“Local Watershed Looks at Updating Permit Program”

At their regular meeting held on 1/30/13 (rescheduled from 1/28/13 due to the weather) in Barnesville, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), met with a representative from Houston Engineering, Inc. (H.E.) to discuss updating the Watershed's permit program. Adopted in 1979, Bruce Albright, Administrator, said the system really hasn't changed in the past 34 years. Brian Fischer, GIS Senior Project Manager, H.E., said the primary components of their Permit Data Management Suite are a GIS viewer and a permit database. The interface provides a visual aid for discussing permits and efficiently archives current and historic permits. It also provides automated generation of permit documentation and can be customized to suit a Watershed District's individual needs. The end result will be better information, landowner ability to complete a permit application online, and future cost savings associated with permit review and processing.

Fischer also discussed the need to update the BRRWD's website, which has not been changed since it was installed 5 years ago. The Board authorized staff to work with H.E. to obtain cost estimates for both projects and to present this information at a future meeting.

Other items included:

- The Board approved permits to: Roger Langerud to install non-perforated tile in the bottom of two existing drainage ditches, and then fill the ditches in the SW\(\frac{1}{4}\) NW\(\frac{1}{4}\), Section 11, Cromwell Township, Clay County; the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to replace or line 5 failing pipes on Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 59 north of Callaway; and MnDOT to place 7.5 inches of unbonded concrete payment over the existing pavement on the east bound lane of Interstate 94 from County State Aid Highway No. 10 near Downer to T.H. No. 34 by Barnesville.

- The Board discussed the status of easement negotiations pertaining to the Manston Slough Restoration. The office indicated that all landowners have again been contacted by letter. Each letter includes a proposed schedule that allows for advertisement of construction bids in March, 2013. Albright indicated that many landowners have contacted the office to sign their easements or bring in their abstracts.

- The Board discussed a letter from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regarding the funding needed to complete the Oakport Flood Mitigation Project. On 1/09/13, the BRRWD sent a letter to local legislators asking for $5.62 million to complete the project. The DNR indicated that funding may be available on a 50/50 basis to cover some of the current costs. Benefited landowners have already met the local match of $741,253. It is not likely there will be a willingness to deviate from the State's previous agreement.

- To date, the office has not scheduled the final hearing for the Crystal Creek Levee and the Redetermination of Benefits on Clay County Ditch No. 67. Both hearings will be held the same evening in Moorhead.

- The Board discussed reservations for the upcoming 2013 Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts Legislative Reception and Day at the Capitol, which is scheduled for March 13-14. The purpose of this legislative event is for Managers to meet with legislators one-on-one allowing them to get better acquainted and to educate legislators about Watershed District perspectives on key issues.

- The Board agreed to donate $150.00 to both the West Otter Tail and Wilkin Soil and Water Conservation District for the Area I Envirothon.
The Board approved payment of bills totaling $95,313.83.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Managers, BRRWD, will be held on Monday, February 11, 2013, at 7:00 PM in the Barnesville office located at 1303 4th AVE NE, Barnesville. All meetings are open to the public. For more information, please visit our website at www.brrwd.org.