

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS

PROPONENT: Agassiz Resource Management Ltd.
PROPOSAL NAME: Winding Trail Farms and Robt McIntosh Ltd. Irrigation Project
CLASS OF DEVELOPMENT: Two
TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT: Water Development and Control
CLIENT FILE NO.: 5055.00

OVERVIEW:

The Proposal was received on July 28, 2004. It was dated September 1, 2004. The advertisement of the proposal was as follows:

“A Proposal has been filed by Agassiz Resource Management Ltd. on behalf of Winding Trail Farms and Robt McIntosh Ltd. to irrigate up to 356 ha (880 acres) annually in rotation on a land base of 1106 ha (2730 acres). The project land is located south of Graysville in the Rural Municipality of Dufferin. Approximately 543 dam³ (440 acre-feet) of water would be applied annually, using water obtained from the Boyne River. Some of the project’s water requirements would be diverted from the river during the irrigation season, and the remainder would be diverted during the spring runoff period and stored in an off channel reservoir to be constructed in SW 2-6-6W.”

The Proposal was advertised in the Carman Valley Leader on Monday, September 13, 2004. It was placed in the Main, St. James-Assiniboia Public Library, Eco-Network and South Central Regional Library (Morden) public registries. It was distributed to TAC members on September 3, 2004. The closing date for comments from members of the public and TAC members was October 8, 2004.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

No public comments were received.

COMMENTS FROM THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Manitoba Conservation – Red River Region No technical concerns with the proposal, but serious concerns regarding the eventual licence conditions related to monitoring and reporting requirements.

Disposition:

Although licence conditions related to monitoring and reporting requirements are not an issue in themselves, this comment is related to the observed reluctance of irrigation licencees to comply with monitoring and reporting requirements, and the Department's limited ability to follow up on these requirements. This matter is being addressed in a separate initiative directed at irrigation associations.

Manitoba Conservation – Sustainable Resource Management

Manitoba

Water Stewardship and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans are working to develop instream flow needs for the province. Currently, we are requesting that the water withdrawal rate does not exceed 10% of the instantaneous flow at the withdrawal point and that water is not withdrawn if it has the potential to create isolated pools or increase the risk of fish kills.

What is the effect of accumulative water withdrawals on the hydrological cycle of the Boyne, Morris and Red rivers?

Current fill rates for the spring filling of the first reservoir exceed the recommended rate given in the letter of authorization from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. This letter also indicates that no excavation will occur below the normal high water mark. However, the proponents indicate that granular material may be applied to the bank and/or riverbed below the excavated platform. If this course of action is pursued the proponent should follow up with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

The proponent has indicated that best management practices will be implemented for their operations. This should be included as a licence condition.

Consideration should be given to developing a monitoring program for groundwater in sensitive soil areas and for surface water downstream of the development.

Disposition:

Water withdrawal rates would be addressed primarily through Water Rights licencing requirements. Additional information on the impact of withdrawals was previously provided by the applicant's consultants in a fish habitat impact assessment report. DFO is also involved in the review of the project, and will have separate conditions for the review of additional information. Best management practices and monitoring can be addressed as licence conditions.

Historic Resources Branch

No concerns.

Mines Branch

No concerns.

Petroleum Branch

No concerns.

Highway Planning and Design No concerns.

Community Planning Services Branch No major concerns identified from a land use planning perspective. However, the applicant should be aware that “Irrigation Dugouts or Ponds” is a conditional use in the “AG” and “AR” zones under the RM of Dufferin Zoning By-law and therefore, a conditional use approval from municipal council will be required for this proposal.

Disposition:

This information was forwarded to the applicant’s consultant.

Soils and Crops Branch

I have reviewed the Environment Act Proposal (EAP) on behalf of Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (MAFRI). Comments and requests for some additional information are follows. The comments follow the grouping of fields provided in the EAP (section 4.1.4 page 22 and 23).

The comments provided are in addition to previous correspondence from MAFRI contained in Appendix C of the EAP.

Comments:

Winding Trails Farms

Field 4	SE 13-6-6 W
Field 5	SE 12-6-6 W
Field 6	SW 12-6-6 W

I concur with the recommendation that land is suitable for irrigated production.

Field 1	SW 18-6-5 W
Field 2	NE 18-6-5 W
Field 3	NW 17-6-5 W

The recommendation on the above fields is as follows:

“These quarter sections were deemed suitable for development for irrigated potato production with consideration of the agronomic issue that to maintain productivity, special management consideration and intense irrigation management is required.”
Pg 22 KGS EAP

I request a description of the special management considerations and a description of the intense irrigation management that will be practiced on these land parcels. I require this information before commenting on suitability for irrigation.

Robt McIntosh Ltd

Fields 1,2,3 SE 4-6-6 W
 Fields 4 SW 14-6-6 W
 Fields 7 NW 2-6-6 W
 Fields 8 SW 2-6-6 W

I concur with the recommendation that this land is suitable for irrigated production.

Field 5 NW 11-6-6 W
 Field 6 SW 11-6-6 W
 Field 9 NE 11-6-6 W
 Field 10 SE 11-6-6 W

I concur that the extent of salinity must be assessed before a recommendation on the suitability for irrigation can occur.

Field 11 SW 4-6-6 W

There is no summary recommendation made on this parcel. I request that a recommendation be made on this parcel so that comments can be provided.

Field 14 SW 17-6-5 W
 Field 16 SE 8-6-5 W
 Field 17 NE 8-6-5 W
 Field 19 SE 16-6-5 W

These 4 parcels are rated for Agriculture capability as predominantly class 1 with some class 2. These parcels are rated fair for irrigation suitability and are rated as class 4 for irrigated potato production. The recommendation for these parcels indicates the following:

“...have no significant limitations to development and are deemed suitable for irrigated potato production and no further work recommended.”

I note that other land parcels in the study, namely Winding Trial Farms fields 1, 2 and 3 are also rated as class 4 for irrigated potato production, however, the recommendation is different. The recommendation for Fields 1, 2 and 3 indicate that:

“These quarter sections were deemed suitable for the development of irrigated potato production with consideration of the agronomic issue to maintain productivity, special management consideration and intense irrigation management is required.”

I request that information and explanation of the difference in the limitations of the WTF fields 1, 2 and 3 and the RM fields 14, 16, 17 and 18 that result in a different recommendation be provided.

Field 15 SW 17-6-5 W

Field 18 SE 17-6-5 W

I note that these soils have significant areas of class 5 soils. The KGS EAP indicates that *"...should be deemed suitable for irrigation if agronomic management can overcome the agronomic risks inherent in producing potatoes on these fine textured soils."*

I request information on the agronomic practices that will be used on these parcels prior to commenting on the suitability of these soils for irrigation.

I also note that the following statement is made: *"These soils do not pose an environmental risk."* Our department realizes that heavier textured soils do not pose environmental risks associated with leaching. However, surface run off from these soils is an environmental risk. Our department requests that comments be made on the agronomic/irrigation practices that will be used on these fields and the relationship with potential runoff and the environmental risks associated with run off.

Fields 12 NW 6-6-5 W
Fields 13 NE 6-6-5 W

The report indicates that these soils are not suited for irrigation, unless the irrigation system is designed to avoid the class 5 land in the SE and SW corners of fields 12 and 13.

I concur with this statement.

Disposition:

Additional information was requested to address these comments.

Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency I have completed a survey of federal departments with respect to determining interest in the project. Copies of the relevant responses are enclosed.

Based on the responses to the federal survey, the application of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act is likely not be required for this project. However, a final determination on this issue depends on the proponent submitting an application to Marine Safety Branch (aka Navigable Waters Protection) of Transport Canada (TC) as indicated on TC's response. Pending TC's receipt of this application and their determination regarding the application of the Act, CEAA will act as Federal Environmental Assessment Coordinator (FEAC) for the cooperative assessment process. Please follow up with the proponent to ensure that an application is submitted to Navigable Waters as soon as possible, and keep CEAA informed of developments with regard to the environmental review.

Please note that Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Environment Canada (EC) and Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) have responded that they would be able to offer specialist advice with respect to the project review.

(Note: None of the three federal agencies offering specialist advice indicated that they wished to participate in the provincial review of the project.)

Fisheries and Oceans Canada DFO provided a Letter of Advice for the project to the applicant. The letter provides nine mitigation measures to be followed respecting construction and operation of the project.

Disposition:

Although DFO will follow up on these mitigation measures directly, similar conditions are appropriate in an Environment Act Licence for the project.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Additional information was requested on November 8, 2004 to address the comments of the Soils and Crops Branch. A response dated January 27, 2005 was received on January 28, 2005. This response was reviewed by MAFRI, and satisfactorily addressed the MAFRI comments.

PUBLIC HEARING:

No requests were received for a public hearing. Accordingly, a public hearing is not recommended.

RECOMMENDATION:

All comments received on the Proposal have been addressed in the additional information or 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 Red River Region.

PREPARED BY:

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