“BRRWD Receives Agency Updates”

The Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) held their regular meeting on June 11, 2018 in Barnesville. They met with representatives from three organizations, who presented updates regarding their activities.

Pete Waller, Board Conservationist, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), provided a summary of the 2018 Legislation Session funding allocations related to BWSR programs. The Legislature approved $15 million for the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council to fund Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) wetland and buffer easements that will be used for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Waller reported that BWSR has been working with the Soil and Water Conservation Districts around the state to obtain input regarding CREP marketing. Using this input, BWSR staff presented their recommendations to the BWSR Board RIM Committee, which could bring about some changes to the CREP program that would provide better incentives to participating landowners. Waller thought the BWSR Board would act on the recommendations this month and the new program guidelines could be operational by July, which he felt would help the BRRWD implement our Wolverton Creek Restoration easement acquisition process.

Julie Goehring, South Basin Manager, Red River Basin Commission (RRBC), presented a funding proposal to update the RRBC's 2011 Long Term Flood Solutions (LTFS) report. The RRBC is looking for matching funds ($10,000) for a potential Minnesota Pollution Control Agency $30,000 FY 2018-2019 Environmental Assistance grant for Communities Adapting to Climate Change and Extreme Weather Patterns. The Clay County Board of Commissioners agreed to sponsor the grant application, and the RRBC asked the BRRWD and the Wild Rice Watershed District to split the $10,000 local grant match 75/25. After discussion, the Board approved a $7,500 contribution to the RRBC's LTFS update grant application. The application submission deadline is 6/26/18. The total estimated cost for the LTFS update is $500,000. Other funding sources could include the Red River Joint Water Resource District and the North Dakota Joint Water Resource Board, Cass County, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB).

Rob Sip, Executive Director, RRWMB, gave the Board an update of the RRWMB activities since he took over his position last fall. He discussed the recent staff and organizational changes they have made and the RRWMB's goals and mission. Currently, the RRWMB is going through a strategic planning effort. Sip discussed the current challenges for watershed districts in the Red River basin, including flood hazard mitigation funding issues and future/current projects and future opportunities to work with the member districts to get projects completed. He distributed a sample questionnaire for the BRRWD's review and input.

Other business included:

- Approved 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 $2,079,412.24. Administrative disbursements for the month are $34,094.71 and for the year total $71,781.92. Current 2018 accounts receivable are $5,873,008. Our total income for the year is $1,072,822.94. Income since the 4/9/18 meeting was $621,427.74. Receipts came primarily from Otter Tail County ($54,625.11) and Wilkin County ($565,156.11) for their 2018 first half property/ditch tax proceeds. The balance of the income came from bank account interest ($1,421.52) and Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI) office rent ($225). The Board approved payment of bills totaling $172,472.21.
• Approved permits to Justin Rasmusson to install a new residential driveway/culvert in the SE¼, Section 22, Oakport Township, Clay County, with the requirement that the new pipe match adjacent structure sizings, subject to County approval to work within their road right-of-way (R/W); Harmen Tande to finish his 2017 tiling project in the E½NW¼, Section 25, Oakport Township, Clay County, outletting one mile north to Clay County Ditch (C.D.) No. 35, to which it is assessed, subject to our standard tiling disclaimer; and Nate Thompson to regrade the ditch along 70th AVE S in the NE¼, Section 12, Elkton Township, Clay County, to regrade a field lateral, and to install a new dry approach in the north east corner of the property, entering 180th ST S, all subject to township approval to work within their road R/W.

• Discussed a drainage dispute in Section 3, Callaway Township, Becker County, regarding two unpermitted tile outlets that were installed to discharge onto downstream property without the landowner's approval. Both landowners were requested to file after-the-fact permit applications with the stipulation that they must work with their neighbor to obtain his approval for their projects. Letters will be sent to the affected parties, asking them to work together to find a solution to their drainage issues.

• Authorized a letter be sent to a local contractor, who has installed tile for several landowners in Becker County, advising him that it is his responsibility to be aware of the BRRWD Rules requiring landowners to have approved permits prior to installing projects.

• Noted that a hearing to review two petitions to add and remove lands in Wilkin C.D. Nos. 44, 13, and 13-Lateral is scheduled for 6/26/18 at 7:30 PM in Barnesville.

• Noted that a Manager field review has been scheduled for 6/14/18 at 7:30 AM regarding a 2017 tiling project in the SW¼, Section 26, Manston Township, Wilkin County, to discuss downstream ditch grading and wetland issues at the outlet. A landowner informational meeting will be held on 6/19/18 at 8:00 AM in Barnesville. Until the downstream issues are resolved, the landowner cannot operate his tile.

• Reviewed survey results regarding a drainage concern in the SW¼, Section 11, Morken Township, Clay County, along the east side of 90th ST N. The survey shows that the ditch along the landowner's property has about 1’ of sediment and there is also sediment in the County Road No. 108 culvert. The Clay County Highway Department has agreed to extend the culvert to prevent sediment from washing in from the road. HEI also forwarded the results to the landowner, who can clean his ditch without a BRRWD permit, subject to township approval to work within their R/W.

• Discussed a ditch cleanout concern in Section 1, Barnesville Township, Clay County. Staff will contact the landowner regarding erosion concerns.

• Authorized staff to send letters to the landowners in Sections 20 and 21, Hamden Township, Becker County, regarding the results of a 6/7/18 Manager field review and advising them that the BRRWD has determined that the terms of Permit No. 16-123 were not violated, and the tile project in Section 21 only contributes approximately 7% of the total drainage entering the low area in Section 20. The Board will work with the landowner of the outlet in Section 20 to be sure any downstream obstructions to Becker C.D. No. 5 are removed so his tile will drain properly in the spring.

• Discussed an ongoing water problem in Section 14, Hamden Township, Becker County, associated with a proposed 2011 United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) tile installation meant to address a water problem on cropland adjacent to the Hamden National Wildlife Refuge. The Board authorized HEI to prepare a cross section of the road through the culvert, showing the culvert elevation and the water elevation when USFWS applied for the tile permit and the current water level to review at the next Mediation Project Team meeting.
• Discussed the 6/4/18 landowner informational meeting held regarding Wilkin/Otter Tail Judicial Ditch (J.D.) No. 2 and appointed Managers Anderson, Fjestad, and Larson to serve on the J.D. No. 2 ditch committee.

• Discussed the status of Project No. 79, Wolverton Creek Restoration-Phase 1. The landowners are starting to return their signed easement options, and HEI has prepared the Phase 1 Plans and Specifications. A construction bid opening is scheduled for 6/25/18. The Board authorized HEI to hire a company for vegetation on Wolverton Creek prior to construction.

• Accepted the Project No. 78, Clay/Wilkin J.D. No. 1-Improvement petition and bond. HEI was appointed to prepare the Preliminary Engineer's Report, subject to the BRRWD Attorney's review.


• Noted that BRRWD Administrator Bruce Albright and Managers Fjestad, Van Amburg, and Hanson plan to attend the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts Summer Tour on June 20-22, 2018, in Chanhassen, MN.

The Board of Managers, BRRWD, will hold their next regular meeting on Monday, June 25, 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.