

## **10.0 Economic and Recreational Opportunities Status**



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## 10.0 ECONOMIC AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES STATUS

### 10.1 INTRODUCTION

The Red River Floodway expansion project will increase flood security and improve the quality of life for many Manitobans. It will also create thousands of direct and indirect jobs, protect the environment and give residents an opportunity to help shape the future of their communities.

At the same time as improving flood protection for hundreds of thousands of Manitobans, floodway expansion also has the potential to result in other long-lasting benefits for all Manitobans and future generations. Some of these benefits include:

- Recreation and economic development opportunities for local communities;
- Training opportunities that will help to meet the need for future construction projects; and
- Employment opportunities during construction.

The Manitoba Floodway Authority (MFA) has been established by the Government of Manitoba as an independent crown agency to manage the construction of the floodway project. In addition to expanding the floodway, MFA has a mandate to enhance the benefits the floodway will provide to the community.

This section outlines ideas submitted to the MFA by the public and options for consideration as the floodway expansion project moves ahead. Since they are only ideas at this point, final decisions on the recreation and economic development opportunities require ongoing public consultation. MFA is in the process of preparing a recreation and economic development "Opportunity Report" to facilitate further discussion and identify next steps as the process moves forward.

The implementation of any recreation or economic proposal is expected to be the responsibility of the proponent. No recreation or economic proposal will be authorized that has a potential to have a significant adverse effect on the environment. Project proponents will be required to comply with relevant environmental regulatory standards and any other applicable legislation.

### 10.2 THE CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Over the years there have been general suggestions made about secondary use of the floodway for recreation and economic development opportunities. A review of these suggestions as part of the floodway expansion project has been included in the mandate for MFA as it proceeds with the project.

To facilitate in the identification of possible options, MFA issued a Call for Expression of Interest on March 18, 2004, encouraging the public, local municipalities and stakeholder groups to provide their ideas on the subject.

At the time, MFA CEO Ernie Gilroy stated:

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*"We want Manitobans to have their say and help shape the future of their communities. This process will compliment and assist the current independent environmental assessment and allow us to prepare a more concise blueprint for specific recreation and economic development activities associated with the new floodway."*

The Call for Expression of Interest clearly identified all of the objectives and guidelines for the submissions:

- compatibility with the primary purpose of floodway expansion;
- minimal ongoing maintenance costs to taxpayers;
- stakeholder participation and community support;
- maximize benefits to rural and Aboriginal communities;
- compliment existing Red River facilities and initiatives; and
- environmental stewardship.

Manitobans were given until April 20, 2004 to submit their ideas in writing to MFA.

MFA undertook a number of strategies to communicate this initiative to residents of the region, including:

- March 18 press release issued to local radio, television and newspaper outlets;
- follow up interviews by MFA staff with local reporters;
- series of advertisements in more than a dozen local newspaper outlets;
- direct mail information package to key stakeholders and callers to MFA's toll-free access line; and
- MFA's ongoing public consultation process.

Since the conclusion of the period allocated for responding to the Call for Expression of Interest, other submissions have also been received by MFA through the ongoing public consultation on the floodway project. All written submissions have been acknowledged and reviewed by MFA officials.

When the Call for Expressions of Interest was issued, MFA announced its intention to compile an "Opportunity Report" that would be presented to the public, local municipalities, recreational organizations, project partners and the independent environmental review process.

The "Opportunity Report" will summarize the submissions received, recommend next steps, and will serve as a general framework for pursuing future opportunities and partnerships.

### **10.3 COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH**

In association with the formal Call for Expression of Interest, MFA developed a comprehensive communication plan to ensure interested Manitobans were given the opportunity to submit their ideas. As noted, the strategy contained a number of elements: media outreach, advertising, direct mail and the project's ongoing public involvement process.

### **10.3.1 Media Outreach**

On March 18, 2004, a press release was issued by MFA to radio, television and newspaper outlets across the region. A backgrounder entitled: Call for Expression of Interest – Information Package was also included.

Interviews were arranged between MFA staff and local reporters to follow-up the press release.

### **10.3.2 Advertising**

MFA purchased a series of advertisements in local newspapers inviting Manitobans to submit their ideas. The ads asked residents to contact a toll free telephone line to get more information about the call for expressions of interest.

Specifically, ads were placed in the Winnipeg Free Press (3x), Selkirk Journal (2x), Scratching River Post, Carillon, Crow Wing Warrior, La Liberte, Interlake Spectator and Valley Leader.

### **10.3.3 Direct Mail**

More than 500 information packages were mailed directly to various associations & grassroots organizations, including:

- Manitoba Chamber of Commerce
- Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce
- Rivers West
- Destination Winnipeg
- Manitoba Business Council
- Manitoba Historical Society
- Manitoba Cycling Association
- Manitoba Freestyle Ski Association
- Snowmobilers of Manitoba
- Manitoba Horse Council
- Cooks Creek Conservation District
- Manitoba Métis Federation
- Southern Manitoba Chiefs
- Peguis, Brokenhead & Roseau River First Nations
- Manitoba Eco-Network
- Cross Country Ski Association of Manitoba
- Red River Basin Commission
- Tribal Council Investment Group
- Manitoba Recreational Trails Association
- Group'Action Saint-Norbert
- North Ritchot Action Committee
- Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation

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- Red River Valley Group
  - City of Winnipeg – Parks & Recreation
  - Manitoba Hydro
  - Forks North Portage Partnership
  - Ducks Unlimited Canada
  - Association of Manitoba Municipalities
  - Floodway East Drainage Association
  - 768 Association
  - Coalition for Flood Protection North of the Floodway
  - Bird's Hill Park
  - Canadian Nature Federation
  - Pembina Valley Conservation District
  - Save Our Seine Environment Inc.
  - Springhill Winter Park
  - Local Municipalities

Information packages were also mailed to residents and organizations that contacted the toll-free telephone line based on the advertising campaign.

#### **10.3.4 Public Consultation Process**

As part of our ongoing public consultation process, details of MFA's call for Expression of Interest were communicated to local municipal governments and stakeholders on the following occasions:

- Winnipeg & Manitoba Chamber of Commerce - March 25
- Manitoba Business Council - March 26
- Red River Valley Group - March 30
- RM of Ritchot - April 6
- RM of West St. Paul - April 8
- RM of Springfield - April 13
- City of Selkirk - April 13
- RM of Tache - April 13
- Manitoba Association of Municipalities - April 14
- RM of Morris - April 14
- Keystone Agriculture Producers - April 16
- Floodway East Drainage Association - April 19
- RM of St. Clements - April 20
- 768 Association - April 20
- RM of St. Andrews - April 27
- RM of MacDonald - April 27
- RM of East St. Paul - April 28
- Town of Niverville - May 4

Questionnaires were distributed at MFA's various town hall meetings. Participants were invited to answer questions about recreation and economic opportunities associated with the project on six occasions:

- April 19 - Oakbank Baptist Church
- April 20 - East Selkirk Recreation Centre
- April 21 - St. Norbert, Howden Community Centre
- April 26 - Morris, Southern Manitoba Convention Centre
- April 29 - Winnipeg, St. Norbert Community Centre
- May 3 - Winnipeg, Vince Leah Recreation Centre

MFA was also assisted in its public consultation by Group'Action Saint-Norbert (GAS). In February 2004, GAS conducted a mail survey of the residents on both sides of the Red River between the Perimeter Highway in the north and St. Adolphe in the south. Close to 700 people responded.

Residents identified walking trails, toboggan hill and cycling paths as their top priorities and showed a preference for certain recreational opportunities over loud, environmentally intrusive uses.

GAS also identified a strong interest in establishing a floodway interpretive centre which would include historic perspectives, flood history, multi-media displays and public facilities such as a parking lot, washrooms and warming hut.

#### **10.4 PUBLIC RESPONSE TO THE CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**

More than fifty formal expressions of interests were received by MFA. In addition to the written expressions of interest, MFA has received input regarding recreation and economic opportunities from municipal governments, provincial officials and local residents via MFA's toll-free access line and through the ongoing public consultation process.

Expressions of interest focused on the re-use of the excavated earth, summer and winter recreation, employment training, business development and other opportunities.

##### **10.4.1 Re-Use of Excavated Earth**

A specific area of interest that received significant public attention was a suggestion to maximize the opportunity for re-use of the millions of cubic metres of earth that will be excavated from the floodway channel. Among other things, residents suggested MFA use the earth to:

- support local highway construction projects
- rural flood protection
- expand Springhill Winter Park
- make a new ski hill
- stabilize and flood-proof private property
- improve existing river banks
- collect deposits of selenite crystals

- help farmers who might need it
- construct a graveyard

#### **10.4.2 Summer and Winter Recreation**

MFA received numerous proposals regarding various summer and winter recreation activities that could be associated with floodway expansion. They include:

- development of a multi-use, four season, greenway/trail along the floodway
- cross-country ski trail
- snowmobile trails
- toboggan hill
- sled dog racing and training trails
- outdoor ice rink
- horseback riding trails
- hang-gliding facility
- snowboarding
- orienteering
- wildlife management area
- festival site
- rowing facility
- gun & target range

#### **10.4.3 Employment Training & Business Development**

MFA received a small number of training and business development expressions of interests. These ideas were related to private investment and general economic development opportunities for Aboriginal and Métis residents.

MFA has initiated consultations with southern Manitoba Aboriginal & Métis communities regarding employment and business development opportunities. In addition, various industry, labour, Aboriginal and training organizations have been engaged in a stakeholder process to develop the training components of the project.

In light of the fact most of the current floodway is used for agricultural purposes, MFA has initiated a series of consultations with local Manitoba agricultural producers regarding any disruption caused by the construction of the floodway and any associated recreational developments. In addition, MFA has been working with local producers to explore ways that the project will benefit them in areas such as drainage, access to earth and land stewardship.

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#### 10.4.4 Other Opportunities

In addition to summer and winter recreation, training and business development and suggestions regarding the disposal of earth, MFA received some other ideas through the Call for Expressions of Interest and public consultation program, including:

- Twinning of Highway 15 floodway crossing east of Winnipeg to accommodate increased future traffic flows.
- Development of a 3-D virtual reality floodway to demonstrate the project's benefits, assist the engineering design and help prepare for flood emergencies.
- Re-vegetation of native grassland species in the floodway.
- Develop an interpretive centre for the floodway that features flood history, educational & historic material and multi-media presentations.
- Formally document and archive the project's development, public consultation and construction phases for historic and educational purposes.
- Beautification of the floodway's inlet and outlet control structures.

#### 10.5 OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Since the conclusion of the Expression of Interest, MFA has reviewed the submissions in the context of the project's environmental licensing process and the guidelines described in the original "Information Package". In many cases, organizations were contacted and interviewed directly by MFA staff.

Through this process and the ongoing public consultation process, MFA has identified a number of conclusions and observations that can be drawn from the initiative:

- Increased flood security for Winnipeg and southern Manitoba will benefit all Manitobans and is in the interest of both the provincial and national economy.
- The expansion of the Red River Floodway provides an important opportunity for recreation and economic development for organizations, local communities and the public.
- Since expanding the floodway in anticipation of future floods is the primary purpose of floodway expansion, actual construction on any recreational component will be incorporated into the latter stages of project construction.
- Proposals that require summer water use of the floodway are not compatible with the primary purpose of flood protection, as indicated in the Call for Expressions of Interest issued on March 18, 2004.
- Broad public support has been demonstrated for the development of a four season multi-use, greenway trail system along the floodway.
- There were other proposals and ideas submitted that were complimentary to the greenway trail, such as the establishment of snowmobile trails, a multi-media interpretive centre and horseback riding trails.

- Opportunities exist with the millions of cubic yards of excavated earth that will result from the project – in particular as it relates to local highway construction.
- The project's design will allow Springhill Ski Facility to remain at its current location – without disruption.
- Establishment of a new ski hill, compatible to Federation International du Ski (FIS) requirements, would require earth in excess of the amount that will be made available through excavation of the project, additional property acquisition and a separate application for an environmental license.
- There will be a need to define the engineering parameters for recreation development on the floodway – particularly regarding access to the floodway channel and environmental protection.
- No recreation or economic proposal will be authorized that has a potential negative effect on the environment. Project proponents will be required to comply with relevant environmental regulatory standards and any other applicable legislation.
- Residents and municipalities have legitimate concerns regarding uncontrolled use of the floodway for recreational purposes.
- The project's planned improvements to highway bridges crossing the floodway will have a positive local impact on the economy of rural communities surrounding Winnipeg.
- There is a strong connection between success in the agriculture sector and access to quality groundwater, drainage systems and haying opportunities. MFA needs to be sensitive to these realities when considering the project's design and current lease framework.
- There is strong public support for ensuring that – to the extent possible – Manitobans are employed to construct the expanded floodway.
- There is strong public support for developing training opportunities for Manitobans through the construction of the project.
- By providing training opportunities for workers, the floodway project will have the potential to address labour shortages in the construction industry and benefit future economic development projects in the Manitoba.
- Training partnerships need to be efficient, job-oriented and accessible to Aboriginal, Métis, rural, and employment equity groups.
- Opportunities may exist to partner with the Governments of Canada and Manitoba to promote skills training.
- There is a high level of appreciation that the expansion of the floodway is an historic initiative and should be documented, archived and promoted to increase public awareness of the project and its benefits. This includes Red River flood history and the construction of the original floodway.
- There are varying degrees of unregulated activity in and around the floodway – in particular enjoyment of motorized vehicles. There may be outstanding questions about legal and liability issues associated with this current "use" of the floodway.
- There is an opportunity to use leading-edge, made in Manitoba technology to demonstrate the effects of the floodway expansion and simulate various flood events, assist engineers in the project design, improve emergency response efforts and provide opportunities for young Manitobans in the new media and technology sectors.

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## 10.6 NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the submissions received through the Expression of Interest process and the ongoing public consultation process, MFA will consider a number of next steps as the project moves forward:

1. Establishment of a Floodway Recreation Working Group to:
  - examine issues of recreational use along the floodway;
  - examine the overall planning and design work process of the recreational component;
  - work in collaboration with MFA staff on this component as the planning and design work on the floodway project is undertaken;
  - consider legal and liability issues associated with current unregulated “use” of the floodway site;
  - consider ongoing maintenance issues related to potential opportunities; and
  - identify opportunities for financial support.
2. Establishment of a multi-use, four season greenway trail along the floodway within the project’s pre-design.
3. Incorporate a four lane crossing in the planning for the PTH 15 Bridge to meet increased traffic flows in the future.
4. Initiate a formal process that will allow Manitobans to access the excavated earth from the floodway channel. This process will be initiated and advertised closer to the start of construction in 2005. The following principles will guide this process:
  - no increase in project costs
  - no delay of in floodway construction
  - priority for local highway construction and rural flood protection projects
5. Create a virtual reality 3D floodway model that will recreate much of Manitoba’s Red River Basin, simulate flood scenarios, illustrate the floodway’s effects and help to increase public awareness of the project.
6. Examine options to help capture, document and archive the project’s development and construction.
7. Ensure that the project does not disrupt the operation of the Lockport Children’s festival site.
8. Distribute the “Opportunity Report” to the members of the public, key stakeholders, local municipalities, the Province of Manitoba and Government of Canada and the independent environmental review team.

Three activities MFA will **not** consider as part of the expansion project are:

1. any proposals that require water in the floodway;

2. acquisition of additional lands for the sole purposes of recreational development; and
3. development of a new ski-hill.

In addition, MFA will not consider the following activities *within (in and around the wetted area) the floodway channel*:

- no permanent or temporary structures;
- no earth trails;
- no earth trails in areas subject to sediment transport into the floodway channel;
- no foreign vegetation (native Manitoba species only);
- no hazardous material storage; and
- no sewage or solid waste

As the project proceeds, MFA will continue to consider the following priority areas:

- Ensure rural Manitoba communities realize economic benefits from the floodway expansion project.
- Examining opportunities to maximize employment opportunities for Manitoba workers and contractors.
- Maximizes training opportunities associated with the floodway expansion.
- Identify opportunities for the Governments of Manitoba and Canada to support skills partnerships and other opportunities identified in the report.
- Work with local municipalities to help facilitate improved local drainage systems and mitigate any potential impacts to groundwater supplies.