

Manitoba Floodway Expansion EIA – Round 1 Municipal Meetings

Meeting Highlights

**Meeting With
RM of East St. Paul
Municipal Office – Birds Hill, Manitoba
February 11, 2004**

In Attendance

For RM of East St. Paul Council

T. Hallet – Councillor ward 3
L. Morris – Councillor ward 2
D. Gera – Councillor ward 4
J. Mauws – Chief Administrative Officer
B. Schmidt – (arrived at 6:15 p.m.)

For Environmental Assessment Team

D. De Pape – TetrES/InterGroup
B. McGurk – TetrES/InterGroup

For Manitoba Floodway Expansion Authority

J. Thomson – Vice-President – Transportation
D. McNeil – Vice-President – Hydraulics

Purpose of Meeting

The meeting was requested by the Environmental Assessment Team for the Floodway Expansion Project to:

- Begin dialogue about the Environmental Assessment process
- Provide initial information about the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and its associated Public Involvement Program (PIP)
- Provide background information about the proposed Floodway Expansion Project
- Identify issues and concerns Council has with the proposed project, the EIA and the PIP.

TetrES/InterGroup Round 1 PIP

The meeting is one of a series of sessions being held with municipal Councils in the areas affected by the proposed Floodway Expansion Project as part of Round 1 of the PIP. At least two additional rounds of meetings with municipal Councils are contemplated as information from the Environmental Assessment becomes available.

Meeting Process

Denis De Pape of the Environmental Assessment Team made a presentation about the background and current status of the proposed Floodway Expansion Project EIA process, plans for involving the public in the EIA, and next steps in the process. In conjunction with Denis' presentation, Jim Thomson of the Manitoba Floodway Expansion Authority described the five components of the proposed project – Floodway Channel Expansion, Inlet Control Structure, Outlet Structure, Channel Crossings, and the West Dyke. Each Council representative in attendance was provided with a copy of the presentation and the first PIP newsletter. Extra copies were left with the Administrator for general distribution.

Throughout and following the presentation, discussion took place in which:

- Council asked questions, offered perspectives, and identified issues about the proposed project, the EIA and the PIP
- Where appropriate, representatives of the Environmental Assessment Team and Manitoba Floodway Expansion Authority offered perspectives on items raised by Council.

The following are highlights of the meeting and are intended to capture the key points that were raised or presented. They are not presented in the sequence that they were raised at the meeting, nor are they a detailed or verbatim transcription of what was said.

Key Perspectives and Issues Identified by Council

Project Impacts and Management of Project Impacts

- Primary concern is the potential impact of floodway channel deepening and widening on the quality and quantity of local groundwater. Area leaders and residents of East St. Paul are worried that the floodway will cause groundwater levels to drop, as occurred when the original floodway was constructed, or to become contaminated due to a possible breach in the aquifer, causing Red River water to enter the aquifer. The Birds Hill area would be especially affected by such occurrences because, in addition to having many rural residents who obtain their water from groundwater fed wells, the municipal water supply for Birds Hill comes from a groundwater source near the existing floodway.
- Any adverse impacts from the Floodway Expansion Project on groundwater (quality and quantity) that cannot be mitigated should be compensated for.
- Residents along Henderson Highway up to and including Lockport are concerned about river water entering their private wells if the floodway is deepened.

TetrES/InterGroup Round 1 PIP

- Concerned about the impacts of changes to bridge structures and roadways on private property adjacent to the floodway.
- The proponent of the floodway should pay municipal taxes (in the form of a grant in lieu of taxes) for any lands that are expropriated for floodway use. This is not happening with the current floodway.
- The municipality is concerned about losing any land as a result of widening the floodway. With East St. Paul being the smallest municipality in Manitoba, losing any existing land is a large concern.
- The municipality wants to be assured that any current and planned structures (e.g., drains, drop structures) affected by the floodway project in their municipality would be replaced and the cost covered by the proponent (province). The municipality is currently evaluating a drop structure between East St. Paul and Springfield to increase the drainage capacity between the two municipalities.
- The municipality expects any costs to remove/relocate water lines and other underground lines to be covered by the project proponent.
- Councillors had concerns with respect to compensation. MFEA informed them that there is proposed flood compensation legislation that would grant citizens the right to financial compensation if they experienced artificial flooding due to floodway operation.

Public Involvement Process

- Would like to have a combined meeting with rural municipalities later in the process to allow for information exchange among municipalities (in particular, a meeting with Springfield and St. Clements).
- Would like to have access to notes from meetings with other municipalities to gain a better understanding of their issues.

Key Perspectives from the Environmental Assessment Team

- The decision to consider the Floodway Expansion Project option was the outcome of numerous studies and consultations, which evaluated alternatives to improve flood protection for the Winnipeg area.
- Before construction can commence, a licence must be obtained by the proponent under the provincial *Environment Act*, and federal approvals must be granted. As part of the Environmental Assessment process, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) must be prepared. The EIS will be subject to review, including public review through the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission.
- Current information indicates that impacts of the proposed project are diverse and vary substantially in different areas. To recognize these differences, the study region has been divided into six zones. A color map, as presented in newsletter #1, outlines the key impacts relative to each of the six zones.
- As part of the EIA process, the Environmental Assessment Study Team will be conducting a PIP. The results of the program will be used by the study team to identify and evaluate potential effects and mitigation measures. There will be three rounds of public involvement: **Round 1** (begin dialogue, provide information, identify issues); **Round 2** (share and seek feedback on initial assessment, discuss ideas to mitigate impacts); and **Round 3** (review results of EIA). The program includes

TetrES/InterGroup Round 1 PIP

meetings with municipalities, affected and interested stakeholders, and open houses. This PIP for the EIA is independent of any other public consultation that the Manitoba Floodway Expansion Authority will be undertaking. Two upcoming open houses for the PIP occurring in neighbouring communities are:

- Selkirk – February 25th (Legion Hall)
- Dugald – March 2nd (Dugald Community Centre)

Key Perspectives from the Manitoba Floodway Expansion Authority

In response to questions and comments, MFEA representatives noted:

- The project is currently in the pre-design stage. Design of the Floodway Expansion Project continues to be refined and will evolve and be improved as input is received through engineering studies and public involvement.
- MFEA will be holding public involvement events to address the following topics:
 - Compensation
 - Possible recreational opportunities
 - Spring operations
 - Summer operations
 - State of nature water levels.
- The floodway will not necessarily be deepened and widened along its entire length; decisions pertaining to what areas of the floodway will be deepened and widened have not been made.
- After the floodway is expanded, a 1997 flooding event would result in less water in the floodway due to the additional capacity created by widening and deepening the floodway.
- Where beneficial improvements can be dealt with easily and at a reasonable cost as part of the Expanded Floodway Project, they will be considered. An example is where drainage drop structures have to be replaced; project engineers will be asked to look at increasing the capacity of the structures.
- MFEA has hired two engineering firms to look at possible groundwater effects. One study focuses on groundwater effects in Birds Hills. The other study addresses groundwater effects along the entire floodway.