NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  October 12, 2012
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“Local Watershed Meets in New Office”

The Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), held their first meeting in their new office located at 1303 4th AVE NE, Barnesville MN, on Tuesday, October 9, 2012. While there is still some work to do on the building and grounds, business is being conducted from the new location. Manager Roger Ellefson, Wilkin County, was appointed as interim Treasurer, as Manager Curt Nelson, Clay County, recently broke his ankle, and may miss a few meetings.

Business included:

- Ryan Frohling, Manager, Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District/United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), mad a presentation regarding the Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Assessment. The CCP describes draft goals, objectives, and strategies that will guide management of the Hamden Slough NWR for the next 15 years. The Refuge was approved in 1989 by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. The USFWS is authorized to acquire 5,944 acres of land to restore a piece of the prairie-wetland ecosystem that historically existed there. To date, about 3,200 acres have been acquired. Some of the preferred alternatives include restoration of Pierce Lake. This is a project area studied by the BRRWD in the 1990's. It appears restoration of Pierce Lake could provide both natural resource enhancement and flood damage reduction benefits. A multitude of agencies are interested in this project, and hopes are that a meeting could be held sometime this winter with the landowners. Other goals include restoration and maintenance of the natural hydrology of all prairie pothole wetlands, development of an integrated wetland management plan, focus on restoring diverse prairie vegetation, implementation of a grazing program, conservation partnership efforts on increasing soil and water retention, restoring natural water flow corridors, and continuation of the deer and waterfowl hunt programs. The Board looks forward to working with Frohling regarding projects and programs regarding the Refuge that have a variety of benefits.

- The Board approved permits to: Clay County Highway Department for the replacement of a bridge over the Buffalo River on County Road No. 94 between Sections 6 and 7, Moland Township; Spring Prairie Colony to improve a drainage ditch across Section 27, Alliance Township, Clay County; Spring Prairie Colony to route drainage north to the South Branch of the Buffalo River from the NE corner of the Section 33, Alliance Township, Clay County, which will keep the water on the applicant's property in Section 27; Kelly Nichol for a Wetlands Reserve Program project in the E½SE¼, Section 16, Humboldt Township, Clay County, to include 3 excavated wetland areas; John Bergseid to install 4 sediment control basins designed by the Natural Resource Conservation Service in Sections 20 and 29, Parke Township, Clay County; John Bergseid to install random tiling in low areas to address seepage problems in Sections 20, 28, 29, and 32, Parke Township, Clay County; and Luke Brakke for 40 acres of pattern tiling on the east side of the SW¼, Section 8, Deerhorn Township, Wilkin County, which is an extension of a previously approved permit to the same applicant, to pattern tile the SE¼ of the same section, both projects will use the same outlet.

- The Board scheduled a special meeting for a field review of an ongoing issue regarding a Township road crossing over Wolverton Creek between Sections 9 and 10, Wolverton Township, Wilkin County. The field meeting will take place at 1:30 PM on Tuesday, October 16, 2012.

- The development of Project No. 74, Clay County Ditch No. 51-Lateral No. 3, has been stopped due to an appeal by Robert N. Norby through his attorney, Zenas Baer. The attorneys are working on scheduling a court date.
Proposals will be sent to area contractors regarding the development of Project No. 73, Country Heritage Outlet Ditch. The hearing was held on 10/03/12. Landowners wanted to see construction prices before determining whether or not to proceed.

William Nichol Excavating is working on Project No. 72, Wilkin County Ditch No. 22-Lateral No. 3 Improvement. The project is expected to be completed this fall.

Repairs will be made this week on Project No. 63, Grove Lake Outlet. The HDPE dual wall pipe has collapsed at one of the curves. The outlet did not operate this past summer due to the dry conditions.

The office is working with the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to obtain the funding needed to reach the 75% state funding level on the Manston Slough Restoration Project. BWSR has verbally committed approximately $682,365 to the project. The BRRWD intends to complete the easements and hearing process in 2012 and advertise for bids this winter for construction to begin in the spring 2013.

Hearings will be held for Project No. 32, Hawley EDA Diversion Redetermination of Benefits and Project No. 50, Cromwell Township Highwater Outlets, on Wednesday, October 10, 2012, at the Hawley Community Center. Affected landowners have been notified.

The contractor started work on the Georgetown 2012 Levee Improvements. The work area is cleared for Phase 1 construction on the east side of Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 75. The office continues to work on obtaining the remaining easements west of T.H. No. 75. That work will also include the removal of several houses. A quote from Schmitt and Sons Construction/Movers was reviewed.

The next Mediation Project Team meeting will be held on Thursday, November 15, 2012, at 1:30 PM in the BRRWD office.

Troy Larson of Rothsay has been appointed by the Wilkin County Board of Commissioners as a Manager from through the enlargement of the District. BWSR approved the enlargement on 4/25/12. An appointment from Otter Tail County has yet to be made, although several names have been suggested.

The office will review construction bids regarding the Elkton Township Wetland Mitigation site at their upcoming 10/22/12 meeting. The Part B application to the Clay County Soil and Water Conservation District in accordance with the Wetland Conservation Act rules has been submitted.

The office will complete an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the Wolverton Creek/Comstock Coulee Comprehensive Project. The EAW is needed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources before a permit for channel restoration can be issued.

The Board discussed Manager attendance at the upcoming Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts annual meeting to be held on November 29-December 1, 2012 in Alexandria. Reservations will be made.

The Board approved payment of bills $179,898.24.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Managers, BRRWD, is scheduled for Monday, October 22, 2012, at 7:00 PM in the new office at 1303 4th AVE NE, Barnesville. All meetings are open to the public. For more information, please visit our website at www.brrwd.org.