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Water Forecasting Platform Soon to be Launched for the Pembina River Valley

AAFC-funded forecast tool will help inform decisions with RealTime water data

Winnipeg, MB – (February 15, 2023) – An exciting, high-tech modelling project led by Pembina Valley Watershed District (PVWD) and Manitoba Forage and Grassland Association (MFGA) that will have the ability to forecast and detail water resources and water movement in the Pembina River Valley for farmers and land managers is nearing completion and readying for public launch.

With funding of up to $152,250 provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's (AAFC) AgriRisk Initiatives Research and Development stream via the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, PVWD and MFGA have partnered with Aquanty, a software firm from Waterloo, Ontario, to construct a high-resolution HydroGeoSphere (HGS) simulation model that encompasses the full area of the PVWD. The tool will have the ability to forecast water resources such as soil moisture, groundwater, and surface water flow within a decision support tool that farmers, land managers, and decision-makers can access via a portal at MFGA.net.

"Manitoba farmers know firsthand the impacts of climate change and severe weather conditions that continue to threaten their livelihoods," said the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. "This new forecasting tool will help farmers and stakeholders plan ahead and make informed decisions to better manage these risks and increase resiliency across the Pembina Valley Watershed District."

The Pembina Valley watershed is a vitally important Manitoba region, according to PVWD Manager Ryan Sheffield, with a tremendous agricultural presence across the 5,000-sq.km Canadian portion of the Pembina

watershed. The user-friendly forecasting tool will enable agricultural producers, communities and conservation planners to look at key factors such as what moisture is in the soil as well as satellite imagery down to the field level, which will enhance short-term and long-term decision making throughout the PVWD.

"The ability to access this tool will be a valuable asset to have on so many levels, from farming to wetland conservation to infrastructure decisions," says Ryan Sheffield, PVWD Manager. "From a planning perspective, once we all get up to speed on what the tool can exactly do and tell us, we will have access to a database around water movement and water resources that we have never had before."

The Pembina Valley project will represent the second major water forecasting platform for MFGA. Both forecasting tools will be hosted on the MFGA website. The Pembina Valley forecasting tool is the first to include water courses of the Red River Basin. MFGA has a concurrent water forecasting tool project underway in the Assiniboine River Basin that is also on track for completion and launch before the end of March 2023.

"Now that we are close to completing this powerful water decision-support tool in the Pembina Valley watershed, we will work closely with PVWD to ensure all audiences are aware of the tool, with those that want to learn more to have the chance to test it and provide key feedback before we launch publicly," said Lawrence Knockaert, MFGA chair and dairy farmer from nearby Bruxelles, MB. "We want to ensure farmers and stakeholders will be able to use it to the best of their ability. MFGA and PVWD will be hosting and organizing workshops in the next month to start that process and training."

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