

To Environmental Protection Board

10/31/2015

Dear Vice-Chairman,

Although I know you prefer to work through your agencies, I feel compelled to write to you directly as the DNR prepares it's final EIS regarding the Fargo Diversion Authority and USACE proposal to build a class 1 dam on the Red River. I have already sent my comments to the DNR and voiced my opinion at their public meeting, which, in truth, was dominated by the financial and political interests who want this project, and have pressured for it's rapid approval. I believe this project would be a colossal mistake that will forever damage this river without providing any benefit to Minnesota. You at the EQB are the ultimate stewards of these resources for the citizens of Minnesota, and my hope is that you will scrutinize this endeavor, even though it's far away from the Twin Cities, and, being a prairie river, is a different type of resource.

My family has lived along the Red River since the 1870's. I own the remnants of my grandparent's farm in Wilkin County 18 miles south of Moorhead with 2 miles of flood plain forest along the Red River. The fishing is fantastic and the woods are full of wildlife and birds, including species you don't see much anymore. This wooded corridor along the river from Breckenridge to Moorhead is rarely visited by humans, and is wild and beautiful. My concern is that deeper more prolonged and frequent flooding caused by this dam project will damage or entirely destroy this unappreciated woodland and it's wild inhabitants, to the detriment of future Minnesotans. The DNR recognizes that there may be damage to the river and it's bank structure, the flood plain and adjacent forest, the wildlife, fish, invertebrates, wetlands, and to the hundreds of people who will be flooded out. This project will also adversely impact the farmers in the region, whose lands are to be newly flooded. They (DNR) are stuck with weighing these damages against the economic advantage to Fargo of achieving flood control utilizing a dam, rather than doing it without a dam, as other cities, including Moorhead, have already done. The dam will thus allow Fargo to pursue development in the existing flood plain.

The DNR has worked long and hard on this project, but they have had to accept some of the ideas and data of the USACE and the Fargo Diversion Authority, neither of which are noted for their environmental credentials. Further discussion with the DNR stream biologists involved might illuminate the risks I have mentioned, and give a clearer understanding of the uniqueness of this resource before it is lost. It is my hope that the Minnesota EQB would take an interest before it is too late. Thank you.

Sincerely,

David A. Ness MD