



**BUFFALO – RED RIVER  
WATERSHED DISTRICT**



# **2021**

# **ANNUAL REPORT**



**Buffalo-Red River Watershed District**

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Office Hours:

Monday—Thursday 8:00 AM—4:30 PM

Friday 8:00 AM—2:30 PM

# Buffalo-Red River Watershed District

## History

BRRWD was established on August 31, 1960 and originally named South Buffalo Watershed District. The District encompassed approximately 344 square miles in Clay, Otter Tail, and Wilkin Counties (primarily the South Branch of the Buffalo River watershed). Following a severe summer flood in 1975, it became apparent that the District needed to include all land contributing runoff to the Buffalo River to address flooding in the watershed. By Order on September 17, 1976, the State of Minnesota expanded the District and changed the name to Buffalo-Red River Watershed District. The Order expanded the representation on the Board of Managers to five Managers. In 2011, Wilkin and Otter Tail Counties petitioned BWSR to expand BRRWD to include lands between the south border of BRRWD and Bois de Sioux Watershed District. The State of Minnesota expanded the BRRWD to its current size by Order on April 25, 2012. The Order expanded the representation on the Board to include seven Managers: three from Clay County, two from Wilkin County, one from Becker County, and one from Otter Tail County.



## Our District

Today, BRRWD covers an area of approximately 1,780 square miles in Clay, Becker, Otter Tail, and Wilkin Counties. The principal watercourse is the Buffalo River, located in parts of Becker and Clay Counties. The South Branch of the Buffalo River is a tributary to the Buffalo River in parts of Clay, Wilkin, and Otter Tail Counties. Tributaries to the South Branch include Stony Creek, Hay Creek, Whiskey Creek, and Deerhorn Creek. Other major tributaries to the Buffalo River include Hay Creek, east of Hawley, and Becker C.D. No. 15, north of Audubon. Direct tributaries to the Red River of the North include Wolverton Creek in Wilkin and Clay Counties; Whiskey Creek near Kent, MN, in Wilkin County; and the Otter Tail River, downstream of Orwell Dam to Breckenridge, MN, in Otter Tail and Wilkin Counties. Becker County, and one from Otter Tail County.



Buffalo-Red River Watershed District is committed to serving the residents of the District to provide efficient management of our water resources.

## Mission Statement

To alleviate flooding and to manage water resources of the District in a manner that best protects this valuable resource



## Goals

- Reduce or alleviate damage caused by floodwaters.
- Administer and maintain drainage systems.
- Develop programs and projects that will help to sustain an adequate supply of high quality surface and groundwater for public and private use.
- Protect and/or improve water quality of the surface and groundwater resources.
- Cooperate and support viable projects that have the purpose of reducing erosion.
- Actively pursue a program of erosion control and sediment management within all ditch systems.
- Promote maintenance of biotic diversity.
- Incorporate recreational opportunities into District projects whenever feasible.
- Maximize potential cooperative opportunities available with all government levels.
- Endeavor to keep all residents informed of its duties, authorities, activities, and projects.
- Endeavor to inform and educate residents about water and soil resource issues and the importance of protecting these crucial resources.





# 2021 in Review

## January

- Glyndon East Tributary Restoration—Engineer's Report accepted.
- South Branch Buffalo River Restoration—Received \$300,000 Clean Water Fund Grant through Board of Water and Soil Resources.
- Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan—Became fiscal agent for \$1,296,838 of watershed based funding through Board of Water and Soil Resources.

## February

- South Branch Buffalo River Restoration—Engineer's Report accepted.

## March

- Clay County Ditch No. 10—Approved repairs with estimated cost of \$135,000 in Sections 15 and 17, Morken Township.
- Whiskey Creek Enhancement Project—Approved contributing up to 20% of total project cost to be raised by district-wide general levy.
- Clay County Ditch Nos. 5, 10, 59, 35—Acquired right-of-way.
- Conditions for Tiling Permits—Revised.

## April

- Whiskey Creek Enhancement Project—Approved water management district; established project.
- Clay County Ditch Nos. 2, 3, 35, 39—Acquired right-of-way.

## May

- Clay County Ditch Nos. 12, 21, 55, 58, 59—Acquired right-of-way.
- Clay County Ditch No. 3—Approve repairs with estimated cost of \$81,282 in Section 8 Moland Township.

## June

- Whiskey Creek Enhancement Project—Hired Ehlert Excavating, Inc. to complete Phase 1 of project.
- Glyndon East Tributary—Completed Environmental Assessment Worksheet.

## July

- Glyndon East Tributary—Authorized Archeological Survey.

## August

- South Branch Buffalo River Restoration—Approved contributing up to 25% of Clean Water Fund cost-share to be raised by district wide general levy.
- Silver Lake Outlet Modification—Approved contributing up to 10% Conservation Partners Legacy grant match to be raised by district wide general levy.
- 2022 Budget Hearing.

## September

- Wolverton Creek Outlet Grade Control Project—Hired LaFreniere Construction LLC to complete installation of rock riffles near Wolverton Creek outlet.
- Stony Creek Water Resource Management Project—Accepted \$320,000 from Flood Hazard Mitigation Program with 50% match.
- South Branch Buffalo River Restoration—Approved Environmental Assessment Worksheet.
- Upper Buffalo River Restoration—Approve Environmental Assessment Worksheet.

## October

- Wilkin County Ditch No. 44/South Branch Buffalo River Restoration—Approved petition to impound, reroute, divert, and partial abandonment of Wilkin County Ditch No. 44 for South Branch Buffalo River Restoration.

## November

- Clay County Ditch No. 16—Approved repairs with estimated cost of \$42,500 in Sections 20, 21, 22, 29, and 30, Highland Grove Township.
- Turtle Lake Outlet—Authorized staff to hold informational meeting regarding alternatives to siphon systems.

## December

- Clay/Wilkin J.D. 1—Approved repairs estimated to cost \$25,000 in Section 25, Holy Cross Township and Section 29, 30, and 31 Alliance Township, Clay County and Section 18, Deerhorn Township, Wilkin County.
- Silver Lake Outlet Modification—Received \$230,000 Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program.



# Project Highlights

## Wolverton Creek Restoration Project

Wolverton Creek is a 23.5-mile long tributary to the Red River of the North, with 8.2 miles of the stream in Clay County and 15.3 miles in Wilkin County. The watershed is approximately 104 square miles and is located within Holy Cross and Alliance Townships of Clay County and Wolverton, Deerhorn, Roberts, and Mitchell Townships of Wilkin County.

BRRWD partnered with Clay and Wilkin SWCDs to reduce erosion and sedimentation in Wolverton Creek. Between 2006 and 2009, the outlet reach of Wolverton Creek downstream of T.H. No. 75 was restored through the installation of a series of rock riffles, vegetative buffers, and sediment BMPs. The outlet project was expanded in 2017 to include the installation of vegetative buffers, erosion control, and sediment BMPs on all legal drainage systems draining into Wolverton Creek.



Phase 1 of construction was completed in 2020, and Phase 2 was completed in 2021. Land was acquired using MN Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and BRRWD permanent conservation easements. In 2021, BRRWD continued to finalize easement acquisition.

Wolverton Creek Restoration Project will improve wildlife habitat, increase wildlife habitat connectivity, improve water quality, reduce sediment loading, and reduce occurrence and magnitude of flood damages to agricultural fields.

## Whiskey Creek Enhancement Project

Whiskey Creek, a tributary of the Red River of the North, is located in Wilkin County, MN. The creek is one of many natural waterways within the BRRWD that has poor water quality due to agricultural practices and channel bank erosion. The Whiskey Creek Enhancement Project is expected to be a multi-phase project, restoring the channel in Sections 5, 8, 9, 10, and 15, Connelly Township, Sections 19, 30, 31, and 32, Nordick Township, and Sections 13 and 24 McCauleyville Township, Wilkin County.

A hearing was held on April 7, 2021 to establish the Whiskey Creek Enhancement restoration as a watershed project. Board of Managers approved the project Findings and Order on April 26, 2021. BRRWD acquired temporary construction easements for Phase 1. Phase 1 of construction was completed in 2021 with Phase 2 expected to commence in 2022.

The Whiskey Creek Enhancement Project will improve water quality, promote stable stream conditions, improve aquatic and wildlife habitat, and provide significant flood damage reduction. .





# Project Highlights

## South Branch Buffalo River Restoration Project

The South Branch Buffalo River is a tributary to the Buffalo River, located in Wilkin and Clay Counties. Phase 1 of the South Branch Buffalo River Restoration is located in Sections 9, 10, and 11, Manston Township, Wilkin County. The project has a subwatershed of approximately 27 square miles.

There are two legal public drainage ditches located within the South Branch Buffalo River—Phase 1 subwatershed: Wilkin County Ditch No. 44 Lateral A and Wilkin County Ditch No. 44 Lateral B.

Phase 1 of the project will reroute Wilkin County Ditch No. 44 Lateral A in Sections 9, 10, and 11, Manston Township back into the historic channel.



In 2021, Board of Managers accepted the Engineer's Report, began acquiring project funding, and completed the Environmental Assessment Worksheet. Construction is expected to commence in 2022.

## Glyndon East Tributary

The Glyndon East Tributary is a tributary to the Buffalo River located in Clay County. The Glyndon East Tributary subwatershed is approximately 9.5 square miles. The stream has a total length of 9.2 river miles starting at MN State Highway 9 and extending downstream to the Buffalo River.

Project proposes to improve channel conveyance for agricultural drainage and lagoon discharge from the City of Glyndon, improve water quality, restore conveyance through historic meanders, and improve wildlife habitat.

In 2021, Board of Managers accepted the Engineer's report, held a landowner informational meeting, completed the Environmental Assessment Worksheet, and completed an archeological survey. Construction expected to commence in 2022.





# Project Highlights

## Lower Otter Tail River Restoration

The Otter Tail River watershed encompasses approximately 1,952 square miles of drainage from Clearwater, Becker, Otter Tail, and Wilkin Counties. The river outlets in the City of Breckenridge, MN, where its confluence with the Bois de Sioux River forms the headwaters of the Red River of the North. For planning and resource purposes, the expansive watershed area has been broken into upper and lower portions. The lower portions extends from the outlet of the river in Breckenridge to the Orwell reservoir in Otter Tail County.

Project proposes to restore the Lower Otter Tail River by reconnecting oxbows to remeander the channel. This project will improve water quality and wildlife habitat.



In 2021, BRRWD worked with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to finalize the Feasibility Report through the USACE's Section 1135 Program and continued with project design.

## Upper Buffalo River Restoration

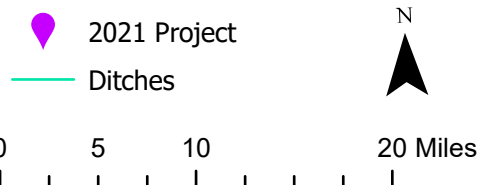
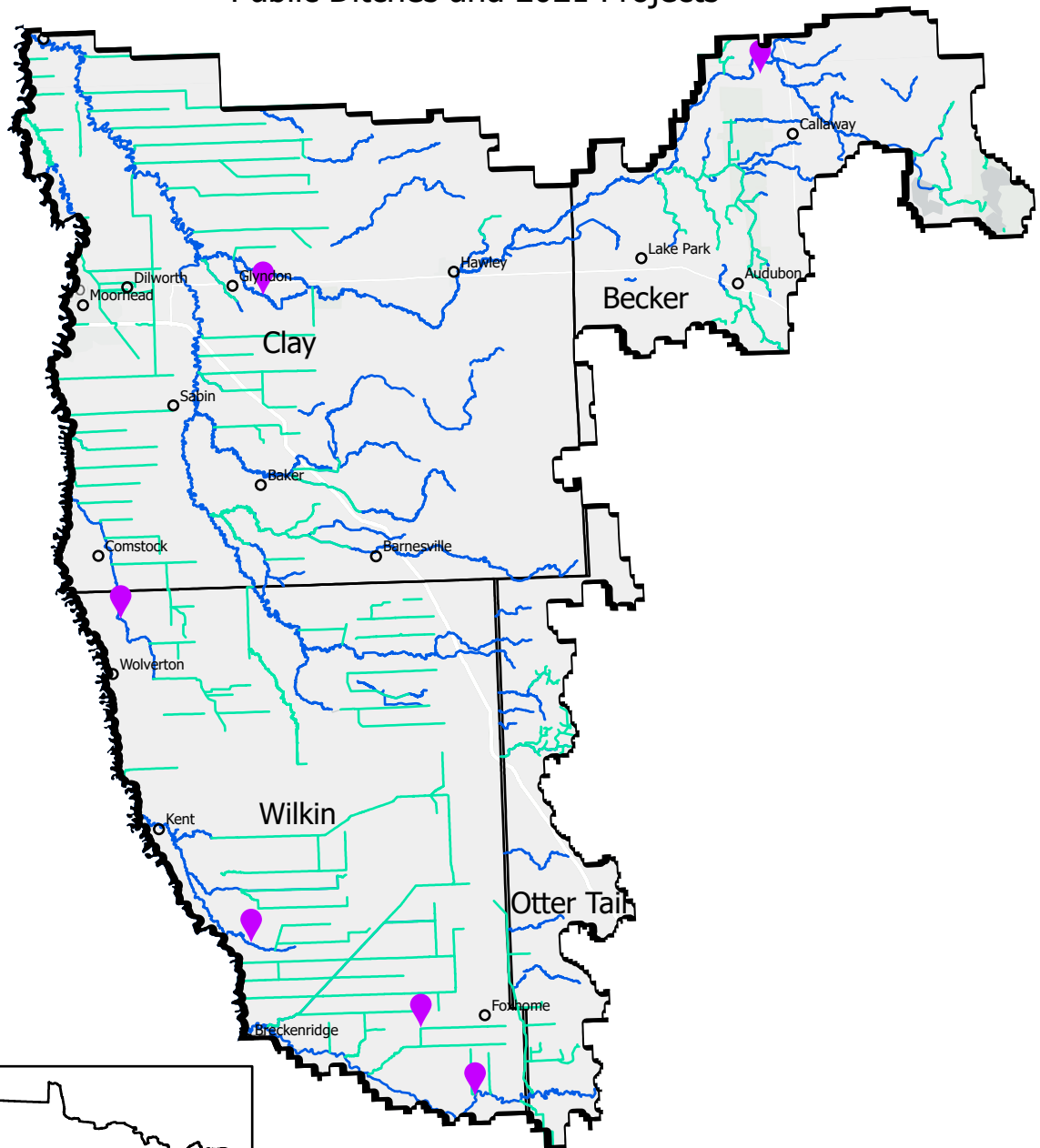
The Buffalo River watershed encompasses approximately 1,100 square miles in Becker, Clay, Wilkin, and Otter Tail Counties. The river outlets to the Red River near Georgetown, MN. The Upper Buffalo River Restoration is located in the most upper reaches of the Buffalo River beginning west of US Highway 59, approximately 3.5 miles north of the City of Callaway, MN and continuing downstream to Becker County Road 105. The drainage area to the proposed project is approximately 93 square miles.

Project proposes to restore approximately 9 miles of river between Buffalo Lake and Becker County Ditch No. 15. This project will reduce erosion and incision in the stream, improve water quality, foster stable stream conditions, improve drainage, and improve wildlife habitat.

In 2021, Board of Managers completed Environmental Assessment Worksheet and began acquiring permits.



# Buffalo-Red River Watershed District Public Ditches and 2021 Projects





# Board of Managers



Peter Fjestad—Board President  
Otter Tail County



Catherine Affield —Vice President  
Wilkin County



John Hanson —Secretary  
Becker County



Troy Larson—Treasurer  
Wilkin County



Gerry Van Amburg —Manager  
Clay County



Paul Krabbenhoft —Manager  
Clay County



Mark Hanson —Manager  
Clay County