

**NORTH OTTAWA
OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Monday, August 10, 2020 at 9 AM**

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss a 10-Year North Ottawa Impoundment operations and maintenance plan.

In Attendance: President Linda Vavra, Board Manager Allen Vold, Administrator Jamie Beyer and Landowner Dwight Veldhouse. Participating by phone: Board Manager John Kapphahn, Board Manager Scott Gillespie, Board Manager Jason Beyer, Engineer Chad Engels, Technician Troy Fridgen.

Participants reviewed information provided in EOR's Technical Memo and the DNR's Moist Soil Management Guide, and put together the following recommendations for the framework for a 10-Year Working Lands Agreement.

CELL USAGE & ROTATION

Participants were asked whether the holding cell(s) should be rotated or designated. Based on this year's experience with B3, which is a first-year holding cell and experienced significant cattail growth, participants decided that the holding cell(s) should not be rotated, and that the best candidates are: A4, B4, and/or B3. Board Manager Wold expressed concern about sedimentation in the holding cell. Board Manager Beyer offered that side inlet culverts should be installed up-channel to catch sediment before it enters the Impoundment. The best crop cell candidates are: A1, A2, B1, B2. Crop mixes were discussed at length. Forage crops are limited by available markets. Alfalfa is the most common forage in the region, but alfalfa would be difficult to implement – as a perennial crop, it would require a 4 – 5 year minimum continuous lease. If the alfalfa crop were to be lost in Year 3, it is uncertain how the crop could be continued for the remaining lease term. Participants were hesitant to recommend long lease terms, having so few years of operation experience with North Ottawa – long leases restrict adaptive management flexibility. Participants offered corn silage with a cover crop as a viable alternative to alfalfa, the most common perennial crop.

Participants expressed support for research projects at the Impoundment.

ANTICIPATED EXPENSES

Landowner Dwight Veldhouse is pursuing facility improvements with the West Central FFA. Possibilities are wholly dependent upon the availability of funding, and include:

- Permanent Restroom Facility
- Blinds for Photographers
- Bike Kiosks and Paths
- Primitive Camping

Engineer Technician Troy Fridgen identified some of the likely repairs needed in the near future, to include interior cell ditching and collection channel ditch cleaning.

PROJECT TEAM

The DNR has requested establishment of a Project Team to provide input and management recommendations, committing one staff person. The Project Team will act in an advisory capacity, providing input and recommendations for the operations and management of the facility – persons with detailed knowledge about the facility, the region, and physical operations of cells will be sought. These recommendations will be considered for incorporation into the facility’s Annual Operations and Maintenance Plan, and/or the 10-year Working Lands Agreement.

Meeting participants recommended that the Project Team membership include: Grant and Wilkin County Commissioners, neighboring landowners, and board managers. Administrative and engineering staff will support the Project Team.

Recommended Framework for a 10-Year North Ottawa Working Lands Agreement

The goal of the Working Lands Agreement is to outlay a 10-year plan to meet the fiduciary needs to operate and maintain the Impoundment, while maximizing natural resource enhancement benefit opportunities.

As provided in https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/input/environmentalreview/fm_flood_risk/fm_fseis_app-g.pdf, the Agreement will be an “Adaptive Management Plan:”

Adaptive management (AM) is a “learning by doing” management approach which promotes flexible decision making that can be adjusted in the face of uncertainties as outcomes from management actions and other events become better understood (National Academy of Sciences 2004). It is used to address the uncertainties often associated with complex, large scale projects. In AM, a structured process is used so that the “learning by doing” is not simply a “trial and error” process (Walters, 1986).

The basic elements of an AM process are: (1) Assess; (2) Design; (3) Implement; (4) Monitor; (5) Evaluate; and (6) Adjust. In practice, AM is implemented in a non-linear sequence, in an iterative way, starting at various points in the process and repeating steps based on improved knowledge.

CELL USAGE & ROTATION

3 Cells Focused on Revenue, 3 Cells Focused on Revenue + NRE’s, 2 Cells NRE’s

“Holding Cell”

cell used to store and/or divert water. NRE Benefits: year round habitat, facilitate stream augmentation, facilitate moist soil management in other cells in the spring and fall, buffer water level bounce and protect other cells from inundation, provide area for incoming sediment to settle out. This cell (or cells) will likely not be rotated.

“Moist Soil Management”

using water from holding cells to create seasonal wetland habitat through intensive water level management (adding and removing water); may be accompanied by tillage because soil disturbance controls undesirable perennial vegetation including invasive species, and can be used in conjunction with cropping in lieu of natural seed production; may require additional artificial systems to efficiently remove water to facilitate draw downs. These cells may contain alternative crops such as forage, corn silage with a cover crop, or small grain. The cropping mix may be dependent upon available markets and the length of leases. NRE Benefits: seasonal wetland habitat, growing and harvested plants to recover and remove nutrients, feedstock and cover attraction for wildlife. These cells could be rotated.

“Crop Cell”

cell used to generate revenue for Impoundment operations and maintenance. The cropping mix will be determined by lease holders and the District. NRE Benefits: flooded for spring migration, growing and harvested plants to recover and remove nutrients, feedstock and cover attraction for wildlife, weed suppression. Cells A1, B1, A2, and B2 are preferred.

The District is supportive of university research, which will be considered on a case-by-cases basis.

CELL	YEAR & GROWING SEASON INUDATION SEQUENCE									
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
A1	4th	8th	8th	8th	4th	8th	8th	8th	4th	8th
B1	8th	4th	7th	7th	8th	4th	7th	7th	8th	4th
A2	7th	7th	4th	6th	7th	7th	4th	6th	7th	7th
B2	6th	6th	6th	4th	6th	6th	6th	4th	6th	6th
A3	3rd	5th	3rd	5th	3rd	5th	3rd	5th	3rd	5th
B3	5th	3rd	5th	3rd	5th	3rd	5th	3rd	5th	3rd
B4	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd
A4	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st

At Least 1 Holding Cell (always the 1st and 2nd Cell Inundated)

Total Farmable Acres Over Ten Years

Corn, Corn Silage, Soybeans or Small Grains	3166.9
Small grains with Moist Soil Management	1043.1
Perennial crop such as alfalfa or corn silage w/ post-harvest cover crop	2233.0

ANTICIPATED EXPENSES

- B3 gate repair
- Interior cell ditching
- Exterior and collection channel ditch cleaning
- Side inlet installation and repairs
- Repair right-of-way
- Removal of tare piles
- Repair interior roads
- Replacement of stop logs
- Removal of sediment from cells and collection channels

PROJECT TEAM & REVIEWS

Composition: 1 DNR Representative, 1 Wilkin County Commissioner, 1 Grant County Commissioner, 2 Area Landowners, 3 Board Managers

Time Commitment: 2 Meetings per Year