"Landowners Voice Concerns Regarding Watershed Issues”

At the 2/23/09 meeting of the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), approximately 20 landowners attended to discuss two different subjects.

The first issue pertains to drainage southwest of Barnesville in Barnesville and Alliance Townships, Clay County. The BRRWD has a long history of dealing with water issues in this area. An initial study of the area was done back in 1984. The most recent concerns relate to a request from a landowner to enlarge culverts in two crossing located on a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) protected waterway. The downstream landowners felt something had to be done to look at the overall problems rather than just allowing more water to drain downstream. One landowner commented that the Board first needs to learn how to say "No", when people ask for projects that affect downstream properties. The Board ended up tabling action on the culvert request and agreed to discuss the area with their Mediation Project Team (PT). A general study of the area could be completed in the next 12-18 months.

The next controversial issue pertained to a permit application filed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) regarding the restoration of wetlands on their property located in Sections 25 and 36, Riverton Township, and Section 1, Elkton Township. The proposal would restore approximately 100 acres of wetlands on this 1,327 acre parcel. The neighboring homeowner, who already has a seepage problem with his basement, felt the wetland restorations would compound that problem. However, after reviewing the opinion of three separate engineers, who all felt that the wetland restorations would not affect the homeowner, the Board agreed to approve TNC's permit. TNC will continue to monitor groundwater wells around the landowner's house to document any potential changes in the groundwater elevation. TNC also agreed to work with the landowner regarding several options to address his historic basement problems. These options could include possible installation of a gravity flow tile outlet, removal of beaver dams, relocation of the house, or a possible sale of the property to TNC.

Other business included:

- Noting that a hearing to add property located in Section 16, Elkton Township, to the benefit area of Clay County Ditch No. 55, will be held on Thursday, March 5, 2009, at 7:30 PM in the Barnesville Senior Citizen Center.

- Approval of a permit to the Becker County Highway Department to replace a bridge over the Buffalo River on County State Aid Highway No. 7 between Sections 9 and 10, Cuba Township.

- Agreed to hire a local contractor to remove snow from the Trunk Highway No. 34 north ditch in the southwest corner of Section 21, Humboldt Township. There is an icing problem in this area. The water seems to be coming from an upstream Wetlands Reserve Program project. Removal of the snow should open a path for the water to flow towards Whisky Creek.

- Noting that the Grove Lake Outlet is functioning. Depending on when the spring melt starts, the pipe will remain open for the immediate future. The contractor still has work to complete in the spring when conditions permit.

- Agreed to turn over a legal issue regarding right-of-way (r-o-w) widths along Clay County Ditch No. 11-North to the Vogel Law Firm for their review. There appears to be a discrepancy between the documents filed at the Court House regarding the actual existing r-o-w widths. The issue needs to be resolved in the near future, as the BRRWD has
scheduled the final hearing for the one-mile ditch improvement on Monday, March 30, 2009, at 7:30 PM in the Moorhead City Hall Council Chambers.

- Noting that the Memorandum of Understanding has now been signed by all of the agencies for the Manston Slough Restoration project. Hopefully, the Environmental Assessment Worksheet can be distributed in early March. Right now, it appears the comment period will end on 4/22/09. The office is working on preparing the easement options for landowners.

- Noting that the next Technical Committee meeting for the Oakport Flood Mitigation project is scheduled for 3/10/09 at 1:30 PM in the Clay County Court House.

- Noting that the next Mediation PT meeting will be held on 3/26/09 at 1:30 PM in the MSUM Science Center.

- Noting that a hearing for the redetermination of benefits on Clay County Ditch No. 49 is scheduled for 3/17/09 at 7:30 PM in the Moorhead City Hall Council Chambers.

- Agreed to contribute $200 to the International Water Institute for the 2009 River Watch Forum, which will be held on 3/18/09 at the University of Minnesota-Crookston.

- Approved payment of bills totaling $52,239.97.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Managers, BRRWD, is scheduled for Monday, March 9, 2009, at 8:00 PM in the Barnesville office. All meetings are open to the public. For more information, please visit our Website at www.brrwd.org.