FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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“Local Watershed Agrees to Work with Basin Commission”

At their regular meeting held on 2/12/13 (rescheduled from 2/11/13 due to the weather) in Barnesville, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), met with Jeff Lewis, Assistant Executive Director/Policy, Red River Basin Commission (RRBC). Lewis reported on the Halstad Upstream Retention Modeling. Retention throughout the Red River Basin is a key component for reducing damages from floods. It is also a major component of the Long Term Flood Solutions Recommendations/Report (LTFS) that Minnesota and North Dakota jointly funded through the RRBC. The LTFS identifies a target mainstem flow reduction of 20%. Those goals were based on models that were developed up to and through the 1997 flood. The Army Corps of Engineers (COE) has since developed new models based on more recent floods. The COE is also in the process of developing hydrologic models for each sub-watershed in the United States. Last fall, the FM Diversion Board of Authority approved a $500,000 allocation to the RRBC. This allocation is for Phase I modeling efforts for retention site mainstem and regional impact modeling and prioritization upstream of Halstad. On 12/18/12, the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) approved funding the updates to the models; however, their funding did not cover the BRRWD since we are not a member. The work on the North Dakota side is being funded by the Joint Water Resource District Boards.

Lewis said the modeling for the BRRWD is estimated to cost $43,000. Outcomes of the modeling include better flood and LiDAR data, development of a synthetic model, update of the LTFS, and will put all proposed retention projects on the same page with data and information. Lewis said the RRBC is willing to fund the proposed modeling with the BRRWD on a 50/50 basis. The new modeling effort will include the recently added area to the BRRWD in Wilkin and Otter Tail Counties. After considerable discussion, the Board agreed to enter into a contract with the RRBC to complete the modeling with the cost share.

Other items included:

- The Board discussed implementation of the permit program for the added areas in Wilkin and Otter Tail Counties. Questions were raised as to whether or not landowners should report recently completed projects and it was agreed that information is always good. Bruce Albright, Office Administrator, commented that permit applications are starting to come in from this area.

- The Board approved permits to: BNSF Railway Company in the NE¼, Section 8, Wolverton Township, Wilkin County, to replace an existing bridge with 2 lines of 73" x 55" CMPA was recommended for approval after an analysis of the request was completed by Erik S. Jones, Engineer, Houston Engineering, Inc.; The City of Moorhead for the Prairie Meadows 4th Addition located in the NW¼, Section 28, Moorhead Township, Clay County which will include the construction of residential homes on 42 parcels, street and underground utilities, and storm sewer flow that will discharge into the Southfield-Prairie Meadows storm water pond; and Dennis Butenhoff for 151 acres of pattern tiling in the N½, Section 16, Barnesville Township, Clay County that will outlet via gravity flow to "west tributary" of the Whisky Creek project.

- The Board reviewed a letter from Kris Carlson, Lead Engineer, Ulteig Engineers Inc., stating that the City of Detroit Lakes is evaluating the possibility of using the BRRWD as a discharge point for their waste water treatment facilities. It appears the discharge would eventually outlet into Becker County Ditch No. 5 system and the drainage would have to be assessed to that drainage system. Concerns were also noted about water quality. The City is looking at relocating some of their facilities in order to expand their airport. More information will be forthcoming.
Obtaining the remaining easements needed for the Manston Slough Restoration Project is in process. The office has not set a date for the hearing continuation. A meeting will be held with Vogel Law Firm on 2/14/13 to discuss title opinions and condemnation proceedings where needed.

The Board discussed the status of funding for Phase 4 of the Oakport Flood Mitigation Project. Estimates are that $5.62 million is needed. It is hoped this will be listed in any 2013 bonding bill proposed by the State Legislature. Albright will meet with local legislators on 2/13/13 at the State Capitol. The Board approved Resolution No. 13-02, which details the need and requests the funding.

The Board discussed the status of easement work in Georgetown. The contractor finished Phase 1 of the project last fall on the east side of Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 75. He intends to complete work on the west side of T.H. No. 75 this spring. There are approximately 4 remaining issues to be resolved.

The next Project Team meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 21, 2013 at 1:30 PM in the BRRWD office.

The Board discussed the BRRWD boundary hearing for the watershed district enlargement that was held on 1/31/13 in Rothsay. The hearing focused mainly on the eastern boundary. Several concerns were noted including the issue that Lake Haldorson is landlocked and should not be included in the watershed. The hearing was recessed and will be continued once questions and concerns can be field verified.

The BRRWD needs to start the Revised Watershed Management Plan (RWMP) process for the added areas in Wilkin and Otter Tail Counties. Citizen and technical advisory committees will be formed. The office is also working with Wilkin County regarding the transfer of their drainage systems for the new area.

The BRRWD has received 50% of the funding from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources for the approved Clean Water Fund grants. The projects include conservation drainage pertaining to Clay County Ditch Nos. 9, 32, and 33 and the Upper South Branch Best Management Practices Project-Part 2 in Wilkin and Otter Tail Counties. The two grants total $671,450.

The status of the meeting regarding RRWMB membership was discussed. A Saturday morning meeting is being considered for early April. The meeting will be open to public. Invitations will be sent to County Commissioners, local, state, and federal legislators. An agenda will be developed, a facilitator hired, and a press release will announce the meeting details.

Managers Hanson and Fjestad reported on the RRBC Conference which they attended in Grand Forks on 1/15/13-1/17/13.

The Board approved payment of bills totaling $169,319.45.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Managers, BRRWD, will be held on Monday, February 25, 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.