

Crestwood residents seek solution to erosion

By Karyn Spencer
The Forum

Aaron and Mary Longtine have lost their footing to the Red River.

Erosion has eaten their backyard, leaving only 15 feet between the riverbank and their home in the Crestwood subdivision south of Moorhead.

Now the Longtines and several neighbors will ask Minnesota legislators to help them stand their ground.

The problem: Any possible solution would be so spendy that it

might be cheaper to buy the four endangered houses.

In 1992, the Longtines built their house outside the flood plain on a lot with a long, sloping bank.

The theory is that water is pooling underground, undermining the bank and causing it to collapse.

Homeowners have been trying solutions, to no avail. The erosion had been steady until this year's flood, which took a hefty 5-foot hack.

The Longtines had to rearrange the stairs off their deck because the first step had become a killer –

a 7-foot drop.

Homeowners are upset disaster agencies have refused to help because the homes are livable – for now.

An in-depth study to find a solution could cost up to \$50,000, Clay County planning director Tim Magnusson told the county board last week.

Proposed solutions like driving metal sheets into the ground or anchoring metal along the bank with cables have price tags up to \$1 million.

"That's the thing. How much can you spend?" Magnusson said.

Staff from the National Resource Conservation Service in Fergus Falls, Minn., have suggested placing stone riprap at the riverbank's toe. It's one of the least expensive options, but they can't guarantee it will help.

"If you really want a true fix, you've got to go to the Legislature and do a buyout or something," Scott Smith of the NRCS told county commissioners.

County officials are collecting information to give to local legislators for the next session.

While homeowners still would prefer a fix, they understand buyouts may be the only option.

Homeowner Dan Paulson's request is so simple, it almost sounds funny. "I just want my children to have a safe place to live and not fall into the river," he said.



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The banks of the Red River are jagged and crumbling behind Aaron and Mary Longtine's home in the Crestwood subdivision south of Moorhead.



Photo submitted to The Forum

The Longtine's backyard gradually sloped to the Red River in 1993.