"Local Watershed Meets with Landowners"

At their meeting held in Barnesville on Monday, May 11, 2015, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), met with several groups of landowners pertaining to water concerns. The first matter pertained to drainage in Section 22, Atherton Township, Wilkin County. The outlet for an existing field ditch was changed to aid in the farming of a small field located north of Deerhorn Creek. The upstream landowner talked about options for addressing his historic drainage patterns. A new outlet could be installed into a waterway that is an outlet for Wilkin County Ditch (C.D.) No. 42. The downstream landowner also agreed that a tile outlet could be installed on the south end of the field ditch. The landowners agreed to consider the discussed option and will get back to the Board before their next meeting.

The next issue pertained to tile drainage in Sections 23 and 24, Hamden Township, Becker County. In the fall of 2013, a landowner replaced 100-year old tile outlet in his field. In the fall of 2014, the downstream landowner plugged the tile with concrete. A second outlet was created for the upstream drainage going north along the east side of 220th AVE. The BRRWD agreed to conduct an elevation survey of the area and will make recommendation for the next meeting as to how the problem can be resolved. The Board will also check with their attorney, Tami Norgard, Vogel Law Firm, regarding the blocking of the tile system.

The last issue dealt with Stakke Lake, south of Lake Park. In 2013, homeowners around the lake contacted the BRRWD and an informational meeting was held on 07/23/13. The subdivision landowners would like to see a stable outlet created for the lake, which is the headwaters for Hay Creek. Due to the recent dry weather conditions, the lake is now down approximately 15”. In 2014, the BRRWD had their engineer, Erik Jones, Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI), complete a preliminary investigation of various options. It appears raising the lake could affect neighboring landowners. Another option would be to construct a better channel between a bay located at the northwest corner of the lake and the main water body. The Stakke Lake landowners in attendance questioned what the next steps might be. They noted that they are currently planning a lake association meeting. The Board directed Bruce Albright, Office Administrator, to attend that meeting and answer questions.

Other business included:

- Review of the BRRWD's monthly financial statements. Cash on hand in $1,481,469.32. Albright noted that the office recently received Grant Amendment No. 8 for the Oakport Flood Mitigation Project in the amount of $131,082. A billing will be sent to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to collect those funds.

- Landowners in attendance questioned the Board's status regarding approval of the Fargo-Moorhead Diversion Authority's Fiscal Year 2015 budget. Albright noted that at the 04/27/15 meeting, it was noted that no further action will be taken by the BRRWD in that regard until the Minnesota Environmental Impact Statement is completed.

- A landowner questioned the status of the proposed Stony Creek Detention Site. Jones said the engineers are looking possibly at two pools. The pool south of the creek channel could be constructed at this time. The north pool could also be used to store flood waters from Hay Creek in the future. The soil borings are completed, but it will take several weeks for the analysis. HEI is also surveying the area to determine what a detention site inlet and outlet would look like. As more information becomes available, landowners will be kept informed.
• The Board approved permits to Jean Ward for a field approach off County Road (C.R.) No. 18, in the SE1/4, Section 29, Spring Prairie Township, Clay County, subject to approval by the Clay County Highway Department to work Wilkin their road right-of-way and the City of Barnesville to install a fish ramp and clean sediment from a pond on the south side of Trunk Highway No. 34, Section 19, Humboldt Township, Clay County.

• With the recent weekend rains, discussed several new drainage complaints. One area is along the Clay-Wilkin county line southeast of Barnesville. The landowner feels that the townships road ditches need to be cleaned. The second complaint pertains to drainage along C.R. No. 54, Section 27, Alliance Township, Clay County. This has been an ongoing issue, and Albright will schedule a meeting with the landowner and David Overbo, Engineer, Clay County Highway Department. Both areas were field reviewed by Albright on 05/11/15. Pictures were taken.

• The Viewers have been contacted regarding Project No. 77, Clay C.D. No. 51-Proposed Lateral No. 3. They hope to been in the area later this month or early June to complete their benefit analysis.

• One of four easements has now been signed for the restoration of Whiskey Creek in Section 14, Connelly Township, Wilkin County. Albright continues to work with the remaining landowners.

• A field review of the Manston Slough Restoration Project was completed on 05/07/15 with representatives from the DNR and United States Fish and Wildlife Service. A goal of the inspection was to document additional cleanup items that need to be completed by the project's contractor, Gladen Construction, Inc. Pending site conditions, the native grass seeding can start after May 15th. BRRWD representatives will attend the Minnesota Environmental Initiative Awards Ceremony on May 21st in Minneapolis. The Manston Slough Restoration Project is one of three finalists in the "Natural Resources" category.

• Noting that BRRWD representatives met with the Georgetown City Council and landowners on 05/04/15. The City was concerned about additional costs not covered by the DNR grant. They were also concerned about the project's schedule. No work was completed on the project in 2014 because of a house that needs to be demolished. The City invited the BRRWD back to their next council meeting on June 1st.

• Noting the Albright is working with Attorney Norgard regarding options for a possible diversion on the county line for the Clay-Wilkin Judicial Ditch No. 1 system. In accordance with Minnesota Drainage Law, it appears that the best option for a petition would be using the improvement of an outlet statute.

• Representatives from Manston Township have contacted the BRRWD about the possible removal of a road center line culvert in 170th ST between Sections 3 and 10. Back in the 1980s, the legal ditch system was essentially rerouted to stay on the south side of the road. The Township said the existing culvert is too short and is a road hazard. They would like to see the ditch on the north side of the road abandoned. Albright will check into the legal requirements to make a project of this nature happen in accordance with Minnesota Drainage Law.

• Noting that the next Mediation Project Team meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 9, 2015, at 7:00 PM in the Barnesville office. The BRRWD staff and engineers plan to regroup regarding a potential Phase 1 project for the South Branch of the Buffalo River. Recent easement acquisitions by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources have changed the proposed plan. Albright noted that an informational meeting with landowners regarding a potential retention site in Section 4, Manston Township, and Section 33, Atherton Township, will be held on Tuesday morning, May 19th, at 8:00 AM in the Watershed office. An informational meeting regarding the Barnesville Township Area Drainage Investigation has also been scheduled with
landowners for Thursday, May 28th, at 7:00 PM in the Watershed office. Affected landowners will also receive notification by mail.

- Work continues on the update of the BRRWD's Revised Watershed Management Plan (RWMP). A Technical Advisory Committee meeting was held on May 12, 2015. The update to the plan will include two new planning regions including the Upper Red and Otter Tail River. The BRRWD has a goal of completing the "draft" RWMP by May 31st.

- Discussed possible funding options for the Wolverton Creek/Comstock Coulee restoration. A request for funding will be submitted to the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. A package is also being assembled for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) which details the history of the work completed to date. The NRCS will use the information to determine whether or not the project is eligible for NRCS funding. One of the DNR permit requirements will be that the outlets of several of the C.D. systems that drain into the Coulee need to have grade stabilization structures. Jones said that he will have recommendations in that regard for the next meeting.

- Noting that recently, two informational meetings have been held regarding the possible restoration of the Otter Tail River from Orwell Dam downstream to the City of Breckenridge. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency currently has 319 federal funding available. The deadline for the application is May 22nd. An application would require a 45% local cost share. The Board agreed to submit the application and to provide the required local match.

- Reviewed repair recommendations for Project No. 37, Clay C.D. No. 41-Lateral No. 1. The outlet on this ditch system is eroding. Jones recommended repairs for an approximate area of one mile along the south side of 15th AVE N. The estimated cost of the work is $65,000-75,000. The Board approved the repairs.

- Noting that the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad may have inadvertently plugged one of the culverts on Clay C.D. No. 11-South with their recent work on the tracks. BNSF representatives will be contacted to remove the ballast material.

- Approved the payment of bills, totaling $173,918.82.

The next meeting of the Board of Managers, BRRWD, is scheduled for Tuesday, May 26, 2015, at 7:00 PM in the Barnesville office, located at 1303 4th AVE NE, Barnesville, MN. The meeting date was changed from the traditional fourth Monday because of Memorial Day. All meetings are open to the public. For more information, please visit our website at www.brrwd.org.