NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 9, 2018
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BRRWD Reviews F-M Diversion "Plan B"

The Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) held their regular meeting on Monday, March 26, 2018, at 7:00 PM in Barnesville. Representatives from the Fargo-Moorhead (F-M) Diversion Authority (DA) presented an overview of their revised Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Diversion permit application, or "Plan B". Moorhead Mayor DelRae Williams and Engineer Robert Zimmerman both made presentations regarding the new plan.

Mayor Williams explained that when the DNR did not approve the original Diversion permit application, a Governors’ Task Force, a Technical Advisory Group (TAG), and a Policy Group, were formed to provide input and to reach a consensus regarding revisions to the F-M Diversion plans. Representatives from Richland and Wilkin Counties were added to the TAG and Policy Groups to allow them more participation in the decision-making process. The TAG key recommendations were to strive for balanced flood protection and impacts, minimize acres removed from the floodplain, minimize newly impacted acreage and structures, minimize impacts in Wilkin and Richland Counties (640 acres or less), and consider the economics of a revised plan.

Moorhead Engineer Zimmerman provided a more detailed description of Plan B that still includes the diversion ditch to route water around the Fargo-Moorhead metro area and the southern embankment, but the southern embankment has been significantly redesigned to balance project impacts between North Dakota and Minnesota and to reduce rural impacts upstream in Richland and Wilkin Counties. The height of the river through Fargo during project operation has been raised from 35’ to 37’. The revised project would only be operated 1 in 20 years, instead of the earlier plan operation of 1 in 10 years (based on historical data). The addition of the eastern and western tie-back levees and repositioning the southern embankment further north in Minnesota will eliminate the proposed ringdike for the City of Comstock and the need to raise the Burlington Northern/Sante Fe Railroad/Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 75, and significantly reduces impacts on organic farms (down 90%) and upstream cemeteries. Plan B balances project impacts so the staging area acreage reflects the proposed protected acreage: approximately 80% (ND) to 20% (MN). Pre-task force proposed splits were 80%/20% protected acres with 58% (NT)/42% (MN) impacts. Plan B shifts more of the staging area impacts to North Dakota, which is in line with the estimated "protected" acreage. In addition, the duration and depth of water for the 100-year event has been shifted further into North Dakota, and the revised plan reduces the overall upstream staging area for the 100-year event by approximately 7,000 acres. The DA is in the second permit submittal phase for the project development. The next steps include community outreach and the public comment period. There are also several items that will be addressed for the technical and financial aspects of the project: easement valuation, mitigation planning, alignment micro-siting, a new cost estimate, and funding and financial planning.

Other business included:

- Reviewed the BRRWD's financial status. Cash on hand is $1,773,423.74. There was no income since the 3/12/18 meeting. Total 2018 income to date is $257,495.47. Albright noted that the office will send invoices to the landowners on the Accounts Receivable list to try to clean up those old outstanding debts. The Board approved a motion to close our Wells Fargo banking accounts. The Managers also approved the payment of bills totaling $15,764.51.

- Approved permits to the City of Dilworth for the construction of the Keystone 1st Addition and 4th AVE/14th ST improvements in the NE¼, Section 1, Moorhead Township, Clay County, subject to
verification of Clay County Ditch (C.D.) No. 41-Lateral No. 1 ditch bottom elevation/geometry, and verification and, if necessary, restoration of the Eastview Subdivision Pond overflow to the T.H. No. 10 road ditch, eventually to C.D. No. 50; and Oberg Family Farms to install tile in the NW¼, Section 30, Morken Township, Clay County, outletting on the north section line to Clay C.D. No. 59 to which the land is assessed, subject to our standard tiling disclaimer and the installation of a maximum of two outlets.

- Received a complaint from a landowner in Section 5, Elkton Township, Clay County, regarding water backing up onto his property from a blocked field lateral on his neighbor's property, which is the outlet for his farmyard drainage. The staff will field verify the complaint, and if necessary, they will notify the downstream landowner that he needs to properly maintain his ditch.

- Noting that Humboldt Township had to patch a washout on one of the Pearl View Estates driveway culverts crossing Whisky Creek off T.H. No. 34 east of Barnesville on 3/23/18. The Township plans to repair the crossing this spring when conditions allow. The BRRWD will assist Humboldt Township to file the necessary paperwork if a DNR permit is required for the work.

- Noted that a meeting with Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources has been scheduled on 4/3/18 in Detroit Lakes to discuss the Wolverton Creek Memorandum of Understanding, which would give the BRRWD access to the Reinvest In Minnesota lands within the Wolverton Creek Restoration project boundaries for construction. Erik S. Jones, Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI), provided an update of the project development and easement acquisition process.

- Noted that a meeting has been scheduled to discuss the Stinking Lake project and 2018 operation with the DNR in their Detroit Lakes office on April 3, 2018, at 9:00 AM.

- Noted that Managers Jay A. Leitch (Delegate) and Peter V. Fjestad (Alternate) have been appointed to serve on the One Watershed, One Plan Policy Committee.

- Approved Lowell Deedee's request for a $1,500 stipend from the BRRWD to cover the costs for chemistry analysis of his water samples in 2018. Deedee is independently monitoring several sites not on our water quality monitoring list in Becker County.

- Authorized HEI to conduct a survey to find where the breakouts are occurring along approximately two miles of the south bank of Wilkin C.D. No. 40 in Section 1, Manston Township, and Section 6, Tanberg Township, Wilkin County.

- Approved Resolution 2018-03-26 #1, authorizing a Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) funding application for $1.75 million for the Stony Creek Comprehensive Project, which is due 4/11/18. The BRRWD is waiting for LCCMR comments on our draft application.

- Discussed adding more members to the Advisory Committee. Arvid Thompson, who has been a member of the Advisory Committee and a BRRWD Viewer for nearly 35 years, recently notified the office that he plans to retire from both positions. The office is preparing a commemorative plaque to present to Thompson in appreciation for his years of service.

The Board of Managers, BRRWD, will hold their next regular meeting on Monday, April 9, 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.