"Local Watershed Considers RRWMB Membership"

At their regular meeting held in Barnesville on Monday, July 13, 2015, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), spent some time discussing the pros and cons of rejoining the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB). Bruce Albright, Office Administrator, had prepared a factsheet regarding this issue. The RRWMB was created in 1976 to institute, coordinate, and finance projects and programs to alleviate flooding. The BRRWD was a RRWMB member from 1981-2002. The BRRWD is currently working on a number of possible retention projects and feels there is a need to identify a secure funding source to help build those projects. The estimated cost (land, design, and construction) is $2,000 per acre-foot of storage. The 2015 taxable market value within the BRRWD is $7,856,233,700. Depending on land values, an average acre of crop land within the BRRWD would pay approximately $2.50 per acre for the RRWMB tax. Rejoining the RRWMB would increase BRRWD's taxation by approximately 2.75 times. The Managers had some concerns about the local costs. In order to become a RRWMB member in 2016, discussions have to begin now to incorporate the taxation within the BRRWD's budget hearing process. Board members are planning to attend meetings of the various County Commissions (Clay, Becker, Wilkin, and Otter Tail) within the next several weeks to discuss this issue further with them.

Other business included:

- Continued discussion regarding historic drainage/flooding problems in Section 28, Barnesville Township, Clay County. Two affected landowners attended the meeting. In 2013, the landowners reached a tentative agreement that would have addressed some of the issues. One landowner could not install a proposed ditch because of the pipeline's depths in his field. The BRRWD authorized Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI) to conduct an elevation survey of some of the area road ditches. Once the survey is done, we can determine proper culvert sizes and depths.

- Reviewed the BRRWD's current financial status. In the past month, we have received income totaling $1,153,311.65. The BRRWD's current bank balance is $2,124,817.96.

- Approval of permits to: Brian Thomas to install pattern tiling in the NE1/4, Section 12, Kragnes Township, Clay County; Tim Pender to install pattern tiling in the NW1/4, Section 28, Riverton Township, Clay County; Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to restore six wetlands in Section 16, Parke Township, Clay County; John Walkup to install pattern tiling in the N1/2NE1/4, Section 18, Orwell Township, Otter Tail County; Blaine Rasmussen to install 80 acres of pattern tiling in the SW1/4, Section 12, Andrea Township, Wilkin County; Blaine Rasmussen to install 30 acres of random tiling in the SW1/4, Section 32, Oscar Township, Otter Tail County; Duane Brendemuhl to install pattern tiling in the SE1/4, Section 16, Kragnes Township, Clay County; Duane Brendemuhl to install pattern tiling in the SW1/4, Section 15, Kragnes Township, Clay County; Steven Miller to install 280 acres of pattern tiling incorporating subsurface irrigation in the S1/2, Section 17, Sunnyside Township, Wilkin County; Brian Glynn to install an approach with a 24” diameter culvert along County Road No. 32, in the N1/2NE1/4, Section 12, Atherton Township, Wilkin County; Richard Yaggie to install pattern tiling in the NE1/4, Section 31, Nilsen Township, Wilkin County; the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to restore wetlands in Section 21, Highland Grove Township, Clay County; Larson Farms to install 22 acres of tiling in the SW1/4, Section 35, Akron Township, Wilkin County; Larson Farms to install tiling in NE1/4, Section 22, Tanberg Township, Wilkin County; and Tang Farms to install pattern tiling in SW1/4, Section 15, Morken Township, Clay County.

- Signed paperwork with Midwest Bank to obtain a $600,000 operating loan that will be in effect from 07/13/15-07/01/16.
Agreed to seek a court order to remove an obstruction from a tile line in the NE1/4, Section 23, Hamden Township, Becker County. A mutual agreement was reached with the affected landowners back on 06/18/15. Since then, the downstream landowner has not removed the obstruction. The matter will be turned over to the BRRWD's Attorney, Tami L. Norgard, Vogel Law Firm.

Received the Viewers’ Report for Pj. No. 77, Clay County Ditch (C.D.) No. 51-Proposed Lat. 3. The net benefits total $190,322.85. The Board scheduled the final hearing for Thursday, August 27, 2015, at 7:00 PM, in the Moorhead City Hall Council Chambers.

HEI presented a repair report regarding their investigation for Clay C.D. No. 11-North. There are two slumping problems: one on the east side and one on the west side of Trunk Highway No. 75. The estimated repair costs for both sites are $65,000-$75,000. The BRRWD has scheduled the hearing regarding these repairs and repair of the outlet, estimated to cost $130,000-$150,000, for Tuesday, July 21, 2015, at 7:00 PM in the Watershed office. Affected landowners have been mailed notice. After the hearing, if there is a consensus to complete the repairs, HEI will advertise for construction bids.

A landowner presented a proposal to reseed part of the ditch right-of-way (R/W) associated with Pj. No. 27, Clay C.D. No. 55. The landowner stated that he cuts hay on the bufferstrip and would like to see more desirable grasses. He also said parts of the bufferstrip are very rough because of gopher mounds. The Board approved the request with the understanding that the landowner would work with the Soil and Water Conservation District on selecting the best native grasses for the area.

Processed the final pay request for Gladen Construction Inc. and their work associated with the Manston Slough Restoration project in the amount of $29,031.79. All construction work on the project has been satisfactorily completed.

Authorized outlet repairs for Clay C.D. No. 67 in Section 21, Oakport Township. Back on 04/22/15, HEI filed a repair report regarding the failing outlet structure. Two alternatives were considered. Alternative No. 2 would move the structure downstream to a location that would better fit with future work proposed by the City of Moorhead for flood control. Both options will be bid. The two alternatives are estimated to cost $32,350 and $58,390, respectively.

Awarded a repair contract to Johnson Excavation in the amount of $128,255 for their bid to complete repairs on the outlet of Clay C.D. No. 41 in Sections 4 and 5, Moorhead Township, and Sections 33 and 34, Oakport Township.

Approved a bid totaling $79,995.35, that was submitted by American Enterprises Inc. for their work repairing erosion on the outlet of Clay C.D. No. 41-Lat. No. 1.

Noting that William Nichol Excavating has started repair work on Clay-Wilkin Judicial Ditch (J.D.) No. 1.

Noting that a condemnation hearing will be held on 07/23/15 regarding one final house that needs to be acquired to complete the Georgetown Flood Control Levee.

Noting that Viewers Thompson, Bernhardson, and Peterson are working on setting a value for the R/W to acquire the one-rod grassed bufferstrips on Wilkin C.D. Nos. 5A, 22, and 26. Once the Viewers file their reports, the Board can schedule the required hearings.

Noting that the next Mediation Project Team meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 10, 2015, at 7:00 PM in the BRRWD office, Barnesville. The Board is working on a number of possible retention sites. The next steps will be for the Board to calculate a value for the necessary
easements. North Dakota State University is currently working on a study regarding easement values in association with the Fargo-Moorhead Diversion. That study is expected to be completed in the next several months. There are other State and Federal programs that could also assist in acquiring the easements.

- HEI and BRRWD Staff continue to review sections of the Revised Watershed Management Plan.

- Reviewed a repair request for a slumping issue along 240th ST in Sections 19 and 30, Carlisle Township, Otter Tail County. The area may be a branch to Wilkin-Otter Tail J.D. No. 2. HEI will conduct an investigation.

- Signed a petition prepared by the Bois de Sioux Watershed District and Otter Tail County to make changes to the Watershed District boundary. Once submitted to BWSR, they will handle the proceedings.

- Approved repairs for the gradeline of the outlet of Clay C.D. No. 51 in Sections 16 and 21, Kragnes Township.

- Noting that the BRRWD is the recipient of a $100,000 Enbridge Ecofootprint Grant for work on the Wolverton Creek/Comstock Coulee Restoration project.

- Noting that the BRRWD has been selected for a Federal Section 319 Grant in the amount of $242,000 for the Lower Otter Tail River Restoration plan.

- Approved the payment of bills, totaling $349,823.78.

The next meeting of the Board of Managers, BRRWD, is scheduled for Monday, July 27, 2015, at 7:00 PM in the Barnesville office, located at 1303 4th AVE NE, Barnesville, MN. All meetings are open to the public. For more information about the BRRWD, please visit our website at www.brrwd.org.