

North Branch Elkhart River Flood Committee Minutes  
for the meeting of Nov. 11, 2010

Meeting session called to order 7:00 PM in the Ligonier police training room.

Present: Scott Zeigler, Dave Abbott, John Richardson, Rick Smigielski, Gene Lightner

1. Item one is to develop a scope of services to better define what the committee wants in the unsteady modeling. Rick Smigielski presented the committee with an outline to approach this and discussion followed about the scope of the study being limited by the dollars available and conversely the dollar cost being determined by the scope. Dave Abbott added that the engineering firm selected should not be given too structured of a scope and be boxed in but rather the firm should be able to make recommendations and suggestions regarding the study as it moves forward. The conclusion was flexibility will need to be built into our scope of services to accommodate this. Rick's outline follows these minutes.

All present agreed to go forward with requests for a statement of qualifications which will be sent to six or seven engineering firms. Rick offered to draft this. From this group three firms will be selected to prepare a scope of services.

Defining the general study area was discussed, especially the potential of including the impact of upstream work on points downstream. Rick expressed an interest in including Ligonier. That would likely necessitate including the South Branch Elkhart in the scope of the study and open the opportunity to look at specific areas in that watershed. Gene Lightner expressed an interest in including the Elkhart River watershed from where the river enters the St. Joe at the city of Elkhart to its upstream limits. Discussion focused on the trade off between gaining more support by including more of the watershed and the unknown additional costs involved.

Regarding sources of funds for the modeling, Dave Abbott reported that Region 3-A could be a source for grant writing assistance but that

it was Region 3-A's opinion that neither OCRA nor DR-2 monies could be used for the modeling.

2. Flood prone property buyout program. Gene Lightner said the first steps in this process include identifying affected owners, making contact with them to see what interest they have in participating, and having interested owners sign a "statement of voluntary participation". A copy of that statement was provided to committee members. A short discussion followed of who is best suited to pursue these grants. The St. Joe River Basin Commission is willing to help if our committee asks and Rodney Renkenberger, MRBC, is willing to support us with his experience and knowledge if we request it.
3. Water gauging in the watershed. Scott Zeigler has had measurements of river heights taken from a number of bridges throughout the watershed. This usually is being done on a weekly basis. We discussed the possibility of expanding this work to include sites in the other three counties in the watershed. The Noble County surveyor's office is currently taking measurements at bridge sites from the North Branch at Co Rd 1200 N (LaGrange County line), the Sylvan Lake dam(Middle Branch), the South Branch, and points along the main river channel to the Goshen dam pond.  
The value of additional river gauging was discussed. Mike Shellman in previous comments said he was particularly interested in the Middle Branch especially back to Kendallville. The committee also expressed an interest in obtaining accurate rainfall data in the watershed. Kendallville sewage treatment plant now has accurate equipment for rain measurement. We need to determine who else in the watershed has collected accurate data, who else could be added to a data collection base, what costs are involved, and how this data can be accumulated for our use.
4. The need for a watershed coordinator was also discussed along with possible sources of funds. John Richardson and Gene Lightner will pursue contact with the Great Lakes Basin Commission.
5. Possible sites for reestablishing water storage in the watershed was discussed. There are past LARE studies locating some sites and Scott Zeigler also presented some possibilities.
6. Adjournment 8:40 PM  
Next meeting scheduled for Thursday, 7:00 PM, Dec. 16, 2010, Ligonier police training room.

