"BRRWD Authorizes Stony Creek Funding Application"

At their meeting held on Monday, March 12, 2018, at 7:00 PM in Barnesville, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), received a draft benefit analysis from Erik S. Jones, Engineer, Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI) for the Stony Creek Comprehensive Project. Jones included several items in the analysis: agricultural flood damages, increased land value, structure flood damages, infrastructure costs based on past Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) damages, non-FEMA damages, increased wetlands from the stream restoration, increased wetlands within the project, water quality, land-use changes, field erosion reduction, and Clay County Ditch (C.D.) No. 31 repair savings. Jones estimated $67,740,629.42 in benefits. Given an estimated project cost of $13,981,747.00, the benefit/cost ratio is 4.845. The Board agreed that the project should provide enough benefits to move forward with the search for funding, landowner meetings, and design. Jones was authorized to submit a Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources funding application for $1.75 million, highlighting the stream restoration features along Stony Creek. If approved, funding wouldn't be available until July 2019. Land acquisition in the easement corridor could be funded in part by the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. The Board also authorized BRRWD Administrator Bruce E. Albright to pursue state bonding for this project if the opportunity should arise.

Landowner Chuck Anderson asked the Board to schedule a meeting with the project landowners before spring field work begins to discuss easement values. The Managers will meet with HEI staff on 3/22/18 for a demonstration on how the Taff Easement Value Calculator could be applied to Stony Creek.

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 $1,937,911.12. Administrative disbursements for the month are $38,966.20, and for the year total $68,104.46. Current 2018 accounts receivable totals $5,953,231. Our total income for the year is $257,495.47. Income since the 2/12/18 meeting was $162,817.83 from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) FY18 Drainage Records Grant ($25,000), Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Otter Tail River Planning 319 Grant ($17,621.94), Buffer Initiative Aid payments from Becker ($15,050) and Clay ($52,691) Counties, the Wilkin Soil and Water Conservation District reimbursement for Whiskey Creek Enhancement ($51,108.44). The balance of the income came from a Red River Basin Commission conference registration refund, Albright's witness fee/mileage payment, Agassiz Valley Grain LLC office rental, and HEI office rent. Cash on hand is $1,906,200.73. Approved the payment of bills totaling $164,487.38.

- Approved permits to Roger Hansen for an approach/36” dia. culvert for a new house off County Road No. 21 in the S¹/2SE¼, Section 28, Barnesville Township, Clay County, subject to County approval to work in their road right-of-way (R/W); the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to replace a water control structure in the east basin of a United States Fish and Wildlife Service Wetlands Reserve Program easement in the E½, Section 6, Norwegian Grove Township, Otter Tail County; City of Moorhead for the construction of a roadway/railway underpass (grade separation) at the intersection of SE Main AVE (Old Highway 52) and 20th/21st ST in Moorhead, including a stormwater lift station near the low point along 20th/21st Street to route stormwater from the underpass to Clay C.D. No. 47; Arvig Enterprises, Inc. for the installation of fiber optic lines along road R/Ws with 5’ minimum of cover when going under road beds using directional boring
or vibratory plow in various locations within the BRRWD boundaries in Spring Prairie, Cromwell, Moland, Glyndon, Riverton, Hawley, Elmwood, Skree, and Elkton Townships, subject to our standard utility disclaimer and a location map showing where the facilities will cross BRRWD ditch systems/projects; Robert Faulkner to install pattern tiling in the SE¼, Section 22, Manston Township, Wilkin County, outletting via a lift station, on the south quarterline through 200th ST to a natural waterway in the NE¼, Section 27, Manston Township, eventually entering the Manston Slough project, subject to our standard tiling disclaimer and township approval to work within their road R/W; and Bruce Yaggi to install pattern tiling in the SE¼, Section 32, Nilsen Township, Wilkin County, outletting via a lift station to the north side of State Highway No. 210 to Wilkin C.D. No. 37, subject to our standard tiling disclaimer and township approval to work within their road R/W. The Board postponed action on permits for Fergus Falls Fish and Game Club pending the results of a meeting on 3/15/18 with the NRCS, applicant, and neighboring landowners; Paul Daugherty pending more information regarding the outlet; and Jeff Holt pending receipt of the downstream notification form.

- Received a summary report from the Assistant Administrator Hiring Committee. The Committee asked HEI to provide information regarding Human Resources overhead charges for the current HEI office and engineering staff. They should also present a proposal for staffing the new position.

- 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 Total Maximum Daily Load/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 to discuss coordinating our 2018 monitoring efforts.

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

- Noted that the Red River Watershed Management Board and the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group are holding their 20th Annual Joint Conference on March 21-22, 2018, at the Courtyard by Marriott, Moorhead, MN. A Technical Seminar is planned for Tuesday, March 20, 2018, starting at 1:30 PM. A tour of some of the projects around Moorhead is scheduled for Wednesday morning, including the Oakport area.

- Noted that representatives from the Diversion Authority plan to attend the BRRWD's 3/26/18 meeting to present an update of the project.

- The Board reviewed their 2018 short, intermediate, and long term workplan. Short term objectives (0-6 months) include updates of both the BRRWD Rules and Bylaws, finalizing Phase 1 landowner easements and opening construction bids for the Wolverton Creek project, completing the Buffer Law effort for the legal drainage systems, and submitting the One Watershed, One Plan Workplan and Budget to BWSR for approval.

The Board of Managers, BRRWD, will hold their next regular meeting on Monday, March 26, 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.