"BRRWD Approves Draft 1W1P"

At their regular meeting held on February 10, 2020, at 7:00 PM in Barnesville, the Board of Managers, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), reviewed a Power Point presentation regarding the draft status of the One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P). After discussion about how the Plan will be implemented, the Board voted to approve the draft. Once the 1W1P Policy Committee reviews and approves the Plan, it will be distributed for a 60-day notification period to local governments and agencies, followed by a public hearing. The Plan will then be submitted to the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Northern Planning Committee, who will make a recommendation to the full BWSR Board. After BWSR's formal adoption, a new local committee will be formed to implement the Plan. As one of BWSR's approved 1W1P efforts, the BRRWD is working with local government agencies from Becker, Clay, Wilkin, and Otter Tail Counties, local government officials, and regular citizens to create a single plan for the three watersheds within the BRRWD: the Red River, Otter Tail River, and the Buffalo River. Cooperation throughout multiple, connected jurisdictions is important because water management in one county can affect the waters of all the other counties. Combining multiple water planning efforts will create a more efficient and cooperative plan for water management. The Plan will include goals and implementation actions that are prioritized and targeted on a watershed basis with measurable results, instead of the present individual plans that are restricted to political boundaries.

Other business included:

- Reviewed the BRRWD's monthly financial statements, including the project account balance sheet, administrative disbursements, accounts receivable, and summary of income. Cash on hand is $2,581,048.51. Administrative disbursements this month equal $53,725.13, and for the year, total the same. 2020 Accounts Receivable total $5,571,184. Total income this year is $264,711.41. Income received since the 1/13/20 meeting totaled $59,328.59, including delinquent county property/ditch tax payments from Clay ($14,989.45), Becker ($6,450.56), Otter Tail ($1,734.26), and Wilkin ($12,547.74); Becker County for a Buffer Initiative Aid payment ($15,007); Audubon Township for their share of a culvert repair ($2,500), and $1,000 from the North Dakota State University for the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Grant program. The remainder of the income came from Midwest Bank for January interest ($4,874.58) and Houston Engineering, Inc. for their monthly office rent ($225). The Board approved payment of the bills totaling $133,078.67.

- Signed an agreement with three other parties to split the estimated $6,156 to repair the former Galaxie Supper Club driveway/culvert.

- Received an update on the status of the Stony Creek Water Resource Project. The office staff is updating the easement options and will be sending them out to the affected landowners in the next few days. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources plans to forward the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Grant paperwork for the Board's signature in the near future. Once the landowner easement options are acquired and the Engineer's Report is filed, the Board will schedule the Final Hearing where funding options will be finalized.

- Approved a motion to proceed with the hearing process for the Hamden Slough Refuge wetland modification project. As part of their project, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) plans to raise the Homstad wetland 1 foot above the "as-built" elevation, which involves Becker County Ditch (C.D.) No. 15. The USFWS will forward a petition for the impoundment of water on the county ditch system to the BRRWD. The Board set a tentative hearing date of March 24, 2020.
• Approved the preliminary budget and project development steps for the Whiskey Creek Restoration project near Kent, subject to the Final Hearing.

• Scheduled ditch buffer hearings for Clay C.D. Nos. 20, 22, 23, 28, and 51 on Thursday, March 5, 2020, at 7:00 PM in Barnesville. This is just the first in a series of ditch hearings to be held in accordance with the 2015 State Buffer Law.

• Discussed changes to the cost estimate of the Army Corps of Engineers (COE) Section 1135 Study for the Lower Otter Tail River Revised Project Management Plan. The original 2017 estimate was $340,000 with the COE paying the first $100,000 and the COE and the BRRWD splitting the remainder 50/50. The new cost estimate has risen to $753,749 with the BRRWD's share now at $326,912.50. The Board decided to delay signing the agreement until more Managers were present to discuss the revisions.

The Board of Managers, BRRWD, will hold their next regular meeting on Monday, February 24, 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.