



For Immediate Release

ARBI watching Spring Flood Forecasts Closely

MFGA Aquanty modelling project underway in Assiniboine River Basin on schedule for 2018

Winnipeg, MB, January 30, 2017--The Assiniboine River Basin Initiative (ARBI) is watching all flood forecasts closely these days.

“Our network crosses the entire Assiniboine River Basin (ARB) and we make it our business to keep informed with what’s going on in the basin by interacting with all interests,” says Dr. Allan Preston, ARBI chair. “While it is much too early to accurately forecast what spring may herald in terms of flooding, this winter’s heavy snowfall across the Souris River sub-Basin in particular, coupled with saturated soil conditions over the entire Assiniboine Basin, certainly have begun to raise some potential concerns.”

The latest flood forecasts for the ARB from the various agencies that monitor flood conditions are beginning to be released. Regardless of the details of the forecasts, the key message will no doubt confirm what all Prairie flood forecasters know – the severity of spring flooding is contingent much more on the speed of the snow melt, the thawing out of the ground, and the extent of early spring precipitation, than it is on the actual amount of snow currently on the basin landscape.

Preston says ARBI is determined to better understand the water movement across the basin and to help identify best practices for adaptability and resilience of the ARB that crosses large areas of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and North Dakota. One such model is the Manitoba Forage and Grassland Association (MFGA)’s Aquanty project, a HydroGeoSphere model on the ARB primarily funded by the Canada and Manitoba governments through Growing Forward 2, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative. The MFGA Aquanty model will model the effects of flood and drought on soils and topography as well as simulating various mitigation measures to lessen flood and drought event impacts on agricultural lands.

Preston is co-chair on the MFGA Aquanty steering committee with Henry Nelson of MFGA. Nelson says the MFGA Aquanty project model is well underway and on schedule after 10 months of the 25 month project.

“It would be premature at this point to make any statement that advocates the use of the model for predicting the behavior of the 2017 spring melt,” says Nelson. “That being said, when complete, there will be extensive winter hydrologic process functionality built into the model which could warrant some application towards spring flood analysis in the future.

Nelson says once completed the MFGA Aquanty model will be a valuable tool for the ARB.

“At the end of March 2018 we will have a working model that can be used to predict the impact on water movement within the Assiniboine River Basin of certain basic changes to infrastructure as well as the impact of changes in the area dedicated to perennial forages and/or grasslands,” says Nelson,

adding at some point in the future the MFGA Aquanty model could possibly be used similarly with cover crops.

ARBI is also nearing completion of its “Framework for Water Stewardship” – a detailed document that identifies key issues of importance to basin-wide stakeholders. The Framework clearly defines ARBI’s goals, objectives, key strategies and expected outcomes that need to occur in the basin to reach the future that stakeholders envisage. Certainly, flood preparedness and flood mitigation are of significant importance within ARBI’s mandate.

“Flood preparation and mitigation activities have been ongoing across the basin since the 2011 flood,” says Wanda McFadyen, ARBI executive director. “While never a completed task, there is no question that everyone in the basin can be more comfortable with the knowledge that many improvements in addressing flooding concerns leave us much better prepared for whatever Mother Nature has in store for us this spring and in the future.”

In order to assist stakeholders across the basin, ARBI has developed a page on their website (<http://assiniboinerbi.weebly.com/>) with direct links to all government departments in the basin that provided flow and flood forecasting as a point of reference.

-30-

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