

Manitoba

Floodway Authority



Release

March 7, 2005

For Immediate Release

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FLOODWAY AUTHORITY OUTLINES GROUNDWATER PROTECTION STRATEGY

Five Point Plan to Ensure Long-term Sustainability of Groundwater: Gilroy

Winnipeg, Manitoba – The Manitoba Floodway Authority (MFA) today outlined its five point Groundwater Protection Strategy, consisting of enhanced groundwater monitoring and public involvement, associated with the Red River Floodway expansion project.

“We are very confident that all of the measures incorporated into the floodway project will protect groundwater resources long into the future,” said Ernie Gilroy, CEO of the MFA. “In fact, today’s announcement reinforces the fact that floodway expansion means better protection for groundwater and the environment. A key principle of the plan is MFA’s commitment to achieve zero tolerance for any adverse groundwater impacts related to floodway expansion as we move forward.”

Gilroy noted that more monitoring, a greater understanding of regional groundwater issues, and more opportunity for public input will result in improvements to the overall status of groundwater protection and management in the vicinity of floodway.

The five-point Groundwater Protection Strategy consists of the following:

- **No deepening of the floodway channel** – As a result of the public consultation program, MFA has dramatically scaled back plans to deepen the floodway channel from initial estimates of up to two metres (six feet) to **no** deepening. The redesigned floodway will maintain the same design capacity increase from 1,700 cubic metres (60,000 cubic feet) of water per second to 4,000 cubic metres (140,000 cubic feet) per second.
- **Low Flow Channel Protection** - To protect against erosion and potential leakage within the low flow channel, MFA will invest in measures to strengthen, armour and fill in erosion spots to re-establish the grade of the low flow channel and better protect fish.
- **Environmental Mitigation Fund** - An \$11 million fund has been established by MFA to mitigate any unanticipated, isolated environmental effects associated with the floodway expansion project including groundwater protection.

- **Ongoing Monitoring** – In partnership with Manitoba Water Stewardship and local authorities, MFA will adopt a monitoring and adaptive management approach to identify and respond to any unpredictable adverse effects regarding groundwater. The key principles of the program will be:
 - 1) A focus on sensitive spring areas;
 - 2) A focus on the bedrock aquifer but also includes the sand and gravel aquifer;
 - 3) Consisting of multiple wells into bedrock or other granular zones;
 - 4) Establishment of secure wells for on-going monitoring;
 - 5) Facilitate both monitoring and pumping of impacted groundwater if required.

In addition, as part of its commitment to groundwater protection and ongoing monitoring, MFA has confirmed its participation in the regional groundwater review announced last month by Manitoba Water Stewardship.

- **Community Liaison:** MFA will establish a Community Liaison Committee to provide local residents with updates on the project as well as provide a venue to raise issues related to the expansion project. Additional information on the composition and structure of the committee will be outlined in the near future. In addition, MFA will also establish a toll-free telephone line for rural residents to report groundwater concerns.

“Throughout our ongoing public consultation program, we have incorporated changes that will enhance this project,” said Gilroy. “Today’s announcement builds on our previous groundwater protection initiatives by incorporating suggestions we have heard from the public through the Clean Environment Commission (CEC) public hearings.”

MFA also confirmed that a preliminary review of a proposal to establish a floodway liner by the rural municipalities of Springfield, St. Clements and East St. Paul has concluded that it would not be practical or cost-effective and would potentially be detrimental to groundwater protection. “There are a number of practical problems with installing a floodway liner, most notably the difficulty of maintaining the liner in place due to the pressurized nature of the aquifer.” said Doug McNeil, MFA Vice-President of Hydraulics. “Furthermore, construction of a liner would require deeper excavation into the channel, thereby posing a greater risk to the groundwater.”

“The floodway expansion project is as much an environmental protection project as it is a flood protection project,” said Gilroy. “As we plan for the start of construction, we will be outlining more details of our plan in the upcoming weeks and months. We are pleased to incorporate additional measures that will ensure the long term sustainability of Manitoba groundwater resources and support the ongoing development of rural economies around the City of Winnipeg.”

Once completed, the Red River Floodway expansion project will protect 450,000 residents, 140,000 homes, over 8,000 businesses and prevent over \$12 billion in flood losses in the event of a 1-in-700 year flood. Canada and Manitoba have confirmed their commitment to complete the expanded floodway. Canada has identified the project as a national infrastructure priority. Pending environmental approval, construction of the expanded floodway is scheduled to begin this summer and is anticipated to be completed in 2009.