"BRRWD Signs Wolverton Creek Restoration Contract"

At their regular meeting held on August 13, 2018, at 7:00 PM in Barnesville, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), signed the construction contract with Sellin Brothers, Inc., Hawley, MN for Phase 1 of Project No. 79, Wolverton Creek Restoration. The contractor expects to start excavation work this week on the lower 0.5 miles of the channel north of the Clay/Wilkin County line to establish an adequate outlet for the project construction. Phase 1 is the middle reach of Wolverton Creek from County State Aid Highway (CSAH) No. 30 in Section 26, Wolverton Township, downstream into Section 4, Wolverton Township (county line). The excavation completion date is 12/31/18 with seeding to be completed by July 20, 2019. Wilkin County Commissioner Lyle Hovland discussed a landowner's concerns regarding the Phase 1 outlet cleanout and side inlets on his property. BRRWD Administrator Bruce E. Albright assured Hovland that a gradeline will be established at the outlet north of the County line before any other work is started in Wilkin County. He also noted that the BRRWD will work with landowners regarding their field inlet needs, adding that the sideslopes of the channel/soil placement locations are not designed to act as a dike, and the excavated material will be blended in so that adjacent land can still drain naturally to the creek. Hovland also raised questions from area landowners about the possible impact of a newly proposed F-M Diversion dike crossing Wolverton Creek near the county line south of Comstock. Albright explained that the dike will only be about 18’ high where it crosses Wolverton Creek and will only come into play for the 500 to 1,000-year flood event.

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 $2,376,195.45. Administrative disbursements for the month are $34,182.87 and for the year total $228,124.75. Current 2018 accounts receivable are $4,409,684. Our total income for the year is $1,872,908.79. Income since the 7/9/18 financial report was $67,961.53. Receipts came primarily from Otter Tail County ($396.26) for their 2018 first half tax proceeds, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency for the Otter Tail River Planning 319 Grant ($23,055.48), Wilkin County for the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Buffer Initiative Aid ($41,603.50). The balance of the income came from bank account interest ($2,366.69), Pitney Bowes sales tax reimbursement ($9.51), and office rentals ($525). The Board approved the payment of bills totaling $221,598.75.

- Noted that the BRRWD will hold their Annual Budget Hearing on Monday, August 27, 2018.

- Approved permits to Merle Nelson for pattern tiling in the NE¼, Section 28, Atherton Township, Wilkin County, with a main running west across the NW¼, outletting via gravity flow to the township ditch, then north for about 0.5 miles to Deerhorn Creek, subject to our standard tiling disclaimer; Scot Manthe to install a culvert/new approach off a township road to a storage unit facility in the NW¼, Section 7, Eglon Township, Clay County, subject to township approval to work within their road right-of-way (R/W); Parke Township to install one line of 15” dia. x 45’ centerline culvert in 86th AVE S and one line of 15” dia. x 20’ culvert in the Palya driveway off 86th AVE S in the SE¼, Section 15; Krystal Francis to move the existing approach/18” dia. culvert on the property line in the SE¼, Section 9, Hawley Township, Clay County, to the north so that it can be widened and shared with both property owners, subject to township approval to work within their road R/W; Magellan Midstream Partners to conduct pipeline maintenance (lowering) in the NE¼SE¼, Section 30, Prairie View Township, Wilkin County, adjacent to Wilkin County Ditch (C.D.) No. 43, subject to our standard utility disclaimer; Troy Larson to install pattern tile on about 35 acres on the west side of a waterway in the NW¼, Section 35, Akron Township, Wilkin County, outletting via a 10” dia. tile line to the east ditch of County Road No.
19/320th AVE where it will travel south 0.5 miles, then enter a natural waterway and tile another 10 acres in Section 35, outletting via a 6" dia. tile line to the creek on the east, traversing through the property, subject to our standard tiling disclaimer; and the City of Moorhead to construct a shared-use path and detention pond north of their 15th AVE N mill and overlay project, outletting to Clay C.D. No. 41 via a piped outlet with erosion control measures and an emergency spillway to the ditch system, subject to the pond berm elevation matching the ditch berm elevation. All permits are subject to the BRRWD's standard disclaimers and noted conditions. The City of Barnesville administratively withdrew their application to construct a dike near the airport off CSAH No. 52. The Board postponed action on permit applications for Terry Czichotzki and Shane Thompson, pending downstream landowner notifications.

- Discussed concerns associated with Clay C.D. No. 16 redetermination of benefits proceedings with a Highland Grove Township landowner. C.D. No. 16 outlets south to a natural waterway on the landowner's property, and he wants the BRRWD to clean the channel across his property to the Buffalo River. Minnesota Drainage Law, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources protected waters restrictions, and potential wetland impacts limit the BRRWD's ability to address his requests for work in a natural waterway. The redetermination of benefits hearing for C.D. No. 16 was held on 8/15/18 in the Hawley Community Center.

- Reviewed cross-section information and a timeline of the elevations regarding an ongoing water problem in Section 14, Hamden Township, Becker County, associated with a 2011 United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) proposed tile installation to lower an area wetland pool by 1' to alleviate a water problem on the neighboring cropland and restore a wetland on the Hamden National Wildlife Refuge. The report shows that the current water elevations have changed significantly since the USFWS allegedly broke a tile on their easement in about 2005. The information has been forwarded to the landowner and the Detroit Lakes USFWS office. BRRWD President Leitch suggested that given the information, the landowner should be able to address this problem without further BRRWD assistance.

- Noted that the Preliminary Hearing for Project No. 78, Clay/Wilkin Judicial Ditch No. 1 Improvement has been scheduled for August 30, 2018, at 7:00 PM in the BRRWD office in Barnesville.

- Noted that the Minnesota Department of Transportation agreed to mow the last 0.5 miles north of Tower Road along Trunk Highway No. 9, adjacent to the Manston Slough Restoration project in Wilkin County, in response to landowner concerns brought to the Board by Wilkin County Manager Catherine L. Affield.

- Noted that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) plans to mow the Nichols Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) site east of Barnesville this fall and then conduct a controlled burn on the site next spring. They also plan to address problems with the berm where there had been a muskrat infestation. Cattle are grazing the site for the first time in several years. The WRP is associated with Project No. 54, Whisky Creek Tributaries.

- Agreed to send a letter of interest to the Army Corps of Engineers (COE) to ask them to consider a Flood Risk Reduction Section 205 program for the City of Hawley's Phase 3 Buffalo River Flood Protection work for existing and future dikes to protect residential and business structures and sewer system. Under this program, the COE pays 100% of the study costs up to $100,000.

- Approved a proposal to work with BWSR to develop a Memorandum of Understanding to use Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program as means for easement acquisition for future restoration projects, starting with the proposed Whiskey Creek Restoration near Kent.
Adopted the Order for the redetermination of benefits for Becker C.D. No. 9 and a one-time $25,000 outlet fee for Project No. 64, LaBelle/Boyer Lakes Outlet, subject to a 30-day appeal period.

Approved a request from the Clay Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) for an additional $3,698 contribution to the Wyland Streambank Erosion project in the NE¼, Section 1, Glyndon Township. The NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program cost share for this project was $7,396, but their 2018 funding was not approved. The Clay SWCD contributed the balance of the shortfall.

Discussed the BRRWD's practice of contracting for staff and engineering services from Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI). BRRWD President Leitch feels there could be significant cost savings with hiring office staff in-house and encouraged the Board to retain an outside accounting firm to provide a comparison of HEI costs to potential in-house staff costs.

Noted that the four current Managers with terms expiring on August 31 have been reappointed by their respective Counties: Jay Leitch-Clay County, Troy Larson-Wilkin County, John Hanson-Becker County, and Peter Fjestad-Otter Tail County. The Managers took their Oaths and signed the documentation, which will be filed with the State of Minnesota, as required by law.

The Board of Managers, BRRWD, will hold their next regular meeting and annual budget hearing on Monday, August 27, 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.