



Red River Basin Watershed Districts

# Project Team Handbook

Project Team Member Notebook



This information has been compiled for the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group (RRBFDRWG) to provide support for the Project Team process.

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**Acknowledgements: Project Team Handbook Acknowledgements** (see back cover)



# Red River Basin Project Team Handbook

## SECTION 1.

# Project Team Guidelines

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This section of the Project Team Handbook is designed to provide you with the information needed to give you a background on the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group agreement which created project teams. It also contains specific recommendations for the various roles needed to implement the plan.

- ⇒ 1A – When Do We Need a Project Team?...definition of “project” and when to use Project Teams for this process.
  - ⇒ 1B - Project Team Overview...brief description of Project Teams and their purpose.
  - ⇒ 1C - Roles and Responsibilities...highlights the roles and responsibilities of the various partners in this work.
  - ⇒ 1D – Team Membership...guidelines for selecting Project Team members and an overview of what is expected of them
  - ⇒ 1E – Making Decisions...guidelines for decision-making and the use of consensus in Project Team processes.
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## SECTION 1A. PROJECT TEAM GUIDELINES

# When Do We Need a Project Team?

### **DEFINITION OF PROJECT FOR THE PROJECT TEAM PROCESS**

The question has been frequently asked: What “projects” are supposed to go through this Project Team process?

Following the direction given in the 1998 mediated Agreement of the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group [RRBFDRWG], the process that is outlined in this handbook is intended to apply to “projects that address substantial water management or resource management problems, and/or that would benefit from early and on-going stakeholder communication and collaboration.” [refer to Section 6A.18]

Use of Project Teams is voluntary. It is up to the project proposer<sup>1</sup> to determine whether or not they want to employ this process and follow the guidelines and principles established by the RRBFDRWG. Projects that have been developed using this process may have a better chance of receiving funding and other types of support.

Project proposers can use the Project Team process<sup>2</sup> for projects that are large, complex, or have the potential to be controversial. But even small, relatively minor projects can be advanced through this process if the project proposer believes that the project could be expedited or would benefit from the group decision-making and regulatory coordination inherent in this process.

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<sup>1</sup> In most situations the project proposer will be a watershed district. However, other government entities (i.e. state or federal agencies, local governmental units, etc.) could be a project proposer.

<sup>2</sup> The Project Team process described in this handbook is written from the perspective of a watershed district serving as the project proposer. If the proposer is other than a watershed district they would follow the general principles and processes outlined in this handbook.

## SECTION 1B. PROJECT TEAM GUIDELINES

# Project Team Overview

The concept of a “Project Team” was created in the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group agreement, December 9, 1998 [see PT Handbook Section 6A for a copy of the agreement]. This agreement outlines a project development process for reducing flood damage and improving natural resources in the Minnesota portion of the Red River Basin. The agreement provided for a new collaborative approach to planning and implementing both flood damage reduction and natural resource protection and enhancement projects, which involves early consultation and collaboration among all stakeholders and a cooperative approach to permitting projects.

A Project Team consists of appropriate stakeholders (*watershed districts, state, federal and tribal agency personnel, local government officials, affected landowners and interested citizen group representatives*), including at least one designated contact person from each agency. Members of the Project Team are appointed by the watershed board of managers. [refer to Section 1D for detailed information on “team membership”]

Project Teams are responsible for ***working with a project from development of a project concept through to project construction and monitoring.*** [refer to Section 1C for detailed information on “roles and responsibilities”]

# Roles and Responsibilities

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF WATERSHED DISTRICTS

The watershed districts are responsible for utilizing Project Teams in the development of projects within their watershed district. Specifically, they are responsible for:

1. Identifying areas of concern where the Project Team process should be utilized,
2. Inviting stakeholders to serve as delegates (and alternates) on the Project Team and to endorse their appointment,
3. Coordinating meeting dates and locations for the Project Team,
4. Arranging for a meeting facilitator,
5. Keeping a record of team activities, and
6. Communication (*i.e. mailings*) with team members

There are two options for facilitation of Project Team meetings:

1. Watershed district provides a facilitator
2. Project Team selects a facilitator from among their membership

## ROLE OF WATERSHED BOARD OF MANAGERS

The Watershed “**Board of Managers**” is the decision-making body in this process. They are responsible for setting direction, focusing and supporting the work of the Project Team, considering alternatives recommended by the Project Team, and taking action to move projects forward.

## ROLE OF WATERSHED ADMINISTRATORS

The Watershed “**Administrator**” is a resource person to the team and is generally responsible for managing, but not necessarily leading the Project Team process.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PROJECT TEAM

The “**Project Team**” is advisory to the watershed board. The team is responsible for working with a project from early concept and alternative evaluation through to construction and follow-up monitoring. The work of the team is to:

- 1) identify problems and opportunities for flood damage reduction and natural resource enhancement in areas identified by the watershed district,
- 2) formulate and evaluate alternative solutions that will address the problems and opportunities,
- 3) recommend preferred alternative solutions to the watershed district,
- 4) identify and clarify regulatory requirements and permitting,

- 5) review and comment on key project documents, and
- 6) assist in formulation of project operating and monitoring plans where required.

Project teams are to operate in a cooperative, joint problem-solving mode using a consensus-based process [refer to Section 1E for detailed information on “consensus”].

### **ROLE OF THE PROJECT TEAM FACILITATOR**

The “***Project Team Facilitator***” is responsible for guiding the project team within the framework identified in the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group mediated agreement [refer to Section 6A for a copy of the agreement]. The facilitator is selected by the watershed district to guide the Project Team through the consensus-based process ~ which includes observing group dynamics, monitoring the ground rules, and asking questions (*without participating in development of alternatives*) to clarify issues. The facilitator is not a decision-maker in the process, but rather a neutral individual who is skilled in leading group decision-making [refer to Section 5 for detailed information on “facilitation”].

## SECTION 1D. PROJECT TEAM GUIDELINES

# Team Membership

Project Team membership is at the invitation of the watershed district. When identifying members, watershed districts should consider broad-based representation from all stakeholder groups with an interest in the project area.

### **GUIDELINES FOR PROJECT TEAM SELECTION**

[adopted by the RRBFDROWG, 10-31-00]

The Project Team membership invitation should be extended by the watershed district to the following entities, which have a responsibility to determine the specific individuals to serve as representatives and alternates.

- City Councils
- County Boards of Commissioners
- Conservation Organizations
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts [SWCD]
- Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources [BWSR]
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources [MNDNR]
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency [MPCA]
- Township Officers
- Tribal Representatives
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers [USACE]
- USDA Farm Service Agency [FSA]
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service [USFWS]
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service [NRCS]

Membership may also include:

- Other interested persons (i.e. landowners, citizen group representatives and/or local sporting groups) as the watershed district determines to be appropriate to achieve broad-based representation relative to the issue.
- A delegate (and alternate) from the “board of managers” to serve as a member of the team to facilitate communication between the Project Team and the board.

### **EXPECTATIONS OF PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS**

1. Project Team members must commit to regular attendance at team meetings. Project Team membership should be reviewed annually by the watershed district and members reappointed...or replaced if they haven't been participating in the process. Specifically,
  - If a delegate is absent from two consecutive meetings of the Project Team and has not been represented by the designated alternate, conveyance of that organization's official position on issues shall be forfeited until a new delegate is named.
  - Replacement of a delegate and/or alternate no longer eligible or able to participate will be allowed.
2. Members must also agree to deliberate issues in a constructive, productive manner.

3. Team members are expected to commit resources (*personal skills and expertise, data and analysis, and/or project funds*) to the work of the team.
4. Members should remind themselves that their role on the Project Team is advisory to the watershed board of managers.
5. Throughout the process and specifically at all significant project milestones, Project Team members are expected to indicate any “red flags” (*including regulatory/permitting, political, engineering, and other local issues*).
6. Individual members (*delegates and alternates*) of the Project Team are expected to:
  - follow the “Project Team Guiding Principles,” as adopted by the watershed district,
  - represent the views and programs of the agency and/or interest group they represent on the Project Team,
  - commit time and effort to identifying alternative solutions to problem areas (*as identified by the watershed district*),
  - take responsibility for follow-through with responsibilities identified at meetings, and
  - come prepared for the meeting by reviewing previous meeting notes and additional background materials

# Making Decisions

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PROJECT PROPOSER

The project proposer<sup>1</sup> is responsible for making the final decisions around each project. This is accomplished via a voting process by the watershed board of managers based on the information and/or recommendations provided to them from the Project Team.

The project proposer is also responsible for assuring that Project Team recommendations have been thoroughly studied and have taken into account the interests of all stakeholders. This is accomplished by using a consensus-based process to develop an agreement that both identifies and explores diverse interests in the specific project.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS

Stakeholders participating in Project Teams will use a consensus decision-making process which is key to the success of Project Team efforts. It is important that the Project Team understand that they are advisory to the project proposer and that the process seeks to develop recommendations via consensus among the stakeholders to present to the project proposer.

## USING CONSENSUS<sup>2</sup> IN THE PROJECT TEAM PROCESS

Consensus is built by identifying and exploring all stakeholder interests and assembling a recommendation that satisfies those interests to the greatest extent possible. The process of building consensus involves the development of alternatives, the assessment of the impacts of those alternatives, and the selection of a preferred alternative or proposed action. ***Consensus has been reached when all Project Team members can live with and will not publicly oppose the recommendation.***

## INABILITY TO REACH CONSENSUS

If there are issues the Project Team cannot resolve through consensus decision-making despite good faith efforts of the members, the Project Team will be responsible for summarizing each issue and fully documenting the remaining differences, including the specific concerns of individual members, to present to the project proposer.

[Refer to Section 2A for information on “using a consensus-building process“, and Section 5 for more detailed information “decision-making” and “facilitating a consensus-building process”]

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<sup>1</sup> In most situations the project proposer will be a watershed district. However, other government entities (i.e. state or federal agencies, local governmental units, etc.) could be a project proposer.

<sup>2</sup> Consensus comes from the Latin word “consentire,” which means “to agree”. Perfect consensus is unanimity: everyone involved agrees with the decision. Unanimity may be impossible to achieve, so there are degrees of consensus. For the purpose of the functioning of project teams, consensus is generally understood to mean that everyone involved has had a chance to participate, understands the decision, and can live with the outcome, even if it is not their first preference. Those members who do not object to a recommendation under this definition of consensus but do not support the decision, at least agree not to oppose it publicly.