

Council to help fix slumping river banks

By Andrea Domaskin

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Six Cass County homeowners will receive help from the Red River Regional Council to stabilize the slumping banks of the Red River.

The Grafton, N.D.-based council, which normally works in more rural areas, agreed to pay 60 percent of some costs involved for the properties in the Kensington Place subdivision south of Fargo. Homeowners would pay the rest.

But there's a catch. Because the council will spend about \$100,000, it wants assurances that future landowners won't make changes that contribute

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to river bank slumping.

County commissioners voted Monday to sponsor the agreement with the homeowners.

Commissioner Ken Pawluk, who said he was involved with the project through the Lake Agassiz Regional Council, requested that the contracts state the project is a demonstration.

The funding is likely a one-time deal, Pawluk said.

The agreement would prevent the landowners from activities such as changing vegetation, irrigating their

backyards or installing drain fields in their backyards.

Slumping is a common problem on river banks in the Red River Valley. It stems from the valley's thick blanket of problematic clays.

"Those soils are unstable in any condition, but when you start to change the landscape, the hydrology, the vegetation, the soils become more unstable," said David Rush, environmental projects coordinator for the Red River Regional Council.

To help stabilize the slumping banks, workers will essen-

tially flatten the slopes.

Workers will remove soil to reduce weight from the top and then place rocks at the bottom to add weight there. Then they'll plant deep-rooted vegetation.

The project won't stop bank slumping, both Pawluk and Rush said.

"I'd hate for anybody to get the misconception that we're going to go in and fix it and it will never move again," Rush said. "What we're doing is slowing that natural process down."

The cost of moving septic

drain fields is not included in the Red River Regional Council's cost-share agreement. That will be an expense for the landowners, who did not attend Monday's commission meeting.

They are Roger and Judith Schwinghammer, Thomas and Ruth Zaeske, Scott and Mary Handy, Steven and Christine Huber, Amity Technology and Kenneth and Nola Storm.

Cass County Planner Mike Zimney estimated it would cost each homeowner \$5,000 to \$10,000 move to the drain fields.

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