

Introduction

Over the years, Manitobans, especially residents of the Red River Valley and the City of Winnipeg have experienced the devastation of spring floods first hand. Significant Red River flooding in 1950, 1966, 1979, 1996 and, in particular, 1997 - when the Floodway came within inches of its limit - reinforced this reality and the need to prepare for larger floods in the future.

After the 1997 "Flood of the Century", Canada and Manitoba invested \$110 million in flood protection initiatives in rural Manitoba. At the same time, the International Joint Commission (IJC) studied a number of different flood protection options to improve flood protection for the City of Winnipeg.

After reviewing all the facts and options, the federal and provincial governments chose the expansion of the current floodway as the most cost-effective and viable solution. As a result, the Government of Canada has recognized the project as a national priority and has partnered with the Province of Manitoba to expand the floodway to combat a 1 in 700 year flood (approximately twice the size of the 1997 flood).

The Red River Floodway expansion project will increase flood security and improve the quality of life for many Manitobans. It will also create thousands of direct and indirect jobs, protect the environment and give residents an opportunity to help shape the future of their communities.

By providing flood protection to a 1 in 700 year level of protection, the expanded floodway will:

- Protect an additional 450,000 Manitobans from flooding.
- Avoid the social, economic and environmental impact that would accompany a major flood.
- Prevent more than \$12 billion in damages to the provincial economy.
- Protect the Red River and Lake Winnipeg during a 1 in 700 year flood.

At the same time as improving flood protection for hundreds of thousands of Manitobans, floodway expansion will also result in other long-lasting benefits for all Manitobans and future generations. Some of these benefits include:

- Recreation and economic development opportunities for local communities.
- Training opportunities that will help to meet the need for future construction projects.
- Employment opportunities during construction.

This report outlines ideas submitted to the Manitoba Floodway Authority (MFA) by the public and options for consideration as the floodway expansion project moves ahead. These are only ideas at this point and final decisions will require ongoing public consultation.

The implementation of any recreation or economic proposal is expected to be the responsibility of the proponent. No recreation or economic proposal will be authorized that has a potential to have a significant adverse effect on the environment. Project proponents will be required to comply with relevant environmental regulatory standards and any other applicable legislation.

The Floodway Expansion Project

The Red River Floodway is an important part of Manitoba's economic infrastructure. It was built between 1962 and 1968 at a cost of \$63 million. Since its completion the floodway has saved Manitobans more than \$8 billion in flood losses, not to mention the social, emotional, and environmental devastation that would have impacted Manitobans.

The floodway expansion project is an enormously complex project that will more than double the capacity of the existing floodway. It will include a number of components including earth moving, the construction and redesign of highway and railway bridges, modifications to hydro and water lines, and the protection of water quality. The major components of the project relate to improvements to the existing floodway protection system including the Floodway Channel, bridges, the Inlet and Outlet control works, utilities and services and the West Dike.

This expansion project will greatly improve flood protection for local residents from floods larger than the 1997 "Flood of the Century", including a repeat of the 1826 flood –which was the largest flood on record and 40 per cent larger than 1997 – and as great as a 1 in 700 year flood.

The Mandate of the Manitoba Floodway Authority

The Manitoba Floodway Authority (MFA) has been established by the Government of Manitoba, under *The Floodway Authority Act*, as an independent crown agency whose mandate is to manage the construction of the floodway project. As part of its mandate, it is also responsible for enhancing the benefits the floodway will provide to the community.

The floodway extends approximately 48 km from just south of Winnipeg, through the Rural Municipality of Springfield (east of Winnipeg) and north to Lockport with approximately 10,400 acres as part of the floodway right-of-way. The floodway is a provincial waterway operated by the Department of Water Stewardship. The majority of the land included in the floodway right-of-way is occupied by the floodway embankments (i.e. dikes). For the most part, this property is maintained through leasing for the production of forage crops, which is administered by Manitoba's Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives. The Springhill Winter Ski Facility, located northeast of Winnipeg, is the only other leaseholder.

The Call for Expression of Interest

Over the years there have been general suggestions made about secondary use of the floodway for recreation and economic development opportunities. A review of these suggestions as part of the floodway expansion project has been included in the mandate for MFA as it proceeds with the project.

To facilitate in the identification of possible options, MFA issued a Call for Expression of Interest on March 18, 2004, encouraging the public, local municipalities, and local organizations and others to provide their ideas to the subject.

At the time, MFA CEO Ernie Gilroy stated:

"We want Manitobans to have their say and help shape the future of their communities. This process will compliment and assist the current independent environmental assessment and allow us to prepare a more concise blueprint for specific recreation and economic development activities associated with the new floodway."

The Call for Expression of Interest clearly identified all of the objectives and guidelines for the submissions:

- Compatibility with the primary purpose of floodway expansion.
- Minimal ongoing maintenance costs to taxpayers.
- Stakeholder participation and community support.
- Maximize benefits to rural and Aboriginal communities.
- Compliment existing Red River facilities and initiatives.
- Environmental stewardship.

Manitobans were given until April 20, 2004 to submit their ideas in writing to MFA.

MFA undertook a number of strategies to communicate this initiative to residents of the region, including:

- March 18 press release issued to local radio, television and newspaper outlets.
- Follow up interviews by MFA staff with local reporters.
- Series of advertisements in more than a dozen local newspaper outlets.
- Direct mail information package to key stakeholders and callers to MFA's toll-free access line.
- MFA's ongoing public consultation process.

Since the conclusion of the period allocated for responding to the Call for Expression of Interest, other submissions have also been received by MFA through the ongoing public consultation on the floodway project. To date, all written submissions have been acknowledged and reviewed by MFA officials.

When the Call for Expressions of Interest was issued, MFA announced its intention to compile an "Opportunity Report" that would be presented to the public, local municipalities, recreational organizations, project partners and the independent environmental review process.

This "Opportunity Report" summarizes the submissions received, recommends next steps, and serves as a general framework for pursuing future opportunities and partnerships.

Communication and Outreach

In association with the formal Call for Expression of Interest, MFA developed a comprehensive communication plan to ensure interested Manitobans were given the opportunity to submit their ideas. As noted, the strategy contained a number of elements: media outreach, advertising, direct mail and the project's ongoing public involvement process.

Media Outreach

On March 18, 2004, a press release was issued by MFA to radio, television and newspaper outlets across the region. A backgrounder entitled: Call for Expression of Interest – Information Package was also included.

Interviews were arranged between MFA staff and local reporters to follow-up the press release. A copy of the news release and backgrounder are included in Appendix.

Advertising

MFA purchased a series of advertisements in local newspapers inviting Manitobans to submit their ideas. The ads asked residents to contact a toll free telephone line to get more information about the call for expressions of interest.

Specifically, ads were placed in the Winnipeg Free Press (3x), Selkirk Journal (2x), Scratching River Post, Carillon, Crow Wing Warrior, La Liberté, Interlake Spectator and Valley Leader.

Copies of ads are included in the Appendix.

Direct Mail

More than 500 information packages were mailed directly to various associations and grassroots organizations, including:

- Manitoba Chamber of Commerce
- Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce
- Rivers West
- Destination Winnipeg
- Manitoba Business Council
- Manitoba Historical Society
- Manitoba Cycling Association
- Manitoba Freestyle Ski Association
- Snowmobilers of Manitoba
- Manitoba Horse Council
- Cooks Creek Conservation District
- Manitoba Métis Federation
- Southern Manitoba Chiefs
- Peguis, Brokenhead and Roseau River First Nations
- Manitoba Eco-Network
- Cross Country Ski Association of Manitoba
- Red River Basin Commission
- Tribal Council Investment Group
- Manitoba Recreational Trails Association
- Group'Action Saint-Norbert
- North Ritchot Action Committee

- Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation
- Red River Valley Group
- City of Winnipeg
- Manitoba Hydro
- Forks North Portage Partnership
- Ducks Unlimited Canada
- Association of Manitoba Municipalities
- Floodway East Drainage Association
- 768 Association
- Coalition for Flood Protection North of the Floodway
- Bird's Hill Park
- Canadian Nature Federation
- Pembina Valley Conservation District
- Save Our Seine Environment Inc.
- Springhill Winter Park
- Local Municipalities

Information packages were also mailed to local residents and organizations that contacted the toll-free telephone line based on the advertising campaign.

Public Consultation Process

As part of our ongoing public consultation process, details of MFA's Call for Expression of Interest were communicated to local municipal governments and stakeholders on the following occasions:

- Winnipeg and Manitoba Chamber of Commerce – March 25
- Manitoba Business Council - March 26
- Red River Valley Group - March 30
- RM of Ritchot - April 6
- RM of West St. Paul - April 8
- RM of Springfield - April 13
- City of Selkirk - April 13
- RM of Taché - April 13
- Association of Manitoba Municipalities - April 14
- RM of Morris - April 14
- Keystone Agriculture Producers - April 16
- Floodway East Drainage Association - April 19
- RM of St. Clements - April 20
- 768 Association - April 20
- RM of St. Andrews - April 27
- RM of MacDonald - April 27
- RM of East St. Paul - April 28
- Town of Niverville - May 4

Questionnaires were distributed at MFA's various town hall meetings. Participants were invited to answer questions about recreation and economic opportunities associated with the project on six occasions:

- April 19 – Oakbank Baptist Church
- April 20 – East Selkirk Recreation Centre
- April 21 – St. Norbert, Howden Community Centre
- April 26 – Morris, Southern Manitoba Convention Centre
- April 29 – Winnipeg, St. Norbert Community Centre
- May 3 – Winnipeg, Vince Leah Recreation Centre

MFA was also assisted in its public consultation by Group'Action Saint-Norbert (GAS). In February 2004, GAS conducted a mail survey of the residents on both sides of the Red River between the Perimeter Highway in the north and St. Adolphe in the south. Close to 700 people responded.

Residents identified walking trails, toboggan hill and cycling paths as their top priorities and showed a preference for certain recreational opportunities over loud, environmentally intrusive uses.

GAS also identified a strong interest in establishing a floodway interpretive centre which would include historic perspectives, flood history, multi-media displays and public facilities such as a parking lot, washrooms and warming hut.

Public Response to the Expressions of Interest

More than fifty formal expressions of interests were received by MFA. In addition to the written expressions of interest, MFA has received input regarding recreation and economic opportunities from municipal governments, provincial officials and local residents via MFA's toll-free access line and through the ongoing public consultation process.

Expressions of interest focused on the re-use of the excavated earth, summer and winter recreation, employment training, business development and other opportunities. A list of the organizations that submitted expressions of interest is located in the acknowledgement section.

Re-Use of Excavated Earth

A specific area of interest that received significant public attention was a suggestion to maximize the opportunity for re-use of the millions of cubic metres of earth that will be excavated from the floodway channel. Among other things, residents suggested that the earth be used to:

- Support local highway construction projects
- Rural flood protection
- Expand Springhill Winter Park
- Make a new ski hill
- Stabilize and flood-proof private property