

Wetland Restoration Conservation Initiative for The Red River of The North Watershed of Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota

FY 2011 Progress Report

October 7, 2011

The Wetland Restoration Conservation Initiative for the Red River Basin of MN, ND and SD was formulated by NRCS with input from many partners to utilize the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) to address concerns related to the loss of wildlife habitat, water quality and water quantity concerns.

The Red River of the North forms the boundary between Minnesota and North/South Dakota. It flows north into Manitoba and eventually empties into Lake Winnipeg.

The Chief of NRCS approved this project and allocated \$10 million of WRP financial assistance funds to this effort for FY 11.

Assistance has been provided from many partners including local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Watershed Districts, Water Boards and the newly established Red River Retention Authority (RRRA).

The RRRA has served as a facilitating body for this project and other efforts in the Red River Basin (RRB) focused on natural resource concerns and intergovernmental cooperation. In this role the RRRA has assisted NRCS with project guidelines, priorities and outreach.

One particular focus that was proposed by the RRRA and accepted by NRCS was the concept of the location of an easement and the relative contributions to Red River peak flows. A complex modeling project was completed by the Red River Basin Board which delineated very high to very low areas. The concept is that if efforts are focused in areas that have the highest potential to reduce peak flows to the Red River while providing wildlife habitat the biggest bang for the dollar spent can be realized.

NRCS utilized this data to screen all WRP applications in the Red River in FY11 covered by this project.

In FY11 applications were brought forward by partners as well as through the NRCS normal WRP application process. The partner applications maximized flood mitigation benefits while providing wildlife benefits. Regular WRP applications have been funded that will restore sites back to their pre-altered condition. Partners are currently working to review all of the funded applications to determine if design changes can be made to increase flood mitigation benefits.

FY11 WRP Obligation Summary

	# Funded	Acres	Dollars
MN	28	5,476	\$5,015,793
ND	10	1,756	\$2,733,000
SD	7	584	\$1,000,854
Total	45	7,816	\$7,849,647

All priority applications were funded in FY11 with more acres being offered than was expected but at a lower cost than was estimated when the project proposal was first formulated.

FY12 Efforts:

Continued cooperation and coordination will be occurring between the RRRRA, NRCS and all partners.

NRCS is working with partners to investigate the potential for increased flood mitigation benefits on all 45 funded FY11 applications.

Partners are currently assessing potential projects and will be working with landowners to submit applications in FY12.

NRCS is formulating a more uniform scoring and ranking system to be used across the Red River Basin.

Payment rates are being assessed to minimize differences across state boundaries.