

January 1998

Bakken elected chairman as County Board begins new year

District 1 Commissioner Don Bakken, Fertile, will serve as chairman of the Polk County Board in 1998. Bakken succeeds District 3 Commissioner Lyle Eisert, Crookston, who directed the board in 1997.

Vice chair this year is Warren Strandell, East Grand Forks. He represents District 2. Other commissioners are Rupert Syverson, McIntosh, representing District 4, and Henry Vasek, rural Warren, who represents District 5.

Bakken, who was first elected to the board in 1980 and has been re-elected seven times, was sworn into office as a part of the annual re-organization meeting on Jan. 6.

"Our main tasks in 1998," he says, "are to get on with flood recovery and to get the county's financial house back in order.

"Last year was a disaster of major proportions... both with the flood and with financial turn-arounds that were the result of other causes. I feel, that with help from the State of Minnesota, East Grand Forks and all of Polk County can come back in good shape, but there will be some bumps in the road along the way."



Don Bakken

Bakken says early indications are that Polk County, through the recommendation of the citizens committee of health field representatives that was named last fall, will proceed with a plan for "county-based" purchase of medical services rather than participate in the state program. "The committee seems to feel, and I do, too, that we would be better off going with our own plan," Bakken says.

The participation of the citizens committee in the health care issue and the earlier involvement of a citizens task force in the development of the new county feedlot ordinance are very successful examples, he says, of how residents can be involved in government.

"We want to promote a more active citizenship," he says. "Involving more people in their government is good for the taxpayer; good for the board; and good for all of us.

"As always, we as a board welcome thoughts and help from our constituents in not only finding solutions to problems as they come up but also in planning for our future," Bakken says.

Loss of tax base presents a real problem

Effects of flood to be felt by all

The effects of the flood of 1997 will be felt in Polk County for the next five years and more.

And they will "touch" virtually every resident of the county.

That's the word from county officials as they concern themselves with not only the individual needs of each flood victim but also with the ability of county government to provide regular services to all residents.

While state and federal programs are effectively working in the attempt to get most people back on the track, Polk County's concerns extend beyond immediate needs to the succeeding years of 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002. That's a period in which the county tax base will be reduced by 15 percent and more because of the property "buy-outs."

In East Grand Forks alone, more than 500 homes (out of the city's 2,300 single family residences) are being bought out. That means that they will go off the tax rolls. Another 24 homes in rural Polk County are scheduled to be acquired by government buy-out programs.

Add in the more than 50 commercial properties that have been lost plus significant valuation decreases for flood damage (virtually every home in East Grand Forks had at least a flooded basement) and the extent of the problem becomes obvious.

"This a huge, huge loss to our tax base," says County Board Chairman Don Bakken. "And for a county that is already facing

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Rural home buy-outs are now under way

The magnitude and devastation of the flood of 1997 exceeded all expectations. There were approximately 270 homes in rural Polk County that were in some way affected by the flood. Of these homes, approximately 95 were inspected for structural damage. At this time, 24 homes are eligible to participate in the Voluntary Acquisition Program.

Polk County has contracted with Scott Knudson and Steve Griesert of Community Partners Research, Inc. to administer the Voluntary Acquisition Program. The county entered into contracts with Zimmerman Appraisal Co., East Grand Forks, and Stone Appraisal, Crookston, to conduct property appraisals, which determine the buy-out values. Homeowners will determine how quick the purchases will be completed. All of these homeowners will have an offer to accept or reject by the end of January.

Polk County has made arrangements with Joan Abercrombie of the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) in Mentor to initiate and implement the Housing Rehab Program. This program is designed to help make up the monetary "gap" between flood insurance, the homeowner's insurance, FEMA payments, SBA loans and the actual cost of repairs needed to put the home back in a safe and livable condition.

Many changes have taken place in these programs during the course of the summer, fall and early winter. Some were expected and some were not. The changes in program direction has created frustration for all parties involved, especially when the answer to a question only creates more unanswered questions.

Attempting to meet each FEMA or SBA deadline and work around a contractor, who is in high demand, makes everyone well aware that winter has arrived and of the uncertainty that next spring may bring. The patience and cooperation received from individuals in these programs in these most trying times has been greatly appreciated.

— Jon Steiner, Polk County Planner

Effects of flood

Continued from Page 1

budgeting problems for reasons beyond the flood, it presents an even bigger threat to our financial situation."

The impact of the problem is county-wide since all property owners will feel the effects of the lost tax base. That's because the lost revenue will have to be made up through an increase in the tax bill for all remaining properties in the county. This "tax shift" will remain in place in varying degrees for the five years or longer that it takes to rebuild the homes that were destroyed in the city of East Grand Forks and in rural areas along the Red River. None of this lost tax base problem was shown on the 1998 Truth in Taxation statements that were mailed to county residents in November.

There is a one-year reprieve before the problem shows up on tax bills because the State of Minnesota will make up the tax revenue losses in 1998. It will be in the years to follow — 1999 through about 2002 — that the lost tax base will be a problem.

"Without further help from the State of Minnesota, we could see the tax bills for some residents go up substantially during some of those years," Bakken says. "Or, we could see a combination of increased tax bills along with extensive lay-offs of county employees and greatly decreased services, including road maintenance and law enforcement."

The Polk County Board of Commissioners is working with area legislators and the Association of Minnesota Counties in an attempt to get additional state assistance to meet this crisis. Individual county officials are also planning trips to St. Paul to make other state legislators aware of the county's problem.

Mold problem not just in flood homes

Is mold a concern for homes impacted by the flood?

Yes, but mold is a concern for all homes not just those that experienced flood damage. When airborne mold spores are present in large numbers, they can cause allergic reactions, asthma episodes, infections and other respiratory problems for people.

Exposure to high spore levels can cause the development of an allergy to the mold. Some individuals appear to have an increased sensitivity to mold. When mold goes through periods of wetting then drying, the wood can eventually warp and cause walls to crack or become structurally weak.

Experts have been finding that some of the mold problems that homeowners

have been experiencing are not necessarily related to the flood but are longstanding problems that were exacerbated by the floodwaters. Mold needs moisture to thrive and multiply. Homes that were reconstructed too soon and not allowed to dry out thoroughly may be prone to ongoing mold problems. Other sources of indoor moisture include:

Backed up sewer; leaky roof, humidifiers, ice dams, damp basements, constant plumbing leaks, plants (watering them can generate large amounts of airborne moisture), and moisture not exhausted from combustion appliances.

The Minnesota Department of Health does not recommend testing as the first step to determine if you have a mold problem. Testing can be expensive. If you can

see or smell mold, you definitely have a moisture problem. However, keep in mind that 80 percent of the homes with mold do not have an identifiable odor nor readily visible signs.

The first step is to check for mold by looking under carpets, inside boxes of stored goods, behind stored materials, behind furniture placed against outside walls, attics and behind ceiling tiles and paneling. Then identify the moisture source and correct it. Lastly, clean, disinfect and dry the moldy area. Further information may be obtained by calling the Minnesota Extension Service at (218) 281-8696, or Polk County Nursing Service at 1-800-823-2858 or 281-3385.

— Brenda Menier, Polk County Director of Public Nursing

Help asked in identifying flow of flood waters

Citizen help in accurately identifying where floodwaters flowed is being asked by the Northwest Regional Development Commission (NWRDC) as a part of a project to map flooded areas in Polk County and the Red River Basin.

The information will be used to pinpoint properties that don't fit into existing recovery programs. Purposes of the mapping effort include:

1. To make sure that people who still need help are referred to the appropriate agency;
2. To identify areas that have substantial unmet needs;
3. To bring information on flood damage up to date to aid the further development of programs and policies.

Citizens are asked to call NWRDC with information on where water covered roads, farmlands or properties. Calls should be made to Kay Hegge at NWRDC, 218-745-6733.

Polk has high radon potential

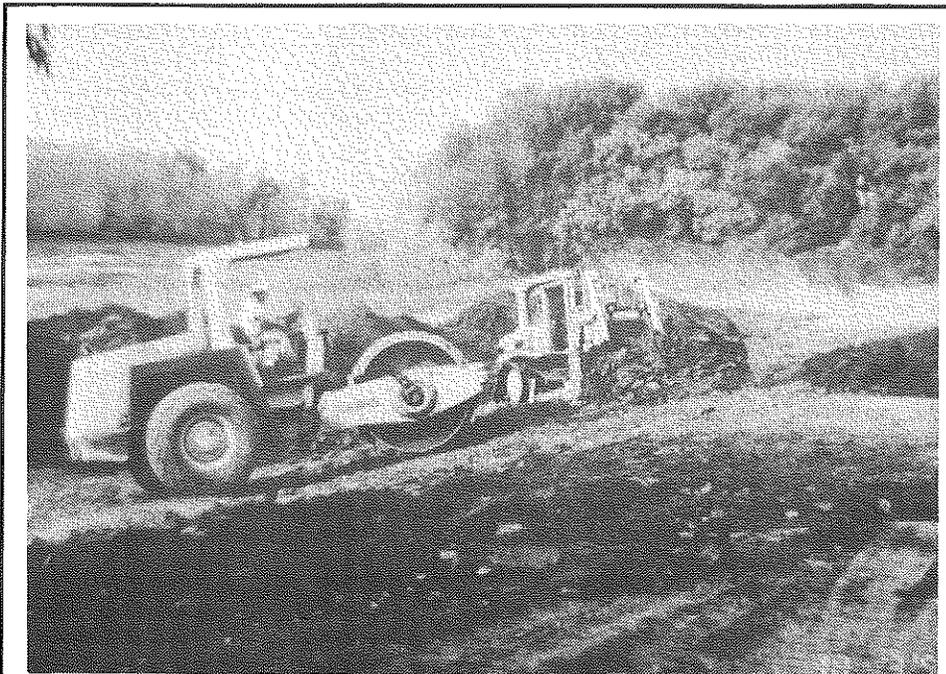
With the closed doors and windows of winter, we need to consider the quality of our indoor air. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, second only to smoking. If you are a smoker, the risks increase dramatically.

Radon is a radioactive gas that results from the natural breakdown of uranium in rock and soil. This gas seeps into our homes through the cracks in the foundation or openings around service pipes.

According to geological studies, Polk County has a high potential for radon.

Testing for radon is a very simple and inexpensive procedure. Installation of a ventilation system similar to what is used to avoid the build-up of sewer gas can be installed to reduce radon gas.

Testing kits can be purchased at Polk County Nursing Service, 1500 University Ave., Crookston, for \$4 per kit. This cost includes the lab analysis. For further information, please contact Vicky Korynta at (218) 281-3385.



Ring dikes to the rescue

Fifteen new farm ring dikes — 12 through planning and assistance provided by the Red Lake Watershed District and three that were engineered by the Middle River-Snake Watershed District — have been built in Polk County since the spring flood. With additional funding from the State of Minnesota, many more will be built. The RLWD has requests from another 40 landowners who want ring dike protection. The MR-SRWD, which serves a part of northwestern Polk County, has applications from about the same

number of landowners. With state funding, the RLWD dike program pays 87.5 percent of the cost of construction. The MR-SRWD program pays 80 percent of the work. Some landowners, not wanting to wait for approval of additional funding or for a watershed-designed project, have proceeded to build or improve their own ring dikes. This photo, taken by the Red Lake Watershed District, is of work that was done to protect the home of Willem and Gail Schrage, north of East Grand Forks.

Minnesota Recovers Task Force has programs to fill in the gaps

The Minnesota Recovers Task Force has developed a strategy to help flood victims who for whatever reason did not apply to FEMA or SBA for assistance, or who qualified for SBA assistance but turned down an SBA loan.

The strategy is a part of a program created to fill the gaps between what the FEMA/SBA process can provide and the amount necessary to return properties to pre-flood condition. It also covers the repair of health and safety standards and conducts activities to prevent damage from occurring again.

Eligibility for home rehabilitation deferred loans includes:

1. Households that applied to FEMA and *were not referred to SBA* because they didn't meet income thresholds;

2. Households that applied to FEMA and *were referred to SBA* but didn't follow through with the application;

3. Households that applied to SBA *but turned down the loan* because they didn't believe they could afford the payments;

4. Households that simply *didn't apply to FEMA/SBA*. Those households are too late for that resource but should apply for a loan from a bank. After accepting the bank loan, the state's deferred loan funds can be used to fill in the gap between the bank financing and the cost of the project.

Further information is available by contacting Kay Hegge, Region 1 flood recovery coordinator, Northwest Minnesota Regional Development Commission, 218-745-6733, or Colleen MacRae, information specialist, Northwestern Minnesota Disaster Response Network, 218-281-3940.

County Highway Department readies for program of summer road work

The Polk County Highway Department is busily preparing plans for the proposed road construction for 1998. Preliminary estimates indicate that the planned program could total \$6.2 million.

The county's road system is divided into two groups, the County State Aid Highway (CSAH) system and the County Road (CR) system.

The CSAH system is primarily funded with monies allocated to the respective county from revenue generated from the state gasoline tax and from motor vehicle excise taxes. The county board also allows for a certain amount of local effort on the CSAH system.

Because of budgeting problems, the County Road system projects planned for 1998 will likely be delayed one year. This road work is funded with revenues derived from the local levy.

Polk County also shares in varying amounts of federal revenue to be used in a variety of projects including bridges.

Projects that are planned and will be constructed unless situations arise that prevent carrying out the program are as follows:

CSAH 1 from Beltrami east city limits to CSAH 44, grade widen, milling and lay-down, bituminous overlay, aggregate shouldering. Estimated Cost - \$924,000 Project Length = 7.0 miles

CSAH 1 near Fosston on Sandhill River, replace SPPA with concrete box culvert. Estimated Cost - \$170,000 Project Length = 0.1 miles

CSAH 19 from TH 75 to the east county line, bituminous surfacing and aggregate shouldering. Estimated Cost - \$1,370,000 Project Length = 8.3 miles

CSAH 20 from CSAH 17 to CSAH 19, bituminous overlay and aggregate shouldering. Estimated Cost - \$88,000 Project Length = 2.0 miles

CSAH 21 from TH 75 to the east county line, grade widen, bituminous overlay with aggregate shouldering, Estimated Cost - \$1,857,000 Project Length = 8.4 miles

CSAH 51 from CSAH 14 to TH 9, grading and aggregate surfacing. Estimated Cost - \$464,000 Project Length = 4.3 miles

CSAH 70 from CSAH 22 to north coun-

ty line, Bituminous surfacing and aggregate shouldering. Estimated Cost - \$578,000 Project Length = 3.5 miles

CSAH 71 from TH 2 to CSAH 19, aggregate base, bituminous surfacing, aggregate shoulders. Estimated Cost - 90,000 Project Length = 1.0 miles

The County Road projects that are now in doubt because of financial shortfalls include:

CR 223 from TH 220 E. to TH 220 N., bituminous overlay with aggregate shoulders. Estimated Cost - \$70,000 Project Length = 1.6 miles.

CR 231 from CSAH 12 to CSAH 10, bituminous overlay with aggregate shoulders. Estimated Cost - \$66,000 Project Length = 1.5 miles

CR 243 approximately one mile south of CSAH 1, grading with aggregate surfacing. Estimated Cost - \$54,000 Project Length = 0.5 miles.

In addition to the projects listed above, it is anticipated that we will perform the contract administration for several town bridge replacement projects.

— Roger Diesen, Highway Engineer

Highway engineer points out benefits of sometimes controversial rural addressing plan

The concept of rural addressing in Polk County is still alive and kicking. Although controversy abounds, it would appear that the bronze wheels of progress are continuing to grind slowly forward.

A brief history on the project has the four counties of Marshall, Pennington, Polk and Red Lake working together on the concept.

Results of a recent survey of Polk County Departments conducted by a consortium comprised of three companies, Pro-West and Associates, Meta-Dynamics and Widseth, Smith and Nolting revealed the importance of rural addressing. Survey information and follow-up interviews of all department heads revealed that rural addressing topped the list of important needs for the County.

Many of the department heads indicated that they spend a considerable amount of time trying to locate clients. This list of interviewees included people from the social service, veteran's service, probation people, home health care people and other departments.

Several of the interviewees also stated that at times when a post office location is the basis, the address may overlap county lines which can cause confusion and delay of service. This writer also knows of situations in other counties where someone died when an emergency response team was unable to locate the proper location because of incomplete or confusing directions. The situation may have had a happy ending if rural addressing would have been in place.

I can visualize the possibility of this in Polk County in the event of a house fire in the winter because of the numerous minimum maintenance roads. The fireman may be able to see the location of the fire but may have to take a circuitous route because of impassable roads. A rural addressing system in conjunction with GIS would prevent this from happening.

The argument is made that we would have all these additional signs along the roadway. It would seem that one sign installation at each intersection is not excessive. It is conceded that the purchase and erection of each sign structure would appear costly for the entire county. However, what value can be placed on the possibility of saving one small child in a house fire or the loss of a loved one in the event of a heart attack.

It should also be mentioned that a rural addressing system would be beneficial to strangers coming into the county as an aid to locating a certain site. We have been contacted by the U.S. Census Bureau as they are interested in the project. They believe that it would be beneficial to that agency in developing a more accurate and meaningful census.

I am sure that those who are in opposition to a rural addressing system will be able to list several additional arguments favorable to their position. However, I am also sure that those who can visualize the benefits will prevail.

— Roger Diesen, Highway Engineer

Changing of the guards in Highway Department

Goosen out, Juvrud in as the 'man on call'

This winter when the wind blows and the county roads need an early morning plowing, don't call Dave Goosen.

Goosen, who retired on Nov. 1 after 39 years with the Polk County Highway Department, will instead be able to roll over and a blow a few more Z's.

The man who will now get those early morning calls is Don Juvrud, who has become the county's new maintenance supervisor. He has 28 years with the department and comes to the job knowing full well what it involves.

Previously a truck driver/snowplow operator with a route in southwestern Polk County, Don had an abrupt indoctrination into his new position. "We had a storm my first day on the job," he says of the Nov. 2 start. "I had to have the guys come down to the shop that Sunday to put the plows on and be ready for Monday. But since then, it's has been a pretty nice winter."

A native of Fosston, Juvrud attended Bemidji State University for three years and served in the Army for two years (including 15 months in Vietnam) before joining the Highway Department in 1969. He worked in the engineering department for 11 years before making the move to the maintenance side in 1980. He and his wife, Marilyn, live in Crookston and have three children, sons Robert and Paul, and a daughter, Erin.

"I look forward to working for the public to provide the best service that we can," he says. "I worked under Dave for 17 years, so I've had good training and I know the road system. I'm working with a great bunch of guys, who with Roger (County Engineer Roger Diesen) and the entire staff will make the job much easier."

He calls last winter the worst in his time on the job. "From beginning to end, there's no doubt it was the toughest winter," Don says. "And then we went right from plowing snow to repairing washouts."

Dave agrees that last winter was the worst for storms. "If we would have had those conditions 25 years ago," he says, "everything would have come to a standstill. As it was, we never had anything last winter that was closed for more than a



Dave Goosen



Don Juvrud

day. This winter, at least, the way it started, has been really good. We need a good winter to replenish the budget and get things back in shape."

While the winter of 1996-97 was the worst that Goosen has seen, an experience in 1966 stands out in his memory. It took two men to operate the county trucks back then and Dave and Roger Herberg were in a unit that was plowing County Road 51 in Hubbard and Scandia townships.

"We had 20 plus inches of snow in that storm. We got stuck and in the process of getting out, the transmission went out. We were out there alone and had to call the county shop on the radio to get directions on how to take the top off the tranny and get it working again. We were out there for more than 40 hours."

When Dave and his partner were finally able to limp back to Crookston for more permanent repairs, Dave recalls "sleeping in the cab for a couple hours while they worked on the truck. Then we went back out on the road again.

"Back in those days, the wind would blow right through the cab. You'd be in there with a big parka and the arm that was next to the window would be all full of snow. Not only are the trucks and all the equipment much nicer now, but the roads are better and wider, too."

The public expects more services all the time, Dave says, noting that it's tough to satisfy everyone. "You just do the best you can with what you have," he says. "I've always enjoyed working with people, so I'm going to miss that part of the job."

A native of the Euclid area, Dave graduated from high school at the Northwest

School of Agriculture in 1956. He started working part-time for Polk County that same year. He got a fulltime job in 1957 as one of the first hirings of former county engineer and current State Rep. Bernie Lieder.

Dave worked in the engineering department at first... on a survey crew. He left the department in 1963 to go farming only to return two years later. "When I came back," Dave says, "I went to the maintenance department because I could make

more money as a heavy-equipment operator."

He succeeded Vern Cormican as maintenance supervisor in 1985. "Vern and Bernie (Lieder) retired at the same time," Dave says. "When I retired last fall, I got a nice letter from Bernie in which he remembered that I was his first hiring and said how proud he was of what I had accomplished."

In retirement, family activities will be high on Dave's agenda. He has six children (sons Randy, Kim and Brent, and daughters, Corie, Tammy and Tanya) and his wife, Linda, has three (daughters Michelle and Tracy, and son Bryant). "I've got some work to do around the house, but I don't have any definite plans... except that I will do something," he says. "Last fall, I did a little deer hunting. I got two nice eight-point bucks, and I'll do some ice fishing this winter."

Polk County Board of Commissioners

Don Bakken (Chairman)
Warren Strandell Lyle Eisert
Rupert Syverson Henry Vasek

The board meetings are held at:

- 8:30 a.m. on the first Tuesday
- 1:20 p.m. on the third Tuesday
- 8:30 a.m. on the fourth Tuesday

Meetings are open to the public. For special accommodations or to request a spot on the agenda, call John Schmalenberg, Polk County coordinator, 281-5408.

Committee looking at liquor licenses, fees

The Polk County Board of Commissioners has placed a moratorium on the issuance of any new liquor licenses in rural Polk County. The moratorium, which will continue through April 1998, will allow the development of guidelines that will direct and control the growth of businesses which serve or sell alcoholic beverages.

A recently appointed Liquor Advisory Committee will draft a new ordinance to address public concerns related to the permitting of new businesses to serve or sell alcoholic beverages. The responsibility of this committee is to review information, determine the direction the county wants to encourage in this enterprise and draft regulations which define the direction.

The committee will also address such issues as setbacks, density limits, population requirements, frontage and parking requirements, license eligibility, and limits on the number of licenses issued by Polk County.

Committee members are: Jack Bailey, Ralph Larson, Rowann Larson, Greg Widseth, Bob Rosenberg, Ilane Rue, Wilbur Nielson, Angela Holkesvig, Doug Qualley (Sheriff's Department), Wayne Swanson (County Attorney's Office), Gerald Amiot (Auditor's Office), and Jack Schmalenberg (Coordinator's Office).

— Jon Steiner, County Planner

Mission of Northwestern Minnesota Disaster Response Network is meeting human needs

"Local agencies providing a human service response to area individuals and families." That's the mission of the Northwestern Minnesota Disaster Response Network.

The harsh winter and severe flooding in Minnesota's Red River Valley in 1997 left its disaster victims to face ongoing hardships. The displacement of so many people from their homes and businesses, regular routines and social structures has had a lasting impact, both physical and emotional. Once the immediate danger to human life was eliminated, the task of sorting through the remains and the rebuilding of life began.

Shock, grief, confusion, irritability, anxiety, fear, depression, anger, frustration, loss or increase in appetite, trouble sleeping, weariness and, voluntary isolation, are impacts being seen by crisis counselors working in all age groups. Over time, other issues are appearing including chemical abuse, child abuse, family stress, violence, and related problems.

In order to address the overwhelming emotional impact of the disaster, Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota, the Northwestern Mental Health Center, Inc., Polk County Social Services, Rural Life Outreach and Tri-Valley Opportunity Council have formed a service network.

Funded through a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant, from July 16, 1997 through April 15, 1998, Network staff have been providing a variety of outreach crisis counseling and referral services throughout a region covering Roseau, Kittson, Marshall, Pennington, Red Lake, Polk, Mahanomen and Norman counties.

The purpose of the Network is to assist individuals and families through the immediate stress and trauma and to help

them mobilize their own recovery efforts.

Fifty-two staff provide services that include assessments, crisis counseling and support services, education and training, resource referral and information and, outreach and home visits. Specific, targeted services are aimed at farmers, the unemployed, disabled persons, homeless persons, the mentally ill, the elderly, children and their families, adolescents, adults, and minority populations. Services are available throughout the week with telephone support and crisis line access available on a 24-hour basis.

Specific services provided include: Outreach to farmers facing threat of farm loss in all eight counties; assistance with mental health issues related to loss and change; referrals to financial counseling, mediation, and other agencies providing counseling services; dissemination of information about mental health and recovery organizations; and intensive follow-up services for elderly, disabled, mentally ill, and chemically dependent who require support in their recovery. Local allied service providers also receive help in addressing the needs of disaster victims.

Specific outcomes of the Network are:

- The development of crisis counseling services that address the needs of all people impacted by the flood and weather disaster of 1997 who have demonstrated a need for assistance with their recovery.

- The implementation of a process for assessment of individual, family, neighborhood and community needs.

- The improvement in the ability of people to cope with the impact of the weather/flood disaster.

- Increasing the ability of victims to respond positively to their fears, losses and changes in their lives.

- Increasing the ability of victims to manage their own recovery, and to minimize the residual impact of loss, stresses related to recovery, and fears/residual memories.

By July 15 over 13,000 direct contacts had been completed. Based upon the large numbers of people who are currently needing and receiving services and on related research from other disasters that identify the continuing impact, it is clear that crisis counseling services will be needed beyond April 15, 1997.

Based on current information collected by the Network, it is estimated that direct contacts will remain at approximately 2,000 per month. It is anticipated that as more and more people meet their physical needs, there will be an increase in crisis counseling once they focus on their emotional stability. Additionally, the onslaught of winter storms is sure to cause anxiety about the severity of what may happen, and cause flashbacks to those events that precipitated the flooding. Likewise, spring thaw and the anniversary of the flooding in April 1998 is expected to cause difficulties.

In addition to ongoing crisis counseling, there is a need to help those affected to re-establish their social and support structures. Continued education for survivors, the community-at-large, governmental organizations, and other agencies on dealing with disaster related issues is also needed.

In response to anticipated need, a request for continuation funding has been submitted to the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

For additional information on the Northwestern Minnesota Disaster Response Network, please contact Dan Wilson at (218) 281-3940.

Ways being sought to cut mounting costs of 'out of home placement'

The cost of the "out of home placement of juveniles" in Polk County has continued to rise dramatically over the last few years. Under current projections, \$3 million will be spent in Polk County in 1997 for the placement of juveniles in out of home settings.

The most alarming aspect of this expenditure is that historically 75 percent of the dollars spent have been county tax dollars. The rising cost of these placement activities has significant implication to the financial health and stability of our county's budget.

In response to the concern for this problem, the Polk County Board directed that a group be assembled to study the cause and effects related the trend of rising out of home placement costs and formulate response strategies.

The result of this effort must not only be directed at cost savings but at altering the current service delivery system to better meet the needs of families and children of our communities.

A focus group, comprised of department heads, supervisors, and line staff from a number of county agencies involved in the placement of juveniles have been meeting. The meetings of this group have yielded insight into the strengths and weaknesses of our current system and many observations have been shared as to how improvements can be made.

It is accepted that there is no one quick fix solution to this problem and a number of creative and innovative strategies will need to be implemented to truly have a significant impact on the cost and cost effectiveness of services provided to families and children.

The department heads from the focus group recently visited Anoka County to gain information on what successful strategies they have implemented to reduce the costs of out of home placement and improve services to juveniles and their families.

It was unanimously agreed that this visit will be extremely beneficial to the process of the focus group in developing strategies to address out of home placement costs. The group left Anoka County with valuable ideas and strong reinforcement for the direction that the focus group in Polk County is taking to respond to the issues of children at risk of placement and the costs of out of home placements.

The focus group is establishing recommendations to be presented to the Polk County Board on how to stabilize and reduce the rising costs of out of home placement of juveniles.

— Kent Johnson, Interim Director of Polk County Social Services

SCBG can help in rehabilitation

The Small Cities Block Grant program can help people who came up short of funds for rehabilitation after applying through flood insurance, FEMA or SBA.

In the program, which is operated by the state of Minnesota, the low- to moderate-income guidelines are waived.

Residents can apply for no interest loans of up to \$25,000 for rehabilitation of single family homes. The loans can be forgiven after 10 years. In some cases, loans of more than \$25,000 can be approved.

For Polk County residents, help in filling out the application forms is available by contacting the Northwest Multi-County Housing & Redevelopment Authority, 218-637-2345. Residents of East Grand Forks should contact Wynne Consulting, Inc., 218-425-7466.

4 possible solutions are identified for high water on lakes

The East Polk Soil & Water Conservation District has identified four possible solutions to the high water levels that have caused problems for property owners on Union Lake and Lake Sarah.

The options were developed as a result of a request from Roland Gagner and Jack Bailey, who are among the affected lakeshore property owners.

The possible solutions have been discussed at various meetings of the Union Lake Sarah Improvement Association and also by the Red Lake and Sand Hill watershed districts and by the Polk County Board.

We must understand that these are only possibilities and that we are open to any suggestion. There are positive and negative points with each option and that each can involve other landowner concerns.

The options are:

Option 1 — Restore wetlands upstream to help hold back some water. Also look at the possibility of installing structures on Tee and Bradley lakes.

Option 2 — Allow the water to follow what appears to be the natural drainage way north of Lake Sarah by installing a culvert or tile under CSAH 41 on a route through Lake 18 to Bee Lake and then into Judicial Ditch 73. Once the water gets into JD 73, there are many possibilities, including:

A. From JD 73 at the southeast corner of Section 32, Badger Township, route the water north a half mile to JD 111.

B. From JD 73 at the southwest corner of Section 32, Badger Township, route the water north 2 1/2 miles to JD 111.

A control structure could be built in JD 73 to direct the water north at either option A or B. When Maple Lake is in need of water, the structure could be opened to allow water to flow into that body.

Option 3 — Allow the water to follow the natural flow out of Lake Sarah into JD 73 but then let the water continue into Maple Lake. Place an overflow pipe at northwest corner of Maple Lake at the same elevation as the existing outlet, and tile or open the ditch in Section 14 of Godfrey Township.

Option 4 — Connect Union and Lake Sarah and pipe the water from the west end of Union to a proper outlet point to be determined by a survey. This may extend approximately 1 1/2 miles from Union Lake to get a natural flow and would start on U.S. Fish & Wildlife land.

"With control structures and pipes, we can control water elevation. These elevations could be managed to lower or raise the water as needed and timed as to not create problems downstream," Lee says.

"One must also realize, though, that impoundments and water retention will not solve the flooding issues. If every pond, wetland, lake, etc. is full of water and we get more rain or snow, where is that water to go?"

— Gary Lee, East Polk Co. SWCD

County seeks grant for pilot project

Polk County has submitted a grant application to the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance requesting financial support for a pilot project to test the beneficial utilization of ash from the waste-to-energy plant.

The grant request totals more than \$100,000 and is a matching grant whereby OEA would provide 50 percent of the funding. The county's portion of the project can be in dollars or with "in-kind" services. The majority of Polk's match will be in-kind.

The goal of the project is to save the county money by diverting waste ash that is a by-product of burning solid waste at the incinerator in Fosston from costly storage in the county landfill near Gently.

The waste ash can be used as a base material for roadbeds along with crushed glass, or as an ingredient in asphalt. There may be some costs associated with screening the ash or a pre-treatment of it prior to its usage.

The utilization of ash will make waste-to-energy plants more economically competitive in the free market having lost many of the original flow control tools once available to assure waste would be processed and not just landfilled. Resource recovery to survive as a solid waste management alternative needs innovative approaches such as ash utilization to be cost-competitive.

The technical feasibility of using municipal solid waste (MSW) ash residues for road construction uses has been demonstrated in Western Europe. In Denmark, processed ash has been used for development of granular sub-base for parking lots, bicycle paths, paved and unpaved roads, and a number of small projects. Similarly, granular sub-based paving applications has been carried out in Germany.

The use of MSW ash for construction of granular base (or fill-in road base) embankments has been carried out in the Netherlands. The Dutch have also used processed ash as an aggregate in asphalt. Sweden has used MSW ash in pavement applications.

Utilizing ash in roadbed material had a two-fold effect. First,

the ash is beneficially used and is not disposed of as a waste in the landfill. This will minimize the stress on landfills. Second, the ash is utilized as a resource rather than as a waste by-product; therefore, these tons of beneficially-used ash will replace equivalent tons of virgin resources that would be extracted from the land. This will conserve natural resources and reduce waste at its source.

The pilot project will produce information on both usefulness and environmental impact of utilizing ash in roadway materials. The integrity of the material will be tested and observed, drawing conclusions on its usefulness. Pollution detection equipment will ascertain the potential environmental hazards that may be encountered with ash utilization. The results of the careful observation and testing will yield a protocol that is transferable to the utilization of ash from all waste-to-energy facilities in Minnesota and across the nation.

Currently, Polk County pays \$25 per ton, or approximately \$150,000 annually to dispose of ash at the Polk County Landfill. This ash is placed in lined cells specifically constructed for incinerator ash. These cells each cost \$200,000 to \$250,000 to construct and last approximately three to four years.

To gain approval from Minnesota PCA and to evaluate long-term performance and installation requirements on future projects, a monitoring and reporting plan will be developed. This plan will discuss monitoring of the use of the ash from cradle to grave, including the screening process, asphalt mix plant, mixing into subgrade, and monitoring after placement. Monitoring will include, but not be limited to:

- Air quality
- Construction
- Surface water samplings
- Soil sampling and testing.

The details regarding reporting will also be provided to include periodic status reports and contents of the final project report.

— **Bill Wilson, Solid Waste Manager**

What went right and what went wrong

Post-flood health needs should have double focus

Post-flood public health needs focus on two main areas:

- Assisting families and individuals with the long-term recovery process; and
- Assessing and learning from the disaster, the emergency response system, and subsequent recovery efforts.

Fortunately, there has been a good amount of recovery dollars to address child care, acute mental health needs of flood victims, and housing needs for those who qualify.

What appears to be missing are funds to address issues that may be chronic or show up once the acute recovery effort is

over.

Public health plays a major role in assessment, advocacy and assisting people in accessing needed services. There will be an increased demand for these services as people struggle to put their lives together over the long haul and find that life won't be the same ever again.

Federal, state and local officials would be remiss in not taking this opportunity to assess what went right and what went wrong in implementing and coordinating disaster response services. We were truly fortunate that there were no injuries, disease outbreaks or loss of life considering

the magnitude of the disaster.

All of the emergency response workers deserve commendations for their hard work. The assessment should focus on how to improve our response system, not find fault with any particular individual or organization.

The assessment and learning needs to be a shared process that is reflective of the state and local partnership. This information will benefit the entire state not just those regions that were affected by the flood.

— **Brenda Menier, Polk County Director of Public Nursing**