

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS

PROPONENT: Central Manitoba Irrigators Association
Inc.
PROPOSAL NAME: La Salle River Watershed Phase I
Irrigation Project
CLASS OF DEVELOPMENT: Two
TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT: Water Development and Control
CLIENT FILE NO.: 4193.00

OVERVIEW:

The Proposal was received on July 22, 1996. It was dated July 15, 1996. The advertisement of the proposal was as follows:

“A Proposal has been filed by the Central Manitoba Irrigators Association for the construction and operation of an off channel irrigation reservoir adjacent to the Elm Creek Channel in SW 28-8-6W. The reservoir would store 200 cubic decametres (160 acre-feet) of water and would be constructed in the fall of 1996. It would be filled during the spring runoff period each year starting in 1997. Instream flows would be maintained for downstream water users and fisheries purposes during reservoir filling operations.”

The Proposal was advertised in the Carman Valley Leader on Tuesday, August 6, 1996. It was placed in the Main, Centennial, Eco-Network and Portage Plains Regional Library public registries. It was also distributed to TAC members on July 29, 1996. The closing date for comments from members of the public and TAC members was September 4, 1996.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

No public responses were received.

COMMENTS FROM THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Manitoba Environment - South-Central Region The proponent must ensure no livestock waste, chemicals or domestic sewage enter the reservoir.

Disposition:

This recommendation can be included as a licence condition.

Manitoba Environment - Water Quality Management The concern from a water quality perspective is that proper allocation is determined in order to sustain the integrity of the streams, i.e. habitat and associated aquatic life. Since senior licenses and applicants have not been included in the proposal, caution should be exercised in the final allocation

...2

- 2 -

decision. The project site is located in an area with sloughs and much of the drainage has been channelized in ditches. There does not appear to be concern over significant impacts to water quality. Screens should be used on intake lines to prevent sucking in fish that may navigate up Elm Creek. Natural Resources Fisheries will be better able to address concerns related to fish and if this part of the creek is utilized by fish.

Disposition:

Minimum instream flow (MIF) requirements require additional discussion between the proponent, DNR and DFO. This can be addressed as a licence condition as has been done for other recent irrigation projects. The project site is upstream of any known fish habitat, and DNR and DFO did not identify a requirement for fish screening. Therefore, screening need not be included as a licence condition.

Historic Resources Branch No concerns.

Mines Branch No concerns.

Highway Planning and Design No concerns. The project's distance from any provincial roads or highways likely precludes any impact on our system of roads.

Medical Officer of Health Health concerns with this project are general in nature. Irrigation is becoming a more common practice and there is concern that its overall long term impact on groundwater (and of particular concern shallow drinking water sources) has not been thoroughly examined. This proposal talks about possibly affecting groundwater but there is no indication if there are any wells in current use nearby.

Disposition:

Groundwater impacts due to the operation of the reservoir would appear to be insignificant due to the proposed liner. Normal monitoring of storage volumes and water use from the reservoir should indicate if problems occur with the artificial liner. Groundwater impacts due to irrigation are discussed in the proposal. Monitoring programs have been proposed and licensed for previous irrigation developments. A policy on the groundwater impacts of irrigation could be developed if monitoring results

from earlier projects indicate that groundwater contamination is occurring due to irrigation practices.

Natural Resources Specific comments: The project is subject to review and licensing under the Water Rights Act. In reseeded the facility the proponent should use native species or their cultivars.

General comments: The proponent should be encouraged to provide an overall plan of proposed future activities so that the cumulative effects of the present project in conjunction with future projects could be evaluated. In some cases the same writeup is provided in this proposal as was provided in the recent irrigation proposal by the Agassiz Irrigation Association. It is questioned whether conditions in both the CMIA and AIA project areas

...3

- 3 -

are so similar that a generic assessment is appropriate. Although minimum instream flows are an important consideration, periodic flushing flows and good relatively consistent spring peak flows are also important to maintaining viable fish habitat in streams.

Disposition:

The specific comment regarding reseeded can be addressed as a licence condition. The general comments are noted and will be brought to the Proponent's attention for use in preparing future proposals. The Proposal notes that further discussions are needed with DNR and DFO to define the fisheries area of interest on this waterway, and to determine an appropriate MIF based on this area of interest. This point can be confirmed as a licence condition.

Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency Application of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act with respect to this project will not be required. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has an interest in the project and would like to participate in the provincial review.

Fisheries and Oceans DFO concurs that Elm Creek would not support significant fish habitat in the vicinity of the proposed dugout and therefore we have no concerns with this specific proposal. However, as this proposal is Phase 1, there are future irrigation proposals planned for the La Salle basin. As was the case with the Whitemud River watershed proposal, the current impact assessment does not adequately take into account the downstream impacts of diverting or impounding spring snow melt and summer rain runoff that are important for sustaining habitat conditions and channel structure in the lower reaches of these streams. An evaluation of incremental changes in stream flow on channel structure, water quality and temperature is required to

recommend a flow regime that will maintain existing habitat conditions. As noted in earlier reviews, Tennant's method of estimating MIF fails to account for stream flow fluctuations and seasonal variability. DFO recommends that a more thorough evaluation of the cumulative impacts to fish habitat and fisheries resources be conducted. Water withdrawal should not be allowed until a method to calculate a MIF is approved by MFB and DFO.

Disposition:

These concerns and suggestions can be addressed as licence conditions.

PUBLIC HEARING:

As no public concerns were identified, a public hearing is not recommended.

RECOMMENDATION:

All comments received on the Proposal 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 South-Central Region.

...4

- 4 -

PREPARED BY:

Bruce Webb
Environmental Approvals - Environmental Land Use Approvals
September 11, 1996 (Updated September 25, 1996)

Telephone: (204) 945-7021

Fax: (204) 945-5229

E-mail Address: bruce_webb@environment.gov.mb.ca