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June 26, 2017

Subject: Polk County Ditch 9 Redetermination of Benefits

Dear landowners,

On March 13, 2017, the Sand Hill River Watershed District (SHRWD) held a public informational meeting to discuss redetermination of benefits for Polk County Ditch 9. The meeting was held to discuss the steps and costs required for redetermination of benefits. A copy of the meeting minutes is attached for your reference.

The primary cost associated with proceeding with redetermination of benefits is to establish the one rod (16.5 feet) buffer strip along the top of the ditch slope. During the informational meeting, a question was asked about the ability to use the current ditch fund to purchase the required buffer strip prior to redetermination of benefits. After review with our attorney, we have determined that use of existing ditch funds may be used to purchase the required buffer strip. Currently, the ditch fund does not have enough funds to use towards acquiring land to establish the buffer strip.

Consolidation of Polk County Ditch 9 with SHRWD Project 17, SHRWD Project 20, Polk County Ditch 119, and Polk County Ditch 80 was also discussed at the informational meeting. Landowners were curious if the consolidation could happen before establishment of the buffer strip, with the assumption that after consolidation the costs associated with the buffer strip could be spread across a larger area. Our attorney has indicated that this is not an option, because a redetermination is required to happen before consolidation of ditch systems. The redetermination process is what triggers the consolidation of ditch systems. MN Statute requires that the buffer strip be established as part of the redetermination.

The use of Polk County Ditch 9 as an overflow for SHRWD Project 17 was also discussed at the informational meeting. Several landowners had indicated that they would like to see this overflow removed. The SHRWD Board is currently investigating how the overflow could be reduced or removed through the Project 17 system.

The SHRWD board plans to delay the redetermination of benefits on Polk County Ditch 9 to allow for sufficient funds to be raised to establish the required one rod buffer strip. Once sufficient funds are in the ditch fund, the Board anticipates moving forward with redetermination of benefits.

Feel free to contact me with any questions and visit our web-site (www.sandhillwatershed.org) for updates regarding Polk County Ditch 9 Redetermination of Benefits.

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