

BUFFALO-RED RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

BARNESVILLE, MINNESOTA 56514

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10 Year Comprehensive Plan Update Central Planning Region Public Input Meeting Hildebrand Hall, Assumption Catholic Church, Barnesville, MN July 19, 2007

In attendance were: Bruce E. Albright, Administrator, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) and Houston Engineering, Inc. (H.E.); Erik S. Jones, Engineer, H.E.; Roger G. Ellefson, Curtis M. Nelson, and E. Robert Olson, Managers, BRRWD; Brian Dwight, Board Conservationist, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR); Steve Hofstad, Jack Frederick, and Henry VanOffelen, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC); Mark Carr, Arvid Thompson, Lauren Peterson, Eddie Bernhardson, Kenneth Schellack, Arnold Swenson, and Alvin Hansen, Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC); Matt Mecklenburg, The Nature Conservancy (TNC); and landowners James Schreiner, Eileen Emerson, Barb Ronsberg, Gary Smith, Dennis Ouren, Iner Bredeson, Peter Thompson, Gary Bergan, Brian K. Halverson, Shirley Peterson, Terry Thomason, Byron Ogren, Jack Johnson, Dorothy Ronsberg, Stuart Shulstad, Patty McGowan, Sherwood Peterson, Judy Shulstad, Chuck Anderson, Frank Schindler, Janet Holt, Joseph Kieselbach, Keith Langseth, Allan K. Johnson, Tom Langseth, and Dan Langseth.

7:30 PM – **Welcome and Introductions** – *Bruce Albright, BRRWD Administrator*

Albright opened the meeting at 7:30 PM. He welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. He discussed the planning process, which is being done in accordance with the Mediation Agreement, adopted in 1998. To date, the BRRWD has completed two overall plans, most recently in April 1998. In the past, the Board of Managers, BRRWD, and their staff primarily did those planning efforts. The next generation of plans will include more public participation. The process started several years ago with the development of a new hydrologic model for the BRRWD. We've also been working with agencies on the natural resource enhancement (nre) assessment. The deadline for plan completion is 12/31/08. The BWSR is funding 50% of the effort. We intend to wrap up the regional planning meetings in July. Later this fall, we'll convene TAC and CAC meetings to look at solutions for the problems identified at the Regional level by the landowners. Albright said that the Board of Managers, BRRWD, meets every two weeks on the second and fourth Monday of each month at 8:00 PM in their office, which is located in the old bank building in downtown Barnesville. The Managers are appointed by their respective county commissioners. Managers VanAmburg and Hanson could not attend tonight as they are traveling on vacation. The District was formed in 1976, following the 1975 summer flood when people in the area felt that a Watershed District was needed to address the serious flooding problems that were occurring. The BRRWD adopted Rules and Regulations on June 1, 1979. Albright said the BRRWD also had a new Website at www.brrwd.org where the public can find more information. He also said there's a booth and brochures on the table, which discuss the BRRWD, as well as copies of our Rules.

7:45 PM – Introduction to the Planning Regions and General Description of the Central Planning Region – Bruce Albright, BRRWD Administrator.

Albright said due to a technical problem, we will not be able to view the Power Point presentation, which was prepared for tonight's meeting. However, he will refer to the maps displayed around the room, which describes the Central Planning Region. The District was broken down into seven different planning regions, which have different resource needs/goals and objectives. A watershed based approach was used to define the planning regions. We have the Northern, Moorhead, Western, Southern, Mainstem, Lakes, and Central Regions. The Central Planning Region is 209,000 acres, or approximately 327 square miles (sq. mi.). The population is about 4,700 people. Regarding land use, 76% of the area is cultivated, 7% is grassland, and 6% is deciduous forest. The area includes the South Branch of the Buffalo River and Whisky, Stony, Spring, and Hay Creeks, north of Barnesville. The City of Barnesville is located in this planning region. It extends east to the eastern border of the BRRWD. Most of the floodplain areas in this region are along the South Branch of the Buffalo River. Another one of the maps shows the area land use, which as previously discussed, is primarily agricultural. Another map shows the rare endangered species found within this planning region. Most of these areas are along the beach ridge north of Barnesville.

8:00 PM – Hydrology of the Central Planning Region – Erik Jones, BRRWD Engineer

Jones said that H.E. is working on a new hydrologic model for the entire BRRWD. This area contains a number of legal drainage systems, which lie in the flatter part of the planning region. Most of these ditches were installed back in the early 1900s to improve drainage and handle water coming off from the beach ridge. The ditch systems are Clay County Ditch No. 34 (Whisky Creek), Clay County Ditch No. 31 (Stony Creek), and Clay County Ditch No. 17 (Hay Creek). Other ditch systems in the area include Clay County Ditch Nos. 12, 21, 54, 55, and 58. The BRRWD did a number of detention projects back in the 1980s. Within this region, they include Hay Creek Detention, Stony Creek Detention, and Spring Creek Detention. Most recently, the BRRWD completed Project No. 54, Whisky Creek Tributaries, which includes an impoundment site, 800 acres of wetland restorations through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), off-channel levees, diking to control Stony Creek overflow, farmstead ringdike, and channel improvements. Since that project was built, it appears that it is serving the area as intended. The BRRWD is always looking for areas where we can do wetland restorations, off-channel storage, etc. Landowners on the downstream ends of Whisky, Stony, and Hay Creeks continue to express concerns regarding flooding, and the best way to address those concerns would be to incorporate more storage.

8:30 PM – BRRWD Projects and FDR Problem Areas in the Central Planning Region – Bruce Albright, BRRWD Administrator

Albright said that because the Central Planning Region is centered around the City of Barnesville, the Board of Managers, BRRWD, is very familiar with a number of problems in this area. Landowners have asked for a redetermination of benefits on Clay County Ditch Nos. 17 (Hay Creek) and 31 (Stony Creek). Most likely if a redetermination were conducted, the benefit areas would extend back to the eastern part of the district. In 1999, we worked on the Turtle Lake project to alleviate a highwater situation that was flooding homes around the lake. The outlet for Turtle Lake is eventually Hay Creek. That project has been operated annually since constructed to address high water problems. Currently, the BRRWD is working on a potential outlet for Grove Lake in northwestern Otter Tail County. Two informational meetings have been held to date, and we're now working with landowners around Maple

Lake to see if we can improve their outlet. Grove Lake would drain into Maple Lake. Landowners on Clay County Ditch Nos. 17 and 31 would like to see the ditch systems improved; however, there would be downstream concerns if those projects were done to speed up the flow of water. Since the ditches were built in the early 1900s, they are probably inadequate for today's water flows. We've been in a wet cycle, which started in 1993, and we continue to record more annual precipitation than normal. There's an area in Barnesville Township south of the City of Barnesville that has had historic flooding/drainage problems along C.R. 51. The City of Barnesville needs to complete their Comprehensive Drainage Plan in accordance with the BRRWD Rules. The BRRWD is currently working with TNC on a potential retention holding area in the E½, Section 28, Riverton Township. The Final Hearing for that project will be held on 8/14/07 at 8:00 PM in the Glyndon Community Center. In 2006, the BRRWD developed Clay County Ditch No. 68, which runs along the west side of the City of Glyndon. Albright pointed out that it's important to understand that most everything the BRRWD does has a cause and effect. If we improve drainage an area, somebody downstream complains about getting the water faster. The role of the Board of Managers, BRRWD, is to take a "big picture look" at ways to develop projects that incorporate multiple benefits. Albright felt the Whisky Creek Tributaries project was a good example. Initially, the landowners wanted to develop laterals to Clay County Ditch No. 34. Downstream landowners expressed concerns about the additional drainage. The project was given to the Mediation Project Team (PT), who developed a multipurpose project that included both flood damage reduction (fdr) and nre. Landowners on Whisky Creek continue to express concerns about downstream flooding. Back in the 1980s, the BRRWD looked at an impoundment site east of Barnesville. Due to poor soils and the fact that the City of Barnesville and Interstate-94 (I-94) were downstream of the potential site, the dam would have been a high hazard dam, which would have been very expensive to build. However, there has to be other areas east of County State Aid Highway (CSAH) No. 31 that have potential to hold back water. Back in the 1980s, multiple impoundment sites were proposed for Hay and Stony Creeks.

**8:45 PM – Natural Resource Enhancement Opportunities in the Central Planning Region–
*Henry VanOffelen, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA)***

VanOffelen has worked with a number of Watershed Districts in the Red River Valley regarding the nre assessment. He would like to see improved wildlife habitat. The best place to do this is in areas where there are already large blocks of grassland. He would also like to see improved water quality. The best way to accomplish this is by installing bufferstrips. Some of their goals and objectives include improve existing hydrologic conditions in watercourses, reestablish the habitat corridor along the South Branch of the Buffalo River, reduce erosion and resulting sedimentation in watercourses, grassland/wetland protection and enhancement east of Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 9, create impoundments for migratory bird habitats, protect existing high quality natural resource features, protect existing shoreline habitats, and improve water quality. Some alternatives for nre goals include improved fish and wildlife habitat, historic upland features, and recreation. VanOffelen said the beach ridge area east of T.H. 9 is a prime area for protecting existing high quality natural resource features. Recreation opportunities include wildlife viewing/birding, hunting, and education. VanOffelen commented that by incorporating nre features into an fdr project, it can sometimes bring additional money to the table to help get the multipurpose project constructed. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has done a habitat evaluation of priority areas. In essence, their modeling looked at adding blocks of habitat to those areas that already exist. MCEA is also concerned about turbidity and Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). Bufferstrips are a good way to improve water quality. They also help get lands out of the floodplain, which may be marginal for agricultural production. VanOffelen felt flood control impoundments could be constructed to incorporate

multipurpose features. An audience member questioned the value of bufferstrips. VanOffelen said they capture the sediment and don't allow it to flow into the watercourse. They also provide wildlife habitat. Sherwood Peterson questioned the best way to establish bufferstrips. So much of the problem lately has been the heavy rainfalls we've received. The water runs off the land so fast that it takes the soil with it. VanOffelen said that increasing the bufferstrip width helps control this erosion. Albright commented that landowners could work with the Clay SWCD. There are a number of programs that their office works with, such as the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM), Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP), the Environmental Quality Initiatives Program (EQIP), and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) II. One of their mottos is "Farm the best, and buffer the rest."

9:00 PM – **Water Quality Issues in the Central Planning Region** – *Jack Frederick, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)*

Frederick distributed a handout, entitled "Impaired Waters." The assessment of Minnesota's rivers, streams, and lakes is tied to the goals of the 1972 Clean Water Act (CWA) for restoring and protecting the ecological integrity of America's waters. One CWA strategy used to meet these goals is identifying, listing, and restoring "impaired waters". The CWA requires states to assign designated uses to water and develop standards to protect those uses, monitor and assess their waters, identify pollutant sources and the reductions needed to achieve standards for waters that do not meet standards, and develop a plan to implement restoration activities. CWA requires states to adopt water quality standards to protect waters from pollution. These standards define how much of a pollutant can be in a water and still allow it to meet designated uses, such as drinking water, fishing, swimming, irrigation, or industrial purposes. The assessment and listing process involves dozens of agency staff, other state agencies, and local partners. The goal of this effort is to use the best data and science to assess the condition of Minnesota's water resources. The first step in identifying impaired waters involves collecting all of the monitoring data available. Once the available data is checked for accuracy and entered into a database, scientists analyze the data to identify potential water impairments. CWA requirements do not stop with the approval of the impaired waters list. States are also required to prepare TMDL studies for every impairment on the list. A TMDL defines the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can receive and still meet standards. TMDLs also set limits and reduction goals for restoring impaired waters so they meet standards.

Frederick said river reaches that cannot sustain their intended use or meet water quality standards are impaired due to: low dissolved oxygen, fish or invertebrate IBIs, ammonia, chlorides, fecal coliform, pH, turbidity, temperature, or toxics, which include mercury/PCBs. The handout includes a list of Red River basin impaired waters as of 2006. There are a number of impaired reaches within the BRRWD, including the Red River of the North, Stony Creek and the Buffalo River. For the Red River basin, there are currently 33 impaired reaches on the 2006 list. Nine are impaired for turbidity, eighteen are impaired for mercury/PCBs with fish consumption advisories, two are impaired for fish IBIs, one for ammonia, and two for fecal coliform. Turbidity is the most prevalent non-toxic impairment in the watershed. Turbidity is caused by suspended particles in the water, making it appear cloudy or muddy. Turbidity limits biological processes such as photosynthesis. It also causes excessive material in streams, which clogs fish gills, smothers fish nurseries and feeding areas. Excessive turbidity also causes taste and odor issues for drinking water. Soil particles transport nutrients that cause eutrophication in lakes and hypoxic waters, and turbidity can reduce the recreational usage of a particular resource. Non-point sources of turbidity include wind and water erosion, as well as construction activities. The handout also includes a number of sampling sites in the Red River basin. The MPCA standard for turbidity is 25 NTUs. Some of the collected samples are as high as 1,000

NTUs. Most of the pollutants are related to runoff events, where they are higher. Frederick commented that every two years, the MPCA updates their Impaired Waters list. Jack Johnson questioned how much our water quality has changed in the last 50 years. Frederick said there was not much sampling done back then, but he expected that it has probably gotten worse. Frederick did feel that some of our standards might be set too low. For example, for turbidity, the statewide standard is 25 NTUs. He didn't feel it was fair to compare a trout stream draining into Lake Superior north of Duluth to one located in the Red River Valley. Frederick felt the biggest cause of turbidity was drainage from the agricultural lands. Jack Johnson felt that we've improved water quality significantly in the last 15 years due to new farming practices. Another audience member commented that he also felt that water has probably gotten better. Twenty-five years ago, most farms had cattle, where they spread manure all winter on top of the snow. Cattle waded in wetlands, rivers, and lakes. Someone questioned what the solution was to addressing the turbidity problem. Frederick commented that we need more grassed bufferstrips.

9:15 PM – **Break.** Albright noted where the rest rooms were located. He gave the group about a 15 minute break. Then the audience will start to fill out the survey questionnaires and identify areas of concerns on maps located on the tables. He also said that attendees were invited to help themselves to the refreshments. He urged the participants to sign the attendance sheet.

9:30 PM – **Identification of FDR and NRE Issues - Small Group Workshop-** *Bruce Albright, BRRWD Administrator*

Albright said that now was the time for the attendees to answer the survey questionnaires, as well as noting on the maps where they feel problem areas are located, or have ideas for fdr or nre projects. There are several survey questionnaires. Return envelopes are available on the table if landowners wish to take the survey home and mail it back to the BRRWD office. Patty McGowan felt one of her concerns was that the urban areas needed more help from the Watershed District to address problems. She lives on Whisky Creek in Barnesville. There are bank stabilization issues, beaver problems, and weeds. She has been trying to cut the buckthorn growing along Whisky Creek on her property, but it just grows back. McGowan said she is familiar with the turbidity issues, as she watches fish in Whisky Creek, and can see the amount of sediment that is coming down the waterway. Her primary goal for attending tonight's meeting was to gather more information about the issues and problems addressed by the BRRWD.

9:45 PM – **Reports from the Small Groups**

Albright thanked the audience for filling out the questionnaires and attending tonight's meeting. As noted earlier, the next step will be for the BRRWD to take all of the information from the surveys and maps and compile it so that the TAC/CAC committees can start to look at solutions to address the concerns. Later this winter, the BRRWD intends to hold a number of regional meetings to discuss the proposed solutions. All landowners in attendance will be mailed notice of that meeting.

The Central Region RWMP planning meeting was adjourned at 9:50 PM.

Respectfully prepared and submitted by

Bruce E. Albright, BRRWD Administrator