

**Abstract Submission for 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian River Heritage Conference**

Title of Presentation:

Transboundary Cooperation on the Red River of the North

Category: Panel Discussion

Presenter:

Mr. Dan Wilkens

Recent Chair of Red River Basin Commission,  
Treasurer Member of Red River Watershed Management Board  
Executive Director of MN Sand Hill Watershed District.

219 N. Mill Street; Fertile, MN 56540

(218) 945-3204

[shrwd@gvtel.com](mailto:shrwd@gvtel.com)

## Abstract:

The Red River of the North begins at Lake Traverse in South Dakota and flows north across the international boundary into Manitoba, through the City of Winnipeg, into Lake Winnipeg and from there into Hudson Bay. The states of Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota and the Provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan make up the Red River drainage basin. In addition to these provincial and state boundaries there is the international boundary between two countries.

The problems that affect this basin vary from: water supply, flooding, competing use of land, economic development, restoration, multi-jurisdictional political boundaries and the lack of basin wide data to guide decision makers. Efforts to work across these boundaries have taken many forms. Some efforts are at the local level where are Watershed Districts, Water Resource Districts, Conservation Districts, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and Soil Conservation Districts are in place somewhere in the basin to address first hand the problems from a local perspective. Other efforts are larger and more regional that include joint powers boards, joint water boards, regional groups working on transboundary tributaries and other efforts to move beyond local political boundaries. Still other efforts are international in scope like the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 which influences how Canada and the U.S. work toward cooperation at the border.

Working to bring all of these efforts into focus and to promote cooperation at each level and across all boundaries is the Red River Basin Commission (RRBC). RRBC is a registered U.S. non-profit and a Canadian charity with offices in both countries. RRBC brings together local leaders from county, city, municipal, water coops and watershed levels of government; citizens; 1<sup>st</sup> nations; environmental; and provincial, state, and federal levels of government. These representatives and many others from around the basin have worked to develop a Natural Resource Framework Plan that has identified goals, objectives, and actions for 13 critical areas in the basin that they are now working individually or in some cooperative manner to implement. The cooperative basin wide efforts that RRBC is leading and facilitating have developed into a model for how international watershed cooperation can make a difference.

## Biographical sketch:

### Daniel Wilkens

Born (1943) and raised south of Crookston, MN

Attended High School at the Northwest School of Agriculture at Crookston, MN. Now UMC

Attended College at UND and U of M St. Paul Campus graduating with a BS degree from the College of Ag Engineering.

Served 6 years in the Minnesota Air National Guard in Minneapolis.

Married, Wife Pamela, 5 Children. 2 Grandchildren

Assisted his Father on a 3000-acre grain farm from the 40's to the 60's. Dan and Pam operated a 3000-acre grain and dairy farm in the 70's and 80's. Farm is currently in CRP.

Served on the Board of Directors and as CEO of the Agassiz Federal Credit Union in Crookston, MN

Served on the Fertile City Council.

In 1974 established the Sand Hill River Watershed District and was appointed manager. Held that position for 25 years and 4 months at which time was hired as the districts first administrator, which is his current position.

Was involved in the formation of the Red River Watershed Management Board in 1976 and has served as the Sand Hill River Watershed member on that board to date. Was elected treasurer in 1991 following Roger Ward, the organizations first treasurer. Currently the only remaining original board member.

Involved in the Minnesota Red River Mediation Effort. The Flood Damage Reduction Work Group reached an agreement in December of 1998 which lays out a process by which all stakeholders take part in reaching agreement on Flood Damage Reduction Projects. Was the first to sign the agreement.

Also involved with the Red River Basin Board serving on the Plan Management, Executive, Finance, and Human Resource Committees and as Chair of the Drainage Inventory Task Force. Currently holds the position of Ex Officio U S Chair of the Red River Basin Commission.

Current Chair of the Minnesota Drainage Inspectors Association.

Serves on the Legislative Drainage Work Group Committee that addresses drainage issues in the state of Minnesota.

Appointed as the United States representative to the International Red River Board, a branch of the International Joint Commission, which deals with water issues along the international boundary.