

Agenda Item: 6.

Memo to: Programs, Projects and Operations Subcommittee
From: Jim Becic
Date: 29 August, 2013
Re: Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) Grant Application for Acquisition of Fee Title or Conservation Easements at the Confluence of the Platte to the Missouri River.

In April, 2013 the NET approved a P-MRNRD \$2 million grant request for assistance in setting back the Existing R-613 levee as part of the R-613 and R-616 certification project. The setback would have allowed nearly 400 acres of Missouri River habitat to be reconnected to the river floodplain. The NET's funding would pay for the difference in levee construction cost from certifying/rebuilding in the existing location or moving it to open up the floodway. This confluence site had been identified as a unique area for cultural/historical reasons, biological reasons and human uses as potential trail usage, viewing blinds, hunting, open space, etc. It was also supported by Sarpy County, the City of Bellevue, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Nebraska Game and Parks, environmental groups and a priority area for the Back to the River, Inc. organization.

The District had been in discussions with the US Army Corps of Engineers (COE) for them to purchase the nearly 400 acres needed for the setback (Exhibit A), using their Missouri River Recovery Program funding authority. Once the land was acquired by the COE, the NRD would move/rebuild the levee. Initial response had been very positive and the NET Grant Application was made and approved based upon this scenario.

Subsequent to the District's Grant Application to the NET, the COE made a determination not to pursue acquisition of the site and additionally determined that the levee setback would not be allowed, requiring instead that the Levee needed to be recertified in the original location.

This lack of support by the Corps, prompted the P-MRNRD to request from the NET Board a modification of the originally approved grant - from construction of a levee setback to acquisition. It was indicated that the ultimate purpose of the initial proposal was for riverine habitat restoration and this modification request was actually an enhancement of the original by allowing for additional wetland acres (Exhibit B) totaling approximately 750 acres. The NET Board at their 19 July, 2013 meeting denied this modification request stating that this was not a modification but an entirely different project. They however urged the P-MRNRD to submit a funding request to the NET for acquisition costs at their September, 2013 Grant Cycle. The new application to the NET would request acquisition funding for 80% of the estimated cost of \$4.5 million dollars or \$3.6 million with the remaining 20% or \$900 thousand obtained from other sources.

Management recommends that the Programs, Projects and Operations Subcommittee recommend to the Board of Directors that the Papio-Missouri River NRD submit a \$3.6 million Grant Application to the Nebraska Environmental Trust for funding of the acquisition of fee title or conservation easements in the area of the confluence of the Platte and Missouri Rivers.

Sarpy County, Nebraska

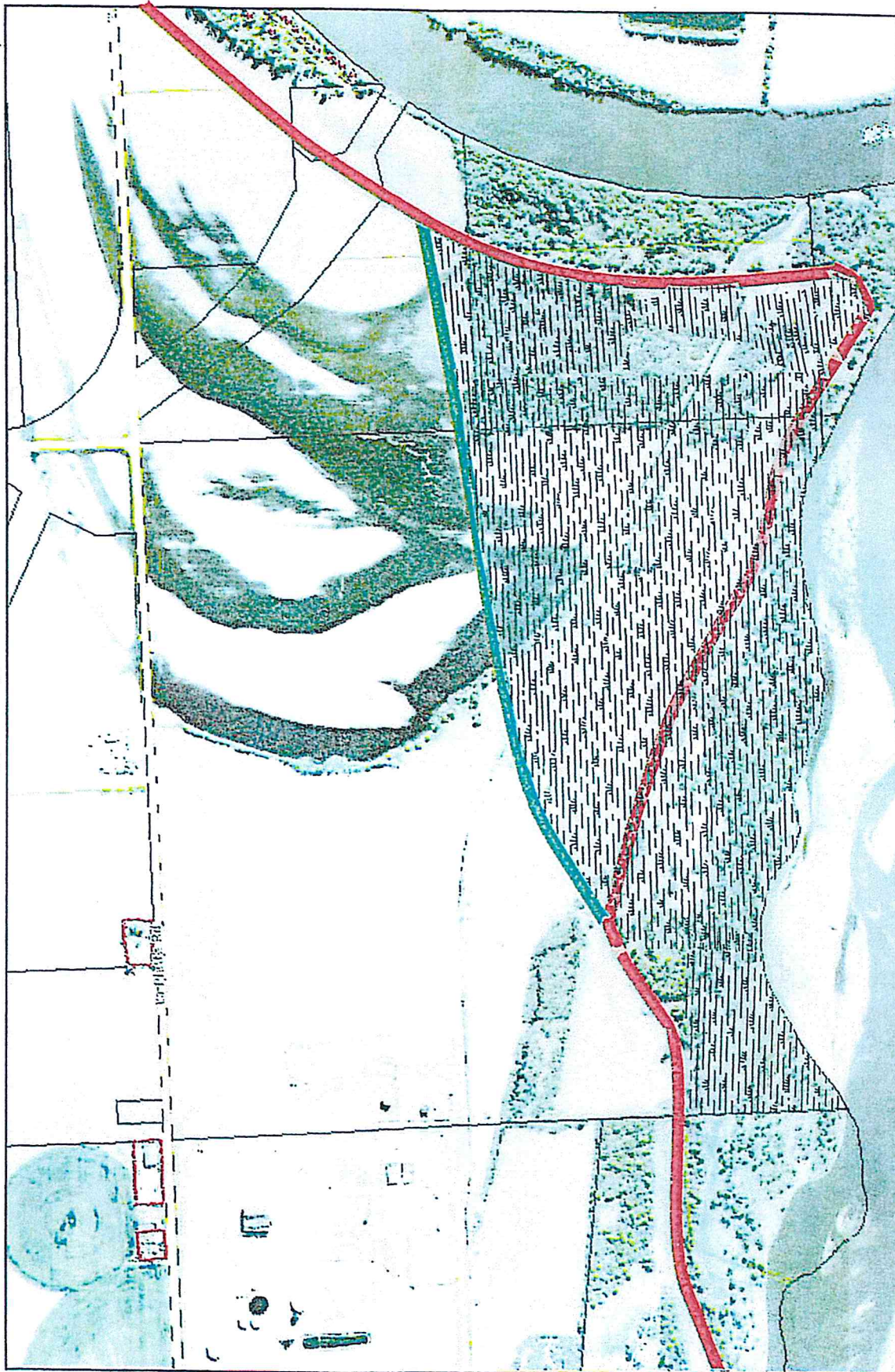


Exhibit "A"

Existing R-613 Levee: Red

Proposed R-613 Levee Setback: Green

Proposed R-613 Levee Setback Acquisition - Approximately 400 acres: Hashed

Sarpy County, Nebraska

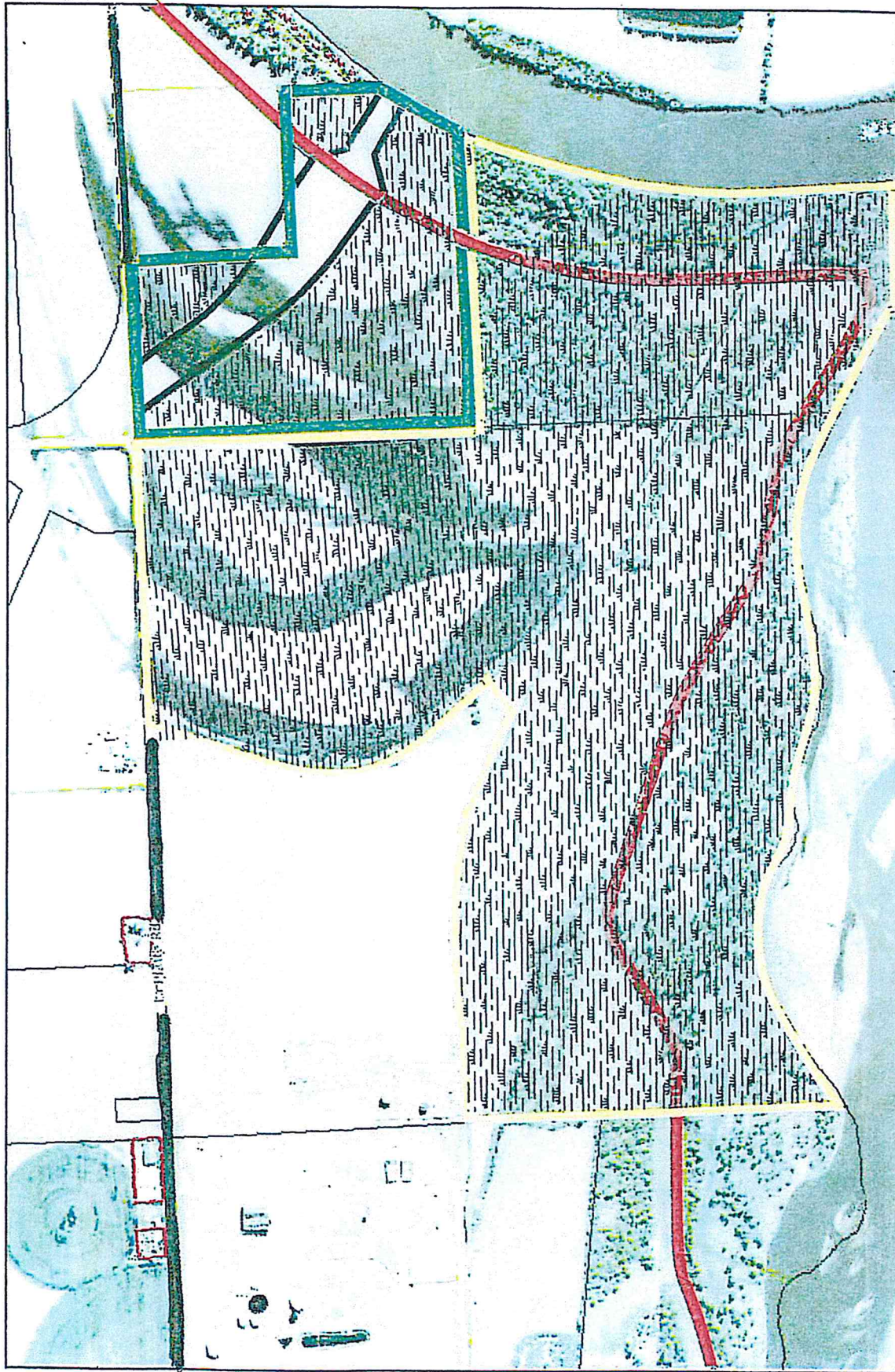


Exhibit "B"

Existing R-613 Levee: Red
 Proposed 'NEW' Acquisition Boundary (PCS) – Approximately 600 acres: Yellow/Hashed
 Proposed 'NEW' Acquisition Boundary (MUD) – Approximately 91 acres: Green/Hashed