"BRRWD Authorizes Grant Application"

At their meeting held on Monday, February 26, 2018, at 7:00 PM in Barnesville, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), authorized Erik Jones, Engineer, Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI), to submit a 2018 Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 319 Grant application for sediment reduction projects in the upper Buffalo River watershed in partnership with the Becker Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). For the past several years, the BRRWD has partnered with the SWCD to fund sediment reduction projects in the upper Buffalo River watershed, consisting mainly of grade stabilization structures, grassed waterways, and water and sediment control basins. The BRRWD is eligible for the 2018 CWA funding now that the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has completed the Buffalo River Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Study. The state/local cost share for the grant funding is 60/40 with the local share coming from the Becker SWCD, landowners, state grants, and the BRRWD. The total application was for $840,000.

Other business included:

- Reviewed the BRRWD's financial status. Cash on hand is $1,906,200.73. Income since the 02/12/18 meeting was $97,344.52: Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) FY 2018 Drainage Records Grant ($25,000), MPCA Otter Tail River Planning 319 Grant ($5,861.08), Becker County for reimbursement for their share of the 2017 Buffer Initiative Aid ($15,050), Wilkin SWCD reimbursement for Whiskey Creek Enhancement ($51,108.44), and the balance coming from HEI office rent and Agassiz Valley Grain LLC for office rental. Total 2018 income to date is $192,022.16. Approved the payment of bills totaling $33,762.92.

- Approved permits to Breckenridge Public Utilities to grade the ditches along Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 75, draining to a storm water collection pond. The project will retain a gate on an existing 36" dia. centerline culvert in T.H. No. 75 to limit water flows to the west. The Board postponed action on permits for the Fergus Falls Fish & Game Club, pending Manager field review; Shawn Norman, pending ditch system hearings; and David Osten, pending receipt of downstream landowner notification forms. The Board administratively withdrew a permit for Curtis Nelson, as he no longer rents the property in question, and the landowner informed the BRRWD that the project has been dropped.

- Noted that BWSR has been contacted to provide a letter of support for the latest Memorandum of Understanding to allow the BRRWD access to Reinvest In Minnesota lands inside the Wolverton Creek Restoration project boundaries. HEI also has completed 44 parcel drawings that will be included in the landowners' easement packets for Phases I and II.

- Noted that funding for the Upper South Branch of the Buffalo River Restoration project has been included in the 2018 Legislative bonding bill for $1.95 million.

- Noted that the One Watershed, One Plan Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is being circulated among the four Counties and SWCDs for review and signature. Once the MOA has been signed by all the partners, it can be submitted to BWSR, who will then release funds to start the planning process. HEI is working with BWSR to revise our boundary map to correct some discrepancies.
Noted that the MPCA has scheduled a kickoff meeting with the BRRWD on Monday, March 19, 2018, from 1:00-3:00 PM in our Barnesville office to start the next TMDL/Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy studies for the Buffalo River and Upper Red River watersheds in 2019-2020. A meeting is also scheduled later that same day (3:00 PM) with the International Water Institute, River Watch, and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to discuss coordinating our 2018 monitoring efforts. Notices for this meeting have been sent.

Accepted Damages Reports for Clay County Ditch Nos. 2, 12, 21, and 69, and authorized the staff to schedule the ditch system hearings, associated with our Buffer Strip Initiative effort.

Received a notification from the DNR regarding a 5-year extension of their State-wide General Permit, expiring on 5/31/18, which authorizes DNR Wildlife Management to conduct certain activities in public waters on designated wildlife management lakes, or in waters controlled by Wildlife Management Areas sites through ownership or easement. Numerous activities are authorized under this permit. The Board offered no comments.

Discussed BWSR’s Biennial Budget Request (BBR). The submission period for upcoming projects (2020-2021) is 3/15/18-4/12/18. The Board will consider the BRRWD's short/intermediate/long-term goals when preparing the BBR.

Noted that the Assistant Administrator Hiring Committee hopes to have a report for the 3/12/18 Board meeting.

Noted that Albright and Manager Leitch attended the Rinke Noonan Drainage and Water Conference at the St. Cloud River's Edge Convention Center on 2/15/18. Albright attended a BWSR sponsored workshop in Detroit Lakes on 2/23/18 for training on the Prioritize, Target, and Measure Application, which is a web application that can be used by SWCDs, watershed districts, local water planners, and other decision makers to interactively prioritize resources and the issues impacting them, target specific fields to place Best Management Practices and conservation practices, and then measure water quality improvements and sediment load reduction as identified in local watershed plans.

Noted that the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts Legislative Breakfast is scheduled for March 7-8, 2018, at the Embassy Suites, St. Paul. Invitations have been sent to our local legislators. Albright and Managers Fjestad and Van Amburg plan to attend.


Noted that the annual Advisory Committee meeting has been scheduled for Friday, March 23, 2018, at 1:30 PM in the BRRWD office.

The Board of Managers, BRRWD, will hold their next regular meeting on Monday, March 12, 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.