



Issue #5 The Red River Floodway Expansion

Information current as of: August 2005
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Summary and Current Status:

The Red River Floodway Expansion project received federal and provincial environmental approval in July 2005 and construction is expected to start summer 2005. The project is designed to improve current flood proofing infrastructure and safeguard the City of Winnipeg and some surrounding municipalities from a flood larger than the 1997 "Flood of the Century" including a flood of the magnitude of the largest flood in recorded history – the flood of 1826. (The Red River flows north from the United States through southern Manitoba to Lake Winnipeg, and into a river network that flows into Hudson's Bay.

Elements:

The original Floodway was built following the 1950 Manitoba flood - the largest in the province's history. The Floodway was completed in 1968 at a total cost of \$63 million and has saved Manitoba more than \$8 billion in flood damage since its construction.

The 1997 "Flood of the Century" challenged the notion that the current Floodway adequately protects the Winnipeg region – it came within inches of reaching its maximum capacity. Following 1997, the International Joint Commission was charged with recommending options that would increase flood protection for the residents of the Red River Basin. Several options were considered and eventually the

Timeline – The Red River Floodway Expansion Project

July 2003 – Environment Act proposal filed by the Manitoba Floodway Authority (MFA)

August 2003 – Draft Environmental Assessment Guidelines released for public comment

February 2004 – Final Draft Environmental Assessment Guidelines released

August 2004 – MFA's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Red River Floodway Expansion filed; public comment period begins

November 2004 – MFA submits Supplementary Filing

February – March 2005 – Clean Environment Commission (CEC) hearings for the Floodway Expansion held

May 2005 – release of federal Screening Report (requirement for federal assessment under CEAA) and requirements for federal permits for the Floodway Expansion

June 2005 – release of CEC report on public hearings for the Red River Floodway Expansion and recommendations for approval of permits required under the Manitoba Environment Act

July 2005 – Province of Manitoba issues Environment Act License No.2691 for the construction, maintenance and operation of the Red River Floodway Expansion; Federal Responsible Authorities conclude that the project "is not likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects".

expansion of the current Floodway was deemed to be the most cost effective way to improve flood protection infrastructure.

Environmental Assessment

The environmental review and assessment for the Floodway Expansion was initiated in July 2003 (see Timeline) with the submission of a proposal and project description under Manitoba's *Environment Act*. The project was assessed by both the federal and provincial governments under the *Canada – Manitoba Agreement on Environmental Assessment Cooperation*. Federal responsibility regarding the project includes federal funding, and the regulatory roles of three federal government departments. Manitoba's Minister of Conservation directed the Clean Environment Commission (CEC) to hold public hearings, which took place in February and March 2005.

Concerns raised by public interest groups and by Rural Municipalities focused on the definition of the baseline for the assessment, protection of groundwater, artificial flooding, the adequacy of the assessment itself, and cumulative effects. The existing Floodway does not have an environmental license and there is ongoing concern about the need to assess the whole project in order to assess and license the whole project.

Federal approvals and a provincial Environment Act Licence (No.2691) <http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/envapprovals/registries/redriverfloodway/licence/2691.pdf> were announced in July 2005. Both federal and provincial approvals require specific environmental plans to be developed and submitted by the MFA. Various construction and operation plans detailing the site-specific environmental management measures for various project components are also required. Detailed monitoring and follow-up plans and reporting are conditions of both federal approval and of the provincial *Environment Act* License. It is not yet clear how public access to information, ongoing consultations, and review of required environmental plans will be accomplished.

The Manitoba Floodway Authority (MFA) was established June 2004 by the *Floodway Authority Act*. The MFA, as proponent of the Red River Floodway Expansion, has expansion of the floodway and maintenance of floodway land and structures as its purpose. The MFA is also charged with ensuring "that the expansion is carried out in a manner that provides increased benefits to the community". Manitoba Water Stewardship continues to operate the floodway.

The expanded Floodway will increase the capacity of the current channel from 1,700 cubic metres (60,000 cubic feet) of water per second to 4,000 cubic metres (140,000 cubic feet) per second and require excavation of more than 30 million cubic metres of earth to construct the expanded channel. Twelve bridge crossings, the floodway gates, the outlet structure, the West Dike, utilities and drainage services also require upgrading and improvements as part of the project.

Key Publication(s) & Links:

- Government of Manitoba– Environmental Assessment and Licensing Branch
Red River Floodway Expansion Registry
<http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/envapprovals/registries/redriverfloodway/index.html>
- Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry – Red River Floodway
Expansion 03-01-611
http://www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca/050/Viewer_e.cfm?SrchPg=2&CEAR_ID=11197
- Manitoba Floodway Authority
<http://www.floodwayauthority.mb.ca/>
- Environmental Assessment Study web site – Red River Floodway Expansion
<http://floodwayeia.com/>
- *The Floodway Authority Act*
<http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/f133e.php>
- Government of Manitoba press release July 11, 2005 – Floodway Expansion
License issued
<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2005/07/2005-07-11-02.html>
- Clean Environment Commission, *Red River Floodway Expansion Project
report*
<http://www.cecmanitoba.ca/files/RRFEPreport.pdf>
- Manitoba Wildlands Water pages – Red River Floodway
http://manitobawildlands.org/water_floodway.htm

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