



# 2020 Annual Report

## 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Published by:  
Buffalo-Red River Watershed District  
1303 4th AVE NE  
Barnesville, MN 56514

Bruce E. Albright, Administrator (Retired 5/11/20)  
Kathleen K. Fenger, Assistant/Interim Administrator (Resigned 8/31/20)  
Kristine M. Altrichter, Administrator (Hired 11/23/20)  
Zachary D. Anderson, Watershed Specialist  
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## Acronyms

<b>1W1P</b>	One Watershed, One Plan	<b>MCCJPA</b>	Minnesota-Clay County Joint Powers Agreement
<b>BMPs</b>	Best Management Practices	<b>MEI</b>	Minnesota Environmental Initiative
<b>BRRW</b>	Buffalo-Red River Watershed	<b>MPCA</b>	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
<b>BRRWD</b>	Buffalo-Red River Watershed District	<b>M.S.A.</b>	Minnesota Statutes Annotated
<b>BWSR</b>	Board of Water & Soil Resources	<b>NRCS</b>	Natural Resources Conservation Service
<b>C.D.</b>	County Ditch	<b>nre</b>	natural resource enhancement
<b>COE</b>	Army Corps of Engineers	<b>NWQI</b>	National Water Quality Incentive
<b>C.R.</b>	County Road	<b>PE</b>	Professional Engineer
<b>CREP</b>	Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program	<b>PT</b>	Mediation Project Team
<b>CWF</b>	Clean Water Fund	<b>RRBC</b>	Red River Basin Commission
<b>CWMP</b>	Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan	<b>RRBFDRWG</b>	Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group
<b>DA</b>	Diversion Authority	<b>RRWMB</b>	Red River Watershed Management Board
<b>DNR</b>	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	<b>R/W</b>	Right-of-Way
<b>EAW</b>	Environmental Assessment Worksheet	<b>RWMP</b>	Revised Watershed Management Plan
<b>fdr</b>	flood damage reduction	<b>SWCD</b>	Soil & Water Conservation District
<b>FM DA</b>	Fargo-Moorhead Diversion Authority	<b>T.H.</b>	Trunk Highway
<b>HEI</b>	Houston Engineering, Inc.	<b>TMDL</b>	Total Maximum Daily Load
<b>IWI</b>	International Water Institute	<b>WMA</b>	Wildlife Management Area
<b>J.D.</b>	Judicial Ditch		
<b>JPA</b>	Joint Powers Agreement		
<b>LiDAR</b>	Light Detection and Ranging		
<b>LSOHC</b>	Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council		
<b>MAWD</b>	Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts		

## DfYgJXYbhfg @YhYf

To the residents of BRRWD,

The Buffalo Red Watershed District celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2020. We were recognized at the December annual MAWD conference with a plaque presentation.

The watershed district has received many awards over the past 60 years including: Oakport , Georgetown, Turtle Lake, Manston Slough, and Wolverton Creek-Comstock Coulee. Our work includes large projects as well as many small projects that benefit our district residents.

The most visible change in 2020 was the retirement of Bruce Albright, our 40 year administrator. He had many years of success in turning ideas into projects that benefited the residents of BRRWD now and into the future. We wish him good luck on his retirement.

Kristine Altrichter was hired as our new administrator to replace Bruce. Zachary Anderson was also hired to join the staff with RaeAnn Berg and Julie Jerger to keep the watershed district running smoothly.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the business of the watershed. Hearings for ditch projects have been put on hold. We are hopeful to get hearings scheduled in 2021. Noteworthy was the end of the lawsuit with the FM Diversion Authority and the Minnesota DNR. We are also investigating hiring our own office staff versus the present arrangement of hiring our office staff through Houston Engineering. Looking forward to 2021, the managers and staff are working on other projects such as Whiskey Creek, Buffalo River, Whisky Creek, Stony Creek and other wetland restoration projects. We will continue to work on ditch hearings and staffing as pandemic guidelines allow.

The future is bright and work is always unfolding for the watershed staff and managers. We continue to manage one of our precious resources by keeping the waters flowing in the district.

Respectfully,

Peter V. Fjestad  
Board President

# 2020 Annual Report Summary

Pursuant to *M.S.A. 103D.351*, we hereby submit the 2020 Annual Report of the Buffalo-Red River Watershed District. The Report contains a summary of the District's activities, projects, and programs for the past year. The Annual Report reflects the Board of Managers' commitment toward serving the residents of the BRRWD to provide efficient management of our water resources. The BRRWD is focused on providing the leadership and resources needed to fulfill these water management goals and objectives. The 2020 Audit can be viewed on the BRRWD's website.

## Mission Statement

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

## BRRWD Goals

- Reduce or alleviate damage caused by floodwaters;
- Administer and maintain the 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 the 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 sedimentation management within all ditch systems;
- Promote the maintenance of biotic diversity;
- Incorporate recreational opportunities into District projects whenever feasible;
- Maximize the potential cooperative opportunities available with all governmental levels;
- Endeavor to keep all residents informed of its duties, authorities, activities, and projects; and
- Endeavor to inform and educate residents about water and soil resource issues and the importance of protecting these crucial resources.

## Office Location-Meetings

The BRRWD office is located at 1303 4<sup>th</sup> AVE NE in Barnesville, MN. The office is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

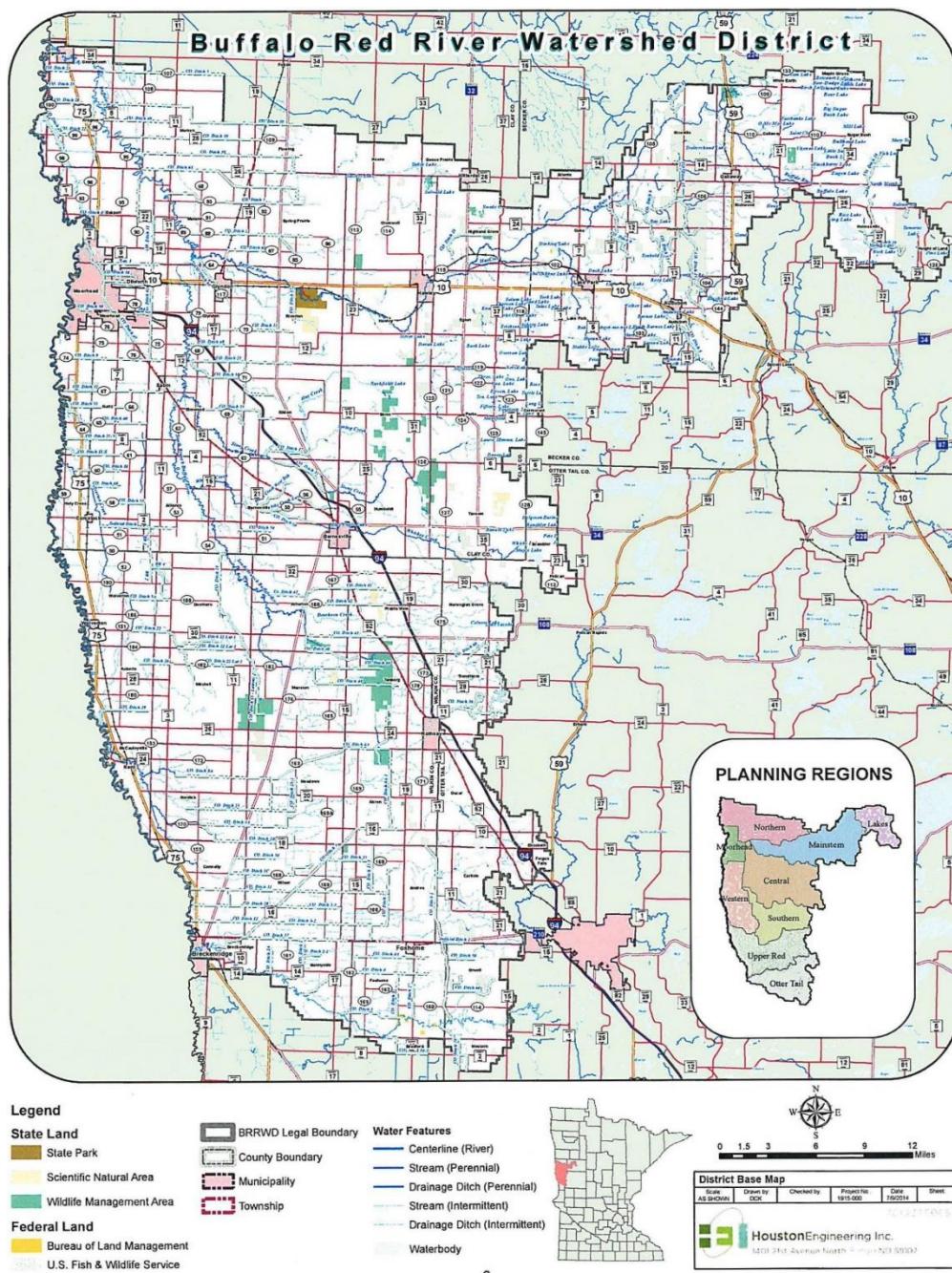


The Board holds meetings on the second and fourth Monday of each month, starting at 7:00 PM at the BRRWD office. The Annual Meeting is held in January and the Annual Budget Hearing is held in August. Regular meetings are open to the public. In 2020, the BRRWD held 21 regular meetings and one special executive session meeting. Meeting minutes are available on the BRRWD website.

# Watershed Description

Established in 1960, the 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, 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 near Kent, MN, in Wilkin County; and the Otter Tail River, downstream of Orwell Dam to Breckenridge, MN, in Otter Tail and Wilkin Counties.

## BRRWD Map



# District History

In 2020, the BRRWD celebrated our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Formerly known as the South Buffalo Watershed District, it was established on August 31, 1960, and covered 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 any rational approach to address flooding needed to include all the area contributing runoff to the Buffalo River. By Order, dated September 17, 1976, the State of Minnesota expanded the District and changed the name to the Buffalo-Red River Watershed District. The same Order expanded the representation on the Board of Managers to five Managers. The Board of Managers adopted their first Overall Plan on January 9, 1978, which was approved by BWSR on July 26, 1978. A RWMP was approved by BWSR on June 23, 2010. In 2011, Wilkin and Otter Tail Counties petitioned BWSR to expand the BRRWD to include lands between the south border of the BRRWD and the Bois de Sioux Watershed District. The State of Minnesota expanded the BRRWD to its current size by Order on April 25, 2012. The same 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. Starting in 2018 and concluding in 2020, the BRRWD worked with local government agencies from Becker, Clay, Wilkin, and Otter Tail Counties, local government officials, and citizens to create the 1W1P CWMP, a single plan for the three watersheds within the BRRWD: the Red River, Otter Tail River, and the Buffalo River.

## Board of Managers

A Board of seven Managers governs the BRRWD. Managers are appointed by the County Commissioners for a term of three years. Officers are elected at the Annual Board Meeting.



**Jay A. Leitch**  
President  
Clay County  
Term Expired 5/28/20



**Troy E. Larson**  
Treasurer  
Wilkin County  
Term Expires 8/31/21



**Peter V. Fjestad**  
Vice President  
(Appointed President 5/28/20)  
Otter Tail County  
Term Expires 8/31/21



**Gerald L. Van Amburg**  
Manager  
Clay County  
Term Expires 8/31/23



**Catherine L. Affield**  
(Appointed Vice President  
5/28/20)  
Wilkin County  
Term Expires 8/31/22



**Paul G. Krabbenhoft**  
Manager  
Clay County  
(Appointed 8/10/20)  
Term Expires 8/31/21



**John E. Hanson**  
Secretary  
Becker County  
Term Expires 8/31/21



**Mark L. Hanson**  
Manager  
Clay County  
(Appointed 10/13/20)  
Term Expires 8/31/23



**Mark T. Anderson**  
Treasurer  
Clay County  
Term Expired 8/31/20

# Staff and Consultants

## **Administrator**

Kristine M. Altrichter (11/23/20)  
Bruce E. Albright (Retired 5/01/20)

## **Interim Administrator**

Kathleen K. Fenger (5/01/20-8/31/20)

## **Watershed Specialist**

Zachary D. Anderson

## **District Engineer**

Erik S. Jones, PE

## **Civil Engineering Technician**

Wade S. Opsahl

## **Senior Administrative Assistant**

Julie M. Jerger

## **Administrative Assistant**

RaeAnn E. Berg

## **Lobbyist**

Joel Carlson  
6 W 5th ST, Suite 700  
St Paul, MN 55102

## **Auditor**

Harold J. Rotunda, CPA  
PO Box 816  
West Fargo, ND 58078

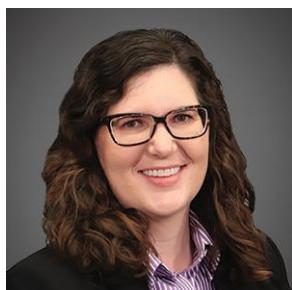
## **Consulting Attorney**

Tami L. Norgard  
Vogel Law Firm  
218 NP AVE  
Fargo, ND 58107



## **BRRWD Administrator Bruce Albright Retires**

BRRWD Administrator Bruce E. Albright retired on 5/1/20. On March 10, 1980, the BRRWD approved a proposal from then District Engineer Robert Muscha, HEI, for HEI to provide staff for the watershed office in Barnesville. Albright assumed the Administrator position on May 12, 1980. Over his 40-year career, Albright was known locally and state-wide for his skilled leadership and water management expertise.



## **New BRRWD Administrator Kristine Altrichter**

In 2020, the Board welcomed Kristine M. Altrichter, who assumed the position of BRRWD Administrator on a full-time basis in the Barnesville office in November. She will work directly with the Board of Managers for policy development, constituent services, and general support, as well as manage all District activities and budgets. Altrichter's educational background and experience in natural resource management will be a great asset to the BRRWD.



## **Watershed District Specialist Zach Anderson**

Zachary D. Anderson joined the BRRWD staff in November of 2020. Anderson will fill the newly created BRRWD Watershed Specialist position. He will focus on working with landowners to acquire permanent easements for BRRWD projects, lead long-term maintenance of projects, work with landowners on BRRWD permits, and help manage the ditch systems.

## Rules and Bylaws

The Board of Managers, BRRWD, adopted their original Rules (*M.S.A. 103D.341*) on May 21, 1979, and their original Bylaws on February 10, 1997. The BRRWD adopted revised Bylaws on April 9, 2018, and revised Rules on July 9, 2019. Documents can be found on the BRRWD's website.

## Permits & Applications

In 2020, the BRRWD reviewed 136 permit applications: 105 approved, 2 denied, 1 tabled, and 28 were administratively withdrawn.

### ACTIVITIES THAT REQUIRE A BRRWD PERMIT (*M.S.A. 103D.345*):

- Pattern or random tiling.
- Construction of an artificial drainageway across a subwatershed into another watershed.
- Diversion of water into a legal drainage system from lands not assessed for the drainage system.
- Works or alterations of any legal drainage system under BRRWD jurisdiction.
- Drainage of any wetland.
- Construction, removal, or abandonment of a reservoir having a surface area of five acres or more.
- Construction of a bridge or placement of a culvert on any natural or legal drainage system.
- Change in the bed, banks, or shores of natural drainageways, lakes, or wetlands.
- Placement of obstructions or disposal of wastes directly or indirectly into a natural or legal drainage system.
- Excavation, grading, or placing fill in or near any natural or legal drainage system.
- All water uses other than domestic use; domestic use is limited to sources serving twenty-five or fewer people.
- Crossing of natural drainageways or established legal drainage systems by pipelines or underground utility lines.

# Organizations

## **Citizen Advisory Committee**

The Board of Managers appointed a Citizens' Advisory Committee (*M.S.A. 103D.331*) to provide recommendations on matters affecting the BRRWD. This year, due to the COVID-19 meeting restrictions, the Advisory Committee meeting was cancelled.

2020 Advisory Committee members include:

Ross Aigner	SWCD Supervisor, Wilkin County
Don Bajumpaa	SWCD Office Manager, Wilkin County
John Boen	Landowner, Otter Tail County
Wayne Brendemuhl	Landowner, Clay County
Sally Casey	Landowner, Clay County
Jon Evert	Former Commissioner, Clay County
Jerome Flottemesch	SWCD Supervisor, Becker County
Roger Haglund	Landowner, Clay County
Lyle Hovland	Commissioner, Wilkin County
Wayne D. Johnson	Commissioner, Otter Tail County
Edwin Johnson, Jr.	Landowner, Otter Tail County
Jenny Mongeau	Commissioner, Clay County
Barry Nelson	Commissioner, Becker County
Gerald Nordick	Landowner, Wilkin County
Charles Piekarski	Landowner, Otter Tail County
Orrin B. Sorum	Landowner, Otter Tail County
William D. Steffl	Former BRRWD Manager, Becker County
Russ Wilson	Mayor, City of Breckenridge

## **River Keepers**

River Keepers is an organization that advocates for the Red River in the Fargo/Moorhead community. In 2020, the BRRWD contributed \$55,000 to River Keepers from revenue levied in accordance with the M.S.A. 103D.905, Subd. 3, ad valorem taxing authority. At the annual Budget Hearing on 8/24/20, the BRRWD included River Keepers in the 2021 General Levy at the same level.



River Keepers identifies several goals to realize their role as a Red River advocate:

- Increase public awareness of the Red River, its uses, and water related issues by disseminating accurate information and engaging in educational activities.
- Maintain and increase appropriate recreational use of the Red River.
- Advocate land use, river use, and environmental practices that contribute to a sustainable, safe, and economically beneficial river ecosystem.
- Provide financial sustainability of River Keepers by securing adequate funding.



## RRBC

The Board of Managers continued to support the efforts of the Red River Basin Commission with a \$25,000 contribution in 2020 from revenue levied in accordance with our *M.S.A. 103D.905, Subd. 3, ad valorem* taxing authority. Administrator Albright, Assistant Administrator Fenger, and Managers Leitch, Fjestad and Hanson attended RRBC's 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Red River Basin Land & Water International Summit Conference on January 14-16, 2020, at the Delta by Marriott, Fargo.

## Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts

### 2020 Legislative Reception and Day at the Capitol and MAWD Summer Tour

The 2020 MAWD Legislative Reception and Day at the Capitol, scheduled for March 18-19, 2020, in St. Paul and the 2020 MAWD Summer Tour were cancelled due to the Covid-19 meeting restrictions.



### 2020 MAWD Annual Meeting and Trade Show

The MAWD Annual Meeting and Trade Show was held as a virtual online event due to the Covid-19 restrictions on December 1-4, 2020. Managers Van Amburg and Fjestad were appointed as Delegates and Affield as Alternate. The BRRWD received a 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemorative plaque from MAWD.

## Mediation PT

In 1997, the State Legislature mandated formation of the RRBFDRWG to resolve grid lock over state/federal permitting of fdr projects in the Red River Valley. The resulting agreement was intended as the framework for a collaborative approach to implement fdr and nre protection and enhancement to benefit Minnesota residents. The keys to this new approach are comprehensive watershed planning, clearly identified goals, and early consultation and collaboration on fdr projects among the stakeholders' representatives. This group works to achieve a cooperative approach to project permitting and development.

The purpose of the Mediation Agreement is:

*To reach consensus agreements on long term solutions for reducing flood damage and for protection and enhancement of natural resources. Such agreements should balance important economic, environmental, and social considerations, and must provide for fair and effective procedures to resolve future conflicts related to flood damage reduction.*

Since 1998, the BRRWD's PT meets as needed throughout the year. In 2020, the Mediation PT was unable to meet due to the Covid-19 meeting restrictions.

## Fall Tour

The BRRWD cancelled their 2020 Fall Tour due to the Covid-19 meeting restrictions.

## Minnesota Environmental Initiatives Award

The BRRWD received the 2020 MEI Rural Vitality Award for the Wolverton Creek Restoration project. The MEI Awards is an annual recognition program that celebrates people and projects working together to achieve a healthy environment, a prosperous economy, and an equitable society.

# 2020 Meeting Highlights

## January 2020

- Held Annual Meeting. Renewed contracts for engineering services-HEI; legal services-Vogel Law Firm; and accounting services-Harold J. Rotunda, CPA.
- Attended the RRWMB Drainage Conference on Monday, January 27, 2020, at the Marriott Hotel and Convention Center, Moorhead.
- Approved a proposal to advance the development of the Whiskey Creek Restoration Project near Kent, MN, following M.S.A. 103D.605, Project Constructed with Government Aid or as Part of Plan.

## February 2020

- Approved the draft 1W1P.
- Approved the preliminary budget and project development steps for the Whiskey Creek Restoration project.

## March 2020

- Approved an Order to acquire R/W for Clay C.D. Nos. 20, 22, 23, 28, and 51 buffer installations in accordance with the 2015 State Buffer Law.
- Approved signing a revised cost-share agreement for the COE Section 1135 Study for the Lower Otter Tail River Revised Project Management Plan.
- Approved a \$25,000 contribution to the Wilkin SWCD's Cover Crop Incentive Program.
- Approved the BRRWD's COVID-19 Action Plan and postponed all project and ditch system meetings/hearings until further notice.
- Signed a \$1.5 million DNR grant agreement for the stream restoration component of the Stony Creek Restoration Project and authorized moving forward with the project's EAW and permitting process.

## April 2020

- Approved a repair proposal to clean both branches of Wilkin C.D. No. 27 to establish the buffers, in accordance with the 2015 State Buffer Law, and to work with the landowners to install field inlets where needed.
- Approved a purchase offer to sell up to 20 wetland mitigation banking credits to BWSR for their Local Government Road Wetland Replacement Program.
- Approved the 2020 IWI water quality monitoring contract for their work at various monitoring sites within the BRRWD.

## May 2020

- Awarded the Project No. 79, Wolverton Creek Restoration-Phase 2 construction contract to Gladen Construction, Laporte, MN. The Phase 2 earthwork is to be completed by 6/30/21 with the seeding to be completed by 7/20/21. Sellin Brothers, Inc. is working on Phase 1 construction with a contract deadline of 6/22/20.
- Authorized signature and distribution of the Whiskey Creek Restoration project EAW. The EAW availability notice will be published for a 30-day comment period.
- Continued discussions regarding staff transition from HEI to BRRWD employees. The HR Committee was authorized to hire a consultant to analyze the potential cost savings of transitioning the three current HEI office staff members to BRRWD employees and to obtain a legal opinion evaluating whether the current office staffing structure creates a conflict of interest.

## June 2020

- Approved the 2020-2021 Barnesville High School River Watch water quality monitoring budget in the amount of \$5,553.80.

## July 2020

- Authorized signature of the Whiskey Creek Enhancement project's EAW.
- Appointed Manager Van Amburg to serve on the MCCJPA land acquisition committee.
- Hired LM Road Services, Ulen, MN, to conduct the 2020 ditch spraying for cattails, trees, and noxious weeds on the Clay and Wilkin County ditch systems and projects.
- Authorized beaver control on the Glyndon East Tributary to the Buffalo River and to expand HEI's survey investigation of the south end of the waterway.

## August 2020

- Authorized the submission of a BWSR CWF grant application for work along the Upper South Branch of the Buffalo River from T.H. No. 9 to just north of Wilkin C.R. No. 30. The \$300,000 grant application is for the installation of inlet pipes and stream restoration along the South Branch channel, requiring a local match of 25%, or \$75,000.
- Held the BRRWD annual budget hearing on 8/24/20. The 2020 administrative levy was set at \$250,000, plus an annual administrative fee to be assessed to projects, based on a project's account expenditures. Insurance fund levy set at \$22,000. The total general levy was approved for \$727,496, as was a second special levy for Project No. 79, Wolverton Creek Restoration (\$500,000). A Survey and Data Acquisition levy was set at \$150,000 to be collected over the next five years. The Board also set 2020 project/ditch system levies, totaling \$1,074,407.

## September 2020

- Approved the 1W1P CWMP.
- Accepted Eide Bailly's cost analysis proposal to transition the staff's employment to the BRRWD.
- Approved the Final Pay Request for \$25,937 to Sellin Brothers, Inc. to close out their work on Phase 1 of the Wolverton Creek Restoration project. Gladen Construction, Inc., Laporte, MN, started Phase 2 work on 9/21/20.
- Accepted the BRRWD's Financial Audit, prepared and presented by Harold J. Rotunda, CPA.
- Selected a preferred project plan for the COE's Federal Section 1135 Ecosystem Restoration feasibility study for the Otter Tail River Corridor Habitat Restoration project.
- Authorized submittal of the EAW for the channel restoration phase of the Stony Creek Restoration project.
- Approved a cost-share contribution of \$12,100 to Pheasants Forever to be applied toward the purchase of a tract in Section 10, Manston Township, Wilkin County, for a 320-acre WMA.

## October 2020

- BWSR prescribes the BRRWD's 1W1P CWMP.
- Approved Permit No. 19-003 for the DA's Diversion Plan B and adopted the Binding Settlement Term Sheet, a precursor to a future Mutual Settlement Agreement, with the FM DA, the Richland/Wilkin JPA, and the Cities of Wolverton and Comstock to resolve the lawsuits for the DA permit denial and the DNR permit contested case.
- Approved a potential 40% match for additional 319 MPCA grant funds for sediment reduction work on the Upper Buffalo River to install additional BMPs, including grade stabilizations, water and sediment control basins, and a restoration on the Buffalo River close to Callaway near the Becker C.D. No. 21 outlet.

## November 2020

- Approved the EAW Findings and Order for Project No. 80, Stony Creek Water Resource Management Project.

## December 2020

- Approved a motion to move forward with the easement option and temporary easement acquisition for the Whiskey Creek Enhancement project.
- Received grant awards totaling approximately \$1 million for three of our current projects: Whiskey Creek Enhancement, Upper South Branch of the Buffalo River Channel Restoration, and Otter Tail River Habitat Restoration.

# 2020 Project Highlights

## **Project No. 79, Wolverton Creek Restoration**

The BRRWD has developed a multi-phase comprehensive strategy to improve water quality and protect the valuable resource of Wolverton Creek in an extensively drained agricultural watershed. Wolverton Creek is a 23.5-mile long tributary to the Red River of the North with 8.2 miles of the Creek in Clay County and the remaining 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. About two-thirds of the downstream stretch of Wolverton Creek is Public Water at the line between Sections 26 and 35, Wolverton Township.

Beginning over a century ago, streams in the Red River Basin have been 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. The BRRWD has partnered with the Clay and Wilkin SWCDs' to reduce erosion and sedimentation in Wolverton Creek. In 2006-2009, 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.

The construction work continued in 2020 with Sellin Brothers, Inc. completing Phase 1 construction in September. In May 2020, the Board awarded the Phase 2 construction contract to Gladen Construction, Inc., for their bid of \$864,883.00. The majority of the Phase 2 work was completed before the end of the year. Final grading and seeding for Phase 2 will be completed in the spring of 2021.



The project was awarded \$2.8 million from the Targeted Watershed Program fund, \$1.877 million from the LSOHC Fund, and \$100,000 from the Enbridge Eco-Footprint Grant Program. The required local match (25% of grant funds) is \$700,000.

### **Project Partners:**

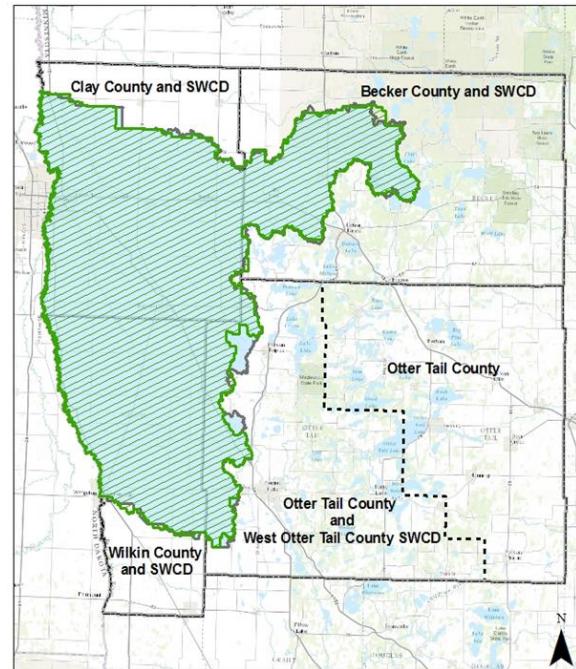
- BRRWD
- Wilkin SWCD
- Clay SWCD
- NRCS
- Landowners



## Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan

The BRRWD's CWMP was developed out of the One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) Program, authorized by M.S.A. 103B.801. It represents an effort to develop a single, concise, and coordinated approach to watershed management. This plan is written to guide local water managers and consolidates policies, programs, and implementation strategies from existing data, studies, and plans, and incorporates input from multiple planning partners to provide a single plan for watershed management. Previously, numerous county and watershed district plans were developed for different areas of the watershed with little attention paid to coordination at the watershed scale. This Plan's purpose is to build on existing plans and information to develop goals and targeted, measurable implementation actions to better manage water resources in the watershed.

The BRRWD coordinated with local government agencies from Becker, Clay, Wilkin, and Otter Tail Counties, local government officials and citizens to create a single plan for the three major watersheds within the BRRWD: the Red River, the Otter Tail River, and the Buffalo River. The Plan includes goals and implementation actions that are prioritized and targeted on a watershed basis with measurable results, instead of the present individual plans that are largely restricted to political boundaries.



Public meetings/hearings were held as part of the Plan development process to compile a list of priority resources and concerns impacting the watershed. The Planning Kickoff Meeting was held on 9/28/19, following the 60-day stakeholder notification comment period. A Public Hearing was held on 9/16/20 to provide the public with an overview of the Plan and the planning process. The BWSR Northern Region Committee approved the draft Plan on 10/07/20 and the full BWSR Board prescribed the BRRW 1W1P CWMP on 10/28/20.

The BRRW will now be eligible to apply for watershed-based project implementation funding as an alternative to the traditional competitive process for water quality improvement projects.

## **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. In 2016, Wilkin County and the BRRWD secured a CWF Accelerated Implementation Grant to study the creek and investigate how to stabilize the stream.

The BRRWD authorized HEI to develop alternatives to stabilize the stream channel. The BRRWD completed a hydraulic model of Whiskey Creek's existing conditions (2016-2017) to determine the watershed's flooding conditions for more common flood events. Once the modeling was completed, the BRRWD held a landowner informational meeting on 6/27/17 to gain their insights into what areas needed attention and to corroborate the hydraulic model findings. The BRRWD used the information from HEI and landowners to develop alternatives to enhance drainage function, water quality, and habitat along Whiskey Creek.

To determine which alternatives should be implemented in the area, the BRRWD held a public informational meeting on 12/13/18. Project partners used this information to gauge landowner interest and determine alternatives that will address landowner needs.

The BRRWD has begun the environmental review process. The EAW was approved by the Board of Managers on 7/13/20. At the 12/14/20 meeting, the Board of Managers agreed to move forward with the acquisition of temporary construction and permanent easements along the channel corridor.

The estimated construction cost for this project is \$6-\$7 million. The BRRWD has obtained funding from the NRCS NWQI program, BWSR Clean Water Fund, and MPCA Section 319 grant funding to begin implementation.

## **Lower Otter Tail River Habitat Restoration**



The Lower Otter Tail River extends from Orwell Dam near Fergus Falls to the confluence of the Otter Tail River with the Bois de Sioux River in Breckenridge, MN. A 2006 TMDL study determined that the Otter Tail River is impaired for exceeding turbidity standards for aquatic life. The COE channelized an 18-mile stretch of this river reach in the 1950s to increase the river capacity for agriculture purposes. This channelization has reduced the channel length, steepened slopes, increased flows, reduced habitat diversity and quality, and impaired water quality.

The BRRWD is investigating the potential for restoring a portion of the Lower Otter Tail River with the goal of implementing strategic BMPs that will reduce sediment loading, maintain the hydraulic capacity, and provide stable and healthy stream conditions.

The BRRWD partnered with the COE through the COE's Section 1135 Ecosystem Restoration Program. The project has been ongoing for the last four years with completion expected in 2021.

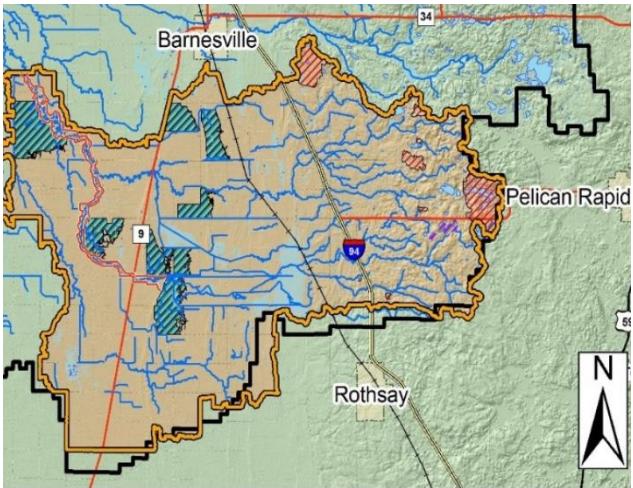
In support of a future river restoration project, the BRRWD partnered with Wilkin County and BWSR to pursue an LSOHC Outdoor Heritage Fund grant. An anticipated \$2.335 million in land acquisition funding is expected to be approved by the State Legislature in 2021.

## Upper South Branch of the Buffalo River

The project area includes the 155-square mile watershed draining to the South Branch of the Buffalo River at the Clay/Wilkin County line. The South Branch has a history of exceeding its channel capacity. Increased sediment loading from the agricultural landscape has resulted in increased sedimentation, reducing channel capacity.

The Upper South Branch Water Resource Management Plan outlines measures to reduce flooding and enhance environmental benefits. Potential solutions were developed and analyzed including:

- Gated off-channel retention
- Wetland restoration
- BMP strategic implementation
- Setback levees
- River corridor restoration



The project is in the conceptual phase with project features and components being developed into alternatives to address flooding and other local natural resources concerns.

The BRRWD received funding for Phase 1A of the project through an Outdoor Heritage Fund grant. Phase 1A of the project is expected to include restoration of the Buffalo River upstream of T.H. No. 9 in Wilkin County, with construction beginning in late 2021.