

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

May 24, 2011

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Bruce E. Albright, 218-354-7710

“Landowners Have Questions for Local Watershed”

At their 5/23/11 meeting held in Barnesville, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), answered questions regarding several projects/issues. A homeowner in Georgetown questioned the status of the appraisal work for the levee improvements. The BRRWD hired an appraiser on 3/14/11 and the work was to be completed by 5/15/11. Due to the flood, the work has been delayed slightly. The appraisals are expected by 6/01/11. The homeowner questioned the buyout scoring/ranking that will need to be done because of limited funds. It appears that the Legislature will not have a Flood Damage Reduction bonding bill in 2011. The BRRWD currently has a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) grant in the amount of \$500,000, which will be used for land acquisition (easements/buyouts).

A couple expressed concerns regarding the water levels on Pete Lake. Last fall, the BRRWD installed an emergency project to deal with water problems on Pete Lake, Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 34, and a series of lakes north of T.H. No. 34. The landowners indicated that the water levels are so low that they can't use their pontoon, and they are afraid that boaters are going to hit submerged trees. The Board agreed to monitor water levels. A final hearing will be held sometime in July 2011.

Landowners questioned the status of the Lake Jacobs Outlet project. They wanted to see the proposed assessments before making a decision to support the project. Bruce E. Albright, BRRWD Administrator, will be working with the Appraisers prior to the 6/13/11 meeting to complete the determination of benefits. Permit applications have been filed. There has been no response from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service regarding a preferred outlet route.

A landowner questioned the status of the Board's review of drainage issues in Section 11, Alliance Township, Clay County. Approximately a year ago, the Board agreed to schedule a field meeting to become familiar with the area. That was to be followed with a special informational meeting with area landowners. While the Board said they had been extremely busy, they will try to conduct the field review prior to the next meeting.

A landowner on Lateral No. 3 to Wilkin County Ditch No. 22 questioned the status of an engineering investigation regarding improvements to the ditch system. A copy of the investigation was furnished to the landowner, who felt the adjacent property owners will want to proceed. An informational meeting will be scheduled with the affected parties.

A homeowner on Tansem and Ranum Lakes along T.H. No. 34 said the high water is now starting to affect his buildings and access. He questioned if the Board could implement pumping to help lower the water levels. The Board indicated that several years ago, they held informational meetings regarding a possible outlet for this area. There was no interest at that time from the Minnesota Department of Transportation or the landowners to proceed with a project. The one homeowner affected by the rising water is now scheduled for a buyout, which could be completed in next several weeks.

A landowner in Section 27, Skree Township, Clay County, discussed his drainage problems. He proposed a solution by installing a ditch along his property to route water coming from an adjacent property around a wetland area. Earlier this year, an agency meeting was held to discuss these issues. There currently is a DNR issued Cease and Desist Order for work in this area. The landowner indicated that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has completed their wetland analysis. The Board asked for a copy of that report and tabled any action regarding additional work in this area until all parties agree.

A homeowner discussed problems on 130th AVE N between Sections 11/14, Kragnes Township, on Clay County Ditch No. 10. Water started going over the road during the 1997 flood. Subsequent floods have eroded the road further. The Township has not restored the road to the original elevation. They would like to see elevations of the current road in relationship to a 1983 survey that was conducted when the ditch was improved. The homeowner asked that the road be raised back to the 1983 level. Once the data is gathered, another meeting will be held with the Kragnes Township Supervisors to discuss this issue.

5/23/11 BRRWD News Release (cont.)

A landowner filed a complaint regarding the alleged plugging of a culvert with rock in the SE¼, Section 19, Tansem Township, Clay County. The Board said they would conduct an investigation. In 2008, the Board had written a letter to the complainant, indicating that they should work with their neighbor regarding erosion coming from a field. No action was taken by either party at that time.

Harold J. Rotunda, Certified Public Accountant, presented that 2010 financial audit. All records are in order. In 2010, the Board depleted their cash reserves by \$779,167. Much of the account activity pertained to the Oakport Flood Mitigation project. Rotunda indicated that except for a couple of the general accounts, including administration, the balance of the BRRWD accounts can be maintained by levying assessments to benefited parties. A copy of the 2010 audit has been posted on the BRRWD Website.

It was 10:30 PM before the Board started their four-page agenda.

Other business included:

- The Board approved permits to James Baker for tiling along CSAH No. 52 in Section 21, Elmwood Township, Clay County; and the City of Moorhead for drainage improvements along the west line of Section 24, Moorhead Township, Clay County.
- The Board agreed to clean approximately 0.5 miles of Becker County Ditch No. 9 in the SW¼, Section 32, Cuba Township, in response to a landowner's request.
- The Board agreed to modifications to the Turtle Lake siphon. Last winter, a gate valve was removed from the Long Lake siphon, which improved the siphon's performance dramatically. Hopes are that removing the gate valve on the Turtle Lake siphon will have the same effect. The estimated cost for the work is \$10,000. Historically, the BRRWD has only been able to draw down Turtle Lake about 0.1' per week, assuming no additional rainfall.
- The Board discussed the status of the new office project. Margaret K. Follingstad, YHR Partners, Moorhead, currently feels the project is still on track. A meeting of the building committee will be scheduled prior to the next regular watershed meeting. The Board would like to advertise for construction bids in late June 2011.
- The BRRWD received a Thank You from the Wilkin Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) for our sponsorship of the Area I Envirothons. One of the BRRWD and SWCD's goals is to provide education to our youth about the importance of conservation and protection of our natural resources.
- The Board agreed to sponsor a resolution to the NRCS for possible Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) funds in 2011. The funding can be used for log jam removals, repair of erosion areas along streams/waterways, and the possible repair of bank failures threatening buildings.
- The Board approved signing DNR amendments to existing contracts to extend project funding for the Manston Slough Restoration project, the HRBP Outlet project, and the Cromwell Township Outlet project. The new grant expiration date will be 6/30/12.
- The Board approved payment of bills totaling \$55,958.01

The next regular BRRWD meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 13, 2011, 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.