

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 9, 2010
FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Bruce E. Albright, 218-354-7710

"Local Watershed Plans for Busy Year"

The Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), spent time at their 2/08/10 meeting in Barnesville discussing pending projects. Last weekend's snowfall, major to severe spring flooding predictions, and an already overloaded schedule all means the BRRWD will be busy. Highwater problems in the eastern part of the district continue to be on the forefront of the discussions. The BRRWD is looking at outlets for Swede Grove Lake, north of Hawley; LaBelle/Boyer Lakes between Lake Park and Audubon; the County Line Outlet, east of Barnesville in Prairie View Township, Wilkin County, and Humboldt Township, Clay County; Tansem/Ranum Lakes, east of Barnesville, along Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 34; and a new request for an outlet for lakes in Otter Tail County along T.H. No. 34, including Helgeson, Businger, Randkler, and Seim. The Board predicted that all of these areas will see rising water levels this spring. The BRRWD would like to progress development of the LaBelle/Boyer and County Line Outlet projects so that work could begin as soon as conditions permit this spring.

The BRRWD is also in the process of completing their Revised Watershed Management Plan. The Plan can be downloaded from the BRRWD's Website at www.brrwd.org. The 60-day comment period will expire on 3/27/10. The Plan will be presented to the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group on 3/02/10. Public hearings will be held on 3/18/10 at 7:00 PM, in Hildebrand Hall, Assumption Catholic Church, Barnesville, and 3/30/10 at 7:00 PM, in the Community Center, Hawley. A report will be made to the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) sometime in April, which should complete the process.

The BRRWD is also working with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) regarding the Buffalo River Total Maximum Daily Load study. Phase 1 work is scheduled to be completed by 10/31/10. Molly McGregor, MPCA, will be conducting Study Circle meetings on 2/25/10 and 3/11/10 in Barnesville. She is currently looking for approximately 12 participants. Interested parties should contact the BRRWD office at 218-354-7710. 2010 will be the second sampling year. Data from 2009 is being reviewed. It appears that most streams/waterways exceed state standards for turbidity and phosphorus.

The BRRWD would like to work on signing easement options with the affected landowners for the Manston Slough Restoration project. Weather permitting, and assuming we get the remaining state funds (approximately \$1 million), the Board would like to start construction of the project this summer.

The Oakport Flood Mitigation project continues to take a great deal of the BRRWD's time. To date, approximately 41 buyouts have been completed. There's currently about 10 buyouts remaining. The office is working on getting easements. At the present time, there's about \$3.3 million left in the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources account. A request for \$3.5 million is being sought from the 2010 Legislature in the bonding bill. The BRRWD would like to be bidding additional work before spring.

There was considerable discussion regarding the Fargo-Moorhead (F-M) Flood Control Project. Current plans are to install a diversion that could be located on either the Minnesota or North Dakota side of the Red River of the North. The BRRWD will be involved with the project, no matter where it is located, and may be asked to do the assessment of benefits for Minnesota properties. They also could be responsible for land acquisition if placed in Minnesota. A decision by the Metro Area Task Force is expected by 4/15/10.

Other business included:

- A request for Houston Engineering, Inc. (H.E.) to develop a concept plan to study an unnamed waterway, located in Alliance and Barnesville Townships. The BRRWD records show that the problems in this area have been a topic of discussion since the early 1980s. The concept plan will

2/09/10 BRRWD News Release (cont.)

look at what is needed to potentially design a project that could incorporate both flood damage reduction and natural resource enhancement.

- Approval of a permit to Jerry Butenhoff to realign a farmyard ditch in the SW1/4, Section 14, Alliance Township, Clay County.
- Discussion regarding the Georgetown Flood Control Levee improvements. The geotechnical investigation has been completed. It appears that 10 buyouts may be needed to relocate the existing levee away from the bank of the Buffalo River. A future project would look at designing a levee height in accordance with downstream impacts expected from the F-M diversion project. One landowner has already asked for a buyout, which the BRRWD will proceed on.
- Received a geotechnical report from Midwest Testing regarding 12 potential farmstead ringdikes. It appears that all of the sites noted in the investigation may be too close to river banks to allow for safe construction of a dike without avoiding levee failure. Applicants will be contacted.
- Noting petitions from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) to do minor improvements on County Ditch No. 50 in Dilworth through T.H. No. 10 and County Ditch No. 9 on T.H. No. 75 for roundabout construction. Erik S. Jones, H.E., is working with MNDOT on several questions pertaining to each petition.
- Noting that last fall, the BRRWD worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service regarding Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) funds to remove logjams from the Buffalo River. Approximately 30 sites were documented. To date, the EWP funds have not been released. If it gets much later, the project will have to be put on hold until this summer/fall.
- Noting that a meeting will be held with the Clay County Board of Commissioners on 2/09/10 to discuss petitions for use of taxing authority per Minnesota Statutes Annotated 103D.905, Subd. 3. The first petition for \$250,000 will be used as local match on buyouts of properties that were affected by the 2009 spring flood, are located in a floodplain, or are having erosion/slippage problems along the Red River of the North. The second petition for \$346,615 will be used for general expenditures, including water quality testing, the Red River Basin Commission, River Keepers; and local costshare for a variety of projects including Manston Slough Restoration, Oakport Flood Mitigation, and Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) projects.
- Noting that the Clay and Wilkin County SWCDs were not successful in their 2010 Clean Water Legacy grant application to BWSR. The application will be resubmitted this fall.
- Noting that Managers plan to attend the upcoming Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts Legislative Breakfast, scheduled for March 10-11 at the Capitol. The BRRWD has a number of requests in for 2010 bonding, totaling approximately \$5 million.

The next regular BRRWD meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 22, 2010, at 7:00 PM in the Barnesville office. All meetings are open to the public. For more information, please visit our Website at www.brrwd.org.