NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 14, 2016
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"Busy Meeting for BRRWD"

With a parking lot full of pickups, and no measurable rain since 2015, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), wondered what was going on at their meeting held in Barnesville on Monday, April 11, 2016. There were a number of different groups that had issues they wanted to discuss with the Watershed Board.

The first issue pertained to drainage issues in and around Sections 27 and 28, Barnesville Township, Clay County. Parts of an old road (150th ST S) were removed last fall by the neighboring land renter. The material was used to recreate a road north of a natural waterway that crosses through this area. Landowners agreed that they would re-gravel the new road section so that it can be used by both parties. There are several rocks that still need to be buried. The second issue in Section 28 pertains to an old fence line located along the east-west quarter line. The neighboring landowner to the north used a scraper last fall to haul some of the excess dirt from the fence line to a low area on his property adjacent to County State Aid Highway No. 2. The neighboring landowner to the south felt that work was actually done on his property. The Watershed indicated that they do not get involved with boundary line issues. Questions were raised if part of the dirt may have been hauled into a wetland area. The landowner assured the Board that he was well aware of the federal, state, and local wetland regulations, and that no fill was placed in the wetland. The neighboring landowners agreed to work together on the situation. An actual property line survey may be required.

The next group of landowners wanted to discuss the 2016 assessment made on Wilkin County Ditch (C.D.) No. 7. The Board of Managers, BRRWD, approved a $150,000 levy at their Annual Budget Hearing held in Barnesville on 08/24/15. Those in attendance questioned why the Watershed needed that much funding. Bruce Albright, BRRWD Administrator, explained that the Wilkin County Highway Department was planning to retrofit their drainage system in 2016. This work includes reestablishment of the ditch gradeline, back sloping the ditch, installation of field inlet pipes, and installing the one-rodd grassed buffer strips. The County uses an average of approximately $35,000 per mile to do this type of work. Most of the legal ditch systems in the newly added Watershed area have already been completed. Wilkin C.D. No. 7 is approximately six miles long. The landowners felt that the BRRWD failed to take into consideration that the drainage system already has $32,000. Also, the Wilkin Soil and Water Conservation District picked up a grant through the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) that will help pay part of the retrofitting costs. Landowners were concerned that the proposed $150,000 ditch levy was costing quarters of land (160 acres) almost $4,000. The Board of Managers, BRRWD, recognized that they had made an error regarding this assessment. A motion was approved to reduce the 2016 levy to $75,000 subject to working with the Wilkin County Auditor's Office. The Auditor will have to mail out revised tax statements.

A landowner questioned how the interview went with the BWSR regarding our Targeted Watershed Program funding for the Wolverton Creek Restoration Project. The interview was conducted on 03/31/16. Bruce Albright and Erik Jones, Engineer, Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI) felt the interview went well. The BRRWD is seeking $2.8 million dollars for Phase I of the Restoration Project. We should know by the end of May whether or not we were successful. There was also a meeting held last week with the representatives from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). They may have funding available for Wolverton Creek through their Wetland Restoration Program. Landowners would need to apply for that funding. If approved, NRCS would pay 100% of the land acquisition costs (easements) and the construction work.
Other business included:

- Review of the BRRWD's Treasurer's Report. Albright noted that this is a relatively slow time of the year. There is not much construction work going on and we are waiting for the first half of the property taxes to start coming in around June 1. The BRRWD's account balance is $330,056.61.

- Approval of permits to: Randy Affield to replace an 18" diameter corrugated metal pipe (cmp) with a 24" diameter cmp in 150th ST in the southwest corner, Section 22, Elkton Township, Clay County; Cristian Anderson to install drain tile in the bottom of a ditch so that he can cross with his farm equipment in the NE1/4, Section 1, Cromwell Township, Clay County; the City of Moorhead for their master plan work regarding new city streets, storm sewer, and a regional pond in the Horizon Shore's Subdivision; Becker County Highway Department to replace culverts in C.R. No. 13 (200th AVE) between Sections 4 and 5, Riceville Township; Alan Hanson to install a new field approach and culvert off 220th ST S into the NE1/4, Section 34, Hawley Township, Clay County; Clay County Highway Department to add an additional culvert to the Buffalo River Crossing on 220th ST S between Sections 22 and 23, Hawley Township; Clay County Highway Department to replace an existing bridge over Hay Creek on 160th ST S between Sections 22 and 27, Elkton Township; and Clay County Highway Department to replace existing culverts on Clay C.D. No. 10 in 60th ST N between Sections 17 and 18, Morken Township.

- Noting that the office has sent a letter regarding additional cleanout work required in a natural waterway in the NW1/4, Section 27, Manston Township, Wilkin County. Discussion regarding this area began last fall when an upstream landowner complained that the downstream landowner was farming through the waterway. HEI conducted a survey of the area in question.

- Noting that Albright has discussed a potential new legal drainage system that would be located along the north line of Sections 5 and 6, Wolverton Township, Wilkin County, west of Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 75. The office will draft a petition for the project.

- Discussed a settlement offer from landowners in Oakport Township regarding a stockpile of material located on their property. The initial lease ran out 12/31/12. Attempts since then by the Watershed to negotiate a new lease have not been successful. The material will be used to complete Phase 4. We currently have a contractor onsite doing that work. The Board will contact the landowners indicating that they would like to wait to settle this issue until the dirt pile is removed and cleanup is completed.

- HEI will be working on a cleanup list for a few remaining items in the City of Georgetown pertaining to their flood control levee work. The list will include seeding of the ball diamond.

- Discussed a slumping problem on Clay C.D. No. 41 in Section 33, Oakport Township, on property owned by American Crystal Sugar Company (ACSC). A number of meetings have been held with ACSC representatives. One solution includes replacement of a culvert in a ditch crossing in the problem area, which could also address the slumping issue. If a deal can be arranged, ACSC would like to see the work done while the factory is shut down (June-August).
Noting that Albright has not had time to work on analyzing the petition filed for a new outlet on Clay-Wilkin Judicial Ditch No. 1. The proposed outlet would be located south of the Clay-Wilkin County line and would drain directly west into Wolverton Creek.

Noting that a Mediation Project Team Meeting was held on 04/07/16. The next meeting is scheduled for 06/16/16. That meeting will begin at 7:00 PM in the Barnesville office. Ongoing project discussions include the South Branch of the Buffalo River, Barnesville Township Comprehensive Study, and Stony Creek Detention.

Discussed the Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP) being developed by the US Army Corps of Engineers (COE). The CWMP is intended to help identify what could be the next generation of success stories in the Red River Basin. Thirteen goals creating a Basin Vision are being reviewed. The CWMP is being done in cooperation with the Red River Basin Commission. Goals are to have the document finished by January 2017, when it will be submitted to the Mississippi Valley Division of the COE and to Congress through the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works for any federally actionable recommendations.

Authorized two miles of ditch repair surveying on Clay C.D. No. 3 starting at T.H. No. 9 and going downstream in Section 18, Spring Prairie Township and Section 13, Moland Township.

Noting that letters have been sent regarding the permission to survey needed on Whiskey Creek in Wilkin County and for the Otter Tail River Project in Wilkin and Otter Tail Counties.

Approved the payment of bills, totaling $186,794.36.

The next meeting of the Board of Managers, BRRWD, is scheduled for Monday, April 25, 2016, 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.