"County Boards Consider BRRWD 2020 Tax Petitions"

At their meeting held on 10/15/19 at 7:00 PM in Barnesville, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), discussed the Clay County Board of Commissioners' decision not to approve two petitions for the BRRWD's 2020 general district-wide tax levies. According to Minnesota Statutes Annotated 103D.905, Sub. 3, the BRRWD has the authority to levy an ad valorem tax based on a percentage of the District's total estimated market value, initiated by petition from a political subdivision within the District to pay for projects and programs of "common benefit" to the Watershed District. For the past several years, Clay County had approved the required petitions, but this year, the Commissioners cited the BRRWD's denial of the Fargo-Moorhead Diversion Authority's permit and the Board's contest of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Diversion permit as reasons to deny their support. Following Clay County's decision, Managers and Staff attended the 10/15/19 Wilkin County Board of Commissioners’ meeting, where the County Board unanimously approved the BRRWD's 2020 petitions. 

Other business included:

- Reviewed the BRRWD's monthly financial statements, including the project account balance sheet, administrative disbursements, summary of income, and accounts receivable. Cash on hand is $3,232,907.52. Administrative disbursements this month equal $31,343.47, and for the year, total $258,228.45. Accounts Receivables currently total $4,579,915. Total income this year is $4,506,201.32. Income received since the 9/9/19 meeting totaled $59,953.11, including $16,546 from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to close out the Otter Tail River Planning 319 grant and $1,973.17 for the Upper Buffalo River 319 grant; $33,136.50 from Wilkin County for a Buffer Initiative Aid payment, $1,383.60 from landowner payments for the Section 27, Manston Township, waterway repair. The remainder of the income came from Midwest Bank for August interest ($6,688.84) and Houston Engineering, Inc. for their monthly office rent ($225). The Board approved payment of the bills, totaling $477,284.75.

- Approved a request from a landowner to install a field approach/crossing off Clay County Road No. 12 on Clay County Ditch (C.D.) No. 9 as an emergency measure to complete his beet harvest in the N½, Section 6, Elmwood Township, Clay County. The landowner will remove the temporary crossing after beet harvest, weather permitting, and work with the BRRWD next spring to install a permanent structure at the same location.

- Approved permits to: Hunt Electric Corporation to install four solar community gardens at various locations in Flowing and Spring Prairie Townships, including access roads and/or culverts off Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 9, subject to our standard utility disclaimer, and County and State permission to work within their road Right-of-way (R/W); Wilkin County Highway Department to modify the elevation of a culvert in Foxhome and regrade a ditch to drain water east to Wilkin C.D. No. 37 along T.H. No. 210; Wilkin Soil and Water Conservation District to replace an existing 18” dia. culvert in the SW¼NW¼, Section 20, Nordick Township, Wilkin County, with a new 36” dia. pipe to repair field erosion, subject to County approval to work within their road R/W.

- Discussed several miscellaneous complaints and investigations throughout the District and agreed to work with the landowners to find timely solutions to their concerns as time and staff resources permit.

- Approved Pay Request No. 3 in the amount of $132,875.55 for Dennis Drewes, Inc. for their work on Project No. 78, Clay/Wilkin Judicial Ditch No. 1-Improvement.

- Approved Pay Request No. 9 for Sellin Brothers, Inc. in the amount of $174,672.13 for their work on Project No. 79, Wolverton Creek Restoration.
• Approved a controlled burn for the Elkton Township Wetland Restoration site in 2020 when conditions allow. The site has been mowed for the past several years, but mowing isn’t an option this fall, given the wet conditions. A controlled burn operation will also address weed infestation and stimulate native grass growth. Prairie Restorations, Inc. provided a cost estimate of approximately $6,000.

• Agreed to schedule a second landowner informational meeting in early 2020 to review the decision to move forward with the proposed Wilkin C.D. No. 27 Retrofit project.

• Noted that a One Watershed, One Plan Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for 10/23/19 in Barnesville.

The Board of Managers, BRRWD, will hold their next regular meeting on Monday, October 28, 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.