

## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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### **“Local Watershed to Update Plan”**

At their regular meeting held in Barnesville on Monday, December 8, 2014, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), discussed an update of their Revised Watershed Management Plan (RWMP). Back in 2012, when approximately 450 square miles was added to the BRRWD in parts of Wilkin and Otter Tail Counties, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) set a deadline of 05/31/15 to have the newly added area incorporated into the District’s RWMP. To start that process, informational meetings have now been scheduled for Tuesday, January 13, 2015, at 7:00 PM at the Rothsay Community Center and Thursday, January 15, 2015, at 2:00 PM in the Court Room, Wilkin County Court House in Breckenridge. The public is invited to participate. Both meetings will follow similar formats. The purpose of the meetings is to have citizens from the newly added areas discuss what they feel are water problems in their area. The process will also include formation of Citizen and Technical Advisory Teams. The BWSR will ultimately have to hold a hearing on the new RWMP.

Other business included:

- There were no new permit applications to review or act upon. There are several tabled permit applications where we need additional information from the applicant, hearings are required to add land to legal drainage systems, etc.
- Reviewed a letter from Erik S. Jones, Engineer, Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI), regarding his investigation of drainage concerns expressed last summer to the Watershed Office from a landowner in Section 21, Tanberg Township, Wilkin County. The landowner was concerned that upstream water was constantly draining across his property that may partially be caused by the amount of drain tile installed in that area. A review of local maps showed that the receiving water body should be Wilkin County Ditch (C.D.) No. 6A. Jones’ report discussed the location of that drainage system, which appears to end at the east-west quarter line in Section 21, Tanberg Township. It appears that the original ditch ended at 195th ST, which is commonly referred to as “Lover’s Lane”. The information will be forwarded to Tanberg Township and the affected party. They may need to work through the permit system to install additional culverts and repair existing drainage ditches.
- Noting that the preliminary hearing for Project No. 77, Clay C.D. No. 51-Lateral No. 3, is now scheduled for Monday, January 5, 2015, at 7:00 PM in the First Floor Council Chambers, Moorhead City Hall. Notices will be mailed to affected parties.
- Noting that HEI has completed field survey work to develop easements needed for the restoration of Whiskey Creek in Section 14, Connelly Township, Wilkin County. The proposed channel restoration is something that the upstream landowners east of Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 9 requested. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) permit has already been obtained. The BRRWD still needs to apply for a conditional use permit from the Wilkin County Environmental Office. The actual easements should be prepared by the next meeting. The next step will be to work with the affected landowners to get them signed. The Wilkin County Highway Department has expressed an interest in doing the work next spring when conditions permit.
- Noting that the contract for Gladen Construction, Inc. regarding their work on Project No. 71, City of Moorhead 50th AVE Flood Control, will be left open this winter. They were unable to seal a leaking defective flood gate. The contract will remain open until its determined next spring if the project seeding is successful and to make the necessary gate repairs. The BRRWD has agreed to mitigate some wetland impacts associated with this project using their newly created wetland bank in Elkton Township.
- A motion to approve signing of Amendment No. 8 to the DNR Flood Damage Reduction Grant obtained for the Manston Slough Restoration Project. The amendment extends the completion date

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until 09/30/15. It also deducts \$100,000 from the grant which shouldn't be needed to help finance the project. A 2014 crop loss claim from a downstream landowner is still under review.

- Discussed a meeting scheduled with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) pertaining to the Kelly Nichol Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) site in Section 21, Humboldt Township, Clay County. There appears to be some holes in the embankment which forced the NRCS to lower the water level last summer. The meeting will discuss possible repairs to the embankment or possibly removing the embankment completely and doing more "typical" wetland restorations for that area.
- Noting that the City of Moorhead has scheduled a meeting with BRRWD representatives on 12/11/14 to discuss financing needed to complete the Oakport Flood Mitigation Project. At the present time, approximately \$5.26 million is still needed from the DNR to complete Phase 4. There has not been adequate funding in the bonding bill the past several years to allow for that work to happen. The area in question becomes part of the City of Moorhead on 01/01/15. The BRRWD remains hopeful that possible funding could be obtained with a 2015 bonding bill acted upon by the Legislature.
- Discussed the status of one remaining house buy-out that still needs to be completed in the City of Georgetown before the levee can be completed. The DNR grant was recently extended until 12/31/15 to allow for Reiner Contracting, Inc. to come back next year when conditions permit to finish that project. Corey Elmer, Attorney, Vogel Law Firm, is working on the last acquisition which has encountered several problems.
- Noting that the office is working on drafting two petitions. One petition will be circulated by landowners on the Clay-Wilkin Judicial Ditch No. 1 system that would ask for a diversion ditch that would be placed on the county line to take high water directly into Wolverton Creek/Comstock Coulee. The second petition pertains to work on Becker C.D. No. 21 in Section 10, Riceville Township. This petition would straighten a ditch that would make farming of a small tract of land easier for the affected landowner.
- Noting that the next Mediation Project Team meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 8, 2015 at 1:30 PM in the Barnesville office. The main topic of discussion will be the recently completed survey work for the Barnesville Township Area Investigation.
- At the 11/24/14 BRRWD meeting, the Board discussed a possible project for the South Branch of the Buffalo River. For several years, the BRRWD has been working on a comprehensive project that would begin at the Clay-Wilkin county line and proceed upstream. Due to the magnitude of that project, it has been difficult to focus on individual concepts. A goal of any project for this area needs to include water retention so that conditions at the county line downstream of that point would not have to deal with more water. A smaller concept would look at a project beginning at County Road No. 30, proceeding upstream to T.H. No. 9. Work in that area would include off-channel levees, channel restoration, and retention. A possible retention site would be looked at just west of T.H. No. 9. The Board is also working with landowners in Section 11, Manston Township on a WRP site that could be modified to detain additional run-off.
- The Board is working with the NRCS on two other WRP projects. One of the projects is located in Section 4, Manston Township and Section 33, Atherton Township, Wilkin County. The Board has authorized HEI to do the preliminary investigation which will include some field survey work. The second site is located on South Reep Lake in Sections 4 and 5, Audubon Township, Becker County. HEI has completed a tabulation of acreages needed for a wetland and temporary storage pool. The goal would be to meet with area landowners during the Holidays to discuss easement acreages and payment rates. The Board will use the same payment rates as used for the Manston Slough Restoration Project.
- Agreed that their January "special agenda" discussion topic will be Stony Creek. For several years the Board has discussed a possible comprehensive project that would begin at T.H. No. 9 and proceed downstream to where Stony Creek enters Hay Creek. Problems in this area are very complex and

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include a county ditch system, possible restoration of the channel, off-channel levees, and a regional detention site.

- Noting that Right of Entry letters will go out to six area cemeteries possibly involved with the Fargo-Moorhead Diversion Project. The Army Corp of Engineers has asked for permission to access these cemeteries for a Cultural and Archeological Survey to determine whether or not any of the cemeteries would qualify to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Board approved sending the letter at the 10/27/14 meeting. The office is working with Vogel Law Firm in this regard.
- Noting that a meeting for the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program and the Whiskey Creek Pilot Area was held with the Steering/Advisory Committees on December 3, 2014, in Breckenridge. Agency personnel will meet again on 12/11/14 to discuss the Fiscal Year 15 budget. Work in the pilot areas is scheduled to end on 06/30/16.
- Approved Pay Request No. 2 and Change Order No. 2 for the Hawley Buffalo River Restoration Project. The amount of the Pay Request is \$221,043.48. The contractor continues to make good progress given the favorable weather conditions.
- Noting that Bruce Albright, BRRWD Administrator, was selected by BWSR at the recent Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts (MAWD) Annual Meeting as the “Watershed District Employee of the Year”.
- Noting that Albright met with representatives from the Wilkin County Highway Department on 12/02/14 to discuss the recently transferred drainage systems. The transfer includes 16 additional systems which will now be administered by the BRRWD. For several years, the Highway Department has been working on repairing the ditch systems, which include grade line restoration, sloping, side-inlets, and buffer strips. Following through with their proposed work schedule, they should be able to complete the repairs in 2016.
- Noting that Watershed Managers met with a salesperson from Solbrekk Business Technology Solutions at the recent MAWD Annual Meeting. Laserfiche is a privately owned software development company that creates enterprise content management and business process automation software for businesses. The concept is to develop a PC-based and searchable full-text index document management system when working with clients that need litigation support for a large volume of documents. BRRWD staff and Mangers plan to meet with a sales representative in the near future to discuss whether or not the technology would be applicable to the BRRWD. Since the mid-1970’s, the BRRWD has obviously accumulated a lot of paperwork, which is a difficult system to maintain and manage. All existing information in the file cabinets would need to be scanned into the system.
- Approved payment of bills totaling \$380,365.61.

The next meeting of the Board of Managers, BRRWD, is scheduled for Monday, December 22, 2014, at 7:00 PM in the Barnesville office, located at 1303 4th AVE NE. The “special agenda” discussion will pertain to the RWMP process. All meetings are open to the public. For more information, please visit our website at [www.brrwd.org](http://www.brrwd.org).