

October 9, 2012

LR495 Testimony

Chairperson Langemeier and Members of the Natural Resources Committee:

Today you have heard about several studies that the NRD has commissioned and many more have been completed over the years going back to the USACE in the 1960s all indicate that the Omaha metro area is at high risk for flooding and the two threats are from the Papillion Creek Watershed and the Missouri River. The NRD has major challenges ahead in implementing flood control structures, maintaining the existing structures and helping communities in the District with their flood control needs. The Omaha and Papio NRD levees could cost upwards of \$30 - \$40 million dollars to accredit the levees however, it is imperative that they function properly because they protect billions of dollars of critical infrastructure including downtown Omaha, Eppley Airfield, Omaha's two wastewater treatment plants and Offutt Air Force Base.

Protecting our downstream communities in the Papillion Creek Watershed is another priority that has a large price tag. It is important to implement the structural flood control in upstream reaches before development encroaches and opportunities are lost. These structures provide immediate flood control benefits and can also serve as recreational amenities for the area. The need to prepare for flooding in the Papillion Creek watershed is important, to date we have completed detailed flood studies on 50 miles of creek and a study of another 147 miles of creek is underway. These studies help us to more accurately portray the flood risk in the Omaha metro area. As you heard today, the flood control structures implemented in the Papillion Creek watershed can help reduce flood risk and therefore reduce damage estimates. Keeping in mind that the Papillion Creek Watershed has over 200 miles of creeks, flood damages for an approximate one mile stretch through the 144th and F Street area, Altech Business Park, are estimated to be around \$50 million dollars. Flooding conditions are different throughout the watershed but it is easy to see that the flood damages are in the billions just in property and infrastructure damages alone.

The costs of a devastating flood are hard to estimate because the impacts are far reaching and go beyond just damaged infrastructure. There are people's lives at stake most importantly and then there are facilities and infrastructure that affect local, state and national distribution, future economic growth, lost income and cleanup costs that contribute to damage costs and are hard to estimate. There is no doubt that the costs to implement and maintain Omaha's flood control structures far outweigh the cost of ignoring the flood threat.

The District appreciates your willingness to hear from the Omaha area communities and appeals for your support as we implement and maintain these very critical flood control measures.



John Winkler
General Manager, Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District