

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS

PROPONENT: Aalbers Farms Ltd.
PROPOSAL NAME: Aalbers Irrigation Project
CLASS OF DEVELOPMENT: Two
TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT: Water Development and Control
CLIENT FILE NO.: 5175.00

OVERVIEW:

The Proposal was received on September 29, 2005. It was dated September 29, 2005. The advertisement of the Proposal was as follows:

“A Proposal has been filed by Aalbers Farms Ltd. to irrigate up to 158 ha (390 acres) annually. The project is located in the vicinity of Katrime, and would have a landbase of 474 ha (1170 acres). Approximately 105 dam³ (85 acre-feet) of water would be applied annually, using water obtained from West Squirrel Creek from a proposed pumpsite in NW 8-13-10W. Water would be pumped from the creek in the spring, and stored in a reservoir in NW 10-13-10W.”

The Proposal was advertised in the Central Plains Herald Leader (Portage la Prairie) on Saturday, March 4, 2006. It was placed in the Main, Winnipeg Public Library, Eco-Network and Portage la Prairie City Library public registries. It was distributed to TAC members on February 27, 2006. The closing date for comments from members of the public and TAC members was April 4, 2006.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

Whitemud Water Conservation District Neither the RM of North Norfolk or Whitemud Watershed Conservation District are referenced regarding need for approvals in the installation of pipelines. Field numbers 9 and 10 (S ½ 32-12-10W) within the proposal are located in the RM of North Norfolk. To deliver water to these parcels District infrastructure would have to be crossed and potentially laid or buried in within WWCD right-of-way. Based on the information provided the following resolution was passed:

That the Board approve, in principle, the project based on off-channel water storage component that is consistent with WCCD policy. An agreement between the proponent and District will be required to cross and/or bury and/or temporarily install

waterline and pumping station within District right-of-way for Squirrel Creek, Bindon Drain and Hodge Drain.

If further information is required or maps indicating drain responsibility for this area are needed, please contact the District office.

Disposition:

These comments were provided to the applicant for information.

Rural Municipality of Westbourne Council wishes to advise that if Mr. Aalber's intent is to place pipe under or across a road allowance he will require an easement with the municipality. Council also felt that the Whitemud Water Conservation District should have received a copy of this proposal, as they are an authority for water projects in this area.

Disposition:

The applicant will be advised of the need for an easement for pipeline crossings on municipal road allowances. WWCD did receive a copy of the proposal, as indicated by the comments above. WWCD copied the RM in its comments on the proposal, but the comments were not received by the RM before the RM's letter was sent.

COMMENTS FROM THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Manitoba Conservation – Sustainable Resource Management Branch No concerns.

Manitoba Conservation – Red River Region Environmental Operations No concerns.

Manitoba Water Stewardship – Planning and Coordination

1. Aalbers Farms have applied for a Water Rights License. This license will not be issued until an Environment Act License has been issued.
2. Due to the risk of increased runoff following irrigation, nutrient management should include phosphorus in addition to nitrogen. Reducing the application of unnecessary phosphorus is crucial as excessive phosphorus can build up in the soil and potentially runoff into surface water. Manitoba is proposing to include phosphorus as a nutrient by which fertilizer application through manure, inorganic fertilizer, or municipal waste sludge to agricultural lands may be limited. The Province is committed to reducing nutrient contributions to Lake Winnipeg to 1970s levels. The implication for Aalbers Farms Ltd. is that fertigation will be required to meet phosphorus requirements. All of the identified land included in the fertigation rotation should have a soil-test phosphorus concentration of less than 60 ppm (Olsen sodium bicarbonate extraction). If soil tests reveal that phosphorus concentrations are above

60 ppm, then fertilizer should be applied based on residual soil-test phosphorus concentrations. Fertilizer application should not occur on lands with a soil-test phosphorus concentration of greater than 180 ppm.

3. It is mentioned that there are eight well records. It is not clear whether any baseline water quality data was collected. Is any water being taken for drinking water purposes downstream of the proposed intake?
4. Section 5.1 suggested that no groundwater monitoring will be provided although the section elaborates what monitoring program can achieve. It is unclear how the impacts of the proposed irrigation on groundwater will be measured. Monitoring of nitrates in groundwater is very important with respect to drinking water.
5. No descriptions were found regarding pesticides.
6. It is our understanding that Squirrel Creek/West Squirrel Creek is fully allocated for summer withdrawals which has led to the request to withdraw during peak flows. Our concern with withdrawals during this period is the potential to entrain/impinge fish eggs and larvae. While the proposal indicates adherence to the end of pipe screen requirements for withdrawals prior to July 1st – these requirements are for the protection of, in this case, anguilliform fish 25mm and larger. We recommend that no withdrawals be allowed during this spring spawning window of April 1 – June 30th unless entrainment / impingement can be mitigated. Generally, while provision for withdrawals to off site reservoirs have been approved in the past, it is our understanding that the locations have been in the headwaters where fisheries concerns have been minimal to non-existent.
7. The proposal indicates adherence to minimum instream flow values provided by Water Stewardship. To our knowledge this value has not been calculated. While the withdrawals, even with the one other irrigation proposal and existing licence requirements included, appears to be minimal there is still three other irrigation requests either on hold or pending and these water requirements have not been included in this calculation. There needs to be some assurance in the allocation, until a MIF is determined, that this and the accumulative impact of these withdrawals does not infringe on the hydrological cycle (volume, duration), the flows needed to maintain channel forming flows (2 of 3 maximum instantaneous flows) as well as overbank flooding and downstream water availability. Given present and future demands it would appear logical to request the installation of a hydrological monitoring station(s) in locations where these intakes are proposed to be situated.
8. Regarding the proposed tile drainage – other than indicating the intent to install there is no discussion on effects or mitigation. There needs to be more detail on this activity prior to approval.

Disposition:

Item 1 is for information. Items 2, 6 and 7 can be addressed through licence conditions. Items 3 – 5 and 8 require additional information.

Historic Resources Branch No concerns.

Mines Branch No concerns.

Transportation and Government Services – Construction and Maintenance Division

The Department has no major concerns but wishes to note the following:

1. Water line agreements are required for any buried waterline crossing or placed within our right-of-way;
2. If affected, all ditches, slopes, and disturbed areas within our right-of-way on PR 350 be restored to an acceptable condition; and
3. We assume that if there are any additional flows into the highway ditch caused by the irrigation systems it will not impact the hydraulic capacity of the existing culverts. However, it should be noted that any increased capacity that may be required is the responsibility of the applicant.

Disposition:

These comments were provided to the applicant for information.

Medical Officer of Health – Central Manitoba RHA The main public health concern for this proposal is the protection of groundwater. The Office of Drinking Water would be better skilled at determining impact to groundwater that would be used for human consumption.

Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency I have completed a survey of federal departments with respect to determining interest in the project noted. I can confirm that the project information provided has been reviewed by all federal departments with a potential interest. I am enclosing copies of the relevant responses for your file.

Based on the responses to the federal survey, I have not yet been able to conclude whether the application of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (the Act) will be required for this project. Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has identified two areas where additional information is required in order for DFO to make its determination as to whether it has any requirements under the Act. Please see the attached Note to File that summarizes the DFO position. I would ask that you obtain this additional information from the project proponent, and then relay the response directly to DFO for review. With regard to the responses that I have received from other federal departments that have been surveyed, I can report that no other federal department is required to complete an assessment under the Act.

Please note that both DFO and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFA/PFRA) have responded that they both have expertise that may assist in the environmental review of this project. In addition, both of these departments have expressed an interest in participating in the provincial review process, pursuant to Clause 59 of the Canada-Manitoba Agreement on Environmental Assessment Coordination. I would therefore ask you to include the representatives from both of these departments on the provincial Technical Advisory Committee that you will be leading for this project.

Disposition:

Additional information to address the DFO information requirements was requested.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Additional information was requested on April 12, 2006 to address the comments of Water Stewardship and DFO. The attached reply dated July 17, 2006 was received on July 25, 2006. The additional information does not fully respond to all comments, but outstanding items can be addressed through licence conditions.

PUBLIC HEARING:

No requests were received for a public hearing. Accordingly, a public hearing is not recommended.

RECOMMENDATION:

All comments received on the Proposal have been addressed in the additional information or can be addressed as licence conditions. Therefore, it is recommended that the Development be licensed under The Environment Act subject to the limits, terms and conditions as described on the attached Draft Environment Act Licence. It is further recommended that enforcement of the Licence be assigned to the Red River Region.

PREPARED BY:

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