“Local Watershed Activities”

At their 6/25/12 meeting held in Barnesville, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), spent approximately four hours talking about projects/issues. A landowner on Wolverton Creek in Wolverton Township, Wilkin County, attended the meeting to discuss his concerns about a crossing that was raised and is affecting his property. Houston Engineering, Inc. (H.E.) has done an investigation of the alleged work. After surveying the crossing, it was found that an overflow section has been raised approximately 1.29’ from its designed elevation. The impacts for the 100-year flood are nominal, and are estimated at 0.05’. The landowner felt that the BRRWD had Rules, and no permit was issued to raise the spillway. Long range plans were discussed for a possible project on Wolverton Creek/Comstock Coulee. The office filed a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) permit application and will start discussions with the DNR Area Hydrologists about what work they might allow. It is proposed to at least construct a gradeline on the Coulee so the water flows in the proper direction. After considerable discussion, the Board voted to contact Wolverton Township, directing them to lower the road spillway to the designed elevation.

A landowner in Section 24, Manston Township, Wilkin County, discussed his concerns regarding seepage from an upstream Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) site. Ever since the project was built, he has had seepage flowing in his field ditch. The landowner is looking at a way to redirect the seepage. Discussion took place regarding area elevations and the possibility of installing a tile line for a short distance to handle the water. The landowner said he would investigate alternatives and attend a future BRRWD meeting to continue discussion of this issue.

Other business included:

- The Board approved permits to Bruce Wheelright for placement of riprap along Whisky Creek on his property in the City of Barnesville, subject to DNR approval; Butenhoff Farms for tiling in the NW1/4, Section 20, and the SW¼, Section 17, Atherton Township, Wilkin County; Orrin Sorum for placing a tile in a waterway, Section 31, Norwegian Grove Township, Otter Tail County; Nancy Marinac to relocate a driveway and culvert in Government Lot 5, Section 36, Tansem Township, Clay County; Rick Halverson Construction, Inc. to install a driveway and culvert off 7th ST NE, Dilworth, subject to culvert hydraulics review by Erik S. Jones, Engineer, H.E., as the area is in a designated floodplain; and Chris Noben to install field drain tile in the NW1/4, Section 18, Cuba Township, Becker County.

- An informational meeting will be held on Monday, July 2, 2012, at 10:00 AM in the Barnesville City Hall Council Chambers to meet with landowners and agencies to discuss a possible restoration project for the Lawndale Trout Stream north of County Road No. 30 in Sections 22 and 27, Atherton Township, Wilkin County.

- The Preliminary Hearing for Project No. 74, Clay County Ditch No. 51-Lateral will be held on Thursday, June 28, 2012, at 7:30 PM in the First Floor Council Chambers, Moorhead City Hall. Notices have been sent to affected landowners.

- The Final Hearing for Project No. 72, Wilkin County Ditch No. 22-Lateral No. 3 Improvement will be held on Tuesday, July 10, 2012, at 7:30 PM, Hildebrand Hall, Assumption Catholic Church, Barnesville.

- The Board discussed the status of the Manston Slough Restoration project. The emphasis now is for the office to find time to work on the remaining easement options. Conversations have taken place with the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) for funding assistance needed to reach the 75% state level. The Final Hearing was held and recessed on 5/22/12. The Wilkin County Environmental office has scheduled the Conditional Use Permit hearing for Monday, July 9, 2012, at 10:00 AM in the Wilkin County Courthouse, Breckenridge.
During the meeting, the office received a telephone call from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding claims from a landowner that he was going to block an outlet structure with sandbags. The BRRWD project is located north of Hawley. The Board discussed the agreement they have with the USFWS and authorized H.E. to install stoplogs in the structure. They intend to meet with the USFWS this winter to renegotiate the project's Operation and Maintenance plan.

The Board discussed the status of the land acquisitions needed for the Georgetown Levee Improvement Project. The progress remains slow due to the fact that most of the affected landowners have issues that need to be dealt with. H.E. has prepared plans and specifications for the project, but the BRRWD will not advertise for bids until more of the land issues are addressed.

The next Mediation Project Team meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 26, 2012, at 7:00 PM in the MSUM Science Center. Considerable discussion took place regarding the BRRWD's involvement with WRP projects in the District.

The Board discussed the status of the watershed district enlargement. BWSR approved the petition on 4/25/12. The BRRWD intends to hold a hearing in August to define the eastern boundary. Wilkin and Otter Tail Counties will each need to appoint one new Manager by 9/01/12. BWSR has asked for a plan for updating the Revised Watershed Management Plan to include the new area.

The Managers reviewed a letter from the Clay County Board of Commissioners asking them to hold an informational meeting with all affected parties to discuss the possibility of rejoining the Red River Watershed Management Board. After considerable discussion, some of the Board members thought scheduling a meeting of this nature should not take place until the issues regarding the new watershed area are resolved.

The Board agreed to contribute 1/3 of the local costs (approximately $7,000) to Ryan Nelson for erosion control structures he is installing on his property in conjunction with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Section 3, Kragnes Township, and Section 34, Georgetown Township, Clay County. Both areas drain directly into the Buffalo River.

The Managers agreed to sign easements with four landowners involving a wetland restoration site in Section 28, Elkton Township, Clay County. The closings will take place as soon as the BRRWD receives their first half tax payments from Clay County.

The Board agreed to file our Biennial Budget Request (BBR) with BWSR for Fiscal Years 2014/2015. The BBR is intended to sustain and promote water management projects and activities for local governments. BWSR will use this process to serve as a basis for budgeting.

The Board reviewed the status of the new office building construction. The BRRWD expects to move into their new location by 9/15/12. Request for Proposals were sent to local contractors for the Board room furniture.

The Board approved payment of bills totaling $33,945.21.