



Release

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For Immediate Release

FLOODWAY AUTHORITY CONFIRMS **NO DEEPENING OF FLOODWAY CHANNEL**

Additional Measures Incorporated to Protect Groundwater and Prevent Erosion: Gilroy

Winnipeg, Manitoba – The Manitoba Floodway Authority (MFA) has confirmed that to further protect local groundwater supplies, no deepening of the floodway channel will be required within the length of the 48 km long channel as part of the Red River Floodway expansion project.

“Environmental protection and moving the floodway project ahead in a sustainable manner is a priority for the Government of Canada,” said Reg Alcock, President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, “We are very pleased that MFA has examined this issue and found an alternative that will further help to protect groundwater resources for the long-term. Today’s announcement is a positive development for all Manitobans. We look forward to hearing more details of this improvement during the public hearings.”

“Today’s announcement is another major step to protect groundwater in the vicinity of the floodway,” said Steve Ashton, Minister of Water Stewardship. “Throughout the public consultation process, Manitobans, especially residents within the Birds Hill area, wanted to make sure that measures are incorporated to protect groundwater. By eliminating the need to deepen the channel, the authority has incorporated another precautionary measure to protect groundwater.”

In May, MFA announced that initial plans to deepen the floodway channel from up to two metres (six feet) had been scaled back to no more than 0.6 metres (two feet). As a result of today’s announcement, no deepening will be required within the floodway channel. Instead, MFA will focus its efforts on widening the channel. Ernie Gilroy, CEO of MFA, said that MFA will maintain the same design capacity as initially provided with the deepening of the floodway by up to 2 metres (six feet). As a result, the capacity of the floodway will be increased from 1,700 cubic metres (60,000 cubic feet) of water per second to 4,000 cubic metres (140,000 cubic feet) per second.

“Last spring, we announced that our initial plans to deepen the floodway channel have been scaled back from six feet to no more than two feet in any location in order to protect groundwater supplies,” said Gilroy. “Since that time we have been working with our environmental consultants and engineers to further reduce the deepening that would be required. We are pleased to announce that the most recent engineering and environmental information confirms that there will be no need to deepen the channel to increase its capacity.”

Gilroy also announced that in order to prevent erosion and further deepening within the floodway's low flow channel, additional measures will be undertaken, including armoring and regrading, to fill in erosion spots and re-establish the grade of the low flow channel. "These measures are designed to protect against erosion, facilitate the movement of water through the low flow channel, and improve fish movement through the floodway during periods of the low water."

Gilroy said that today's announcements complement other initiatives undertaken to address public concerns and protect the environment including the establishment of an \$11 million environmental mitigation fund to address any unanticipated, isolated environmental effects associated with the project. "Reducing the need for deepening for the project and establishing an environmental mitigation fund are measures designed to complement one another and reduce any risks to groundwater," said Gilroy.

As indicated in the project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) filed in August, 2004, temporary dewatering is expected to occur during bridge construction at certain locations, however, the effects would be short-term, reversible, limited to a local area, lasting only during construction, and are not considered to be significant. Limited excavation, not related to the channel work, will be required at the location of the new state-of-the-art Outlet Control Structure where the floodway re-enters the Red River near Lockport. The excavation will be no deeper than presently exists at the structure.

In accordance with the *Canada-Manitoba Agreement on Environmental Assessment Co-operation*, Canada and Manitoba have agreed, that both governments participate in a co-operative review of the floodway expansion project, including public hearings facilitated by the Clean Environment Commission (CEC).

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 at an estimated cost of \$665 million. Canada has recognized floodway expansion as a national infrastructure priority.

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Contact: Ronuk Modha, Manitoba Floodway Authority
(204) 945-4178, (204) 945-4900, or 1-866-356-6355

Naline Rampersad, Manitoba Cabinet Communications
(204) 945-1494

Lise Jolicoeur, Press Secretary to the Honourable Reg Alcock,
Government of Canada
(613) 944-6512, (613) 282-9744