FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 09, 2013
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“Watershed Sets 2014 Levies”

At their regular meeting and annual budget hearing held on Monday, August 26, 2013, in Barnesville, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) set their levies for 2014. The Board adopted a $250,000 administrative levy, which is capped by statute. The Board is also allowed to raise a special levy to cover their liability insurance costs. That levy was set at $23,000.

The following ditch/project levies were set:

**Clay County**
- County Ditch No. 10 - $75,000
- County Ditch No. 20 - $10,000
- County Ditch No. 28 - $20,000
- County Ditch No. 31 - $7,000
- County Ditch No. 32 - $10,000
- County Ditch No. 33 - $6,000
- County Ditch No. 35 - $20,000
- County Ditch No. 36 - $10,000
- County Ditch No. 41-Outlet - $20,000
- County Ditch No. 41-Lateral 1 - $15,000
- County Ditch No. 41-Lateral 2 - $10,000
- County Ditch No. 47 - $50,000
- County Ditch No. 49 - $35,000
- County Ditch No. 50 - $35,000
- County Ditch No. 54 - $10,000
- County Ditch No. 58 - $10,000
- County Ditch No. 59 - $60,000
- County Ditch No. 69 - $10,000

**Becker County**
- County Ditch No. 9 - $15,000
- County Ditch No. 15 - $15,000
- County Ditch No. 21 - $15,000

**Wilkin County**
- County Ditch No. 13 - $20,000
- County Ditch No. 13-Lateral - $10,000
- County Ditch No. 22 - $40,000
- County Ditch No. 30 - $10,000
- County Ditch No. 43 - $10,000
- County Ditch No. 44 - $20,000

**Projects**
- Hawley Diversion - $30,000
- Kragnes Ring Dike - $2,500
- Turtle Lake Outlet - $35,000
- Oakport Flood Mitigation - $100,000
- LaBelle/Boyer Lake Outlets - $80,000
- HRBP Outlets - $30,000
- Lake Jacobs Outlet - $25,000
- Crystal Creek Flood Control - $20,000

The Board is also allowed to levy for a general fund, consisting of ad valorem tax, not to exceed 0.00798% of the taxable market value, to pay the costs attributable to the basic water management features of projects initiated by petition of a political subdivision. Historically, BRRWD has asked the Clay County Board of Commissioners to be the petitioner. The 2013 taxable market value for the BRRWD is $5,772,743,800, meaning the Board could raise up to $460,665 per levy. A general levy in that amount will be used to fund a variety of programs including River Keepers, Red River Basin Commission, log jam removals, water quality studies, and flood damage reduction site investigations. A second general levy in the amount of $375,000 will be used for the Manston Slough Restoration, $100,000; the new office, $100,000; Elkton Township Wetland Mitigation, $100,000; comprehensive planning, $25,000; Wolverton Creek/Comstock Coulee, $25,000; and the South Branch of the Buffalo River, $25,000.

The 2014 general levies total $1,108,665. In 2013, the BRRWD raised $1,123,731. All levies will be certified with the Auditors in Clay, Becker, Wilkin, and Ottertail Counties.
Other business included:

- Met with landowners concerning diking activities in Section 28, Barnesville Township, Clay County. Historical drainage patterns were discussed. Houston Engineering, Inc. (H.E.I.) was asked to provide some survey data for the area so that a recommendation can be made to reestablish the natural waterway elevation. Further discussion will occur at the upcoming 09/09/13 meeting.

- Approval of permits to Jim and Jerry Briks for the installation of an approach with a 24” diameter culvert and a flapgate on the west end of the pipe in the southwest corner of Section 14, Meadows Township, Wilkin County; John Boen for the installation of water and sediment control basins per USDA/SWCD standards and specifications in Sections 4 and 5, Trondhjem Township, Ottertail County; Edward Ernst for the installation of a culvert in a dry approach off County State Aid Highway (CSAH) No. 52 in Section 29, Prairie View Township, Wilkin County; David Butenhoff for 115 acres of pattern tiling in the SE1/4, Section 16, Barnesville Township, Clay County; Louis Tschakert for wetland restorations on a Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) easement in the NE1/4, Section 32, Manston Township, Wilkin County; and Paul Tschakert for wetland restorations on a WRP easement in the S1/2NW1/4 and the N1/2SW1/4, Section 32, Manston Township, Wilkin County.

- Discussed a ditching complaint in the SE1/4, Section 35, Foxhome Township, Wilkin County. Manager Fjestad will field review and meet with the landowner.

- Discussed Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) concerns pertaining to proposed lateral project to Wilkin County Ditch No. 31 in Section 14, Connelly Township. The DNR is concerned that the proposed project will divert flows from Whisky Creek. They would like to see the BRRWD explore a more comprehensive project that could restore the creek and address upstream landowner concerns.

- Received the 2nd Street drainage investigation report from H.E. This summer, landowners along 2nd Street in Oakport Township complained of inadequate drainage during several large rainfall events. Two options were explored. The information will be shared with the affected landowners at an informational meeting to be scheduled sometime later this fall.

- Discussed the status of the Manston Slough Restoration project. The contractor is expected to begin his work sometime in the middle of September 2013. The Board authorized the office to make payments for easements to all affected landowners, provided their title work is completed. A groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled for Thursday, September 5, 2:00 PM, along CSAH No. 26, west of Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 9.

- Awarded a construction bid to Northern States Excavating, Inc. for demolition work at five sites involved with the Oakport Flood Mitigation Project. The low bid was $32,100.

- Noted that a hearing for the redetermination of benefits on the Turtle Lake Outlet will be held on October 7, 2013. The office is preparing the hearing notice.

- Noted that a hearing will be held in Callaway on October 1, 2013 regarding the redetermination of benefits for Becker County Ditch Nos. 10 and 19.

- Authorized Julie Jerger, BRRWD Resident Secretary, to obtain her notary commission.

- Approved the 2012 financial audit as prepared by Harold J. Rotunda, Certified Public Accountant. A copy of the audit will be posted on the BRRWD’s website.
• Discussed the Fargo-Moorhead Metro Flood Diversion Project. BRRWD representatives attended two meetings recently held in Comstock. The BRRWD has been asked to sign the Second Amendment to the Limited Joint Powers Agreement for fiscal year 2014. The Board also reviewed the Richland-Wilkin Joint Powers Authority lawsuit, which was recently filed.

• The annual fall tour is scheduled for Thursday, October 3, 2013, beginning at 1:30 PM at the Galaxie Supper Club east of Barnesville. Invitations will be sent to the Advisory Committee, Mediation Project Team, County Commissioners, local legislators, agency personnel, and the Soil and Water Conservation District board members. The tour has been very successful in the past and gives attendees an opportunity to see BRRWD projects in the field.

• Reviewed correspondence from a landowner involved with the BRRWD’s Project No. 54, Whisky Creek Tributaries. The landowner is proposing a conservation easement alteration request. If approved, 1.7 acres of easement would be traded for nearly 29 new acres that would do a better job of protecting “east tributary” which is a DNR protected water course.

• The Board spent considerable time discussing a possible grant application to the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) for water management entities that desire to improve their performance or operational effectiveness. Grants have a cap of $10,000 per local government unit. A grant application would include proposed activities, expected deliverables, and desired outcomes. The Board has talked about the need for an analysis of district operations and an evaluation regarding the adequacy of the present staffing level to carry out district activities and to meet the goals of the Watershed’s Plan. An outside consultant would be hired to assist with the evaluation. The BRRWD is currently interviewing candidates.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Managers, BRRWD, is scheduled for Monday, September 9, 2013, at 7:30 PM in the new Barnesville office, located at 1303 4th AVE NE. All meetings are open to the public. For more information, please visit our website at www.brrwd.org.