“Local Watershed Holds Annual Meeting”

The Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) held their annual meeting on January 13, 2014. The meeting included election of officers. The following will serve as officers for 2014:

- Gerald L. Van Amburg, Clay County, Chair
- Peter V. Fjestad, Otter Tail County, Vice Chair
- Curtis M. Nelson, Clay County, Treasurer
- John E. Hanson, Becker County, Secretary
- Cathy L. Affield, Wilkin County, Manager
- Troy E. Larson, Wilkin County, Manager
- Breanna Paradeis Kobiela, Clay County, Manager

Houston Engineering Inc. (H.E.) was reappointed as the 2014 consulting engineer. Vogel Law Firm was appointed as the 2014 legal consultant. Harold J. Rotunda, Certified Public Accountant (CPA), West Fargo, ND, will do the 2013 audit. Joel D. Carlson, will remain as the BRRWD’s 2014 lobbyist. The 2014 financial institutions will be Wells Fargo Bank and Midwest Bank, Barnesville, MN, and other financial institutions located within the District as deemed necessary throughout the year.

The Board spent some time meeting with a Brandup Township landowner regarding a permit he obtained in 2013 from the BRRWD. Stipulations were written on the approved permit, indicating that he also needed approval from the Bois de Sioux Watershed District. The landowner felt that approval might be difficult to obtain. No work is occurring within the Bois de Sioux Watershed District, and he questioned the reasoning for adding the noted language. After considerable discussion and consideration, the Board agreed to remove the language. A letter will be sent to the Bois de Sioux Watershed District explaining the action.

Other business included:

- The Board approved a permit to Eddie Mulcay to install an approach and culvert in the southwest corner of Section 28, Humboldt Township, Clay County. The approach will be used to access a small field he has on the west side of Interstate-94.

- The Board discussed a permit application from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to establish a “moist soil unit” on property they own in the NE¼, Section 30, Manston Township, Wilkin County. The unit is located within the boundaries of Project No. 56, Manston Slough Restoration, being conducted by the BRRWD. Erik S. Jones, Engineer, H.E., said that he needs to visit with Don Schultz, Area Wildlife Manager, DNR, about some of their project details. He didn’t feel the height of their proposed levee should negate from the water storage aspect of the Watershed's project.

- The Board discussed the appraisal being conducted for the Kent Rod and Gun Club property in the Manston Slough Restoration Project. The appraisal is being done for condemnation action because of the complexity of the title. The appraiser has found that the before and after values are the same, meaning that the BRRWD’s proposed project does not change the value of the property in question.

- The Board noted that the next Mediation Project Team (PT) meeting has been rescheduled to Thursday, February 13, 2014, at 1:30 PM in the Barnesville office. It was noted that the PT meeting will follow the 02/03/14 informational meeting that will be with the Barnesville Township waterway landowners. That meeting will be held at 7:00 PM in the Barnesville office.
If the landowners are interested in moving forward with some sort of project, details regarding flood damage reduction and natural resource enhancement can be discussed at the PT meeting.

- The Board reviewed a letter from the Wilkin County Environmental Office pertaining to possible zoning regulations and flood water storage. Factors that will be considered by the County: the extent to which the applicant has taken advantage of mitigation opportunities, the impact on the tax base, the impact on public and private infrastructure, where the water comes from that is going to be stored, and whether or not the activity has an impact on the natural flood plain. Comments are requested by 01/31/14. The Board directed Bruce E. Albright, Administrator, BRRWD, to draft a response, which they will review at their upcoming 01/27/14 meeting.

- The Board noted that the office is working with the Viewers on wrapping up several projects, which include the Redetermination of Benefits for Becker County Ditch Nos. 10 and 19. Following the 10/09/13 hearing, which was recessed, there were several questions they needed to field review. The Viewers are also working on completing the Redetermination of Benefits for Clay County Ditch Nos. 9, 32, and 33.

- The Board noted that the new Permit Data Management Suite is online and operating. Landowners interested in filing permit applications can now go to the BRRWD’s website at www.brrwd.org to file their application and supporting materials. The BRRWD is looking forward to the new system, which should be paperless. Also, applicants will be able to track online the status of their application.

- The Board signed the contract with Donna Rae Scheffert, Leadership Tools, for BRRWD strategic planning. The BRRWD obtained a grant from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) in the amount of $4,000 to assist with the process. Planning will include a look at district operations. The process is expected to take three to four months.

- The Board noted that the BRRWD did not receive any Clean Water Funding grants from BWSR for 2014. Projects submitted included erosion repair on the Otter Tail River in Wilkin County, and erosion occurring alongside of a township road in Glyndon Township, Clay County. The office was also not selected for the Targeted Watershed Demonstration Program, which was submitted for Wolverton Creek/Comstock Coulee. Jones is drafting the Environmental Assessment Worksheet response for Wolverton Creek/Comstock Coulee. Comments are due by 02/11/14.

- The Board signed the final order which will be sent to the Minnesota Secretary of State regarding the boundaries for the newly added area to the BRRWD in Wilkin and Otter Tail Counties. This action should set forth taxation of the area starting in 2015. At issue was the eastern boundary in Otter Tail County, which at the time the area was added by BWSR on 04/25/12, was a hydrologic line. The boundary needed to be defined in terms of legal descriptions to allow the auditor to accurately describe the area.

- The Board noted that the office has sent a letter to Clay County indicating they have two manager appointments to make in 2014. The terms of Managers Curtis M. Nelson and Gerald L. Van Amburg will expire on 08/31/14. Citizens interested in applying for the position should contact their county commissioner.

- The Board approved payment of bills totaling $221,321.39.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Managers, BRRWD, is scheduled for Monday, January 27, 2014, at 7:00 PM in the 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.