A study being conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is getting a lot of attention from Red River Basin residents, as well as state and federal government officials and leaders. That’s because the study, called the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Feasibility Study (Study), will look at permanent flood control solutions for Fargo-Moorhead and the surrounding area. In the wake of 2009 flood events, which resulted in a record peak of 40.82 feet at Fargo-Moorhead on March 28, the need for more permanent flood protection is most certainly on the minds of local residents.

The underlying problem in the study area is urban areas along the Red, Wild Rice, Buffalo, and Sheyenne rivers have a long history of facing flood-related risks. The Corps estimates that average annual flood damages in the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area are currently at more than $64 million. If Fargo and Moorhead were to experience a catastrophic failure with their current flood protection during a 100-year flood, damages are expected to exceed $2 billion. For 250- and 500-year floods, damages could be as high as $5 billion and $6 billion, respectively.

The Study will attempt to identify solutions for some of those flood-related risks by addressing several goals, which include:

- To understand the flood prob-

- To develop a regional flood control system to reduce flood risk;
- To determine the federal government’s role in implementing flood risk reduction measures;
- To document study findings in a Feasibility Report and a National Environmental Policy Act Environ-

Temporary levees like this one along 2nd Street in Fargo have to be built to protect the community from major flood events like those experienced this spring. With a more permanent flood control project in place, Fargo could avoid having to build these types of structures, and avoid many of the inconveniences that occur during their construction, and after they’re in place.

Like Fargo, Moorhead has also struggled with flood-related risks for decades. A cooperative approach to flood control, similar to what was developed in Grand Forks-East Grand Forks, could greatly reduce the area’s flood risks.
The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is looking at permanent flood control solutions for Fargo-Moorhead, which has been hit hard by flooding in recent years. The Corps estimates that average annual flood damages in the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area are currently more than $64 million. If Fargo and Moorhead were to experience a flood event at as viable options for flood control alternatives in the Study. Part of the Corps’ justification for this position is that they estimate it would take as much as 400,000 acre-feet of well-placed storage to reduce a 100-year flood event at Fargo-Moorhead by about a foot-and-a-half. The Corps has indicated, however, that it would encourage state and local government interests to continue pursuing retention as a flood control option in the Red River Valley, as they have in the past. 

The Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Feasibility Study is being conducted through a cooperative effort between the communities of Fargo and Moorhead, and the Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District office.

The total cost to conduct the Study is estimated at $5.3 million, with $2.7 million coming from the federal government, and $2.6 million from non-federal sources.
Another Successful Water Festival Held in Bismarck May 19-20

On May 19 and 20, the Bismarck Public School District and North Dakota’s Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) sponsored the sixth annual water festival at the Jack Science Center on the Bismarck State College campus.

Over the course of the two-day event, there were about 800 third-grade students from 15 Bismarck public elementary schools and 39 classrooms. Presenters from several state and federal government agencies, the city of Bismarck, and a rural water system operated the various activities.

Some of the students spent half a day at the event, where they took in four different presentations and activities. Others spent the entire day, taking in up to eight different programs.

The festival itself consisted of structured learning stations, demonstrations, and exhibits where students were actively engaged in hands-on water activities and investigations. In addition, the festival provided students with an opportunity to learn about water resources in a way that both complemented and reinforced their traditional classroom learning in a fun and informative manner.

Once again, comments and feedback from both students and teachers were quite favorable, so a seventh annual festival is already in the works for the spring of 2010.

Water Commission Considers Devils Lake Outlet Extension

The existing Devils Lake outlet, which removes water from the Round Lake portion of Devils Lake and discharges it into the Sheyenne River, has had limited success because of water quality constraints. More specifically, water located at the outlet intake, and often water in the Sheyenne River exceed water quality standards.

To improve the effectiveness of the outlet, the state is considering an outlet extension that would have an inlet north of Highway 19 in the Pelican Lake and lower Mauvais Coulee area. The reason being, is that this area at the northwest portion of Devils Lake has typically had better water quality than the Sheyenne River. From the new inlet point, water would be piped to the existing Round Lake inlet, and then on down the existing outlet works.

The goal is to be able to run the outlet system nearly continuously during ice-free conditions, thus removing a much more substantial amount of water throughout the operating season. The Water Commission is also looking at the possibility of increasing the total discharge capacity of the outlet to 250 cubic feet per second (cfs), from the current 100 cfs.

Presenting Agencies

- Bismarck City Water Department
- Bismarck Public Schools
- National Park Service
- Natural Resource Conservation Serv.
- N.D. Game and Fish Department
- N.D. Rural Water Systems Association
- N.D. Historical Society
- N.D. State Water Commission
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Geological Survey