



VFLO President Randy Bosch makes a point during Thursday's meeting at the State Water Commission office in Bismarck on the Beaver Bay Impoundment.

Prospects looking favorable for new lake created by proposed Beaver Bay project

Water quality and any impact on the Highway 1804 embankment are the major issues that must be addressed before a funding can be pursued for an impoundment at Beaver Bay to create a year-round lake for fishing and recreation.

That was the conclusion of a meeting at the State Water Commission office in Bismarck on Thursday called by Voices for Lake Oahe (VFLO) and chaired by VFLO President Randy

Bosch of Linton.

Represented at the meeting were the State Water Commission, N.D. Game & Fish, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Sen. Byron Dorgan's office, Gov. John Hoeven's office, Emmons County Commissioners, Emmons County Water Board, N.D. Department of Transportation, N.D. Irrigators Association, Meyer Engineering, City of Linton, Linton Industrial Development Corporation (LIDC),

Emmons County Soil Conservation District/Natural Resources Conservation Service and VFLO. District 28 legislators—Sen. Robert Erbele of Lehr, Rep. Mike Brandenburg of Edgeley and Rep. William Kretschmar of Ashley—also participated in the meeting.

Most of the representatives were supportive of the project, and none opposed it.

Game & Fish officials raised the water quality issue. They said their concern was

whether the water behind the impoundment would stay fresh enough to support game fish, particularly walleye, and recreational use when Lake Oahe is low. When Oahe is at normal levels, Missouri River water would extend into the impounded water. When Oahe is low, as it is now, the water sources would be Beaver Creek and runoff from rain and snow. In dry years, the creek's flow is reduced and there may or may not be

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any runoff.

If the lake behind the impoundment became stagnant, algae growth would be a problem and all but carp and other rough fish would die off. Lack of oxygen could lead to winter kill.

The Corps' Oahe Project Operations Manager John Bartel of Pierre said water quality could be an issue since that has been a problem at Lake Pocasse at Pollock, S.D. The Pollock lake is also an impoundment, but it is much smaller and Spring Creek is a much smaller creek that normally does not flow year-round.

Bartel said Pocasse has problems with fish die off, maintaining fish other than carp and winter kill.

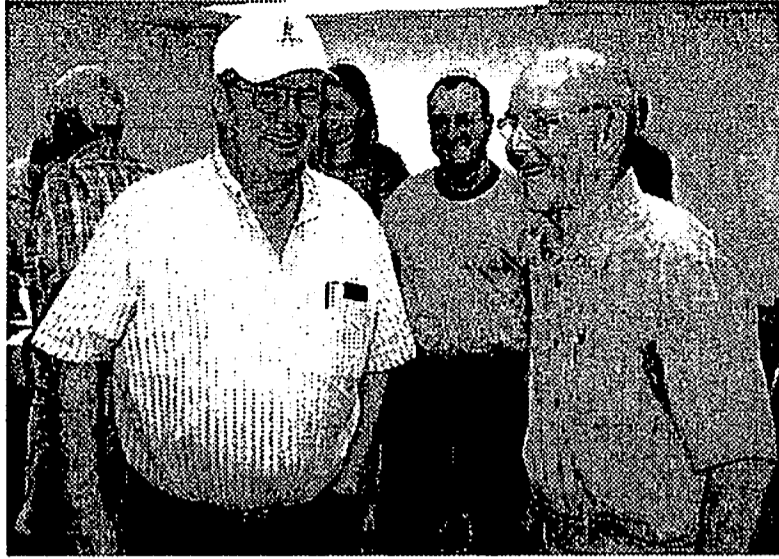
Bosch said VFLO is also concerned about water quality and wants a healthy lake created. He said the water quality issue would need to be addressed with the cooperation of the various agencies. He also noted that the lake should fill in a year with normal creek flows and runoff.

A NDDOT official asked about the impact on Highway 1804 since the road was not built with the intention of being part of a dam. A survey crew mapped out the highway right-of-way last Wednesday, and some soil tests have been done to determine if the area is suitable for an impoundment (sandy soil or gravel could cause seepage). More test borings may be necessary.

Glenn McCrory of Linton, chairman of the Emmons County Water Board, said NRCS and the Emmons County Soil Conservation already has some of the data, which was provided over the years by the U.S. Geological Survey.

Discussions between NDDOT and VFLO's engineer Dennis Meyer indicate there is not likely to be any problem with Highway 1804, but it needs to be confirmed. Meyer also said he does not see a problem with water quality, but he agreed that there needs to be confirmation of that.

Other discussion



Pictured after the meeting are Emmons County Water Board Chairman Glenn McCrory and Emmons County Commissioner Alvin Tschosik, both of Linton.

only five tributaries to Lake Oahe between the Garrison Dam and the South Dakota border. He said walleye would not be likely to swim over an obstruction to get to Beaver Creek.

Bosch and others explained that the dam is designed with a 12-foot-wide opening to allow for walleye to migrate upstream. The plank system envisioned can be opened and closed, raised and lowered, as needed.

Todd Sandos of the State Water Commission, noting requirements for construction and water permits, said he sees no major issues from the Commission's standpoint. He said cost sharing up to 50 percent would be available, subject to approval by the Commission.

Sandos said, when compared with other projects funded through the Commission, the Beaver Creek impoundment is not a major project.

Bosch said preliminary estimates peg the cost at around \$700,000, but inflation will drive up the cost each year.

Irrigator Herb Grenz of Linton, a long-time advocate of water development, said it will be much less expensive to build the impoundment when the water is down, as it is now.

Jason Renschler of Bismarck, North Dakota Regulatory Officer for the Corps, discussed the various steps in the regulatory process. While he said each step is crucial, he saw no major obstacles at this point.

Corps Park Manager

impact of the dam and not the lake that it would create. He said an archaeological study would need to be done of the area that would be disturbed by construction. Studies were done years ago on this area.

According to Bartel, the Corps' concern is that all of the questions be answered before the project moves forward, but he said the Corps would not have to have 100 percent of the final design before the various permits are issued.

U.S. Sen. Dorgan is pushing through a \$300,000 appropriation for upper Lake Oahe recreation projects, but it is not yet known whether some of that money could be used for engineering studies or other costs related to the impoundment.

Sandos said VFLO will need more engineering work done on the project before state and federal agencies can formally react to the project.

Emmons County Commissioner Alvin Tschosik of Linton said the county supports the project, and he pointed out that the new lake would be a great asset to Emmons County and boost the economy. He suggested VFLO get more information out to the people, including a map of the project.

LIDC Development Coordinator Sharon Jangula said the lake would be very important to economic development in the county, and she said Linton and other communities are feeling the negative economic impact of low water and the loss of recreational opportunities.

State Rep. Brandenburg said the District 28 legislators

see a problem with water quality, but he agreed that there needs to be confirmation of that.

Other discussion

Game & Fish asked about the elevation of the dam and whether it would interfere with the annual walleye spawn. He said Beaver Creek (when Lake Oahe is at a normal level) is a key walleye production area. There are

no regulatory problems. While he said each step is crucial, he saw no major obstacles at this point.

Corps Park Manager Ralph Gabrysh of Bismarck noted that the impoundment is mentioned in the Corps Master Plan.

Bartel said the Corps has no problem with the impact of the structure. Concerns relate to the construction and

economic impact of low water and the loss of recreational opportunities.

State Rep. Brandenburg said the District 28 legislators want to help, and he said specifics are needed on funding requirements.

Tschosik thanked VFLO for their hard work, and he said working together is the only way to accomplish anything.



Visiting after the meeting are, left to right, Lee Klapproot of the ND State Water Commission, VFLO President Randy Bosch, Emmons County Water Board Chairman Glenn McCrory, VFLO Director Tony Splonskowski, Todd Sandos of the State Water Commission and John Bartel, Operations Manager for the Oahe Project.