

Ways to stop shifting river bank studied

By Ed Maixner

STAFF WRITER

At a meeting Tuesday to find a solution to slumping river banks at Fargo's Trollwood Park, local planners and engineers learned there are no easy or inexpensive answers.

"I'm afraid we haven't come up with any solutions, and we haven't come up with any money," said James McLaughlin, chairman of the water resources committee of the Fargo-Moorhead Metro Council of Governments.

Maurice Bowers, soils engineer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at St. Paul, Minn., suggested the best response to the eroding river banks in the Trollwood Park and Edgewood Golf Course area is to move buildings away from the banks and let the banks sink.

Endangered are a large barn at Trollwood and the Edgewood clubhouse. Graves in the county's pauper cemetery also are being disturbed.

Bowers, who completed a soil profile and study of the bank instability, said the problem is common along the Red River. Beneath the surface is soil comparable to "100 feet of peanut butter," he said.

Local officials quizzed Bowers and Tom Raster, a civil engineer and planner for the Corps, about at least two other options.

One is a dam downstream from Trollwood, perhaps at the County Road 20 crossing. The idea, said Fargo Parks Superintendent Bob Johnson, is to increase pressure against the banks by raising the river level. Johnson said no slumping has occurred along local river banks where low-head dams hold back some water.

Engineers have also considered cutting new channels across bends in the river, thereby moving the river some distance from Trollwood and the Edgewood clubhouse.

Raster said cutting channels would be "horribly expensive and administratively difficult." It could arouse opposition from downstream property owners because straightening a river's channel can exacerbate flooding downstream. Also, the purchase of land on the Minnesota side of the river to cut the channels would be expensive, he said.

Bowers and Raster said a dam might actually reduce bank slumping, but little evidence exists to support the theory that higher water will arrest the slumping.