



**BUFFALO – RED RIVER
WATERSHED DISTRICT**



2022

ANNUAL REPORT



Buffalo-Red River Watershed District

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Office Hours:

Monday-Thursday 8:00 AM-4:30 PM

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Buffalo-Red River Watershed District

History

BRRWD, originally named South Buffalo Watershed District, was established on August 31, 1960. 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 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 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 Becker, Clay, 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, Whisky 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 in Wilkin County; and the Otter Tail River in Otter Tail and Wilkin Counties.

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.



2022 in Review

January

- Whiskey Creek Enhancement Project—Accepted two Clean Water Fund Grants with Wilkin Soil and Water Conservation District. One grant for \$275,000 and another for \$267,194.66.
- Silver Lake Outlet Modification—Applied for Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership Grant through U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Turtle Lake Outlet Project—Held landowner informational meeting.
- Wilkin Soil and Water Conservation District Long-term Project Maintenance Partnership—Approved.



February

- Lower Otter Tail River Restoration—Held landowner informational meeting.
- South Branch Buffalo River Restoration—Held Hearing to impound, reroute, divert, and partial abandonment of Wilkin County Ditch No. 44. Approved Order.
- Stony Creek Water Resource Management Project—Held educational meeting.

March

- Wilkin County Ditch No. 13—Appointed Viewers for Redetermination of Benefits.
- Whiskey Creek Tributaries—Submitted documents for Department of Natural Resources Public Waters Permit.
- Lower Otter Tail River Orwell Dam Fish Passage—Became local sponsor for Section 1135 Grant through U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on behalf of Department of Natural Resources.
- Bylaws—Approved amendment.
- Upper Buffalo River Restoration—Held informational meeting.



April

- Clay County Ditch No. 50—Held Hearing for partial abandonment.
- Wilkin County Ditch No. 13—Held Hearing to use ditch as outlet.
- Clay County Ditch No. 41—Awarded Contract for Slope Repair to Hough Inc for \$19,975.
- Water Quality Monitoring—Signed contract with International Water Institute for \$24,520 for water quality monitoring.
- Beaver Management Policy—Approved Beaver Management Policy.

May

- Clay County Ditch No. 47—Appointed Viewers for Redetermination of Benefits.
- Stony Creek Restoration—Authorized moving forward with stream restoration.
- Lower Otter Tail River Restoration—Approved Environmental Assessment Worksheet.
- Glyndon East Tributary—Held Hearing, established water management district

June

- South Branch Buffalo River Restoration—Awarded Contract to Minnesota Native Landscapes, Inc. for \$797,795.00.
- Glyndon East Tributary—Acquired temporary and permanent easements for construction and maintenance of project.
- Water Management Districts—Authorized development of water management districts for South Branch Buffalo River, Stony Creek, and Hay Creek.
- City of Georgetown Flood Protection Levee—Signed Memorandum of Understanding with Metro Flood Diversion Authority.
- City of Wolverton Flood Protection Levee—Signed Memorandum of Understanding with Metro Flood Diversion Authority.



July

- Otter Tail County Ditch No. 64 Wetland Restoration—Partnered with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Otter Tail County to apply for Clean Water Fund Grant.

August

- Budget—Held 2023 Budget Hearing.
- Clay County Ditch No. 31—Held Hearing to use ditch as outlet.
- Wilkin County Ditch No. 6A—Held Redetermination of Benefits Hearing.

September

- Lower Otter Tail River Restoration—Authorized development of water management district.

October

- Otter Tail County Ditch Inspection Partnership—Approved.

November

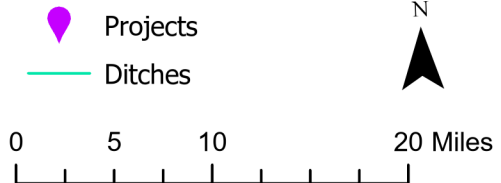
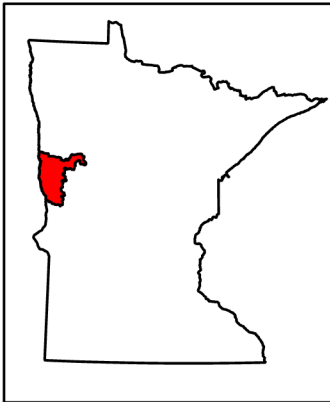
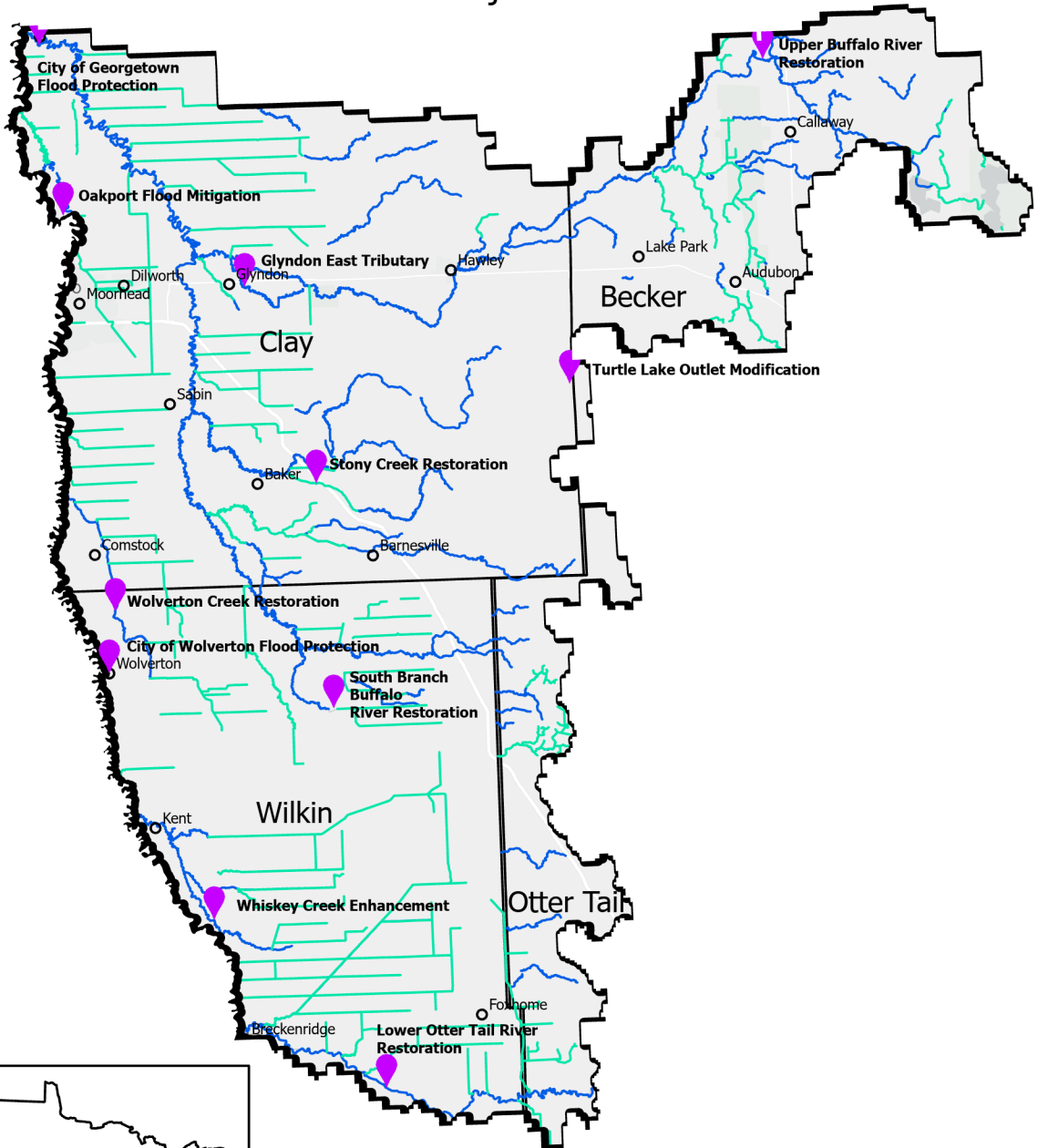
- Glyndon East Tributary—Awarded Contract to States Borders Construction, Inc. for \$1,105,498.00.
- Consent Agenda—Approved using consent agenda for all regular Board Meetings beginning January 1, 2023.
- Permit Database—Approved updating Permit Database.



December

- Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts Annual Conference—Attended by Managers Fjestad, Affield, and J. Hanson.

Buffalo-Red River Watershed District 2022 Projects



Project Highlights: Development and Implementation

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 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.

Project proposes to improve water quality, promote stable stream conditions, improve aquatic and wildlife habitat, and provide significant flood damage reduction.

A hearing was held April 2021 to establish the Whiskey Creek Enhancement Restoration as a watershed project. BRRWD acquired temporary construction easements for Phase 1. Contract for Phase 1 was awarded to Ehlert Excavating, Inc. in June 2021. Construction of Phase 1 was completed in November 2021. BRRWD acquired temporary easement for Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the project in 2022 and construction of Phase 2 was completed in September 2022. BRRWD will acquire permanent easement for Phase 1 and 2 in 2023. BRRWD anticipates commencing construction of Phase 3 in 2023.



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. The hearing to reroute and partially abandon Wilkin County Ditch No. 44 was held in February 2022. Construction contract was awarded to Minnesota Native Landscapes in June 2022. Construction commenced in September 2022 and is expected to be completed in 2023.



Project Highlights:

Development and Implementation

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. The hearing to establish the Glyndon East Tributary as a project was held in May 2022. With the approval of the Findings and Order, temporary and permanent easements were acquired for construction and long-term maintenance of the project. Contract awarded to States Borders Construction, Inc. in November 2022. Construction expected to commence February 2023.



Stony Creek Restoration

Stony Creek is a tributary to the South Branch Buffalo River in Clay County. The Stony Creek subwatershed is approximately 131 square miles. The project proposes to restore 4 miles of channel, construct setback levees, install sediment BMP's and establish buffers along the channel.

Project proposes to address agricultural flooding, sedimentation in the channel, poor water quality, and improved habitat.

In 2022, Board of Managers agreed to move forward with development of stream restoration. BRRWD is working with landowners to acquire temporary easements for construction. A Final Hearing is anticipated to be held in spring 2023 with construction commencing in fall 2023.



Project Highlights:

Development and Implementation

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 remainder the channel. This project will improve water quality and wildlife habitat.

In February 2022, an informational meeting was held with landowners. In May 2022, the Findings from the Environmental Assessment Worksheet was approved. Fall 2022 BRRWD continued outreach efforts to landowners. Phase 1 expected to commence in 2023.



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 2022, BRRWD held an informational meeting to continue gathering landowner input. Additional survey work was completed to aid in project development.



Project Highlights: Development and Implementation

City of Wolverton Flood Protection

BRRWD will design, construct, operate, and maintain a flood protection project for the City of Wolverton to provide the City with 100-year FEMA Accredited Flood Protection with funding from the Metro Flood Diversion Authority (MFDA).

In 2022, BRRWD signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the MFDA to support project. Houston Engineering, Inc. completed survey work to inform project design. BRRWD met with the City to begin project development. BRRWD anticipates continuing to meet with landowners, City, Railroad, and Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) and finalize levee design in 2023.



City of Georgetown Flood Protection

BRRWD will design, construct, operate, and maintain a flood protection project for the City of Georgetown to provide the City with 100-year FEMA Accredited Flood Protection with funding from the MFDA.

In 2022, BRRWD signed the MOU with the MFDA to support project. Houston Engineering, Inc. completed survey work to inform project design.



Project Updates

Turtle Lake Outlet Modification

In 1999, BRRWD constructed a series of siphons to address highwater on Turtle Lake. Turtle Lake outlet siphon discharges highwater from Turtle Lake south into Long Lake and the Long Lake siphon discharges highwater west to a series of wetlands and streams. The siphon system has successfully managed water levels on the lakes for over 20 years.



In the summer of 2021, zebra mussels were discovered in Turtle Lake and in February 2022 the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) issued a letter stating that water cannot be discharged from Turtle Lake due to the presence of zebra mussels. BRRWD continued to discharge water from Long Lake in Summer 2022. With managing water levels on Long Lake and a dry summer, water levels on Turtle Lake were managed. In August 2022, BRRWD received an amended permit from DNR to allow discharge from Turtle Lake with sampling for veligers and only operating the siphon when veligers are not present in the water column and water temperatures are below 48 degrees Fahrenheit.

Prior to the discovery of zebra mussels in Turtle Lake, BRRWD had begun to investigate modifying the Long Lake siphon to a gravity system. This modification would allow for reduced annual maintenance costs. BRRWD held a landowner informational meeting in January 2022. With the need to address the containment of zebra mussels, the plans to move forward with a gravity system were paused.

Oakport Flood Mitigation

The spring flood of 1997 was devastating for the entire Red River Basin. In the Oakport project area, over 150 homes were damaged, and over 200 homes isolated from public safety and services. Similar events in 1969, 2000, and 2001 prompted the Oakport residents to seek permanent flood control. In November 2002, the Township asked the BRRWD to develop a project in accordance with Watershed Law. The BRRWD accepted the task, and construction of the \$36 million project started in 2008. The seven phases of the project were completed in 2016.



In 2021, BRRWD began discussions with the City of Moorhead to transfer the project area to the City. In 2022 an agreement was drafted and BRRWD and the City began addressing items to complete prior to the transfer. It is anticipated that the Oakport Flood Mitigation project will be transferred to the City in 2023.

Project Updates

Wolverton Creek Restoration

Wolverton Creek is a 23.5-mile long tributary to the Red River of the North located in Wilkin and Clay Counties. The watershed is approximately 104 square miles. Similar to other streams in the Red River Basin, Wolverton Creek was straightened, ditched, cleared, and snagged to improve drainage and agricultural production.

In the 1960s, landowners began asking the BRRWD to investigate the problems associated with Wolverton Creek. BRRWD partnered with the Clay and Wilkin SWCDs' to reduce erosion and sedimentation in Wolverton Creek.

Watershed-wide solutions have been developed to address sedimentation, erosion, and habitat loss along Wolverton Creek and its tributaries including channel restoration, installation of side inlets and other sediment control BMPs, and installation of expanded bufferstrips along the creek.



Construction was completed in 2020. In 2022, BRRWD continued to finalize permanent easements. BRRWD hopes to complete land acquisition in 2023.

Board of Managers



Peter Fjestad—Board President
Otter Tail County



Catherine Affield —Vice President
Wilkin County



John Hanson —Secretary
Becker County



Paul Krabbenhoft —Treasurer
Clay County



Gerry Van Amburg —Manager
Clay County



Troy Larson —Manager
Wilkin County



Mark Hanson —Manager
Clay County