The Oxbow

FROM THE NORTH DAKOTA STATE WATER COMMISSION

Outlet Project Completion Provides Hope for Devils Lake Area Residents

In 1995, the three-pronged approach (or metaphorically, the three-legged stool) to addressing the Devils Lake basin's flooding problems became an official policy of the State of North Dakota. The first two prongs, upper-basin water management and infrastructure protection, saw almost immediate implementation. But the third leg of the stool, an outlet to the Sheyenne River, proved to be a daunting task to complete that often seemed unattainable. In fact, there were countless times when the odds seemed stacked against those who were fighting for the project, and fighting for another chance at hope for the flood-ravaged Devils Lake area residents.

However, through the tireless work of many people, not only at the Water Commission, but throughout state government, and particularly the Governor's Office, the state-sponsored Devils Lake outlet was completed. And on August 15, 2005, following several tests in the weeks before, the Devils Lake outlet became officially operational. One might say that the three-legged stool is finally in place—accomplishing a comprehensive approach in the struggle against the area's flooding problems, and a ray of hope for area residents.

This sentiment has been expressed many times by locals who are thrilled to see the project come to fruition. "This is a sign of hope for us out here," said Steve Britsch, an accountant from the City of Devils Lake. "This is the first positive movement towards a solution, not just a band-aid."

Evan Heustis, Ramsey National Bank and Trust Company, Devils Lake, remarked "the activation of the outlet system for Devils Lake has had a positive psychological effect on our community. We're able to see the culmination of a massive, cooperative statewide effort. After many years of being told it was a local problem, it is gratifying to realize our concerns about destructive lake flooding are shared."

During the first days that the outlet project was tested, there was a great deal of excitement throughout the basin—including an incredible amount of press coverage. When water from Devils Lake actually flowed out of the project's terminal structure and into the Sheyenne River on August 5, as part of the initial testing, much of that excitement turned into relief.

"When you build a project of that magnitude in such a short timeframe, there's always a potential for some glitches," said State Engineer, Dale Frink. "We were extremely pleased with the initial tests of the project, and of course, relieved that it operates as smoothly as it does. It's truly a testament to the caliber of people we had working on the project," Frink continued.

Assistant State Engineer, Todd Sando concurred. "I can't say enough about all those who have worked tirelessly to make this project a reality. I'm particularly proud of our staff at the Water Commission, whom I've seen give this project their all—day in and day out, through even the toughest of times."

Though the state's outlet is now operational, it alone will not be able to save the Devils Lake basin's residents from the persistent flooding problems that continue to plague the region. However, in unison with the

other two approaches, and through a continuation of the hard work that has provided such progress to date, there is hope for prosperity and a bright future in the Devils Lake basin.

Of the completion of the final prong of the state's three-component approach, Guy DeSautel, Owner of Wally's Supermarket summed up a common local feeling by saying "the fact that we are finally getting water to flow makes me hopeful. It removes a black cloud that has been hanging over the region."

Now, if we could only get Mother Nature to stop hanging black clouds over the region...

At Left: (front to back) Assistant State Engineer, Todd Sando; Jerry Backes, engineering consultant from Barlett and West/Boyle Engineers; and Bruce Engelhardt, Water Commission outlet project manager, watch as the first drops of Devils Lake water spill from the terminal structure, into the Sheyenne River.

Above: State Engineer, Dale Frink, at the first transition structure and rock filter during testing.

Educators Receive a Northwest North Dakota Perspective to the Missouri River Watershed

By Bill Sharff

The Project WET watershed education program moved the 2005 Discover Today's Missouri River Institute (Institute) further upstream to the Williston area this past July. By moving these types of programs around the state, and by providing more localized watershed issues and concerns, educators are given a greater opportunity to learn about watershed issues that are important in their own "backyard."

The 2005 Institute gave 28 educators, from all grade levels and all parts of the state, insight into northwest North Dakota's watershed issues and concerns. Some of the timely topics covered during the program included:

- Missouri River system management
- Missouri River system reservoir levels, particularly on Lake Sakakawea
- Impacts associated with low reservoir levels
- Irrigation development and operating characteristics
- Water supply and distribution systems
- Endangered and threatened species
- Erosion
- Water quality and delta formation
- Outdoor recreation
- Agricultural development and diversification

The institute also included a half-day environmental investigation segment where educators looked at watershed conditions adjacent to a stream; collected and analyzed macroinvertebrates; collected water samples; analyzed chemical and physical parameters of the stream; and collected data to ascertain a stream profile, to determine stream flow and velocity. In addition, the Institute instructors went through 14 hands-on activities from four major Project WET curriculum guides that correlated to several field tours, environmental investigations, and presentations.

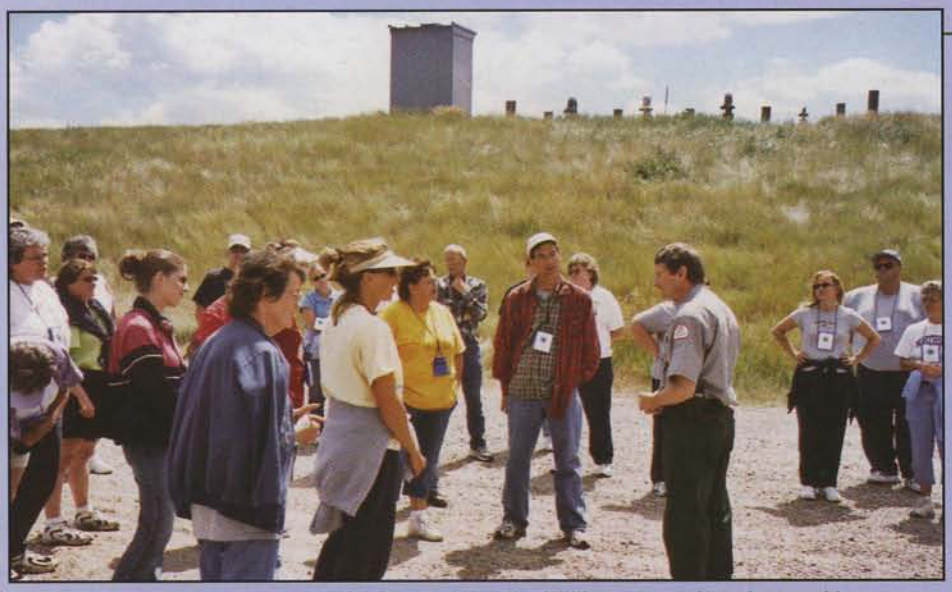
All attending educators had an opportunity to evaluate the institute in regard to overall instruction and value of the course. Jan Christy, a fourth grade teacher from Fargo said, "Time management A^{+}, knowledge gained A^{++}, friendliness of instructors A^{+++} … you are going to make such a big difference in the way I approach my teaching."

2005 FIELD TOURS

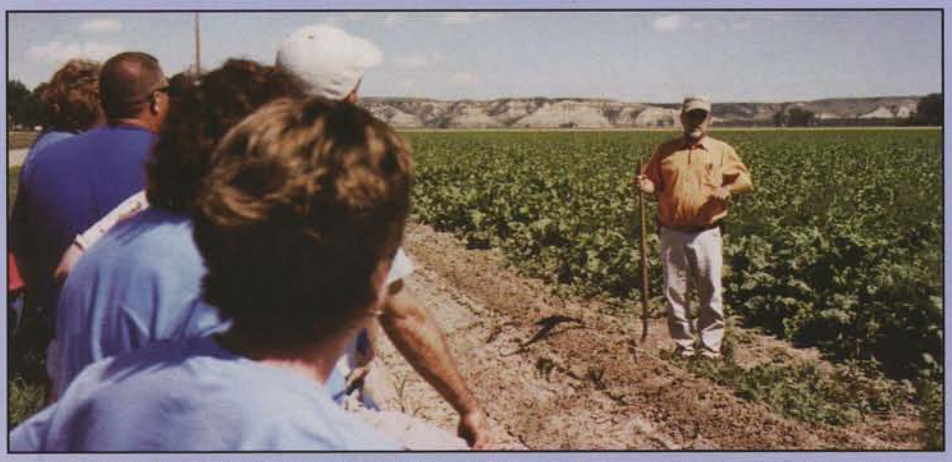
Williston Water Treatment Plant
The Links of North Dakota golf course
Lund's Landing and Resort
Nesson Valley irrigation project
T and T water pipeline project
Sidney Sugars
Buford-Trenton irrigation project
Lewis and Clark Power Plant
Ft. Buford and Ft. Union
Missouri/Yellowstone Confluence Center
Yellowstone River drawbridge and tunnel

2005 GUEST PRESENTERS

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
U.S. National Park Service
ND State Water Commission
ND Game and Fish Department
Historical Society of ND
ND Department of Health
ND Parks and Recreation
ND Rural Water Association
City of Williston Engineer
Lund's Landing and Resort
Agri Industries, Inc.
The Links of North Dakota
Sidney Sugars
Lewis and Clark Power Plant
Buford-Trenton Irrigation District



Jeff Keller, operation manager, USACE, explains the Williston pumping plant and levee system.



Russ Fullmer, agricultural manager for Sidney Sugars, discusses sugar beet production and processing.

2005 participants and instructors, Discover Today's Missouri River Institute, Williston.

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Patrick Fridgen, Editor

Debbie Johnson, a fifth grade teacher from Williston, wrote, "What an awesome group of facilitators. This has to have been the best class I have ever taken in my 24 years of teaching. Hats off to all those who made this class possible!"

Jodie Borgen, a seventh and ninth grade teacher from Devils Lake, said, "I would like to take each of the (instructors) home and use them as a resource in my classroom. Each instructor brought their own individual specialty that put the puzzle of the watershed together… This has been an excellent learning opportunity. I would recommend this class to all teachers."

And finally, Kathyrn Ryan, a sixth grade teacher from Williston, commented, "I learned so much at the institute and loved the variety of tours, activities and speakers…I would recommend this class to anyone."

Again, as in previous years, the Institute put great emphasis on participant journaling. Participants constructed and decorated their journals with materials that reflected Missouri River issues and water uses. Each day, participants were required to journal different concepts and to reflect on what they had learned during the daily activities, and how they could integrate their new-found knowledge into their classroom.

Instructors at this year's Missouri River Institute were Project WET Director Bill Sharff; Jim Collins, North Dakota Department of Health; Angie Bartholomay, a science teacher from Bottineau; and Pam Hintz, a science teacher from Elgin.

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