"BRRWD Advances Whiskey Creek Project"

At their regular meeting held on January 27, 2020, at 7:00 PM in Barnesville, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), approved a proposal to advance the development of the Whiskey Creek Restoration Project near Kent, MN, following Minnesota Statutes Annotated 103D.605, Project Constructed with Government Aid or as Part of Plan. According to this statute, if the project is paid for in whole or in part by the state or federal government, the BRRWD doesn't need to hold a preliminary resolution hearing, which will speed up the development process. Last year, the Wilkin Soil and Water Conservation District received a $320,000 Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources Clean Water Fund grant for field inlet installations along the Whiskey Creek channel. The proposed project was also awarded a 319 Small Watershed Grant last year from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, which could provide approximately $250,000 every four years for up to four funding cycles. The Natural Resources Conservation Service also is considering a National Water Quality Initiative grant program for the Whiskey Creek watershed ($2 million). The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also has the project on their stream restoration list ($5.3 million). The next steps for project development could include submitting the DNR permit application, completing the Environmental Assessment Worksheet process, establishing a watershed management district to provide a local funding source, complete easement drawings/exhibits, developing a Memorandum of Understanding with the agencies involved in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, scheduling a final hearing, starting the landowner easement acquisition process, and finally, advertising for phased construction bids with work potentially beginning in August 2020.

Other business included:

- Reviewed the BRRWD's financial status. Cash on hand is $2,592,279.77. Total income this year is $238,383.91. Income since the 1/13/20 meeting totals $33,001.09, including delinquent county property/ditch tax payments from Becker ($2,712.09), Otter Tail ($1,734.26), and Wilkin ($9,401.72); Buffer Initiative Aid payment from Becker County ($15,007); and $1,000 from the North Dakota State University Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Grant program. The Board approved payment of the bills, totaling $40,347.20.

- Approved permits to Scott Anderson to lower culverts and clean the north ditch of 200th ST S along the Clay/Wilkin County line in Section 32, Humboldt Township, subject to conditions set by the downstream landowner and the Township's permission to work within their road right-of-way; the Clay County Highway Department to remove existing bituminous pavement on County Road (C.R.) No. 1, grade the road to new elevations and specifications, and install a gravel surface in Sections 6 and 7, Oakport Township; City of Moorhead to mill and overlay 12th AVE S from 4th ST S to 20th ST S in Section 16, Moorhead Township, replace existing drainage structures as needed, and reconstruct 12th AVE S from 20th ST S to Main AVE SE with catch basins and storm pipes; Shawn Norman to pattern tile 310 acres in the SE¼ and the SW¼, Section 15, Manston Township, Wilkin County, outletting via an existing tile system to Project No. 56, Manston Slough; and the Clay County Highway Department to replace an existing bridge in the NE¼, Section 19, Barnesville Township, in C.R. No. 21 over County Ditch (C.D.) No. 34 with two lines of 14’ x 8’ reinforced box culvert with end sections and minor grading.

- Approved a 50/50 cost share proposal from Clay County for County State Aid Highway (CSAH) No. 18 drainage improvements in the SE¼, Section 27, Oakport Township, estimated to cost between $70,000-$80,000. The Highway Department expects to handle most of the ditch work and conduct the bidding process.
Approved a proposal to clear brush and small trees on Whiskey Creek from the west line of Section 14, Connelly Township, Wilkin County, east to the C.D. Nos. 1C/34 outlet. JBX LLC submitted a quote of $6,075 for the maintenance work. The costs will be split between the two ditch systems.

Approved a proposal from William Nichol Excavating, Inc. to remove dead fall and debris from Whisky Creek in Section 23, Barnesville Township, west of the City of Barnesville downstream of CSAH No. 2 along the Barnesville Rod and Gun Club property. Staff will work with the affected landowners to gain access to the work site.

Discussed the details of the Houston Engineering, Inc. 2020-2022 engineering consultant contract the Board recently awarded and signed at the 1/13/20 annual meeting.

Approved a $12,500 contribution to the Army Corps of Engineers for an update of the Red River Basin Feasibility Study.

Noted that the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts Legislative Breakfast and Day At The Capitol event is scheduled for March 18-19, 2020, at the Double Tree by Hilton Hotel Downtown, St. Paul.

The Board of Managers, BRRWD, will hold their next regular meeting on Monday, February 10, 2020, 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.