"BRRWD Supports Treatment Wetlands Concept"

At their 6/26/17 meeting, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), discussed the concept of "treatment wetlands" with Don Bajumpaa, District Manager and Ross Aigner, Vice Chair, Wilkin Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Treatment wetlands can be used as a discharge point for tile systems to improve water quality. The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) recently denied Aigner's Drainage Water Management (DWM) funding application for a project in Mitchell Township because it involved using state funds for wetland mitigation and because it was not directly on a legal ditch system. This site could be eligible for a BWSR Clean Water Fund (CWF) funding, but those grants are much more competitive. BWSR supports the concept of treatment wetlands, but prefers that the wetland be associated with a legal ditch system to be eligible for the DWM program. Aigner is considering a new CWF application for a site along Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 9 in the SE¼, Section 4, Manston Township, upstream of the South Branch of the Buffalo River, which is listed as "impaired waters". Aigner asked for BRRWD support for his continuing efforts to promote treatment wetlands for tile project outlets. Constructed treatment wetlands are an innovative conservation practice advocated by the USDA Farm Service Agency and can be an exceedingly cost-effective approach to reducing nitrogen loadings in watersheds dominated by tile-drained cropland. The Board approved a motion to support Aigner's work.

Other business included:

- Reviewed the BRRWD's financial status. Cash on hand is $1,779,006.86, and year to date income is $1,224,831.68. Income for the month totals $26,160 from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) for the Otter Tail River Planning 319 Grant reimbursement ($14,295.50), the Red River Watershed Management Board for Project Team (PT) expenses ($11,625.89), and a mileage reimbursement from the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council for a WorkGroup meeting that BRRWD Administrator Bruce E. Albright attended ($238.61). The Board is expecting Clay County will remit their 1st half property tax proceeds in early July.

- Approved permits to Red River Valley Co-op Power Association to bore a high voltage power line conduit under Clay County Ditch (C.D.) No. 5 in the NW1/4, Section 5, Morken Township, on County Road No. 107, subject to our standard utility disclaimer; Tom Paulson to regrade one mile of the east ditch along 180th AVE in the W1/2, Section 21, Mitchell Township, Wilkin County, from 200th ST north to 190th ST and to lower two culverts to the new gradeline, subject to neighboring landowner approval and road authority approval to work within their right-of-way; Andrew Holmen to install a driveway/culvert in Section 22, Elkton Township, Clay County; Century Link to bore buried fiber optic cables along Clay County State Aid Highway No. 2 and 29th ST S on C.D. Nos. 11, 11S, 36, 53, and 60, and two crossings on Wolverton Creek in Sections 33, Kurtz Township, and Sections 4, 9, 16, 21, and 27, Holy Cross Township, Clay County, subject to our standard utility disclaimer; Richard Yaggie to pattern drain tile in the SE1/4, Section 27, Andrea Township, Wilkin County, subject to our standard tiling disclaimer; WBI Energy Transmission to bore one line of 16" dia. steel natural gas pipeline underneath an unnamed natural waterway and the Buffalo River in the SE1/4, Section 3, Kragnes Township, Clay County, subject to our standard utility disclaimer; and the first two phases of the City of Barnesville's drainage project in the W1/2, Section 29, Humboldt Township, Clay County: Phase 1 is to install 12" dia. drain tile on the east and south boundaries of Del Acres Gilbertson Second Addition, outletting along the east boundary to the north to a catch basin at 2nd AVE NE, and along the south boundary west to the 13th ST SE road ditch, which eventually drains to the City's storm water pond, and Phase 2 is to reset 130 of 24" dia. HDPE dual-wall sewer pipe
to drain north via a catch basin at 2nd AVE SE. All permits are subject to the BRRWD's standard disclaimers, as noted.

- Postponed actions on permits for Mark Sundstrom to replace a 10" dia. plastic pipe with a larger culvert in the northeast corner of the NE1/4, Section 9, Roberts Township, Wilkin County, and to regrade the south ditch of 170th ST from the railroad tracks west to T.H. No. 75, subject to meeting with Albright to discuss the project; Richard Yaggie to install pattern drain tile in the W1/2, Section 24, Foxhome Township, Wilkin County, outalling via a lift station to the north road ditch of 380th ST for one mile before draining into C.D. No. 27, subject to our standard tiling disclaimer, and also downstream landowner notification; and the third phase of the City of Barnesville's drainage project in Section 29, Humboldt Township, Clay County, to regrade approximately 2,000' of the ditch along the east side of 13th ST SE to drain north at a 0.13% grade and to remove an existing 18" dia. centerline culvert at Station 15+60, to allow time to gather more information and discuss the proposal with the affected landowner.

- Authorized signing a Conservation Practices Assistance contract with Wilkin SWCD to cover 75% of the repair costs for outlet control structures for Clay/Wilkin Judicial Ditch No. 1 and Wilkin C.D. No. 53. The remaining 25% of the costs will be paid as a ditch system expense. The Wilkin SWCD received BWSR funding for erosion control work along the Red River, including the installation of side inlets and grade control structures.

- Discussed a 6/21/17 Wilkin County meeting in Breckenridge regarding the proposed floodplain remapping. The County has decided to hire an engineer to take another look at the 100-year floodplain revisions the Army Corps of Engineers (COE) has proposed for the Bois de Sioux and Otter Tail Rivers entering Breckenridge, which could raise the 100-year floodplain by about 2'. A new floodway analysis has also been proposed which would affect future property development. The County plans to meet with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to find out if they would accept an independent engineering review. The COE came up with the new floodplain elevation based on the Wahpeton United States Geological Survey gauging station data from the most current period of record, 1971-2011.

- Authorized the office to send a letter to a landowner in the NE1/4, Section 16, Mitchell Township, Wilkin County, who buried an 8" dia. tile line in the natural waterway and then filled in the waterway, which is fed by a 48" dia. culvert in 190th AVE. The upstream landowner contacted the office when water backed up on to his property after the recent area heavy rainfall event. The letter will advise the owners that while their permit allowed them to install the tile, it did not permit filling the waterway. They must restore the waterway, or reroute the subsurface water to the road ditches on the west side of 190th AVE and the south side of 180th ST.

- Received a request for an investigation of the condition of the main channel of Wilkin C.D. No. 22 to determine if a repair is required. The Board tabled action pending a review of the ditch system's maintenance history.

- Discussed the results of a drainage investigation that Erik Jones, Engineer, Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI), conducted in the SE1/4, Section 15, Parke Township, Clay County, in response to a landowner's concerns associated with Permit No. 17-039, Parke Township, for two culvert installations on 86th AVE S. Jones' recommendations were forwarded to Parke Township and the neighboring landowners.

- Discussed the results of an analysis of a wetland investigation in the NW1/4, Section 27, Manston Township, Wilkin County, to clean a natural waterway to help drain water to the Manston Slough.
The information will be forwarded to the landowner and his renter, and it will be up to them if they want to do the cleanout, subject to the wetland restrictions.

- Discussed the operation of tile pumps within the BRRWD during the recent rainfall event. This issue will be addressed in the new revised BRRWD Rules. Currently, tile operation during downstream flooding events is prohibited under our standard tiling disclaimer noted on all approved tile permits. The Board discussed adding a link on the BRRWD website that would alert tile system operators to stop their pumps on a subwatershed basis, as needed when overland flooding is occurring.

- Reviewed Jones' recommendation for a 0.05% grade in both ditches going south along T.H. No. 9 from the NE1/4NE1/4, Section 4, Manston Township, Wilkin County, to address water problems on land downstream of a tile system lift station. The office will forward the information to the landowners, encouraging them to work together to create an adequate outlet for the tile water.

- Reviewed an outlet inspection report for a joint neighborhood 2012 tiling project in Section 3, Akron Township, Wilkin County. The outlet might be buried in some rocks and is no water flow is visible. The tile is leaking upstream of the outlet. One of the landowners who participated in the tiling project claims that the outlet is blocked. Albright plans to meet with the owner of the land where the outlet is located to personally conduct an inspection.

- Noting that the BRRWD's Motion for a Summary Judgement regarding the Project No. 77, Clay C.D. No. 51-Proposed Lateral No. 3 lawsuit was denied. Vogel Law Firm is preparing an appeal. The trial has been temporarily postponed.

- Noting that the Natural Resources Conservation Service is developing Operation and Maintenance (O&M) plans for the Wetlands Reserve Program sites associated with the Manston project. The O&M plan has been completed for the spillways downstream of the property in the SW¼, Section 20, Manston Township. The Board discussed the tree growth on the NRCS easement areas.

- Noting that HEI is working on an advertisement for bids to remove two spoil stockpiles, totaling approximately 61,000 yards of material associated with the Oakport Flood Mitigation Project. About 9,000-10,000 yards of the excess material could be used to restore borrow sites for three ringdikes the BRRWD built several years ago in the project area.

- Noting that Wade Opsahl, Technician, HEI, is working with a lawn service to keep the easement areas mowed for Project No. 39, Georgetown Levee. Opsahl is also working with FEMA to close out the 2011 Flood damage claims.

- Noting that William Nichol Excavating, Inc. repair work for Project No. 2, Wilkin C.D. No. 13 and Project No. 21, Wilkin C.D. No. 13-Lateral, has been delayed by the area rainfall events over the last few weeks. The Board reviewed Jones' report regarding Bradley Nelson's request for the possible replacement of his texas crossing in the SW¼, Section 23, Deerhorn Township. Jones recommended that the Board reuse two lines of 95" x 67" x 40' corrugated metal arch pipe (CMP-A) from the Manston Slough project outlet. The estimated cost for this option is $5,000-$7,000, which is significantly lower than the alternative plan to install three lines of new 64" x 43" x 52" CMP-A with only 1' of cover over the pipes. The opinion of probable cost for this option is $26,000. Albright will provide Nelson with this information.

- Noting that the next Mediation PT meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 20, 2017, at 7:00 PM in the Watershed Office, Barnesville.

- Discussed the BRRWD's potential acquisition of the Reinvest In Minnesota property owned by the Braton family in Section 22, Barnesville Township, Clay County, in conjunction with the Barnesville Township Comprehensive project. Jones discussed the issue with John Voz, RIM Easement & Working
Lands Specialist, BWSR, who did not appear to be against the proposal, but more investigation will be needed.

- Noting that the COE sent their acknowledgement that Concurrence Point No. 2 has been met for the Barnesville Comprehensive project.

- Noting that it appears BWSR has selected the BRRWD for funding for our One Watershed, One Plan effort. There are several required meetings that will need to be held regarding partnerships, tasks, etc. before BWSR will release the funding.

- Approved a proposal to have HEI handle the server backup for both the BRRWD and M-Files. HEI will keep daily backups for a month on disk, monthly backups for one year on tapes, and year-end backups for 3 years on tape.

- Approved Pay Request No. 2 to States Border Construction for $52,846.20. Change Order No. 1 to adjust culvert and gate quantities with a net increase of $5,179 and a two-week time extension request until 7/10/17 were also approved.

- Received a notice of Issuance of Coverage under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System/State Disposal System General Permit for the Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems for the BRRWD.

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- Approved a contribution to the Clay SWCD for one-third of the local partners' cost to fund the Pheasants Forever (PF) Farm Bill Biologist position, currently held by Tony Nelson. The BWSR Farm Bill Assistance Grant ($65,000) will cover 90% of their costs with the SWCD and local partners responsible for the remaining 10% ($6,500). Our contribution amount would be one-third or $2,166. PF also provides funding to support the Farm Biologist's position.

- Reviewed Jones' recommendations to replace a driveway crossing on Clay C.D. No. 5 in Section 4, Morken Township. The estimated cost is $20,000-$25,000. The information will be sent to the landowner, and Albright plans to investigate Drainage Law regarding landowner cost share for private ditch system crossings.

- Approved continuing support of the drainage water recycling study by Dr. Xinhua Jia, North Dakota State University in association with landowners in Clay County.
• Reviewed Jones recommendations regarding a request for the replacement of two culvert crossing along Clay C.D. No. 51 in Sections 16 and 21, Kragnes Township. The cost estimate for both crossings is $21,000 to $28,000. Albright will forward the information to the landowner and will investigate Drainage Law regarding landowner cost share for private ditch crossings.

• Approved repairs for the upstream end of Becker C.D. No. 5 in Sections 26, 35, and 36, Audubon Township, including the replacement of culverts in three existing crossings. The channel is blocked in several areas by downed trees, old beaver dams, brush, and sediment. Jones recommended cleaning the channel to remove the blockages and replacing the crossing culverts, subject to landowner permission to enter their property. The opinion of probable cost is $15,000-$20,000.

• Reviewed Jones' recommendations regarding a landowners' proposal to eliminate two existing approaches along 160th ST in the NE1/4, Section 14, Elkton Township, Clay County, and replace them with one new dry approach located further north by Hay Creek to provide access to the landowners and to prevent Hay Creek from breaking out to the south. Albright will send the information to the affected parties for their review.

• Authorized signature of two MPCA Construction Stormwater Notices of Termination forms. The projects include: Moorhead Interstate-94 Flood Control and Clay C.D. No. 5 Outlet Repair.

• Denied a request from a property owner from Stakke Lake for the BRRWD to contribute to a proposed aeration system for the lake to prevent possible winter fish kill. The total cost of the system is $1,500-$2,000. After discussion, the Board decided that Stakke Lake is a private lake with no public access, and as such, the BRRWD can't contribute public funds to maintain a private lake.

• Approved payment of bills totaling $72,825.63.

The Board of Managers, BRRWD, will hold their next regular meeting on Monday, July 10, 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.