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C-files

## CITY OF PERHAM

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4/4/06 Copied RRV team

March 31, 2006

Alan Schlag  
PO Box 1017  
Bismark, ND, 58502

Alan,

I want to thank you again for making the trip to Perham for last week's informational meeting. All three speakers did an excellent job explaining the project, and handling questions from the audience. We've received a lot of feedback and questions since the meeting.

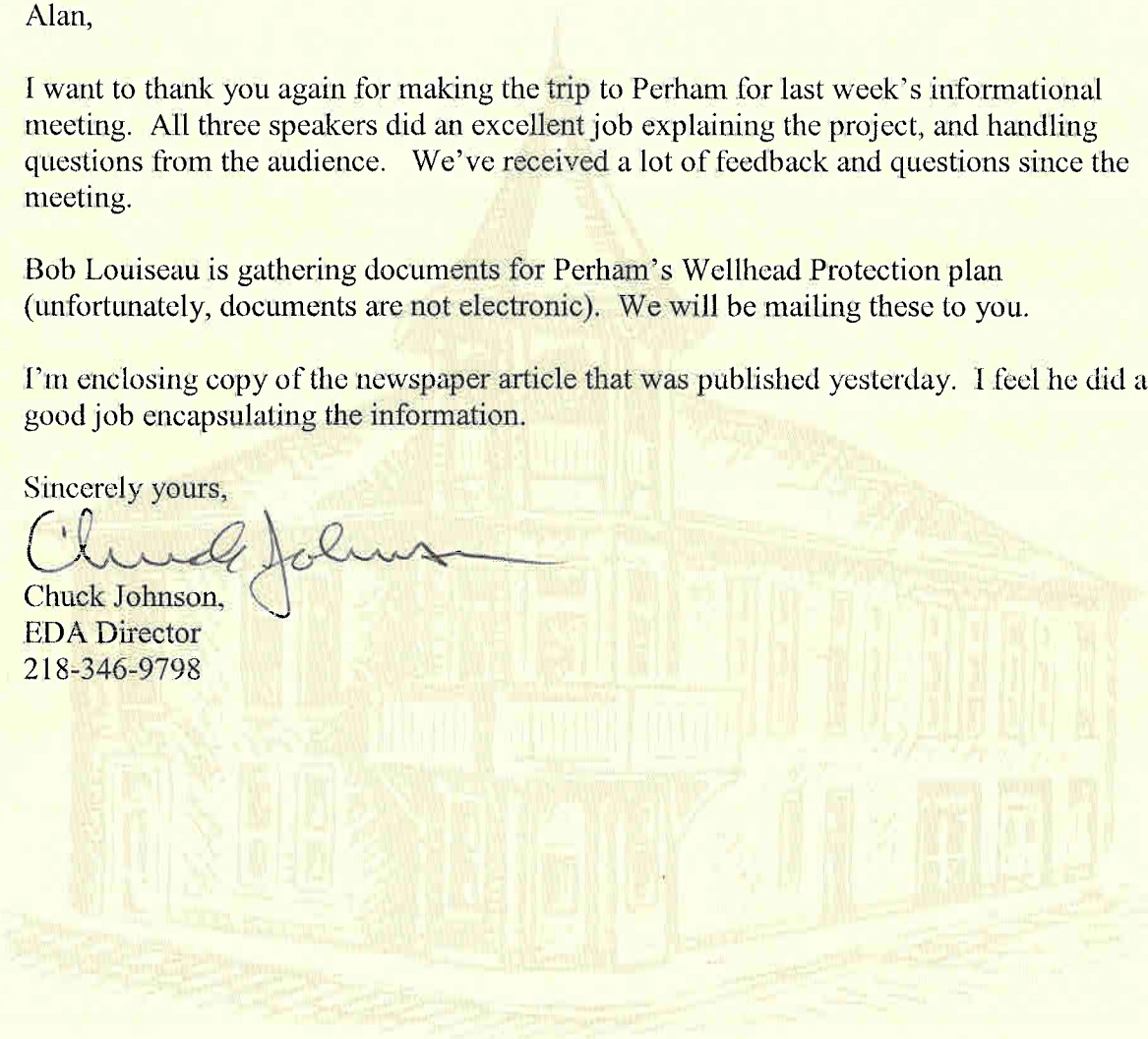
Bob Louiseau is gathering documents for Perham's Wellhead Protection plan (unfortunately, documents are not electronic). We will be mailing these to you.

I'm enclosing copy of the newspaper article that was published yesterday. I feel he did a good job encapsulating the information.

Sincerely yours,



Chuck Johnson,  
EDA Director  
218-346-9798



# Enterprise Bulletin

Thursday, March 30, 2006

WWW.PERHAMEB.COM

THE PERHAM ENTERPRISE BULLETIN ON THE WEB

\$1.00 125th year Issue 13

**New workouts at PHS**  
A new athletic development program is getting athletes in better shape. **Page 1B**



**Ottertail eyes sign controls**  
Reducing roadside sign clutter is the goal of a proposed ordinance being considered by the Ottertail City Council. **Page 5A**

**RELAY FOR LIFE**  
American Cancer Society

**Relay planning starts**  
Team leader meeting will launch planning for 2006 cancer walk. **Page 5A**

## Water worries: Otter Tail-Pelican area is number two alternative for quenching F-M during drought

By Louis Hoglund  
louis@eot.com

Ordinarily, Otter Tail County folks don't care to play second fiddle. But being second in line as an H2O source for the massive Red River Water Supply Project is a dubious honor.

"I have to tell you folks, (Otter Tail-Pelican alternative) is the number two preferred option," said North Dakota hydrologist Allen Schlag, somewhat hesitantly, to a meeting room of more than 125 people at The Cactus in Perham.

Eight drought contingency plans were developed for the Red River Valley Water Supply Project. As it stands now, Number 2 on the list is a \$500 to \$600 million plan to draw water from the Otter Tail-Pelican aquifers if we're besieged with a drought of the 1930's magnitude. The water would supplement municipalities and industry primarily in Fargo-Moorhead.

East Otter Tail would prefer to be seventh or eighth-best on the list.

The \$500 to \$660 million alternative to build a pipeline from the McClusky Canal to the Otter Tail-Pelican area



More than 125 East Otter Tail area concerned citizens jammed into a meeting room at the Cactus supper club in Perham March 23 to learn more about the controversial Red River Valley Water Supply Project. At issue for Otter Tail-Pelican watershed areas is a drought contingency alternative that would pump water from this area to Fargo-Moorhead.

### Your voice can still be heard on water project

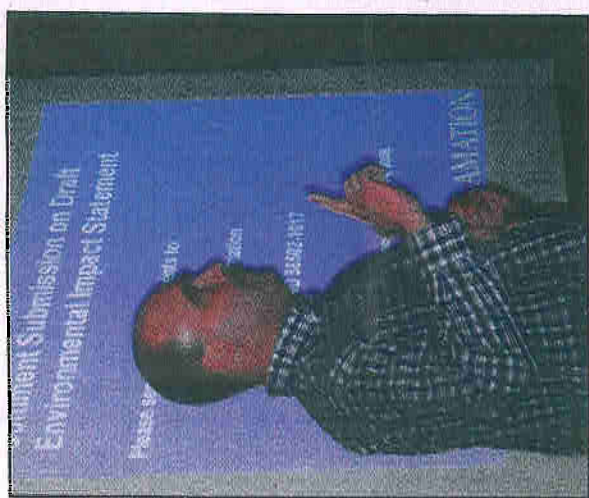
Citizens still have an opportunity to have their voice heard on the Red River Valley Water Supply Project.

The deadline for testimony has been extended from March 30 to April 14.

Comments can be made via the web page: [www.rvwsp.com](http://www.rvwsp.com)  
They can also be mailed, preferably typewritten:  
RRVWSP  
Bureau of Reclamation  
PO Box 1017  
Bismarck, ND 58502

Water worries in Otter Tail-Pelican area continued on 12A

# Water Worries



**DNR hydrologist Larry Kramka, speaking at the Red River Valley Water Project informational meeting in Perham March 23.**

## Otter Tail-Pelican Number 2 option

*continued from front*

Sheyenne River, which flows to the valley. A second pipeline would be constructed to pump water from Fargo to Wahpeton-Breckenridge.

The audience response was predictable--but polite. The discussion was civil and orderly, unlike some of the informational meetings which have been held over the past two months.

Still, the locals were visibly restless about the proposal: North Dakotans have been coming over to take Minnesota bullheads for years.... Now they want the water too?!

The crowd was reminded that the Red River Valley is economically crucial to not only North Dakota, but nearly all of western Minnesota.

If the Red and Sheyenne Rivers ran almost dry like they did in the Depression, it would be an economic holocaust--\$2.4 billion a year. And that doesn't include the crop losses, said David Johnson, District Engineer of the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District.

# East Otter Tail residents, farmers voice concerns

By Louis Hoglund  
louis@cot.com

There were more questions than answers during a lively open forum in Perham March 23 regarding the Red River Valley Water Supply Project.

Following is a sampling of the discussion:

---Economic impact and jobs are one side benefit to construction of the estimated \$79 million "Red River Basin" alternative--which includes water transfer from Otter Tail-Pelican aquifers to Fargo-Moorhead. After construction is completed, operation-maintenance will have an annual economic impact of \$5.1 million in west central Minnesota--including permanent jobs.

The economic impact argument didn't appear comforting to the crowd estimated at 125.

---The 129 wells scattered around the Otter Tail and Pelican watersheds would pump about the equivalent volume of 100 conventional farm irrigation units. The audience was reminded that the single largest user of aquifers is farm irrigation--not municipalities and industry.

---A number of issues were raised by farmers who attended the Perham session. If irrigation restrictions were in force during a drought, because Fargo-Moorhead needed the water--would the government replace revenue due to crop losses?

---Another farm issue: Farm irrigators are already being shut down during peak energy use.

---How much energy will be used to pump and transport water to Fargo?

---Environmentally, a major concern is "intra-basin brotta transfer, meaning the introduction of "foreign" aquatic species and plants would be transferred into other bodies of water. This would not be an issue with the Otter Tail-Pelican alternative--but a larger threat for the alternatives

**"A couple years ago, the state of Minnesota had a budget deficit...we didn't come over and ask you for money to bail us out."**

**Kevin Keil  
Perham City Council**

that bring Missouri River water or Garrison Diversion water east to Fargo.

"In the past, we chose to ignore (botta transfer) and we destroyed a fishing industry on Lake Superior," said Regional DNR hydrologist Larry Kramka, referring to zebra mussels and lamprey eels that were introduced to the Great Lakes. "We have problems with all sorts of things of the past that we just didn't bother to think about--and it can cost billions and billions of dollars."

---Municipalities such as Perham may be forced to go deeper into the water table to supply the town, if water was being exported to Fargo-Moorhead, noted Perham Councilman Terome Boedigheimer.

---Several comments expressed the view that the economic growth of communities in this area would be restricted so that Fargo-Moorhead can continue its unfettered growth.

---Several stated that industry should be locating where the water is--such as Perham--rather than transporting the water to metro-industrial locations.

---As large scale water projects go, is the Red

River water project a groundbreaking and precedent-setting? No, said hydrologist Allen Schlag. "This is pretty typical of what we see in other places...Las Vegas, Phoenix, Sioux Falls...where they don't have water, they go find it."

---The Red River Valley is facing the possibility of a "water deficit." Perham Councilman Kevin Keil offered this analogy: "A couple years ago, Minnesota had a budget deficit...we didn't come over and ask you for money to bail us out."

---North Dakota should "go get its own water." That was the general attitude expressed. One farmer said ND ought to build reservoirs there, which he contends would be considerably less expensive than drilling dozens of wells and running pipelines for miles.

---The crowd was somewhat relieved to learn that ongoing operation-maintenance-repair of the well and pipeline system would be a cost borne by the users--the municipalities and industries in the Red River Valley.

---The Fargo-Moorhead metro area could reach 600,000 population over the next 50 years. Already, half of North Dakota's 636,000 population lives in the Red River Valley. At the same time, Otter Tail County is expected to grow 20 percent --or more. "Our need for water here will also be greater," said Bob Deutschman, Dead Lake.

---Politically, Otter Tail would be overpowered by the 200,000 to 300,000 votes in the Fargo-Moorhead area--especially if the water situation became desperate. This was a comment from several audience members.

---There are holes in the data, acknowledged the engineer and hydrologist. Most notably the "recharge rate" that underground aquifers would refill with water during a sustained, multi-year drought.

Another interesting fact: At Fargo-Moorhead's present level of population and industry, the water demand in the F-M area is equivalent to the entire flow of the Red River in 1934.

Though it may be difficult to view water in the same category as timber, coal or oil, water is a natural resource and "natural resources are imported and exported everywhere," said Johnson.

Under the Otter Tail-Pelican scenario, 129 wells would be drilled and scattered around a watershed of nearly 700 square miles area. An underground pipeline, about 5-6 feet around, would be constructed to channel water to the FM area, from three immense storage tanks with a

flocked to the meeting.

Perhaps most notable was the solid representation from the farming-ag sector in the area; there were few at the initial hearing.

Farmers raised many concerns. Among them the impact on crop irrigation

There was a large dose of Dakota-bashing at the meeting--most of it harmless. But, When all was said and done, it was the Minnesota DNR representative, Larry Kramka, who perhaps offered the most balanced perspective.

"When you look at these options, you really have to take them with a grain of salt...None of these are exactly what will happen in the end. said Kramka, the regional hydrology supervisor, based in Bemidji.

In Minnesota alone, there will be extensive review and oversight by agencies ranging from the DNR to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

"The state of Minnesota has laws that govern water...and this project will be subject to that," said Kramka. "You'll find out alot more before this project is ever approved."

capacity of more than 200,000 gallons, probably similar to the Perham water tower.

An advantage to this plan is that they are both vast aquifers--Otter Tail holds 1.38 million acre feet of water; Pelican 890,000 acre feet of water.

In a drought situation, up to 6,150 acre-feet a year would be pumped from the Pelican aquifer; and 33,480 acre-feet from the Otter Tail aquifer.

More importantly, both have a reliable "recharge" rate--a measurement of how quickly the aquifer is replenished.

Several of North Dakota's aquifers have virtually no natural recharge, due in large part to soil conditions. West Fargo, for example, is drawing its water exclusively from a non-rechargeable aquifer. One hundred feet of groundwater has been removed. With no water coming into the aquifer, West Fargo's future water source is unclear.

Discussion was lively, and varied. A February public hearing was not well-attended in Perham, which prompted city officials to request a second, informational meeting. This time, with increased publicity about the controversial project, people

