"Local Watershed Plans for Landowner Meetings"

At their January 25, 2016 regular meeting held in Barnesville, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), discussed scheduling a series of meetings throughout the District this winter regarding taxation for flood damage reduction (fdr) projects. A year ago, the BRRWD met with the four Counties (Clay, Becker, Wilkin, and Otter Tail) to discuss fdr funding. The Commissioners suggested that the BRRWD hold a series of informational meetings with landowners to discuss this topic. One option for funding large scale retention projects could include rejoining the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB). The BRRWD was a member of the RRWMB from 1981 through 2002. Bruce Albright, BRRWD Administrator, said that if the BRRWD were to rejoin the RRWMB, the local BRRWD taxation could increase by a factor of approximately 2.75. The purpose of the meetings will be to discuss the new Revised Watershed Management Plan (RWMP), 2015 Minnesota Legislation regarding buffer strips in cooperation with the Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the BRRWD's long range plan regarding the need for fdr projects, and to discuss ways to possibly finance these fdr projects/RRWMB membership. Thoughts were that the meetings would be held in the Rothsay/Breckenridge area, Barnesville, and in the Lake Park/Hawley area. The Board authorized staff to schedule the meeting dates.

Other business included:

- A review of the BRRWD's financial status. Currently, the BRRWD has $483,488.48. Albright noted that the office has closed out the 2009 Federal Emergency Management Agency account. Funding was allocated to the various projects/ditch systems affected by that flooding event.

- Approval of permits to: Dwight Mickelson for 54.9 acres of wetland restorations in Section 16, Parke Township, Clay County, in conjunction with the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources; and Ed Stellmach for pattern tiling of 80 acres in the SW1/4, Section 8, Atherton Township, Wilkin County.

- Discussed an informational meeting held on 01/15/16 with landowners near the county line west of Trunk Highway No. 75 in Holy Cross and Wolverton Townships. The Board authorized Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI), to gather some additional information. Landowners are exploring the possibility of installing a new drainage ditch on the south side of the county line that would carry water directly into the Red River of the North.

- Authorized HEI to obtain some additional survey information pertaining to a landowner meeting held on 01/22/16 to discuss drainage in Sections 27 and 34, Manston Township, Wilkin County. The landowners felt that some additional survey work would be needed to look at clean out of the water way north of the Manston Township Cemetery. The affected landowners will be contacted.

- Reviewed suggested changes to the BRRWD Rules. The Board is in the process of updating their Rules. A new section will be added regarding subsurface drainage (tiling). Triggers regarding operation of tile systems were discussed. The Board questioned whether the new Rules could require existing tile systems to be retrofitted to include a drainage water management component.

- Considerable discussion took place regarding the Fargo-Moorhead Diversion Authority's (DA) fiscal year 2016 budget, totaling $237.5 million. As a signer to the current Joint
Powers Agreement, the BRRWD must approve the budget. Board members expressed concerns that the environmental and permitting processes need to be completed before the DA spends additional money on project construction. A draft motion approving the budget contingent upon the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources finishing their Environmental Impact Statement, settlement of the upstream lawsuits regarding work in the Oxbow-Hickson-Bakke area, and the receipt of federal funding, were drafted by the BRRWD's attorney, Tami L. Norgard, Vogel Law Firm. Even with the proposed amendments, a 4-2 vote denied approval of the budget. The BRRWD Managers did note that they had no problem with the City of Fargo continuing their in town work for flood protection.

- Authorized staff to meet with a sales representative from Laserfiche to discuss possible implementation of an electronic document management system.

- Noting that the BRRWD's Mediation Project Team will have a meeting on Thursday, January 28, 2016, at 1:30 PM in the Barnesville office. Active project discussions include Barnesville Township, South Branch of the Buffalo River, and Stony Creek. HEI has completed an analysis of the Stony Creek project and how that project would be operated if the BRRWD was an RRWMB member. The RRWMB would like to see longer retention times if downstream areas are flooding.

- Discussed scheduling of a meeting with Kurtz Township supervisors to discuss road and ditch bank slumping issues along Clay County Ditch No. 33.

- Approved payment of bills totaling $132,433.84, which includes a loan payment to the Vergas State Bank for the BRRWD's new office. 2017 will be the last building loan payment.

The next meeting of the Board of Managers, BRRWD, is scheduled for Monday, February 8, 2016, 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, please visit our website at www.brrwd.org.