NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 25, 2012
FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Bruce E. Albright, 218-354-7710

“Local Watershed Building Project on Track”

The Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), met with Margaret Follingstad, YHR Partners, the architectural firm designing a new BRRWD office project, at their 1/23/12 meeting, held in Barnesville. The plans and specifications are distributed and a bid opening is scheduled for Thursday, February 9, 2012, at 3:00 PM at the Barnesville City Hall. Follingstad said there appears to be good interest in the project. Relocation of the BRRWD office has been the topic of discussion for the past few years. The Board is considering all options. Once bids are opened, the true cost of a new building project can be assessed.

Other business included:

- The BRRWD approved a permit to Moorhead Public Service for the installation of an 115kV electrical transmission line within the easement area of County Ditch No. 47. The power line will be placed approximately 10' off the railroad right-of-way line on the ditch easement. Erik Jones, Engineer, Houston Engineering, Inc. (H.E.), feels that future ditch maintenance will not be affected as a result of this project. The ditch cleaning can continue to be done from the east side of the ditch. The proposed power line will be 30' above the ground at even the lowest sag locations. The Board approved the permit with the understanding that if the line is ever found to be in the way of the ditch needs, it would be moved at the owner's expense. Any spoil placed in the ditch during construction will need to be removed. Revegetation of any disturbed areas will also be required.

- The Board reviewed correspondence from SRF Consulting Group, who's working for the City of Moorhead regarding the reopening of two ramps to Interstate-94. Part of the work parallels County Ditch No. 30. Two of the previous four ramps will be restored. Neither of the "clover-leaf" ramps will be reconstructed. The Engineer's opinion is that the work will not affect the county ditch system. The Board concurred.

- The Project No. 72, Wilkin County Ditch No. 22, Lateral 3-Improvement preliminary hearing will be scheduled. The office will prepare a mailing list. The preliminary Engineer's Report has been filed with the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for their advisory comments.

- The 50th Avenue Flood Control Project, petitioned for by the City of Moorhead, is currently on hold. The City is looking at options regarding drainage/diking needed to protect the area.

- A meeting will be held this winter with residents in north Moorhead including the Crystal Creek South, Crystal Creek North, and McCann's Addition Subdivisions. Flood control work was completed last summer, using the BRRWD's emergency provision. The hearing will discuss distribution of incurred costs.

- The Lake Jacobs project is working well. The project is lowering the water approximately 0.1 feet per day. Jones estimated that the project will reach the target elevation by the end of the month. Field personnel are monitoring the downstream water flows to ensure that icing does not create a problem.

- Appraisers Loren Peterson, Arvid Thompson, and Eddie Bernhardson are working on a number of projects. They plan to meet on 1/26/12 in the watershed office. Their work includes finishing
the assessment of benefits for Lake Jacobs, HRBP Outlets east of Barnesville along Trunk Highway No. 34, the Georgetown Flood Control Levee, and the County Line Outlet.

- The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is currently circulating the Operation and Maintenance Plan and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the County Line Outlet project. The project is operational and has reached its target elevation. The USFWS has filed a petition with the DNR to lower the water below the Ordinary High Water elevation. That additional lowering would probably occur sometime next summer.

- The office is working with the BWSR and Natural Resources Conservation Service on securing the remaining funding (approximately $650,000) to reach the 75% State funding level needed for the Manston Slough Restoration project. The Board intends to finish the easement option acquisitions this winter and hold the required hearing this spring. This should clear the way for construction to begin when conditions permit this summer.

- The Board signed the MOU with the USFWS pertaining to Project No. 50, Cromwell Township Highwater Outlet. The project is located north of Hawley and has been operational since December 2011. The contractor will have cleanup and seeding to complete in the spring.

- The office is working with Greg Anderson regarding the sale of homes acquired for the Oakport Flood Mitigation and Georgetown Levee Improvement projects. The homes are being advertised on the Clay County website. The BRRWD will need approximately $4.9 million in DNR funding to complete Phase 4 of the Oakport Project in 2012. Right now, the Governor has $20 million scheduled in the bonding bill for flood damage reduction.

- The hearing to possibly enlarge the BRRWD and add two managers is tentatively scheduled for 2/23/12 at 6:30 PM in Hildebrand Hall, Barnesville. Petitions were filed by Wilkin and Otter Tail Counties to add approximately 400 square miles to the BRRWD. BWSR is handling the hearing.

- Considerable discussion took place regarding the Fargo-Moorhead Army Corps of Engineers (COE) Diversion project. The BRRWD has a representative that serves on the Diversion Authority. The COE Chief's Report has been signed, and they are still waiting for a Record of Decision regarding the Environmental Impact Statement.

- The BRRWD hosted a successful Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Workshop on 1/17/12 at Hildebrand Hall, Barnesville. Approximately 55 people attended. The purpose of the Open House was to update citizens regarding the status of the TMDL study and future work that will be completed. Most of the sampled lakes, rivers, and streams are impaired. For more information regarding the water quality study, please visit the BRRWD's Website at www.brrwd.org.

- The Board approved payment of bills totaling $374,822.02. The billing included the BRRWD's annual contribution to River Keepers ($40,000) and a pay request from the City of Moorhead for the Phase 4 Feasibility Study, associated with the COE Diversion ($323,605.52). The BRRWD raised the COE funding in 2011 in accordance with M.S.A. 103D.905, Subd. 3.

The Board of Managers, BRRWD, will hold their next regular meeting on Monday, February 13, 2012, at 7:00 PM in the Barnesville office. All meetings are open to the public.