

**Meeting Notes**  
**North Ottawa Project Team**  
**June 22, 2022 at 10:00 AM**  
**LOCATION: NORTH OTTAWA IMPOUNDMENT GAZEBO**

**Project Team Members**

SWCD Representative	Randy Larson	
Landowners	Dominic Blume <b>[absent]</b>	Jordan Schneeberger
County Commissioners	Eric Klindt	Bill LaValley
DNR Representatives	Nick Brown	Christine Herwig
BdSWD Board Managers	Ben Brutlag	John Kapphahn

**Also Present:**

Larry Schneeberger, Landowner  
Theresa Ebbenga, DNR Regional Director  
Linda Vavra, BdSWD Board President and Alternate  
Jamie Beyer, BdSWD Administrator

**Introductions**

Introductions were made.

**Brief History of North Ottawa**

Ebbenga and Vavra provided a brief history of the project, with contributions from other Project Team members, describing the primary function of the facility for flood damage reduction (FDR), secondary function to provide natural resource enhancements (NRE's), and the utilization and funding derived from agricultural leases.

**Policies: 10-Year Operations and Maintenance Agreement**

The current O & M Agreement was mailed/mailed to all Project Team participants. The facility's agricultural leases expire in 2022, so new leases will need to be enacted for crop year 2023. Because construction of the facility was paid for by state bond funds, the Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) office requires that we use their lease form, and their approval is required. Beyer reported that it can take 6 – 9+ months to get MMB's approval, so she has already had MMB approve the lease form for 2023.

The BdSWD will approve the lease format in December and begin advertisement; rental bids are reviewed and approved in January, and rent is due March 1<sup>st</sup>.

In 2021, the District offered 2- and 3-year lease contracts, and saw a notable increase in bid rental offers. Because the District anticipated the formation and enactment of the North Ottawa Project Team, a 2-year lease was utilized for crop years 2021 and 2022.

Project Team members requested a copy of the lease for their consideration.

**Policies: Project Team Duties**

Project Team duties are included in the O & M Agreement, see Section III and Exhibit B. Beyer will mail and collect signed Project Team Statements of Commitment. Ebbenga added that cost-share for meeting facilitators are available through the Flood Damage Reduction Workgroup.

### **Policies: Budget**

Currently, there is approximately \$71,000 in the North Ottawa fund. Engineer Technician Troy Fridgen had provided the following repairs in progress:

1. Gravel will be applied to the center North-South road (\$11 - \$12,000)
2. Three gates to keep vehicles off roads/dikes are being made, because signs aren't working by themselves (\$10,000 installed?)
3. One aluminum gate will replace wooden stop logs on A4 (this is the most used gate within the impoundment to manipulate water levels for NRE's, used to flood the other cells after harvest)
4. Some side inlet culverts are being fixed along the collection channel

These repairs may be \$25,000 - \$30,000 total.

Fridgen requested that the Project Team consider what to do with A3. This cell was not farmed – he recommends that a cover crop be planted to prevent/slow weed growth. Project Team members discussed different cover crop options, including rye, Japanese millet, oats, etc and the NRE benefits associated with those crops. Kapphahn can provide prices and coordinate seed purchase, delivery, and planting. Beyer offered that a cell could be subdivided to grow more than one type of cover crop.

Project Team members discussed the need for facility road signage – Pine to Prairie, MNDOT, and Wendell/Herman gas stations were identified as potential avenues.

### **Spring/Summer/Fall Operations**

Brutlag relayed how the Impoundment was utilized Spring 2022, which had a late spring flood and several subsequent storm events, requiring gate manipulations to ease possible flood impacts and/or flooding perceptions downstream. Despite these flooding challenges, the agricultural cells were able to be planted.

Project Team members discussed interest in monitoring equipment. The system originally installed with the facility has been defunct for several years – the technology was not initially installed correctly and relies on an extensive system of batteries. The equipment manufacturer has visited the site and was unable to repair the system.

Herwig described DNR research noting one species that uses the Impoundment for nesting. Brown commended the District on its cattail control in A4/B4, which were found by District staff to be too shallow to drown the cattails.

### **Next Meeting**

Project Team members requested a meeting prior to harvest, early September?, and a second meeting in November. Beyer will coordinate the logistics of setting and preparing meetings for the Project Team.

District staff have tabled requests/proposals from outside entities for a variety of new activities, and will begin the process of bringing interested parties to future Project Team meetings – enhancement proposals have included bathrooms, camping spots, bird watching blinds, wild rice production, paved walking paths, etc.