

27 June 2011

To: All Friends of the Tobacco Creek Model Watershed

Re: Canadian Water Network Proposal Update and Thank You

As most of you know (and/or have been involved with), a major research funding proposal was submitted to the Canadian Water Network on 15 April 2011. For those of us who have been involved with the Tobacco Creek Model Watershed since its watershed management and research plan was initiated in 2002, it has been a long process. We have been waiting for something like the CWN to come along for many years.

We have a long history of partnership – involving: dozens of local agricultural producers and community members; the Rural Municipalities of Dufferin, Lorne, Roland, and Thompson; the La Salle Redboine and Pembina Valley Conservation Districts; and a growing list of scientific researchers, government contacts, and funding organizations.

Our initial expression of interest to the CWN was developed in December 2010 – in collaboration with Dr. David Lobb, Senior Research Chair of the Watershed Systems Research Program at the University of Manitoba and Dr. Henry Venema, Director of the Natural and Social Capital Program at the International Institute for Sustainable Development. From an original list of 29 submissions, a total of eight were selected for further consideration and detailed proposal development, including the TCWM.

On 24 February, an open meeting of interested community and government representatives occurred in Roland, Manitoba. This meeting laid the groundwork for the needs of the watershed community and ratified concerns previously outlined in the Tobacco Creek Model Watershed Management and Research Plan.

On 16 March, a meeting of interested research and policy partners occurred, involving representatives from the university, government, and other research organizations. CWN is seeking to create end-user driven research that will address the needs of the community and influence the decision making processes of government. By integrating public concerns and involving respective government departments into the proposal application process, we sought to develop a solid proposal that would achieve this goal.

The consultation process was coordinated by Bryan Osborne of Panterra Management Ltd. Bryan also drafted the proposal and responded to ongoing improvement suggestions which we received. The final version was submitted to CWN on 15 April, along with many letters and pledges of support we required to build a strong case for the TCMW.

We were confident the TCMW proposal would fare well during the CWN's proposal review process, which involved the review and submission of comments by an international and independent team of watershed research experts. However, we knew that competition would be tight among the eight finalists. We were advised that three to five proposals would be selected to receive a very significant level of research funding over three years.

Our plan involves a combined investment in excess of \$2 million devoted to the challenges facing the Red River Valley and the Lake Winnipeg basin – focused on the development of a “living watershed laboratory” at Tobacco Creek. We knew there would be a need for the TCMW, regardless of whether the CWN proposal was successful or not. One of our first priorities is focused on the establishment of a detailed monitoring network (for water quality and hydrology) within all subwatersheds the Tobacco Creek system.

Ultimately, we plan to create a sustainable agricultural watershed based on sound science, ongoing research, monitoring, demonstration, and continued improvement. Ongoing water quality problems affecting Lake Winnipeg combined with costly damages associated with severe flooding across the Canadian Prairies suggest the need for this research facility is greater than ever. The TCMW offers some small, but real pathways to long-term watershed solutions. We see the TCMW as a “watershed of the future,” and we will need your continued support to help us get there.

We are very grateful for the response and support we have received during the CWN proposal development process, and we wish to thank you all for your participation.

We are very excited about the future, as we work to implement the TCMW vision.

We will keep you posted of our progress over the coming weeks, particularly as the RFP is developed for administration by CWN. We will be conducting extensive public and media communications around this and around a community celebration to occur in late July.

We are currently working on a new website (weekly updates) at www.tobaccocreek.com

Sincerely,



Les McEwan, Chair

Tobacco Creek Model Watershed

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