DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
ST. PAUL DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
180 FIFTH STREET EAST, SUITE 700
ST. PAUL MN 55101-1678

February 13, 2013

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

Programs and Project Management Division
Project Management Branch (PM-B)

SUBJECT: Impacts from the Fargo-Moorhead Metro Flood Diversion Project, Alliance Township, Minnesota

Mr. Jerald Butenhoff
Chairman, Alliance Township
10449 140th Ave. S.
Barnesville, MN 56514-9129

Dear Chairman Butenhoff,

It has come to our attention you may be concerned with potential impacts to your township by the proposed Fargo-Moorhead Metro Flood Risk Management Project (FMM Project). We hope that the enclosed information is useful to you and can assist with clarifying the potential impacts to Alliance Township.

Please reference the attached map "Richland Wilkin JPA Members and Proposed 100-yr Flood Inundation Area". The red area shows the acreage impacted with the project that would not be impacted under existing conditions without the project. It also shows the "Staging Area" storage component (shown as a red box on the map) of the proposed FMM Project required to mitigate downstream impacts. As shown, Alliance Township is located outside of the Staging Area and there are no direct impacts to Alliance Township caused by the project at the 1-percent-chance event. It is not anticipated that Alliance Township will experience any direct impacts from the Federal project.

Although there will be no direct impacts to Alliance Township, we understand that the storage component of the proposed FMM project may be of concern to you. Please see the enclosed map titled "Upstream 100-Year Total Flood Depths – Preferred Alignment". The Staging Area provides approximately 215,000 acre-feet of effective storage located immediately upstream of the diversion. During a 1-percent-chance flood event this storage would affect approximately 32,500 acres of which approximately 18,300 acres (56 percent) are located in Cass County and 13,000 acres (40 percent) are located in Clay County, the counties that primarily benefit from the Project. In comparison, the storage would affect fewer than 800 acres (2.5 percent) in Richland County and 450 acres (1.5 percent) in Wilkin County.

The Corps and the Diversion Authority have considered other flood storage options. Local Water Resource Districts have completed a sensitivity analysis for the 2009 flood event on the Wild Rice River which demonstrates that distributed storage is not a viable option to replace the storage component of the Project. If distributed storage was pursued for the Wild Rice River, nearly all of the storage would need to be placed in eastern Richland County. Additionally, even if this occurred, the distributed storage would not be enough to replace the storage required for the diversion channel. Similar results can be expected for the other tributaries and Wilkin County. The volume of retention needed farther upstream in the Red River watershed to mitigate downstream impacts would be significantly higher than the 215,000 acre-feet included in the upstream staging area. It would directly impact more land, cost more, and would transfer impacts to counties that would not benefit from the FMM project.

The proposed project and areas of impact are believed to be the best solution for the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area, yet it is recognized that distributed storage could reduce the frequency of project operation. The Red River Basin Commission and other agencies are continually investigating water storage and retention solutions for the entire Red River Basin, and the Diversion Authority has pledged $25 Million to advance retention that benefits the FMM area.

We understand that there are more concerns relating to the Project than just the location of the storage, such as impacts to farm land and crops, tax base, and direct impacts to people and their homes. In an effort to minimize impacts we are continually improving the Project and have a number of changes that are being proposed.

First, we are proposing to move the channel alignment north and add gates to the diversion inlet. These changes would result in fewer impacts to land and residential structures. With the original alignment we anticipated impacting approximately 387 residential structures; with this shift in the alignment the impacted residential structures would be reduced to 251. In addition to the alignment shift, ring-levees have been proposed for Comstock, Oxbow, Hickson, and Bakke. If these ring-levees are constructed, the number of residential structures impacted by the Project would be reduced to approximately 58.

Second, we propose to modify the project by adding levees within the communities of Fargo and Moorhead, which would result in the project operating less frequently than previously anticipated. The frequency of operation would change from about a 3.5-year event to a 10-year event. During the entire recorded history of the Red River, the project would never have operated during the summer. This change should allow for farming operations within the Staging Area to continue with limited risk. The Diversion Authority and Corps are working together to determine possible ways to further reduce risk to farming operations.

We are currently performing an environmental review of the proposed changes before determining whether to formally include them in the Project. These changes would reduce the direct impacts to residential structures, maintain the ability to farm within the Staging Area, and preserve the tax base of those impacted areas. We will continue to seek out opportunities to minimize impacts as part of this Project. However, it is important to point out that any project will have impacts and the upstream storage is a critical component of the Project.

Once again, Alliance Township would experience no direct impacts from the Project. We hope this information is useful to you. The point of contact for this action is Terry Williams, Corps of Engineers Project Manager, (651) 290-5517 or terryl.l.williams@usace.army.mil.

Sincerely,

Aaron M. Snyder, PMP
Project Management Branch (PM-B)

2 Enclosures
1. Figure 1: Richland Wilkin JPA Members and Proposed 100-yr Flood Inundation Area
2. Figure 2: Upstream 100-Year Total Flood Depths – Preferred Alignment