

**LOWER GAR OUTLET – JOINT MEETING
DICKINSON COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS & MILFORD CITY COUNCIL
DICKINSON COUNTY EXPO CENTER (COMMUNITY ROOM)
APRIL 6, 2009 7:00 P.M.**

I. Introductions

Ted Kourousis, Executive Director, NWIPDC (meeting facilitator)
Steve Hallgren, Planning Director, NWIPDC (meeting secretary)
Dickinson County Board of Supervisors
Bryan Read, Milford City Administrator
Milford City Council

II. Overview of Meeting process – Ted K.

Please come to the microphone and state name and city before asking questions. Questions should be directed toward either the Supervisors or City Council and no longer than 2 minutes.

III. Discussions of the Lower Gar Project or Proposal

Wayne Northy, DCBOS, discussed the 1993, 1997 and 1999 Army Corps of Engineers reports. Specifically, a section where it indicates that the governing authorities need to address the flow at the Lower Gar Outlet.

- January 2, 2009 in a letter from Rich Leopold (IDNR) which encourages Dickinson County to pursue 1 of 3 options for the Lower Gar Outlet.
- The option being pursued by the County involves the installation of 3 new box culverts at Lower Gar.
- Wayne stated he has spoken with many of the residents at Lower Gar and has heard their concerns
- 2 weeks ago, the Board of Supervisors passed a motion to hire Jacobsen-Westergard regarding the proposal for 3 new box culverts at Lower Gar by June 16th.

Mardi Allen, DCBOS, reinforced the '97 and '99 Corps of Engineers studies that Wayne mentioned.

- The intent of the Board of Supervisors is not to lower the level of Lower Gar Lake or drain East Lake
- Mardi quoted P. 58 of the Army Corps study
- Mardi indicated the county will lose \$100,000 in financial support for this project if nothing is done this year.
- Mardi stated the reason we are here tonight is because of the threat of flooding to the lakes. Need to do something before another flooding disaster hits the lakes
- Mardi indicated this issue has been going on since a proposal on April 27, 2007 which indicated 4 culverts under the road at the Lower Gar Outlet.

Paul Johnson, DCBOS

- Asked for show of hands representing Lower Gar area (75% +)
- Asked for show of hands representing West Lake (10-15%)
- Asked for show of hands representing East Lake (10-15%)
- Paul stated the Army Corps offered 3 options; culverts (1), bridge (2) or remove road (3). There is actually a 4th option which the Corps does not recommend (do nothing).
- The Board is recommending the culverts (option #1)

Mardi Allen, DCBOS, asked the Milford City Council why they are set against doing anything to the Lower Gar outlet?

Don Lamb, City of Milford, stated he is represented by people living in the Lower Gar area and he is looking out for their interest. Don stated the project will lower the lake level and will cause algae bloom problems.

Wayne Northy, DCBOS, stated he has heard the concerns about lowering the lake level. Wayne suggested there is a middle ground or compromise where excess flow can be released, but not lower the water level of the lake. Wayne proposed to install the new culverts at the existing level of the dam or even 6" above the dam level. This concept has not been run by the IDNR yet.

A Councilman from Milford asked the question why is this being done now? He hears conflicting information. He stated the reason for this project should not be the \$100,000 in grant money.

Mardi Allen, DCBOS, stated the \$100,000 is a fact. She doesn't believe there is conflicting information between studies. Her response to algae blooms is that there are algae problems even during high water events. Algae blooms are not a low water problem. There are other sources causing algae problems. We need to start looking at ourselves on the lake for creating algae blooms.

Don Lamb, City of Milford, responded again to Mardi's comments about algae blooms.

Wayne Northy, DCBOS, talked about the culvert proposal; this project addresses flooding concerns of Lower Gar, as well as West Lake and the upper chain of Okoboji. Everyone is affected.

A Councilman from Milford (Mike) stated the water flow if a bridge goes in is 1,460 c.f. He indicated the study shows the flow will be 1,400 c.f. with a culvert; only a 60 c.f. difference.

Paul Johnson, DCBOS, asked the councilman from Milford if he knew what the efficiency rating of the culvert was? Paul stated that he was an engineer and the box culvert has an efficiency of 70% at most (suggesting the water flow would be less than the 1,400 c.f. suggested earlier).

Wayne Northy, DCBOS, in response to the Milford Councilman's comments, stated the Board of Supervisors backed away building a bridge because Milford didn't want the bridge. Do culverts have merit?

The Councilman from Milford (Mike) indicated that he feels there is a happy medium somewhere, but thinks the 3 new box culverts are not a good option.

Mike Hawkins, IDNR, Biologist, provided an overview of what IDNR is doing

- Lower Gar Lake is impaired for turbidity. The IDNR has a proposal for reducing the impairment.
- IDNR is 1 year into a diagnostic feasibility study by ISU for Lower Gar Lake (sources for impairment)
- Mike also discussed the Army Corps reports; suggested their intent is to reduce the duration of potential future flooding events
- Sustained high water levels are also not good for the biology of natural lakes
- The lakes are not man-made and not intended to be flood control lakes

Paul Johnson, DCBOS, asked Mike what are the consequences of doing nothing?

Mike Hawkins, IDNR, the response was “higher risk of flooding”

Mardi Allen, DCBOS, stated the fact that 1 Milford Councilman is willing to talk about a compromise project is a good sign

Wayne Northy, DCBOS, stated that it is up to the Board of Supervisors to complete 1 of 4 proposals. The proposal of 4 box culverts (3 new plus the 1 existing) provides the least impact as a project.

Don Lamb, City of Milford, asked Mike H. what is substantial high water?

Mike Hawkins, IDNR, responded by stating the watershed area for the Iowa Great Lakes is 90,000 acres. Historically, only about 12,000 acres drained into the lakes, due to natural absorption via marshes, wetlands, and other natural drainage. With current development and a built environment surrounding the lakes, there are many more thousands of acres of the Great Lakes watershed being drained into the lakes today than in years past. This has led to the increase in potential for future flood events.

IV. Questions/Comments from the Audience

Jim Bloom, East Lake (a licensed Land Surveyor) indicated he has also read the Army Corps reports. He said the Corps is recommending increase flow be provided at the Lower Gar Outlet. The Army Corps outlined 4 options. Personally, he likes the lake level when it is higher, about 1’ over the dam is a good height. Jim’s proposal for the Board and Milford to consider is to put in the new culverts at least 6” to 1’ over the dam height. In his opinion, he thinks that only 2 new culverts are needed, not 3.

Dan Eckert, Dickinson County Engineer, responded to a question from Smith Schuneman about the efficiency of the culverts. Dan indicated the efficiency of the culverts would be 70-80% due to surface friction of the culverts. Dan provided some history about the project. He said the 1984 culvert was working, until the 1993 flooding, then the emergency culverts went in.

Smith Schuneman asked the question was there ever a bridge at this location instead of culverts?

Dan Eckert said in 1913 a wooden bridge was constructed for \$500. During the 1950’s was when the first 24” culver was put in place.

Paul Johnson, DCBOS, asked if the unimpeded flow of water from the Lower Gar Outlet was the best choice for drainage of the lakes? (a bridge)

Dan Eckert responded by stating that a bridge would be the best choice.

Bill Jackson asked; how much is this project going to cost? \$100,000 is grant, but what is the total cost?

Dan Eckert stated the total project cost is estimated to be \$257,000. The cost to the Dickinson County taxpayer would be \$157,000 after the \$100,000 grant.

Bill Riensbach, Lower Gar, asked how soon will the lake level drop; June 15 instead of July 15?

Dean Riser, South of Milford, stated that he thinks the problem of flooding in the lakes is the bottleneck opening between Minnewashta and Lower Gar lakes

Marv, Lower Gar, asked how long is the new bridge at Sawmill Park?

Ron Walker, Arnolds Park City Administrator, responded by stating the opening of the bridge at the water is the same width as the existing bridge, but the sidewalls are flared so when the water level rises, there is a larger opening for a greater capacity of water to flow through.

Jim Keck, Wahpeton, offered comments on climatology events and stated that it is not if but how soon we will have another 1993 rain event.

Bill Riensbach, Lower Gar, asked where are the water quality studies? Why proceed when the water quality study is not completed yet? What is the effect of this project on the lake's water quality?

Bud, City of Milford, asked at one time what is the difference in the volume of water going under the Sawmill Bridge compared to the amount of water expelled at the Lower Gar outlet. He has not received an answer to this question yet.

Steve Anderson, Milford, mentioned that currently Big Spirit Lake has protection from a 500 year flood event and the Okoboji lakes have protection from a 175 year flood event. He asked the audience to look at the bigger picture and what all of us can do to protect the lakes and water quality. He stated that he is against any of the Corps of Engineers endorsed recommendations. He stated that we need to be looking at shoreline protection and protecting the lakes from excess storm water runoff.

Pam Jordan, DCBOS, stated that water quality and flood protection are two separate issues. Read a letter from John Mills, Clean Water Alliance, in his absence. The letter stated that there would be no change in water quality from the installation of the culverts. The letter also stated that water quality issues are due to internal load of phosphorus. The culverts are addressing a water elevation issue only (in his opinion).

Ron Knutson, 3 Lakes Association, stated that he has been working for years to come up with a plan to dredge Lower Gar Lake but can't get IDNR on board.

Mike Hawkins, IDNR, stated that there is currently a 2 year study going on in which we are in year 1 of the study. Mike said it is important to separate the issues of water quality and water levels. Both are important but separate.

Victoria Miller, Lower Gar, offered comments about placing the culverts in as a solution

Sue Brinkman, Lower Gar, agreed that both parties need a compromise for higher elevation of culverts, when installed.

Mark Kenseth, Lower Gar, asked what is the amount of wetlands surrounding the lakes as compared to 1993? Are there more today?

Mike Hawkins, IDNR, stated that there are more acres of wetlands around the lakes today than in 1993, but he doesn't have a number.

Wayne Northy, DCBOS, stated that wetlands help retain and drain water during small rain events (1-2") but it is the large rain events (8-10") where then culverts will help alleviate flooding concerns.

Bob Sewell, Lower Gar, asked the Supervisors that whatever project goes in, will the county clean out what's below the dam?

Dan Eckert, Dickinson County Engineer, stated the Board took action back in 2007 to clean out 1,250 feet below the dam. IDNR gave permission to remove some existing vegetation by the existing dam.

Marilee Kenseth, Lower Gar, asked why go ahead with the contract with Jacobsen-Westergard when the county doesn't have final plans or even concepts yet? Obviously, J-W isn't doing this work for free.

Wayne Northy, DCBOS, stated that the project work with Jacobsen-Westergard is on hold until the Supervisors get a resolution

Lori Marie, Lower Gar, stated that if the culverts can be put in so that the Lower Gar residents can maintain 6'-8' water levels in front of their places so that they can enjoy all of the lakes like the other lake residents, she would be in favor of the project.

Steve Schwaller, KUOO Radio, asked the Board and Milford City Council, where do we go from here?

A Councilman from Milford asked the audience by a show of hands how many favored the idea of raised culverts above the dam level. Yes – 75%+ No – less than 10%

Jane Shuttelworth wanted clarification about how the water would drain from the lakes if the culverts were placed above the level of the dam.

Don Lamb, City of Milford, stated that a couple of years ago Dan Eckert indicated the installation of culverts would drain the lake 30 days sooner to the top of the dam.

Dan Eckert said he didn't recall saying that.

Mardi Allen, DCBOS, stated that in response to Steve Schwaller's question about where we go from here; the answer is we need to sit down with the Milford City Council.

Ted Kourousis, meeting facilitator, indicated that the Board of Supervisors and Milford City Council may sit down again at a future meeting, but it would be beneficial to have representatives from the Iowa DNR and the Army Corps of Engineers present to answer specific questions.

One last comment from an audience members suggested that both parties should stop with the unofficial offers or options between 1 or 2 members of either side. The entire Board and entire City Council need to sit down together.

Dave, DCBOS, asked the audience how many people would be interested in attending another meeting in a couple of weeks if the county could get the IDNR and Army Corps of Engineers to show up. Nearly everyone responded yes.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.