"BRRWD Receives Legislative Update"

At their regular meeting held on June 10, 2019, at 7:00 PM, in Barnesville, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), received a summary of the 2019 Legislative Session funding allocations related to Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) programs from Pete Waller, Board Conservationist, BWSR. The general fund grants and programs appropriations for 2019-2021 biennium remained basically the same as 2018, at $15.5 million. BWSR will receive funding for three Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council recommended projects, including $2.3 million for Reinvest In Minnesota program for grassland restoration. The Clean Water Fund (CWF), also supported by the Legacy fund, will receive $138 million with nearly 90% for grants to local governments for conservation implementation projects, including the One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P), watershed-based funding grants, Conservation Drainage Management projects, and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Capacity Funding ($24 million) was also approved with each SWCD receiving $100,000 per year from the CWF for the biennium. The Legislature enacted several policy changes related to BWSR and local government units, including increasing the Watershed District Manager per diem rate from $75 to $125.

The Governor also signed a drainage bill, developed in accordance with the Drainage Work Group recommendations, that initiates three significant changes for Chapter 103E: improving the Ag Best Management Practices (BMP) Loan Program; improving Chapter 103E associated with incremental buffer strips, drainage system legal counsel, redetermination of benefits; and an alternative method in Chapter 103E for determining an equitable allocation of drainage system repair costs, based on relative runoff and sediment contributions. The BWSR competitive grant application process will be starting up soon, and the continuous CREP signup restarted June 3, which will be an important funding source for the BRRWD's Wolverton Creek and Stony Creek projects.

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 $2,581,724.57. Administrative disbursements this month equal $36,946.99, and for the year, $147,567.47. Current 2019 accounts receivable are $5,624,961.00. Total income this year is $1,724,747.29. Income received since the 5/13/19 meeting totaled $533,910.28: $465,011.36 from Wilkin County, $26,129.91 from Clay County, and $37,492.96 from Otter Tail County for 2019 1st half ditch/property tax proceeds; $284.38 from the Red River Watershed Management Board for 3rd quarter Mediation Project Team expenses; $4,766.67 from Midwest Bank for May interest, and $225 from Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI) for their monthly office rent. Harold J. Rotunda, Auditor, plans to attend the 6/24/19 Board meeting to present the 2018 audit report. The Board approved the payment of bills in the amount of $166,990.57.

- Discussed the Fargo-Moorhead Diversion Authority (DA) permit application. Managers Leitch, Anderson, Van Amburg, plus BRRWD Administrator Bruce Albright and Erik Jones, HEI, met with representatives from the DA, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Army Corps of Engineers (COE), and City of Moorhead on 6/5/19 in St. Paul to discuss the DNR's Diversion permit conditions. The DNR showed some flexibility regarding flood proofing options by classifying ringdikes and elevated structures as acceptable alternatives for eligible properties and suggested using the same buyout criteria that was used in Oxbow for all the property acquisitions in the upstream staging area. The DNR also agreed to take a look at the mitigating properties within the staging area on a case by case basis. The group discussed a draft document
regarding potential mitigation flexibility for structures located upstream of the southern embankment, including structure mitigation and new development within the Operating and the Maximum Pools.

- Approved permits to Paul Daugherty to install pattern tile in the W½SW¼, Section 27, Wolverton Township, Wilkin County, outletting to the west via a riprapped lift station to the County Road No. 30, subject to our standard tiling disclaimer; Minnesota Department of Transportation for an after-the-fact permit to abandon a field entrance with a failing 36” dia. on Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 9 in the SW¼SW¼, Section 18, Humboldt Township, Clay County, and to build a new entrance on 150th AVE S with a 24” dia. plastic pipe east of the existing 30” dia. culvert in T.H. No. 9 under 150th AVE S; and Spring Prairie HB, Inc. to install two 18” dia. culverts for access to a proposed fueling station and storage site in the NW¼, Section 13, Clay County, subject to township approval to work within their road R/W.

- Discussed the Project No. 27, Clay County Ditch No. 55 informational meeting held on 6/4/19 regarding possible ditch repairs. The Board agreed to postpone a decision regarding the repairs until the 6/24/19 Board meeting to review HEI repair options.

- Noted that Sellin Brothers, Inc. has about 1.5 miles of the channel excavation completed since they restarted construction on the Phase I, Wolverton Creek Restoration project this summer.

- Noted that the IWIP Policy Committee met on 5/29/19. The Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for June 19, 2019, 1:00-3:00 PM, and the next Policy Committee meeting is scheduled for 7/24/19.

- Noted that the Preliminary Resolution hearing for the proposed Stony Creek Restoration project is scheduled for Tuesday, June 25, 2019, at 7:00 PM in the BRRWD office.

- Noted that the public hearing for the BRRWD Rules update is scheduled for 7/2/19 with the final Rules adoption to take place at the 7/8/19 Board meeting.

The Board of Managers, BRRWD, will hold their next meeting on Monday, June 24, 2019, 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.