NEWS RELEASE

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"Local Watershed Discusses Project Benefits"

At their meeting held on 02/27/17 in Barnesville, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) met with Jeff Lewis, Executive Director, Red River Basin Commission (RRBC), and Chuck Fritz, Director, International Water Institute, to discuss the Mediation Agreement/flood damage reduction (fdr) projects. The BRRWD is currently considering three projects west of Barnesville including Stony Creek, Barnesville Township, and the South Branch of the Buffalo River in Wilkin County. All three have proposed flood retention areas. This topic came up at the last meeting, when the Board discussed possible methods to compensate landowners for easements regarding fdr projects. One of the Basin's goals has been the RRBC's Long-Term Flood Solutions (LTFS). Modeling for that study was based on the 1997 spring flood. Clay County BRRWD Manager Jay Leitch said that many of the communities along the Red River now have flood protection which they did not have in 1997. As a part of the LTFS, the RRBC has peak-flow and run-off volume reduction goals to reduce Red River main-stem flooding by 20%. The study utilized a Mike-11 flood routing model of the 1997 flood. These goals were determined by manually modifying the 1997 spring flood inflow hydrographs with the Red River main-stem model. Tributary goals were also summarized in the RRBC's LTFS basin wide flow reduction strategy report. The BRRWD goals were established to be 35% peak-flow reduction and a 17% overall volume reduction. The BRRWD also contains portions of ungauged areas of Otter Tail and Fargo as defined in the LTFS. The assigned reductions for these areas were 13% peak-flow reduction and 13% volume reduction. A 1984 Study titled "Water Resources Engineering/Planning Program for the Red River of the North Basin in Minnesota" which was done for the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) by McCombs/Knutson Associates, Inc., determined a value of $245 per acre-foot of flood volume removed from the window of the 100-year flood at Emerson on the Canadian border. Someone commented that this study is already over 30 years old.

Discussion took place that fdr projects can also provide other benefits. Lewis thought that Manston Slough was a good example, with wetland restoration, habitat, wildlife, groundwater recharge, and water quality benefits. Lewis talked about some of RRBC's work on the North Ottawa Project in the Bois de Sioux Watershed District. They have shown that the site has the ability to clean up the water before discharging it. Bruce Albright, BRRWD Administrator, said that Board Managers should field review the Stony Creek project area along Interstate 94 (I-94). Right now, we have water breaking out of the creek channel, flooding lands on the northeast side of I-94. The water is going to Hay Creek and causing gullies and erosion on the farmland. Southwest of I-94, there are four or five sections that are currently underwater and several roads are flooded. These problems are unique, because we do not have a flooding threat at the present time. The problems are being caused by an inadequate channel, Clay County Ditch (C.D.) No. 31, which was installed in the early 1900s to replace Stony Creek. The proposed project would restore the Stony Creek channel and provide for an impoundment site capable of holding approximately 7,000 acre-feet of water. One of the impoundment site landowners, Chuck Anderson, was also present at the meeting. He said the landowners are interested in finding out what the BRRWD has to offer.

In conclusion, the agency representatives and the Board of Managers felt that maybe proposed projects have to look at problem areas within the District and that the BRRWD does its own benefit cost analysis for each particular project. This could make it hard to compete for state and federal funding, when sometimes it difficult to compare projects that may have different benefits. In the end, Manager Leitch said that he would consult with Steven J. Taff, Associate Professor Emeritus, Department of Applied Economics, University of Minnesota, regarding his thoughts about easement values. Lewis distributed some information regarding water quality for the Red River at the International Boundary.
shortly, we are going to hear about new goals that we will set phosphorus levels at this location to 0.15 mg/L and nitrogen concentrations at 1.2 mg/L. He also distributed a report titled "North Ottawa Nutrient Capture and Biomass Harvesting". He also reviewed an article that appeared in the Star Tribune, written by Dick Osgood of Duluth, and the co-founder of the Lake Advocates, about the need for leaders to seriously and realistically look at new approaches for safe and clean water. Osgood advocates an approach that would collect and treat polluted run-off at "the end of the pipe" on larger scale projects such as North Ottawa or the proposed Stony Creek Project. Osgood feels we should consider a similar approach for agricultural run-off as urban run-off: collect it, treat it, and discharge it clean.

Other business included:

- Reviewed the BRRWD's financial status. In the past two weeks, we have received $82,682.86. Cash on hand totals $2,154,491.85.

- Approved a permit to Chad Nelson to install a 12" diameter tile line in the NW1/4, Section 34, Norwegian Grove Township, Otter Tail County. The application had been tabled pending notification to the downstream landowner, which has now occurred.

- Agreed to sign an Operation & Maintenance agreement with the City of Moorhead pertaining to Project No. 71, 50th AVE S Flood Control. The agreement defines the City and BRRWD responsibilities. If work is done by the City, they will bill the BRRWD who will assess the costs against the project's benefitting area.

- Agreed to help fund a clean water diversion structure for Hough Farms in Section 25, Humboldt Township, Clay County. The water from the area drains directly into Whisky Creek. The project will divert overland water from flowing through their yard and buildings. The project will also qualify for state and federal funding. The BRRWD's cost share would provide the additional funding, capped at 75% of the project costs.

- Noting that 19th Joint Annual Conference of the RRWMB and the Red River Flood Damage Reduction Work Group will be held on March 22-23, 2017, at the Courtyard by Marriott, Moorhead. The event is open to the public. Workshops will be held the morning of March 22, including a drainage seminar and orientation for Watershed District Managers and Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors.

- Albright presented an updated set of the amended Rules. The Rules contain 12 sections, including a section on buffer law implementation/enforcement and the new Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) regulations for an area in and around the City of Moorhead. Albright asked that the Managers review the Rules. Hopefully, at the next meeting, they can be submitted to the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources for advisory comment. The Rules also need to be submitted to all "public transportation authority's having jurisdiction within the Watershed District". Albright felt that would mean sending them to all of the Townships, Counties, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Notice of a hearing must also be published in a legal newspaper within each County of the Watershed. After the hearing, the Board can adopt the amended Rules and a copy must be filed with each County Recorder.

- Noting that a meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, March 16, 2017, at 8:30 AM in the Watershed office to meet with landowners along Wilkin C.D. No. 13-Lateral.
Last fall, it was noted that this entire system needs repair, and the BRRWD intends to begin that work this spring when conditions permit.

- Discussed reservations for the upcoming Minnesota Association of Watershed District's Legislative Reception/Breakfast, to be held in St. Paul on March 29-30, 2017. Three Managers and Administrator Albright plan to attend.

- Noting that the Annual Meeting with the Advisory Committee will be held on Friday, March 31, 2017, beginning at 2:00 PM in the Watershed office.

- Noting that the City of Comstock has requested a meeting with the Fargo-Moorhead Diversion Authority to discuss protection, if the upstream storage area is constructed. Previous Army Corps of Engineers plans for Comstock included a ring-dike levee allowing for some additional areas for future expansion. A meeting will be held on March 15, beginning at 11:00 AM in the Clay County Highway Department, Moorhead.

- Approved a motion to purchase the document management system called M-Files through MARCO located in Fargo, ND. Houston Engineering, Inc. will handle the hardware updates needed to install the software, including a second processor to the server. Their estimated costs are $5,200. Approval also included the purchase of a 60-page per minute, bottom-feed, USB scanner at $2,728.56. M-Files is used by the Wild Rice Watershed District, in Ada, MN. The program should allow for quick access to information and will include a public portal for access to certain BRRWD scanned documents.

- Approved signing of a transaction form to deposit wetland credits into the Minnesota Wetland Bank for the Elkton Wetland Banking Project developed by the BRRWD. The total anticipated credits per the approved bank plan is 88.7 acres. At the present time, the BRRWD qualifies for 35.48 acres. Filing of the form includes a deposit fee of $1,000.

- Approved payment of bills totaling $35,982.32.

- Noting that Representatives Marquardt, Lien, and Nornes have introduced House File No. 1582 relating to capital investment appropriating money for flood hazard mitigation projects in the BRRWD. The appropriation is for $16.19 million. A similar bill is expected to be introduced in the Minnesota Senate.

The Board of Managers, BRRWD, will hold their next meeting on Monday, March 13, 2017, at 7:00 PM in the BRRWD 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.