“Local Watershed Makes Order for Manston Slough Project”

A special meeting held in Barnesville Monday, April 29, 2013, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) made the order to develop Project No. 56, Manston Slough Restoration on a six to one vote. The Project development started nine years ago with an informational meeting in Rothsay. The project, estimated to cost $4 million, will be located in northern Wilkin County and includes wetland restoration and flood water retention. The site will hold approximately 5,000 acre feet of water. It will also recreate approximately 2,000 acres of wetlands. The BRRWD still has several landowners to work with regarding easement options. The BRRWD has secured 75% ($3 million) in State funding for the project. The Board intends to open bids later this month with construction starting this summer.

Also at the meeting, a landowner from the Kragnes area discussed his concerns with erosion that occurred this spring during the flood on his property next to Clay County Ditch No. 49. Water came over the spoil bank and did considerable erosion damage. The landowner had concerns about this happening several years ago when the Watershed decided to enlarge the upstream culverts. Houston Engineering, Inc. (H.E.) was authorized to conduct a survey of the spoil bank height in relationship to the adjacent township road. An analysis will be made as to whether or not the dike can be raised to help contain the water.

The Board also spent considerable time meeting with landowners on Wolverton Creek. Both landowners experienced flooding again this spring. They expressed concerns about an upstream project the Watershed ordered in a year ago to improve Lateral No. 3 to Wilkin County Ditch No. 22. The discussion primarily focused on what are the next steps to get work done on Wolverton Creek/Comstock Coulee. The Board indicated that the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has tentatively approved a comprehensive plan for future work on the channel. The required DNR permit will also include preparation of an Environment Assessment Worksheet. The BRRWD will also be looking at possibly establishing a water management district to help fund the project cost. The Board discussed a goal of having everything completed by 2014 so channel restoration could begin. The BRRWD also intends to hold an informational meeting in June with the affected landowners.

The Board then spent some time talking about the effects of the 2013 spring flood. Bruce Albright, Office Administrator, said the office has taken some calls about washed out culverts, dikes, etc. We did have major breakout flows from Stony Creek going north into Hay Creek along the east side of Interstate 94. A crossing on Lawndale Creek/Wilkin County Ditch No. 40 also washed out. The BRRWD did operate their retention sites this spring and where applicable, gates were closed. All lake outlet projects were stopped during the flood.

Other business included:

- The bid opening for Project No. 71, City of Moorhead 50th AVE Flood Control has been changed from May 8 to May 10. It will still be held at 10:30 AM at the Fargo H.E. office.

- The next Mediation Project Team meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 23, 2013 at 7:00 PM in the BRRWD office.

- Albright and Manager Fjestad field reviewed the eastern boundary of the new watershed area on 4/26/13. They stopped and visited with some of the affected landowners. Goals are to revise the map and finish the project hearing sometime in June.

- The Board discussed the status of the 2013 permit applications. All approved applications have been mailed. There are still several pending projects. Albright noted that the office has dealt
with all permits that were needed this spring. The BRRWD is working on a new permit data management suite, which will allow landowners to track their application online.

- At the 4/18/13 hearing held in Moorhead, the Board made the order to repair Clay County Ditch Nos. 9, 32, and 33, which will include the buffer strip installation. H.E. was asked to stake all right-of-way areas before landowners begin their spring field work. Temporary right-of-way will be utilized in 2013 for the repairs.

- The Board reviewed costs associated with Becker County Ditch No. 19. The Board made an $11,000 assessment in 2013, which some landowners have questioned. The system is currently being reviewed for a redetermination of benefits. More information will be forthcoming.

- The Board approved payment of bills totaling $11,876.57.

- The Board discussed an informational meeting held with the Turtle Lake Association about a possible redetermination of benefits. The 1999 benefits were based on the market values at that time. Since then, there have been some changes around the lake. The Association feels that the benefits should be redetermined to account for those changes. The Association would like to hold an informational meeting with the affected landowners sometime this June.

- A meeting was held on 4/25/13 to discuss 2013 water quality monitoring. Approximately 42 sites will be monitored. Participants include the Barnesville and Hawley River Watch programs and the International Water Institute. The work includes the addition of 9 sites in the new watershed area added in Wilkin and Otter Tail Counties.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Managers, BRRWD, will be held on Monday, May 13, 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.