BUFFALO-RED RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT
BARNESVILLE, MINNESOTA 56514
123 FRONT STREET SOUTH – PO BOX 341 PHONE 218-354-7710

MINUTES FOR MANAGERS’ MEETING
January 12, 2009

The Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), held their annual meeting on Monday, January 12, 2009, at 7:00 PM in the Barnesville office. BRRWD Managers present were Roger G. Ellefson, Curtis M. Nelson, John E. Hanson, Gerald L. VanAmburg, and E. Robert Olson. Others attending included: Bruce E. Albright, BRRWD Administrator, Erik S. Jones, Engineer, and Julie Jerger, Houston Engineering, Inc. (H.E.); BRRWD Lobbyist Joel Carlson; and landowners: LeRoy Berman, Ellen Bergman, and Mark Yaggie.

Chairman Ellefson called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. He announced that the proceedings were being taped to aid in preparation of the minutes.

Secretary's Report. The Board reviewed draft minutes for the 11/24/08 regular meeting and the 6/30/08 Project No. 62, Clay/Wilkin Judicial Ditch No. 1 (J.D. 1), Branch No. 4-Improvement/Extension Final Hearing. Motion by Nelson to approve the minutes. Seconded by Hanson. Approved.

Treasurer's Report. The Board reviewed the year-end financial reports, and the current 2009 monthly statements. The year-end transactions included interest allocation and account transfers. Albright reported that the accounts are all in order and ready for the 2008 audit. The office is putting together the 2008 W-2/1099 tax information for Gilbertson Tax Office. The Board also reviewed the Accounts Receivable Summary and the 2008 ditch spraying cost breakdown. The Board discussed the 2008 administrative expenditures and a possible Legislative amendment to raise our $250,000 administrative budget cap.

Albright reported that we received $315,557.79 for the Oakport Flood Mitigation project and $29,425.14 for the Manston Slough Restoration project from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). We also received the State Market Value Credits payment ($119,988.03). We currently have a total of $997,774.95 on hand. Albright sent a letter to John Butze regarding his delinquent 2007 ringdike payment ($2,187.41). We are also still waiting for Clay County to forward their 2008 ditch/property tax payment ($183,097.06). Nelson mentioned that the new federal mileage rate for 2009 is $0.55/mile. Motion by VanAmburg to approve the Treasurer's Report and year-end account transfers. Seconded by Olson. Approved.

Other business brought before the Board included:

LaBelle/Duck Lakes Outlet. Landowners LeRoy and Ellen Bergman, who live north of Lake Park, attended the meeting to discuss the status of the investigation of the highwater complaint they filed last fall regarding LaBelle Lakes. At the 12/22/08 meeting, the Board authorized H.E. to contact a local tiling contractor for an estimate for installing a tiled outlet for the lake. Jones noted that he contacted the Ellingson Company, but they have not furnished the information yet. The Board discussed the size and type of tiling that could be used for the project. The landowner, Loren Jetvig, has suggested a tiled outlet. Albright contacted Brad Grant, Becker Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), to obtain aerial photographs of the area to determine if a block had been installed in the outlet channel. It appears that the
aerial slides do show that a dike/berm was installed in approximately 2007/2008. The Board discussed options for addressing the possible Rules violation. In addition, the alleged work might have violated several other agency regulations, including DNR protected wetland area impact, Army Corps of Engineers (COE) rules regarding fill in wetlands, and the Farm Bill in terms of Swampbuster. Albright will continue the investigation and plans to meet with the Becker SWCD on 1/15/09. He will report to the Board at their 1/26/09 meeting. Bergman feels something needs to be done, or his driveway will be inundated this spring.

**Wilkin County Ditch No. 40.** Albright reported that the DNR met with Dave and Mark Yaggie on 1/02/09 in the BRRWD office to discuss Yaggie's options regarding his irrigation well in conjunction with the DNR Lawndale Trout Stream Restoration project. On 1/08/09, Yaggie met with Albright and Manager Ellefson on the same issue. Dave Yaggie would like to see parts of County Ditch No. 40 abandoned after the restoration project is completed. He would also like to install diking along his property to keep the rerouted water from breaking out during high water events and flowing south across his agricultural property. The DNR is willing to consider Yaggie's proposals. Yaggie also feels that the ditch needs work, and he is concerned that when the DNR completes their restoration project, County Ditch No. 40 won't be maintained properly. The Board had an extended discussion with Mark Yaggie about his family's concerns regarding the DNR project. Yaggie feels now is the time to get what he wants, because after the DNR reroutes the trout stream, the BRRWD and the DNR will forget about his concerns. The Board assured Mark Yaggie that we will continue to maintain County Ditch No. 40 in accordance with Minnesota Drainage Law, Chapter 103E. **Tabled** pending the DNR's research regarding Yaggie's irrigation options.

**Permit No. 08-105, The Nature Conservancy (TNC).** Applicant proposes to restore approximately 100 acres of wetlands on the Williams Tract in Sections 25 and 26, Riverton Township, and Section 1, Elkton Township, Clay County. On 1/07/09, TNC and the BRRWD met with Lee and Brandi Alm to discuss their concerns about TNC's proposed wetland restorations. The Alms feel that the project could cause increased flooding on their property. The Board discussed several options that the parties could consider regarding this issue. The Board agreed to contact the Alms before we take action on TNC's permit, so that they can have the opportunity to comment on the Board's decision. **Tabled** pending more information. TNC is in the process of soliciting bids for the project, and would like the BRRWD to act on the application in the relatively near future.

**Minch Lawsuit.** Albright noted that Minch's appeal has been forwarded to the Minnesota Supreme Court, and we are waiting for them to schedule a hearing date, unless they decide to dismiss the case.

**Phillip Rogers Wetlands Restoration Project (WRP).** Rogers has proposed a possible WRP project on his property in the SW¼, Section 5, Humboldt Township, Clay County. The BRRWD would be interested in developing the site with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) so that it could incorporate both flood damage reduction (fdr) and natural resource enhancement (nre). H.E. has started investigating the proposal. Neighboring landowner David Lass has indicated that he supports Rogers' proposed project.

**Permit Nos. 09-01 & 09-02, Robert Norby.** For Permit No. 09-01, applicant proposes to reverse the grade of a field ditch in the S½NE¼, Section 22, Kragnes Township, Clay County, to reroute flows back into the Buffalo River rather than north to Clay County Ditch No. 49. This work would only affect high water events. For Permit No. 09-02, applicant proposes to continue his diking project in the NW¼, Section 22, Kragnes Township, which he started last summer along the Buffalo River. The Board had an extended discussion regarding the proposed work. They felt they needed more information before they could act on the applications. There is also a possibility that Norby may need a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) from the Clay County Planning and Zoning Commission for work in the floodplain. **Motion** by VanAmburg to **table** Permits 09-01 and 09-02, pending Manager field review and further detailed information regarding both projects. The Board directed Albright to send Norby a letter to notify him regarding the Board's decision. **Seconded** by Hanson. **Approved.**
Permit No. 09-03, Parke Township. Applicant proposes to install 1,500' of tile in Sections 34 and 35, to control the elevation of Dewey Lake by draining it through a wetland area to Stony Creek. The lake has overtopped the adjacent township road several times. The Board discussed this proposal. The Township might need to apply for a DNR permit to work in protected waters if the outlet affects the ordinary high water elevation (OHW). Albright provided the Township with a DNR permit application for their use. Tabled until spring when the Managers can conduct a field review. Ellefson said the Township has been pumping the lake for the past several years to protect the road.

The Board also discussed Bruce Bang's proposal to channelize a portion of Stony Creek that is cutting through his property. Nelson mentioned that the area in question is not DNR protected waters. Bang will submit a BRRWD permit application for this work.

Project No. 63, Grove Lake Outlet. The contractor, Steven Johnson Excavating, is continuing to work on the project when conditions permit and would like to complete the project yet this winter. The Board discussed the construction activities. Albright noted that Johnson is having a problem with ground water seepage. Jones explained the details of the issue. He also noted that the Township road grader hit a spoil pile with his grader wing while moving snow. Apparently, the damage was only minor. H.E. submitted Pay Request No. 3 ($15,733.51) and Change Order No. 1 ($7,501.29) for 160' of 24'' tile and an erosion control blanket for the Maple Lake outlet. Motion by Hanson to approve the referenced pay request and change order. Seconded by Olson. Approved. Albright will submit a pay request to the DNR for the expenses to date for the project. He noted that the wetland permits have been approved. The Board discussed operation of the project this spring if we have a flood.

Project No. 61, Clay County Ditch No. 11 North. The Board discussed the issue of John Leseth's box culvert replacement. Clay County needs a place to deposit extra spoil from their County State Aid Highway (CSAH) No. 8 regrading project, which will be done in conjunction with the ditch improvement. Leseth has reservations about allowing the County to place the spoil on his property adjacent to the project. Previously, the BRRWD had proposed a cost sharing agreement where Leseth would pay $7,000 for his $60,000 culvert replacement and the BRRWD and Clay County would split the balance. Recently, Clay County has decided not to agree to the proposal. They would prefer an equal three-way split for the crossing costs. The Board had an extended discussion regarding this issue. Tabled pending clarification from Clay County regarding the cost sharing agreement. The County has drafted a letter to Leseth that explains their offer, as well as requests the need for right-of-way (r-o-w) for the road/ditch project. Albright suggested that we let the County and Leseth resolve those issues.

Project No. 56, Manston Slough Restoration. The Board reviewed an easement summary worksheet showing the landowners and the tracts we will need to acquire for the project r-o-w. The office has also prepared a draft option easement and exhibit templates. H.E. has revised the easement drawings. Rick St. Germain has revised the project cost estimate, which includes the structure changes the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) requested. The new estimated project cost is $3,866,643. St. Germain has also prepared a draft Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW). Albright will work with St. Germain to complete the document for the Board's signature at their 1/26/09 meeting.

Pete Waller, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), recently told Albright that NRCS can't take a WRP easement on the Holubok tract because of new ownership rules, but they will be able to make up the difference by using the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) funding. Don Schultz, DNR, said the DNR is ready to make an offer for the Holubok property. Albright requested a one-year extension for the DNR grant until 6/30/10 when he submitted the pay request referenced in the Treasurer's Report. To date, Kent Lokkesmoe, Division of Waters, has not responded. The USFWS has signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and they will forward it to our office this week. The Board discussed the next steps
in the project development process. St. Germain will also develop a revised project schedule, as well as complete the Engineer's Report in accordance with Minnesota Statutes Annotated (M.S.A.) 103D.711.

**Project No. 49, Oakport Flood Mitigation.** A Technical Committee meeting was held on 1/06/09. Ulteig Engineers, Inc. (UEI) has set a goal to complete construction plans and specifications for at least two phases by 3/15/09. Currently, the geotechnical work is delayed because of the Fischer family's refusal to allow soil testing on their property. The Board had an extended discussion regarding possible options to deal with this problem.

Albright will schedule another Technical Committee meeting and will prepare the Order for the Board's signature on 1/26/09 if they decide to go ahead with the project. Albright suggested that the BRRWD send the affected landowners notice of the Board's Order to Proceed. The letter could also encourage the landowners to consider purchasing flood insurance now while the rates are low before the new floodplain maps are adopted in the next few months and insurance rates increase. It may also be wise to acquire flood insurance, given the current conditions (snow/wet fall).

Albright sent a pay request to Pat Lynch, FDR Hydrologist, DNR Waters, for the Holtgard buyout. In the letter, he mentioned that we had reached a buyout agreement with Vicki Sieben, and asked about funding for this acquisition. He also informed Lynch that we plan to have two phases of the project ready for construction this year and asked about the status of state funding for 2009. The Board had an extended discussion regarding project readiness and the availability of state funding in light of the recent national/state financial crisis. They felt we would be more likely to receive funding if we had phases of the project ready for construction this coming spring/summer. The Board also discussed the bidding process in regards to the project phases. Albright plans to contact Congressman Collin C. Peterson and Senator Keith Langseth about our funding concerns.

Albright has scheduled a meeting on 1/28/08 with the Pearce family at 3:00 PM to discuss how the project will affect their property. The Board also discussed purchasing flood insurance for the buyout properties in light of possible spring flooding. Albright will check with John Hoffman, ICS Agency, Inc., who can give us a quote.

Guy Miller forwarded a breakdown of the three appraisals that were conducted for the Vicky Sieben property to justify the negotiated price. Miller has also submitted an invoice, which is included on tonight's bill list, for his 2008 appraisal services.

**Lobbyist Report.** Joel Carlson, BRRWD Lobbyist updated the Board regarding various legislative issues affecting the BRRWD. The group had an in depth discussion regarding funding and the extension of our taxing authority via M.S.A. 103D.905, Subd. 3, which is scheduled to expire at the end of 2009. Carlson felt that it was important for the BRRWD to obtain resolutions from the counties/cities within the BRRWD supporting our continued taxing authority. He also encouraged the Board to meet with the Senator Keith Langseth and Representative Morrie Lanning regarding this issue. Carlson suggested that we document how we have used the extra funding (2007 and 2008) and a 2009 budget for M.S.A. 103D.905, Subd. 3, expenditures. Carlson felt that since we would be continuing an existing tax and not something new, it might be easier to get legislative support for extending our M.S.A. 103D.905, Subd. 3, taxing authority. The group also discussed the possibility of increasing our administrative levy from $250,000 to $300,000. He also suggested that Board should attempt to bring closure to negotiations with the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) regarding our membership. He also felt that at some point, we'll need to address this issue with Senator Rod Skoe.

The group discussed Carlson's 2009 Lobbyist contract. Carlson was willing to offer the BRRWD his services at the same rate as last year ($850/month). **Motion** by VanAmburg to retain Carlson as the
BRRWD Lobbyist for 2009. **Seconded** by Hanson. **Approved.** Albright will put the M.S.A. 103D.905, Subd. 3, information together and will work with Carlson on trying to get this increase taxing authority extended for another 3-5 years. Carlson felt we should have this done and meet with Representative Lanning before the end of February.

**Project No. 46, Turtle Lake Outlet.** Opsahl noted that Long Lake is at elevation 1361.4, and Turtle Lake is at elevation 1362.45. There is now a 1.3’ separation between the lakes. He plans to install the thin ice signs around the outlet area on Long Lake and start the Turtle Lake siphon as soon as the weather warms up. Turtle Lake is up about 5” since freeze-up. Opsahl will also get someone to plow the roads to the pump stations.

**Project No. 38, Farmstead Ringdikes.** Opsahl has prepared a breakdown of the Kragnes ringdike costs, so Albright can submit a pay request to the DNR. As noted in the Treasurer's Report, Albright sent a letter to John Butze asking for payment for his share of his 2007 ringdike project by 2/09/09 or the Board will turn the bill over to our attorney for collection and/or start charging interest. Jones noted that H.E. has completed the Karppinen ringdike cross-section investigation in Section 17, Elmwood Township, Clay County, and has forwarded the data to Midwest Testing.

**Project No. 32, Hawley EDA Diversion.** Midwest Testing has completed their work regarding the integrity of the 60” dia. pipe. Rick St. Germain will submit a response for the Board's review at their 1/26/09 meeting. **Tabled.**

**Mediation Project Team (PT).** The next PT meeting is scheduled for 1/29/09 at 1:30 PM at the MSUM Science Center. Notices will be sent.

**Red River Valley Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Restoration Initiative.** The office prepared an application for funding from the new Red River Valley RIM Restoration Initiative. This program has approximately $3 million in funding for stream restoration and flood damage reduction projects in the Red River Valley. Ross Aigner, Wilkin SWCD Supervisor, was very interested in submitting an application for the South Branch of the Buffalo River. Albright met with Pete Waller and Bob Honeman, BWSR, and the Wilkin SWCD to discuss the application on 1/08/09. The project area is located in Manston and Atherton Townships in Wilkin County. The project will restore approximately 10 miles of river channel and establish setback levees/channel restoration along the South Branch of the Buffalo River with approximately 800 acres of native grass bufferstrips if all landowners signup on a voluntary basis. The office prepared the application and submitted it on 1/09/09. Landowners must sign up for the RIM program by 6/01/09. The application also needs the endorsement of the BRRWD and the Mediation PT. Albright will obtain PT signatures electronically because the PT doesn't meet again until 1/29/09, and the State BWSR Board meets on 1/28/09. The Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group (RRBFDRWG) will meet tomorrow to review the applications and make their recommendations to BWSR regarding which projects should be awarded the RIM funding. **Motion** by VanAmburg to endorse the RIM application. **Seconded** by Hanson. **Approved.**

**Wolverton Creek/Comstock Coulee Clean Water Legacy (CWL) Project.** Due to the historically wet fall, all work on the project has been delayed until next spring. The Work Group met in Barnesville on 1/07/09 to discuss the project status. The deadline for grant funding is 6/30/09, and it doesn't appear that all work will be completed by the deadline. H.E. has 90% of the channel survey done. The BRRWD contributed $20,000 in matching funds, which we might get back if the state funding is not all used. Hopes are to use the International Water Institute (IWI) digital elevation model (DEM) information to supplement the field survey data. The group also wants to schedule one last landowner meeting before spring field review begins.
Hay Creek/Stinking Lake CWL Grant. Albright will meet with Brad Grant, Becker SWCD, on 1/15/09 at 9:30 AM in Detroit Lake to discuss plan implementation. Becker SWCD was very successful in getting landowners to sign up for the CWL funding. Manager Hanson will try to attend. A BWSR semi-annual project was due 12/31/08, and Albright will work with Brennon Schaefer, Minneapolis H.E. in submitting the report.

319 Grant Modeling. Albright sent a pay request for $22,000 to Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) last week. Brennon Schaefer, Minneapolis H.E., submitted a project status report to Jack Frederick, MPCA. Albright distributed a copy of the report for the Board's review.

BRRWD Total Maximum Daily Load (tdml). The Board discussed the status of the BRRWD's efforts to develop a workplan for the basin-wide tdml study on the Buffalo River. Jones sent some information the MPCA last week, and they responded with comments today. He plans to meet with MPCA again on 1/16/09 to go over the information. A regular Red River Basin Water Quality Team meeting is scheduled with MPCA in Detroit Lakes on 1/14/09 at 10:30 AM. Jones plans to attend.

Red River Basin Commission (RRBC) Annual Conference. The RRBC has scheduled their annual conference on January 20-22, 2009, at the Fort Garry Hotel in Winnipeg. This year's conference is titled, "Shaping the Basin's Future Together". Manager Hanson's registration and reservations are confirmed. When the bus transportation arrangements are received, Albright will forward the information to Hanson.

Patrick Hagen, Flood Defence Group USA, contacted the office with information regarding a new flood-fighting product, which he would like to discuss with Hanson at the RRBC conference. Hagen will contact Hanson to set up a meeting.

Well Sealing Cost Share. Norm Mofjeld, Minnesota Department of Health, recently contacted the BRRWD regarding their Well Sealing program. Mofjeld is updating the 2008 contact information for people seeking funding for well sealing projects. Albright sent Mofjeld a letter explaining that while we do cost share this type of project with the SWCDs within the BRRWD, we are not the primary contact for this program and should be removed from the contact list. The Board agreed with Albright's decision.

Meeting Recordings. Recently, there has been an e-mail discussion among the local watershed districts regarding the practice of audio recording meetings. Albright noted that we are interested in acquiring hardware/software that would make the preparation of minutes easier. Under Minnesota Law, an audio record created by a governmental subdivision must be retained for at least the duration specified by the Minnesota Historical Society/State Archives Department (MHS/SAD). MHS/SAD specifies that audio recordings of meetings be retained for a least one year from the date that the official meeting minutes were approved, and may be destroyed thereafter. The Board discussed how they wanted to handle our meeting recordings. Motion by Hanson to adopt the MHS/SAD standards for the retention of audio recordings. Seconded by Nelson. Approved.

Manager Appointments. Managers Hanson and Olson's terms expire on 8/31/09. The office sent letters to the respective counties to notify them that they will need to consider Manager appointments in 2009.

BWSR Project Ranking. BWSR has requested that local watershed districts provide a list of the "Top 10" conservation projects that we would like to implement, but can't because of a lack of funding. Albright put together a list including Oakport Flood Mitigation, Manston Slough Restoration, Hay Creek (Becker), South Branch of the Buffalo River, Farmstead Ringdikes, Wolverton Creek/Comstock Coulee, Phase 3 of Deerhorn Creek Levees, Hay Creek (Clay), Stony Creek, and a Cromwell Township waterway.
2009 Dam Inspections. Opsahl has completed the 2009 dam inspections and found no major repairs are needed. The inspections cover Project No. 5, Henry Detention; Project No. 8, Stony Creek; Project No. 13, Hay Creek; and Project No. 16, Stinking Lake. 2008 gauge recordings are also on file.

2009 BRRWD Annual Meeting.

Election of 2009 Officers. Motion by Olson to cast a unanimous ballot to elect the same 2008 officers. Seconded by VanAmburg. Approved. The BRRWD officers for 2008 will be as follows: Chairman-Roger Ellefson, Vice Chairman-Gerald VanAmburg, Treasurer-Curtis Nelson, and Secretary-John Hanson.

Appointment of 2009 Consultants. Jones presented H.E.'s 2009 proposal for engineering services. The individual staff members will remain the same. Jones noted that H.E. plans to work in some of the newer engineers to assist him with BRRWD projects. The fee schedule reflects about a 3% increase. The Board discussed H.E.'s proposal. The Board also reviewed Vogel Law Firm's proposal for 2009 legal services. Attorneys Tami Norgard and Cory Elmer will again be the BRRWD's principal legal staff. Harold Rotunda, Certified Public Accountant (CPA), submitted a letter of agreement regarding his services to conduct the 2008 audit. He indicated that the fee for his services will be $1,900. Motion by Nelson to appoint Vogel Law Firm as the 2009 legal consultant on an as needed basis at the Board's discretion, H.E. as the BRRWD's 2009 engineering consultant, and to hire Harold Rotunda to do the 2008 audit. Seconded by VanAmburg. Approved.

2009 Financial Designation. Motion by Olson to designate Wells Fargo Bank and Midwest Bank, Barnesville, as the official 2009 BRRWD depositories, subject to the use of any other depositories within the District as needed throughout the year, provided they are FDIC insured and for Gilbertson Tax Office to prepare the 2008 W-2s and 1099s. Seconded by VanAmburg. Approved.

The following bills were presented for approval:

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Motion by Nelson to approve payment of the bills. Seconded by Hanson. Approved.

Next Meeting. The Board of Managers, BRRWD, will hold their next meeting on Monday, January 26, 2009, in the Barnesville office at 7:00 PM.

Adjournment. Chairman Ellefson adjourned the meeting at 11:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

John E. Hanson, Secretary