"BRRWD Reviews Project"

At their meeting held on Monday, December 11, 2017, at 7:00 PM in Barnesville, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), reviewed the status of Project No. 78, Clay/Wilkin Judicial Ditch (J.D.) No. 1 Diversion. Erik S. Jones, Engineer, Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI), presented his Preliminary Report to the Board and several of the project petitioners. Their petition asks for the installation of a diversion ditch on the south side of the Clay/Wilkin County line in Sections 1, 2, 3, and 4, Wolverton Township, Wilkin County, which would route Wilkin County water in J.D. No. 1 west to Wolverton Creek. The petitioners asked for the project because of downstream drainage problems in Clay County. Following heavy rainfall events, upstream flows from Wilkin County keep water levels in J.D. No. 1 so high that the inlet gates don't open for several days, and water ponds on the adjacent cropland. As a result, the land closest to the ditch in Clay County drains off last, causing crop damage.

Jones offered two alternatives for consideration. Alternative 1 would drain only a portion of the J.D. No. 1 flows west to Wolverton Creek, leaving one of the culverts on the county line open to the north. The project is designed so that flows would be diverted west when the water level reached about 2' in depth in J.D. No. 1. The diversion ditch would be about 3 miles long with approximately 260,000 cubic yards (c.y.) of excavated material. The estimated cost for this alternative is $1.9 million. The J.D. No. 1 benefit area is approximately 30 square miles, and the average cost per acre for Alternative 1 would be $120.26, or about $15.14/acre/year for 10 years. Alternative 2 would block both existing culverts in the county line and divert all the flows from Wilkin County to Wolverton Creek. This option would be more expensive because it would require more excavation (360,000 c.y.) and would increase the estimated cost by $400,000-$500,000. Both alternatives would maintain the current drainage outlet capacity for lands to the south in Wilkin County, but it would only reduce the amount of water flowing north into Clay County by about half. Preliminary modeling suggested that water from the diversion would enter Wolverton Creek ahead of the peak Creek flows, and that water from high rainfall events could drain off the benefited cropland approximately 16 hours sooner than without the project. The Board scheduled a meeting with the project petitioners on 12/21/17 at 8:00 AM in the BRRWD office to further consider the proposed upstream/downstream impacts, costs, and options.

The Board also discussed a possible purchase of a 40-acre parcel in Section 22, Barnesville Township, Clay County, which has been enrolled in Reinvest In Minnesota since 1993. Approximately 4.6 acres of the tract is currently under a BRRWD easement for Clay County Ditch (C.D.) No. 34. The BRRWD could eventually need additional ditch right-of-way (5.3 acres) on this tract for the Barnesville Township Comprehensive project, which includes a possible channel restoration on C.D. No. 34. An inlet channel for a possible retention area could also be possibly located on the tract. After considering the offered price for the parcel and the project timeline, the Board decided not to make an offer on the property at this time.

Other business included:

- Reviewed 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 $2,053,919.46. Administrative disbursements for the month are $42,427.90, and for the year total $457,173.10. Current 2017 accounts receivable totals $3,250,046. Our total income for the year is $3,608,322.68. Income since the 11/13/17 meeting was $976,855.42, including 2nd half tax payments for ditches/projects and real property from Otter Tail County ($17,985.02), Wilkin
County ($285,022.69), Becker County ($71,185.83), and Clay County ($376,766.66-property only), the Fargo-Moorhead Diversion Authority for Phase 1 funding for Stony Creek ($86,800), Upper South Branch of the Buffalo River ($74,022), and Barnesville Township ($60,746), and refunds from Xcel Energy for Project No. 49, Oakport Flood Mitigation ($422.19). The balance of the income came from bank interest and HEI office rent. The Board approved payment of the bills, totaling $220,942.72.

- Noted that the Wilkin County Planning Commission will be making a recommendation to the County Commissioners on 12/12/17 regarding the Conditional Use Permit for Project No. 79, Wolverton Creek Restoration. BRRWD Administrator Bruce E. Albright plans to attend the meeting to answer questions.

- Noted that William Nichol Excavating, Inc. plans to start the repair of Wilkin C.D. No. 22-Main this week and will continue to work upstream while weather permits.

- For the inlets installed this fall on Wilkin C.D. Nos. 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 13, and 13-Lateral, approved Pay Request No. 3 to DM Enterprises for $19,751.70 and Change Order No. 2, for a net contract reduction of -$6,848. The Change Order adjusts the costs to match the actual installed quantities for a total contract amount of $57,544.50.

- Scheduled a meeting with Steven J. Taff, Associate Professor Emeritus, Department of Applied Economics, University of Minnesota, on 1/08/18 at 5:30 PM prior to our annual meeting to review his final easement value study. Dr. Taff was hired to provide consulting services to look at the value of easements on flood damage reduction and natural resource enhancement projects, primarily on areas that will remain as cropland.

- Noted that the Red River Basin Commission is holding their 35th Annual Land & Water International Summit Conference on January 23-25, 2018, at the Fort Garry Hotel, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Albright and Managers Hanson and Fjestad plan to attend.

- Approved the purchase of a replacement handheld controller for the BRRWD office door security system.

- Approved a reimbursement request to Wilkin County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) for a Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Conservation Practices Assistance Grant, which covers 75% of the outlet repair costs for J.D. No. 1 and Clay C.D. No. 53. The request includes the Practices cost share ($36,424.88) and technical and engineering assistance ($25,792.21).

- Noted that Rob Sip, the new Red River Watershed Management Board Executive Director, plans to meet with the BRRWD at the 1/22/18 meeting.

- Noted that the next Mediation Project Team meeting will be held on 12/14/17 at 1:30 PM in the BRRWD office. The office will submit a reimbursement request to the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group for first and second quarter expenses.

- Noted that the Rinke Noonan Law Firm is hosting a Drainage and Water Conference in the St. Cloud River's Edge Convention Center on February 15, 2018. Albright and Manager Leitch plan to attend.

- Noted that BWSR recently announced the recipients of their 2018 Clean Water Fund Grant awards. The BRRWD's two application were not successful, but Wilkin County's Lower Otter Tail Gully
Stabilization project ($185,000), and Becker County's Buffalo-Red Shallow Lakes and Mainstem Improvement Strategies-Phase 2 ($398,000) and the Targeted Phosphorus Reduction and Lake Protection project ($376,250) all received funding. The BRRWD assisted with the grant applications and is partnering with the SWCDs on these projects.

- Continued discussions about hiring an Assistant BRRWD Administrator.

The Board of Managers, BRRWD, will hold their next regular meeting and 2018 annual meeting on Monday, January 8, 2018, 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](http://www.brrwd.org).