NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 17, 2017
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"BRRWD Awards Contracts for Wilkin County Ditch Repairs"

At their meeting held on Tuesday, October 10, 2017, at 7:00 PM in Barnesville, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), approved Orders for the repair of Wilkin County Ditch (C.D.) Nos. 40, 41, 42, 43, and 44, which includes the removal and addition of several properties to their respective benefit areas, the redetermination of benefits for certain parcels, the incremental installation of buffer strips, and side inlets. The Board approved landowner right-of-way (R/W) payments for the buffer installation, totaling $205,945.55. The construction contract for the side inlets was awarded to DM Enterprises, Wadena, MN, for their bid of $39,930.50. The Engineer's estimate was $35,000-$45,000. Because of DM Enterprises' reasonable rates, the Board also approved Change Order No. 1 to add inlet structures for Wilkin C.D. Nos 13 and 13-Lateral, increasing their contract amount by $24,462. R. J. Zavoral and Sons, Inc. was awarded the contract for a limited repair of Wilkin C.D. No. 43 west of Lawndale for their bid of $108,508. The Engineer's estimate was $120,000-$135,000. The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) approved the use of our 2013 Clean Water Fund (approximately $150,000 remaining) grant for the Upper South Branch of the Buffalo River to partially fund these repairs, which will insure full expenditure of the grant by the 12/31/17 deadline.

Other business included:

- Approved the BRRWD's monthly financial statements, including the project account balance sheet, administrative disbursements, summary of income, and the accounts receivable report. Cash on hand is $1,987,817.69. Administrative disbursements for the month are $38,053.01, and for the year total $384,760.33. Current 2017 accounts receivable totals $3,961,070.39. Our total income for the year is $2,529,470.76. Income since the 9/11/17 meeting is $9,106.88, from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for the final 2011 Spring Flood payment ($2,021.56), Otter Tail County for delinquent 2017 ditch/property taxes ($407.30), and the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group for Mediation Project Team expenses reimbursement ($3,439.42), and a refund check from Minnesota Department of Transportation for Project No. 39, Georgetown Levee ($2,000). The balance of the income came from bank interest and office rental. The Board approved the payment of bills totaling $381,801.18, which includes the Wilkin County ditch R/W payments.

- Approved permits to: Brent Ellefson to replace an existing texas crossing in the SE¼, Section 9, Atherton Township, Wilkin County, with a new approach/culvert with the recommendation for a spillway; Michael Yaggie to install an 18" dia. inlet pipe under the road along the NE¼, Section 28, Nilsen Township, Wilkin County, into C.D. No. 3-Branch 3; Clay County Highway Department for a 48" dia. pipe in a driveway along County Road (C.R.) No. 21 in the SW¼, Section 32, Elkton Township, which the landowner will install, subject to the County staking the culvert grade; and Otter Tail Power Cooperative (3 permits) for boring and installation of fiber optic cable under Wilkin C.D. Nos. 3, 7, and 28, from the Red River along 320th ST to the east in Connelly, Nilsen, and Andrea Townships, subject to our standard utility disclaimer and road authority permission to work within their R/W.

- Discussed seeking a Becker County Court Order for a temporary injunction to block a tile outlet in the SE¼, Section 3, Callaway Township, Becker County, which was installed last year without a BRRWD permit. Repeated BRRWD attempts to work with the landowner to address this issue have failed. The matter is being reviewed with the BRRWD's Attorney Tami Norgard, Vogel Law Firm.

- Authorized a letter be sent to a landowner regarding new tiling he has added to an existing control structure outlet in the SW¼, Section 21, Hamden Township, Becker County, without a BRRWD permit. The downstream landowner is concerned that the additional water will overload his outlet. The upstream landowner will be asked to submit a BRRWD permit application and possibly, consider other outlet options.
• Authorized signature of the Wilkin County Environmental Office's Conditional Use Permit for Project No. 79, Wolverton Creek Restoration. The Board also discussed a recent meeting with BWSR and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) regarding the needed project easement acquisitions. A two-stage easement process was proposed with the BRRWD taking an easement for construction and future maintenance, and then BWSR/NRCS following up with their Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) permanent easement. CREP funding would only cover easement acquisition on cropland with the exception that 5% of the total easement area could be non-crop or current Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands. CRP acreage can't be rolled over into a permanent CREP or Reinvest In Minnesota easement, except as noted. For acreage currently enrolled in CRP, the BRRWD would have to acquire the permanent buffer easement as a project expense to comply with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources permit requirements. The Board noted that given these agency constraints, they plan to work with the landowners on easement acquisition and the bid opening this winter with construction starting next spring.

• Reviewed a pending bid advertisement for the removal of extra stockpile material, associated with Project No. 49, Oakport Flood Mitigation. The bid opening scheduled for 10/23/17. The Board also discussed a wetland mitigation site that does not currently meet specifications because the neighboring landowner routinely mowed part of the site and planted trees on the area. The other wetland mitigation sites are meeting all specifications. A restoration plan will be developed for the site. BRRWD Administrator Bruce Albright will work with the neighbor to limit their future access.

• Noted that the Wilkin C.D. No. 13 and 13-Lateral channel repair is nearly completed with just spoil leveling left. There is one stretch of channel in Section 36, Deerhorn Township, that still needs work where the landowner refused the contractor access. Albright will work with the landowner to get the repair finished.

• Discussed Albright's recent trip to Washington, D.C. with a regional delegation to meet with Congressmen Cramer and Peterson. The delegation presented a proposal for the Red River Comprehensive Subwatershed Pilot project located in Wilkin County, which is a large-scale pilot project demonstrating the benefits of comprehensive water management. Their proposal was well received, but NRCS has already spent the current Farm Bill funding on WRP easements.

• Noted that the North Dakota and Minnesota delegations will each chose eight people to create a task force to formulate recommendations regarding the issues surrounding the F-M Diversion project and the Minnesota permitting concerns. BRRWD Manager Mark Anderson has been asked to serve on the taskforce.

• Discussed a ditch cleaning violation on Wilkin C.D. No. 2 in the NW¼, Section 3, Sunnyside Township. The Board authorized Albright to send a letter to the landowner to inform him about Minnesota Drainage Law and to discuss ditch restoration.

The Board of Managers, BRRWD, will hold their next regular meeting on Monday, October 23, 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.