

**Red Lake Watershed District  
Four Legged Lake/JD 5 Project Team  
Meeting Notes  
July 17, 2015**

The meeting was convened by Myron Jesme, Administrator, Red Lake Watershed District (RLWD) at 9:00 a.m. The following Project Team members (or their alternates) were present:

Myron Jesme (RLWD)	Dan Thul (MnDNR)
Nate Dalager (HDR Engineering, Inc.)	Chad Severts, (BWSR)
Les Torgerson (RLWD)	Denise Oakes (MPCA)
Gene Tiedemann (RLWD)	Wayne Goeken (IWI)
Lee Coe (RLWD)	Dan Sauve (Clearwater County Engineer)
Shelley Gorham (MnDNR)	Patty Olson (Landowner)
Larry Pachalski (Corps)	Dave Rave (MnDNR)
Mike Stenseng (Clwr Env. Services)	

Nate Dalager recapped the project process and discussed the project tour held on November 21, 2015.

Myron Jesme stated that a landowner meeting was held in Leonard, with one landowner concerned about water levels for irrigation. The landowner does not want to see the area drained, they would like it a little higher.

Dan Sauve and Jesme discussed the beaver dam downstream of County Road 23. Dave Rave asked if there was landowners being flooded out also.

Dalager reviewed the November 21, 2014 minutes from the project tour and notes presented by landowner Karen Gebhardt. Dalager stated that we haven't advanced much from what has been discussed in the notes, but the District has set a hearing date for the abandonment of the ditch to be held on July 23, 2015 at 9:30 a.m. at the RLWD office.

Dalager stated that the District needs to deal with the legal ramifications that are associated with a legal drainage system. It was apparent to the District Board that the landowners are not so concerned about having a ditch system, they would rather have their water, but before we can change the ditch, we have to go thru legal process. The landowner's have decided that they would like to abandon the ditch. The abandonment hearing allows the District Board to hear from all interested parties that own that ditch. Dalager stated that the landowners are not getting drainage benefits the way it is now. The abandonment will get rid of the ditch system. It will allow the Project Work Team to develop a FDR Project that will get the public needs/wants to the best we can to come to some common conclusion of water levels. The landowners at that time who are being damaged could be duly compensated. Discussion will be held if the FDR Project does not proceed, how the landowners can be assured that the water levels will be maintained at a satisfactory elevation. If there is an objection to the abandonment, the hearing will have to be recessed and we would have to hire viewers to quantify their damages. Dan

Sauve stated that Clearwater County will object to the abandonment, he further stated that someone has to manage the system so that the landowners can be assured on the water levels, plus damage to roads in the event levels are not managed. Patty Olson stated that they currently have damages basically due to a lack of communication between local units of government. Sauve stated that if the ditch is abandoned there would be no authority for the work to be done, and that the landowners should be concerned. Olson stated that the abandonment can be done in conjunction with the FDR Project Work Team and that this needs to be a group effort. The District Board will need to address damages. Sauve stated that county will provide evidence that would not allow the District to abandon the system. Sauve further stated that if the project gets abandoned we want to make sure the water levels are at acceptable levels and maintenance can be completed and he does not want to see the county and landowners left high and dry.

Dave Rave asked if we have looked at just lowering the culvert at the outlet. Jesme stated that since this is a legal drainage system, we would have to lower the culvert down to the 1920 elevation which would be approximately 6'. There was no improvement petition to raise the lake level for which it is currently at now. Jesme stated that the culvert could be raised to what it is today, but there is a legal process to do so and could cost the landowners significant money. Les Torgerson stated that not even 10 years ago, someone raised the lake. He further stated that we have funding available to make improvements to this area, and if we can find a compromise with everyone, we can move forward. Torgerson stated that he understood the County and landowners concerns.

Dalager stated that a key word here is trust (Landowners, MnDNR, County, Watershed). Our goal has to be what that range is that meets all the interested parties interest. It needs to be a consensus. Existing conditions on these four basins is a moving target, due to beaver and man made changes, things are constantly changing. This project has the ability to stabilize all four basins.

Since the November tour, Jesme and Dalager met with the DNR staff in Bemidji. DNR staff put together a list of their objectives and interests. We have tools to analyze different lakes levels and bounce. We have project team goals and objectives already identified. Dalager displayed information from the meeting that that Shelly Gorham had put together. DNR staff surveyed the lake levels. Gorham discussed lakes levels and the interest of installing gated controls for each basin, which would allow for basin management so it would be allowable to have management on one basin and not affect the other three. Dalager reviewed the DNR objectives (enhanced /restore water levels, maintenance/enhance water quality, habitat) Dalager also reviewed the previous water management regime provided by the DNR Jesme stated these items could all be part of management of the project and needs to be put in the scope for operation.

The following elevations were discussed.

Western Basins of Four Legged Lake

DNR Fall Pool Drawdown 1425

DNR Normal Pool 1426

DNR Preferred Max Pool 1428

CCHD Normal Pool below 1427 (1423.8 drawdown capability)  
CCHD Preferred Max Pool below 1429 for 100 yr and 1429.5 (for extreme back to back flood events)  
RLWD? Maximize FDR benefit  
Landowners? Minimum? Preferred Maximum 1429?  
Other?

\*\*Need to define by basin.

Dan Thul stated that a normal pool of 1426 is good with him, max pool he felt would be 1429 with a max 100 year event at 1429.5 this would be the worst case scenario.

Gene Tiedemann stated that in the District's interests and when we do decide, there has to be storage that will count toward the 20% Reduction Strategy or the District would have to walk away if there is nothing there? Jesme agreed in that if the District is going to spend money flood damage reduction dollars, there has to be a benefit.

Olson discussed the changes of the landscape and habitat due to higher lake levels, stating that she does not have a preferred lower level but she feels it can't get any worse than what it is now. Olson wants to have her land accessible to her and be able to access her property. She indicated that her family has been on that land since the 1960's and that property used to be hay and pasture land for their dairy cows. Jesme shared with the PWT that Olson had called him and was fearful that she would lose her land to the state. Unfortunately, there are more wetland issues because of what has happened in the past and now has restricted her to what she can do with her own land. Olson stated that she does not want to see it dried up like a mud puddle but does not want to see the water as high as it is now or higher, she further stated that she would like to determine how many acres of her land have been damaged?

Thul stated that any of these numbers we put up are preliminary. Once we have the modeling completed with the agreed on elevations, we see what the results will be and may adjust from there. Jesme stated that Dalager will need elevations to start and that will be our next goal. Thul stated that frequency, size of event all makes a difference. Rave stated that we don't want an impoundment, we want things to move around. Torgerson stated that its being held now at a certain level because it can't be controlled, the need to hold water would have to supersede other needs. Thul stated that if flood events occur very rarely it's more acceptable. Olson stated that if everyone works together we can accomplish something that will coincide the benefited parties. Need to be respectful of people that own this land.

Olson asked Larry Puchalski what interest the Corps of Engineers has. Puchalski stated there is nothing of interest, his rules govern and regulate discharges of fill into wetlands, and they would permit or not based on the discharges of fill that would result in this system being created. It gets created because of existing ditches/controlling ditches. They would permit the project as a whole. They would be involved to help minimize the damages. This is unique as there is not an established elevation.

Thul asked if the system was moved out of 103D of an abandonment proceeding, would that put the Corps more involved. Puchalski stated he would work with DNR/BWSR. He's not an engineer. Discharges are something they can permit. Corps involvement is unknown at this point.

Dalager discussed what the structures could possibly look like. An opportunity to use stoplogs to manage water and for FDR purposes we would have a gate to operate to manage water levels. It would all be contained in a concrete box with the higher waters dropping into the structure with a pipe. Something with different options.

Jesme stated that most of the District's gated structures are opened, if we get a severe storm we may send out a gate tender to close the structure so there is no adverse effects downstream and then hold the water until downstream conditions allow it to be released. There would be trigger points downstream. Rave questioned how often would you have to shut them in a summer event. Jesme stated that it's very rare we've stored water in a catastrophic event. Chad Severts stated that for vegetation management you want the option to lower the lake levels.

Dalager discussed the various basins. We can claim credit for gated storage that comes from a drawdown. We could retain about 900 acre feet of storage. What the watershed needs for FDR is a two foot of storage in the two west basins and then the further east basins he does not feel we can drain them so there would be about ½ foot of storage. Sauve stated that the shoulder of the road is 1430.6 with the crown of the road at 1431.6, with this proposal the water will not be any higher than what it is because we drew the basins down in the fall.

Torgerson asked if after all these elevations are established and five years down the line and we find things that need to be changed to make it better what kind of procedure does it take to change it? Jesme stated that we will have an operating plan that should give us some leeway but if not, would have to bring this group together to discuss the changes. We may need to adjust trigger points and the operating plan but we would have to go thru the hearing process. Olson would hope the structures would be built in mind if any changes to trigger points would be made

Severts asked how this relates to what is needed for the 20% FDR at Crookston? Jesme stated that we can only get what we get, its 900 ac.ft. of gated storage more than what we had before. We need to reduce at Crookston by 35% for a total of 260,000 acre/ft. of storage and although this is small, it's a start to our goal. Jesme indicated that we can't kid ourselves in that this is a long term plan to get our goals. Thul stated that if we used the 1920 levels as our baseline, the District could show more towards the goal.

Wrap-up:

Water levels for each basin would be on a different scale. Dalager discussed existing conditions and then proposed conditions with drawdown for each basin. Everything would depend on how we would operate it. Rave stated that he thought we were trying to decrease the water levels, but with all of these we are increasing the water levels. Dalager stated we are comparing existing with proposed. With the existing you have no control, under the proposed you have control of the water.

Dalager stated that anytime you do analysis and compare them it all starts with your assumptions. Dalager suggested to wait and see what we hear at the abandonment hearing. The District Board will talk about this concept analysis. Dalager encouraged a small group meeting to discuss various alternatives.

Next meeting Project Work Team meeting will be held on August 21, 2015 at 9:00 a.m. at the District office.

Rave asked where the storage comes in to place. Dalager stated that we would have drawdown in the fall. Jesme stated that our goal is to release water as soon as downstream conditions allow. Rave asked if we would close the structure except for once every ten years, but yet doesn't this scenario have us closing the structure. Dalager was comparing existing conditions due to not having control of it now. Jesme stated that you can also regulate them with the stoplogs, this would all be addressed in the operating plan.