

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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"Local Watershed Reviews Survey Results"

Dr. Karlyn Eckman and Alec Albright, University of Minnesota Water Resource Center, presented the findings of the Social Indicators Survey (SIS) at the 6/27/11 meeting of the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), held in Barnesville. The survey data was collected between July 2010 and February 2011. Social indicators are statistics that measure social trends related to government programs. The project was funded by the Environmental Protection Agency. Dr. Eckman commented that the SIS completed in the BRRWD is one of the largest done in the State of Minnesota. The Detroit Lakes office of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency helped compile the survey questions. The databases were made from lists obtained from the four counties. Landowners were notified of the forthcoming survey by letter. The survey was then mailed, and two reminder postcards were sent. All the data was entered into an online database. The total cost of the survey was \$44,708.19. Approximately 2,040 surveys were distributed and 522 were returned. Wilkin County led the response percentages. Questions included how many years a respondent had owned their property, a breakdown of the agricultural and non-agricultural respondents and the size of the agricultural acreage owned. The survey also asked if the quality of life in a community is dependent upon good local water quality, to which most agreed or strongly agreed, indicating that they felt the economic stability of their community depended on good water quality. Most felt that it was very important to protect water quality, even if it were to cost them slightly more. Several questions also pertained to whether or not landowners have ever used a grassed waterway or retained runoff on their property. Landowners indicated that constraints regarding their use of best management practices included a lack of proper information to install the practices, or they would like to see a demonstration site. The respondents had a very high level of trust in local government, including the BRRWD and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD). Some issues encountered during the survey included quality of the mailing lists, the questionnaire was too long, and interpretation of the data. Dr. Eckman said they will continue to look for additional funding to complete tabulation of all survey results. The Board thanked Dr. Eckman and Mr. Albright for their work.

Other business included:

- The Board scheduled a field meeting with a follow-up office meeting for Tuesday, July 26, 2011, to review an ongoing drainage problem in Alliance Township, Clay County.
- The BRRWD approved permits to American Crystal Sugar for the installation of drain tile at their Glyndon piling station; Dennis and Kevin Jerger to increase the size of the driveway and overflow culverts on County Road No. 188 in Section 19, Atherton Township, Wilkin County; Carl Altenbernd for a driveway and culvert along County State Aid Highway (CSAH) No. 11 in the SE1/4, Section 29, Elmwood Township, Clay County; Maier Farms to install a dike along the north edge of their field in the NW1/4, Section 8, Deerhorn Township, Wilkin County; Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) for the resurfacing of Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 32; MNDOT for the removal of the in-place decks on the Interstate-94 bridges over the South Branch of the Buffalo River in Section 21, Glyndon Township, Clay County; the City of Moorhead to construct a dike for the River's Edge Subdivision in Section 28, Oakport Township, Clay County; Tom Herfindahl for pattern tiling in the NW1/4, Section 1, Cuba Township, Becker County; Randy Dickhaus to install a ditch along 220th ST to lower water in a United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) easement area in the NE1/4, Section 22, Cromwell Township, Clay County; Cromwell Township to replace a culvert between Sections 8 and 9, on 200th ST N; Gerald Zimmerman for pattern tiling in the N1/2NE1/4, Section 21, Morken Township, Clay County, with an outlet to County Ditch No. 10; Jim Sheridan to install a crossing/culvert in the N1/2NE1/4, Section 10, Parke Township, Clay County; and Clay County Highway Department to install an approach and culvert of CSAH No. 12 in Section 31, Moorhead Township.
- The Board reviewed Houston Engineering, Inc.'s analysis of a possible outlet for Ness Lake, located in eastern Clay County. The analysis, which was done using LiDAR, shows that it might be very

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difficult to lower the water levels, since an outlet would also involve a series of downstream lakes. The information will be furnished to a homeowner who raised the question.

- It appears that the majority of permits needed for the outlet on Lake Jacobs have been obtained. The office is working with the Appraisers to complete the assessments of benefits and damages. The next step will be to schedule the required hearing. The BRRWD has a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) grant for 50% of the project costs. It is expected that if everything goes well, an outlet could be constructed yet this year. The office also noted that they furnished the Norwegian Grove Township Supervisors with a petition to annex the Lake Annie watershed into the BRRWD. The petition will need to be approved by the Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners and then forwarded to the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, who will schedule the required hearing.
- The Appraisers are finishing their work on the Project No. 67 outlet, which involves a series of lakes east of Barnesville along T.H. No. 34.
- The Ordinary High Water survey has been completed by the DNR for a series of wetlands located on the County Line Outlet project. BRRWD Manager Roger Ellefson will contact the local landowners regarding the project options.
- The Board discussed scheduling a meeting with the landowners on LaBelle and Boyer Lakes regarding possible shoreline restoration projects, now that the lake elevations are being managed with the outlet projects. Agencies presenting information at the meeting would include the Becker SWCD, DNR, and Becker County Planning & Zoning.
- The DNR sent the BRRWD a letter that discussed the potential State shutdown and its impact on grantees. The DNR has indicated that they will have no or very limited authority to expend or release funds to pay for goods or services after 6/30/11. Any work under contract that continues after that date should be done with the understanding that the grantee is taking some risk with the decision to continue. Also, during a shutdown, agency staff will not be available to answer questions, review payment requests, or make payments. The letter affects several BRRWD projects, including Oakport Flood Mitigation and Georgetown Levee Improvements. A decision was made to not proceed with any buyouts pertaining to the Georgetown Levee project until the State's potential shut down problems are addressed and the necessary funding (approximately \$3 million) is secured to complete the project. For now, the Board will let construction work continue on the Oakport Flood Mitigation project, with the understanding that we may need to stop construction at our 7/11/11 meeting if the State's budget problems are not solved.
- The Board made the Order to establish a project for the impoundment of drainage system waters on Becker County Ditch No. 5. The applicant is the USFWS and the hearing was held on 6/21/11 in Audubon. All affected landowners have signed easements.
- The Managers discussed the status of the new BRRWD office building. A project budget will be prepared. Some Managers feel that a special meeting of the Advisory Committee should be scheduled to discuss the project/costs. At best, the BRRWD would probably be in their new facility in the spring of 2012. Staff will look for possible interim office space for a temporary move if needed. The BRRWD's current lease expires on 9/01/11.
- The Board agreed to contribute \$2,250 (5%) to a request from the Wilkin County SWCD regarding the Farm Assistance Grant to help fund a position to market conservation practices.
- The Board granted a temporary permit to Gerald Zimmerman to impound surface waters on the outlet of Clay County Ditch No. 39 regarding a demonstration project for tile sub-irrigation.
- The Board approved payment of bills totaling \$110,607.27.

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The next regular BRRWD meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 11, 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.