

## BRIEFING PAPER: FARGO MOORHEAD METRO STUDY

29 April 2009 version 7

**Purpose:** To identify a process whereby a flood risk management project for the Fargo Moorhead metro area could be included in WRDA 2010.

**Background:** A flood risk management reconnaissance study for the Fargo-Moorhead metro area was initiated in April 2007 and completed in April 2008. The Corps and the cities of Fargo, ND and Moorhead, MN signed a Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement on 22 Sep 2008 to proceed with a more in-depth study. The study will assess the feasibility of measures to reduce flood risk in the entire metropolitan area. The study will consider an array of potential alternatives including nonstructural flood proofing, diversion channels, levee/floodwall systems, and flood storage. For projects currently under development by other agencies, including the Southside project, the study will consider both scenarios of with and without these projects for the initial condition assessment.

**Fiscal:** Total study cost: \$5.3 M (\$2.7M Fed and \$2.6M NF). FY09 funds: \$478,000; Fed. Funds to date: \$1,078,000; ARRA: \$222,000. Non-fed funds to date: \$1,110,000. (Non-fed funds for FY09 were requested on 14-Apr-09; \$140,000 is still anticipated from Moorhead.)

**Schedule:**

Sept 08	Initiate Feasibility Study
May 09	Feasibility Scoping Meeting
April 10	Alt. Formulation Brief and Prelim. Draft Report
Sept 10	Civil Works Review Board
Dec 10	Chiefs Report and ROD

### Talking Points:

1. The Corps is heavily engaged in flood fight emergency operations in the Red River Valley in general and Fargo/Moorhead in particular. The Corps has supplied over 11 million sandbags, 141 pumps and 81,600 linear feet of rapidly deployable HESCO barriers. To date, \$32 million has been expended on emergency operations. Over \$1.4 billion in damages prevented have been documented so far with more expected.
2. Legislative options have been identified pertaining to the Southside project in Fargo. Those options include 1) removing the Southside project from the future without project conditions, 2) identifying the Southside project as a locally preferred plan, and 3) providing the local interests with credit for their work on the Southside project. MVP is drafting language for each option.
3. The Fargo Southside project as currently proposed would not be in compliance with Executive Order 11988 as a Federal project, because it facilitates development of over 20 square miles of undeveloped floodplain. Legislation would be necessary to exempt the Southside project from this executive order. The Corps NED plan may include alternative measures to protect existing development in the area.
4. Prior to implementation of a non-Federal project at Southside, the city would be required to obtain a 404 permit. The city has not yet applied for a permit, but is coordinating hydraulic analysis with NWO.
5. As with any Flood Risk Management system, there will always be residual risks regardless of what measures are put in place. Residents and communities should understand those risks and make informed decisions.
6. Whenever a Feasibility study is undertaken, there is a risk that there will not be sufficient economic justification to warrant Federal participation in all or parts of the desired solution.

**BRIEFING PAPER: FARGO, ND SOUTHSIDE FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT**  
29 Apr 2009 Version 1

**Background:** The Fargo Southside Flood Control Project is a non-Corps project proposed by the City of Fargo and the Southeast Cass Water Resource District. The project would provide a 100-year plus 4 feet level of protection to 38 square miles south of Interstate Highway 94 between the Red River, Wild Rice River and Sheyenne River. Over 20 square miles of the protected area is sparsely developed agricultural land within the 100-year flood plain. Current cost estimate = \$161 million. The City of Fargo would like to incorporate this project into a larger Federal project if possible.

**Talking Points:**

- Fargo and Moorhead declined Metro study opportunities from 2001 until reconnaissance study started for Metro area in 2007. Fargo preferred to work independently on Southside project.
- Fargo has requested Corps funding in the past, but did not want Corps' planning assistance. Without a feasibility study to recommend a Federal project, Corps unable to support construction funds.
- FEMA provided \$10 million after 1997 flood; city using for this project.
- City held public meetings December 2006; several alternative plans; estimated to cost \$50 million.
- After incorporating mitigation for the hydrologic effects, estimated cost increased to \$161 million.
- Fargo has a preferred alternative; working towards permitting and plans and specs.
  - City working with Omaha District to review H&H modeling; ensure no induced flooding upstream or downstream of project.
  - City has yet to apply for Corps' permit from Omaha District; EPA may require EIS.
- Local officials are proceeding with independent design efforts, but hope to incorporate the Southside project into a Federal project as a locally preferred plan.
- Senator Dorgan has verbally requested Corps assistance exploring options to include the Southside project in a Federal project.
- The current plan appears to violate Executive Order 11988, because it encourages significant development of the existing 100-year flood plain.
- Project literature states, "The benefit of the plan is to provide protection from a 100-year flood so that mandatory flood insurance will not be required for those properties located within the proposed 100-year floodplain."