NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 20, 2018
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BRRWD Hears From Richland-Wilkin JPA

The Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) held their regular meeting on Monday, April 9, 2018, at 7:00 PM in Barnesville. Representatives from the Richland-Wilkin Joint Powers Authority (JPA) presented an overview of their alternative plans for the Fargo-Moorhead (F-M) Diversion project. They also discussed their objections to the Diversion Authority's (DA) revised plan. The JPA hired Charlie Anderson, Water Resources Engineer, to review the Diversion's revised Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) permit application (Plan B) and to develop an alternative design for the north and south project alignments, maintaining the current floodplain storage area. The JPA's goal was to find a design that would meet DNR permit requirements, while providing flood protection for the F-M metro-area with the least impacts to the existing floodplain. With the JPA's plan, flood waters would not impact Hickson-Oxbow-Bakke, Comstock, and would have very little impact on the Minnesota side of the river, while still providing 100-year protection for Fargo-Moorhead. Their plan reduces the acreage of floodplain impacts to approximately 12,570 acres compared to Plan B impacts of approximately 20,000 acres.

JPA Attorney Tim Fox commented that there are opposing objectives for the Diversion project design. The DA claims that the project is designed to provide flood protection for the F-M Metro-area, but Fox maintains that the underlying goal is flood protection for the floodplain in rural Cass County south of Fargo for future urban development. Fox explained that the most significant reason the DNR denied the original Diversion permit application was that the design removed floodplain on the north and south ends of the proposed project and pushed the floodplain further upstream into Richland and Wilkin Counties, creating the "upstream staging area". Craig Hertzgaard, JPA Director and member of the Governors' Taskforce, explained that the DNR's focus for the project and permit review was floodplain management, and they stressed that a project should represent the best alternative "showing the minimal impact solution in respect to all other reasonable alternatives." Hertzgaard noted that the JPA's plan appears to cause the least impacts to the floodplain while providing flood protection for the F-M area. Attorney Cash Aaland commented that the DA's revised DNR application doesn't comply with Minnesota law because it still has a dam on the Red River and it still impacts the floodplain on both sides of the river.

Other business included:

- Reviewed the BRRWD's monthly financial statements. Cash on hand is $1,949,636.93. Administrative disbursements for the month are $37,797.07, and for the year total $105,901.53. Current 2018 accounts receivable are $5,873,008. Our total income for the year is $432,273.17. Income since the 3/12/18 meeting was $174,777.70: the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) for the 2017 Wilkin County ditch repairs ($168,430) and the Red River Watershed Management Board for Mediation Project Team expenses ($5,087). The balance of the income came from bank account interest ($1,034.73) and Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI) office rent ($225). The Wells Fargo Bank accounts have been closed and the balances transferred to our Midwest Bank savings account. The Board approved payment of the bills, totaling $158,784.96.

- Approved permits to Jeffrey Holt to install random tiling in the N½, Section 22, Norwegian Grove Township, Otter Tail County, outletting to a private ditch on Donald Tollerud's property, who approved the proposal, subject to our standard tiling disclaimer; Clifford and Dan Froslie for
pattern tiling in the N½, Section 3, Tanberg Township, Wilkin County, outletting via gravity flow on the south quarterline to the South Branch of the Buffalo River and in a closed conduit west across property owned by Trosvik, Inc., who approved the project, subject to our standard tiling disclaimer; the City of Dilworth for the installation of a sanitary sewer force main and applicable air release manholes crossing Clay County Ditch No. 41-Lateral 1 between 50th and 60th ST, subject to our standard utility disclaimer. The Board postponed action on permit applications for Merle Nelson and the City of Barnesville pending receipt of downstream landowner notification forms.

- Reviewed the Hiring Committee's report regarding the question of whether the BRRWD should hire an Assistant Administrator as a Watershed employee or to continue to contract with HEI. After an extended discussion, a majority of the Managers voted to authorize HEI to hire the new BRRWD Assistant as a HEI employee.

- Scheduled a hearing on 5/29/18 regarding a drainage dispute in the SE¼, Section 20, Hamden Township, Becker County. The affected parties will be contacted.

- Authorized signature of the Project No. 79, Wolverton Creek Restoration Memorandum of Understanding with BWSR to give the BRRWD access to existing and newly enrolled Reinvest In Minnesota lands within the project boundaries for construction and maintenance.

- Adopted revised BRRWD Bylaws. The Board also accepted the draft BRRWD Rules, which will now be distributed to local and state agencies and road authorities for a 45-day review and comment period, according to Minnesota Statutes Annotated 103D.341. Following the comment period, a public hearing will be held prior to the BRRWD formally adopting the revised Rules.

- Approved the 2018 International Water Institute water quality monitoring agreement.

- Authorized HEI to submit the BRRWD's Biennial Budget Request to BWSR for our anticipated expenditures for projects during the 2020-2021 biennium.

- Noting that the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts Summer Tour is scheduled for June 20-22, 2018, hosted by the Carver County Water Management Organization and the Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District.

- Noting that the One Watershed, One Plan Policy Committee held their first meeting on 4/6/18, and they plan to meet again on 5/4/18. The Planning Team has been formed, and the office is working on appointments to the Technical and Citizen Advisory Committees.

- Noting that Albright and Manager Fjestad met with Otter Tail and Wilkin County representatives to discuss a possible redetermination of benefits for Wilkin/Otter Tail County Judicial Ditch No. 2. They also discussed the Buffer Law requirements. The group scheduled a landowner informational meeting on June 4, 2018, at 7:00 PM in the Government Services Center, Commissioners Room, Fergus Falls.

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