

LOWER LOUP NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

January 26, 2017

Ord, Nebraska

The January meeting of the Board of Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District was held at the Headquarters Office, 2620 Airport Drive, Ord, Nebraska, on January 26, 2017. In the absence of Chairman Citta, Vice Chairman Eschliman called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Directors in attendance

James C. Adams
Darwin B. Anderson
Beth Boesch
Virgil W. Gellermann
Randy Kauk
Matt Lukasiewicz
Alan D. Petersen
Dean J. Rasmussen
Dean G. Thede

Rollie D. Amsberry, Treasurer
Robert Bauer
James J. Eschliman, Vice Chairman
N. Richard Hadenfeldt
Gary A. Kruse
James C. Nelson
Chad Podolak
Gerald P. Smith
Henry J. Thoene, Secretary

Directors absent

Timothy E. Bartak
Clifford P. Loseke

Joseph L. Citta, Chairman

Staff in attendance

Leon "Butch" Koehlmoos, General Manager
Larry D. Schultz, I&E Coordinator
Jason Moudry, Water Programs Specialist
Dell R. Harris, Water Resources Specialist
Tylr Naprstek, Water Modeling Coordinator

Russell G. Callan, Assistant General Manager
Irene F. Kreifels, Financial Secretary
Cheryl K. Hornickel, Programs Assistant
Richard Woollen, District Forester
V. Anne Freeman, Water Programs Secretary

Guests in attendance

Scott Montgomery, NRCS, Burwell
Ellis Schrunk, Bartlett
Edward Heinz, Spalding

John Engel, HDR, Lincoln
Steven Schrunk, Elgin

NOTICE OF OPEN MEETING LAW POSTING

Chairman Eschliman referred those in attendance to the open meeting law information posted in the Board room.

VERIFICATION OF MEETING NOTICE AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Chairman Eschliman asked for verification of the meeting notice. General Manager Leon “Butch” Koehlmoos verified that the meeting notices were properly published in all newspapers and that the meeting notice was also posted at the NRD Headquarters office in Ord, the NRD web site, and the eight field office locations. Koehlmoos said there were no modifications to the agenda.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Chairman Eschliman stated that Directors Loseke and Bartak had requested to be excused from the meeting.

Toene motioned, seconded by Adams, to excuse all absent directors. Motion carried by roll call vote, all present voting yes.

Chairman Eschliman welcomed new Directors Chad Podolak and Robert Bauer who were elected to the Board in the November election.

MINUTES

Chairman Eschliman asked for corrections and/or additions to the December 15, 2016, Board meeting minutes. None being heard, Chairman Eschliman ruled that the December 15, 2016, minutes would stand approved as submitted.

TREASURER’S REPORT

Chairman Eschliman directed the Board’s attention to the Treasurer’s Report as published in the regular and supplemental agendas.

Koehlmoos highlighted bills for project construction and study costs, a loader-backhoe, and a new pickup. He said the backhoe was in the shop for viewing. He said a pre-bid meeting would be held on the 31st for the Davis Creek Recreation Area-Phase II project and that bids are due by 3:00 p.m. on February 7th.

Kruse motioned, seconded by Smith, to approve the January, 2017, Treasurer’s Report and pay all bills. Motion carried by roll call vote, all present voting yes.

RECOGNITION OF SERVICE – KATE SULLIVAN

Chairman Eschliman introduced former State Senator Kate Sullivan. Sullivan thanked the Board for their friendship and for the work they do in preserving the state's natural resources. She said she enjoyed representing District 41 for eight years in the Nebraska Legislature and will miss meeting and visiting with her constituents. She said she was glad to help get ownership of Pibel Lake transferred to the NRD and said she was hoping to spend more time at the rec area.

Chairman Eschliman presented Sullivan with a plaque for her years of service.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ellis Schrunk of Bartlett asked about the new irrigated acres that were recently granted in parts of the NRD and asked staff where the NRD came up with extra water to grant the acres. Koehlmoos responded that the water modeling that has been done the past several years revealed excess water flows in the North Loup River and Beaver Creek basins of the NRD, and 2,000 additional acres were granted in those areas. He said no development was allowed in areas of the NRD where there were concerns with the water table. Koehlmoos said there are areas in the NRD that show water table declines of 10 to 12 feet, and increases in the water table from 5 to 30 feet in other areas.

Koehlmoos said that the Lower Loup NRD was not fully-appropriated at this time. He said that although the NRD recommends that cooperators use flowmeters as a tool to better irrigate and manage water, meters were not required in all parts of the District at this time.

When asked by Mr. Schrunk, Koehlmoos responded that the Lower Loup NRD was monitoring the high nitrate conditions in Wheeler County where isolated wells were showing higher levels of nitrates.

Schrunk said that Pibel Lake looks nice. Koehlmoos said that the project cost over \$1M and nearly half of the funding came from outside sources. He said it was through the efforts of Senator Sullivan that the NRD was able to purchase the rec area for \$1.00 from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

FORESTER'S REPORT

North Central District Forester Richard Woollen reported that NSWCP and EQIP cost-share was available to restore existing windbreaks that have deteriorated, bringing them back into functioning status. He said he works on several windbreak renovation projects each year.

Woollen said he also works with forest stand improvement projects which involves efforts to get a healthier tree stand. He said he's working on some bur oak and redcedar stands in Oak Canyon and in the Niobrara Valley. He said that thinning selected stands of eastern redcedar provides for silvopasture benefits and improved use by wildlife.

NRCS REPORT

Scott Montgomery, RC in Burwell, reported that with the new presidential administration, there will be a new Secretary of Agriculture and a new NRCS chief, but they had not been named yet. Montgomery said that the Burwell office had recently completed 40 CSP contracts and was working on EQIP rankings and contracts. He said that the Burwell office has one of the highest number of CSP contracts in the state.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION REPORT

Hazard Mitigation Plan

Schultz reported that JEO is in the process of compiling and inserting information into the document and that the process is on schedule and 60% complete. He said public and NRD reviews would probably begin in a couple months.

2017 NARD Washington, DC, Conference

Schultz reported that the 2017 Washington, DC, Conference would be held March 18-22, 2017. He passed around a sign-up sheet for those interested in attending.

Adventure Camp about the Environment (ACE)

Schultz reported that the 2017 ACE Camp would be held June 11-14 at the State 4-H Camp at Halsey for 6th through 8th graders. He said the camp cost is \$190 and the Lower Loup NRD would offer a \$100 scholarship to students who live in the District.

Contests

Schultz said the NRD would be hosting the 2017 Area IV Range Judging Contest in Valley County. He said over 400 competitors are expected to participate. He reported that the LLNRD will co-host the Central Region Envirothon at CCC in Columbus on February 28th.

ASSISTANT MANAGER'S REPORT

Variance Committee

Assistant Manager Russell Callan reported that the Variance Committee met before the meeting to discuss one request by Larry and Nancy Johnson. He said the Johnsons are wanting to transfer some irrigated acres from the Mud-Clear Creek Watershed to South Loup.

Duncan East Update

Callan showed a powerpoint of the Duncan East Drainage area and reviewed the project. He said that some maintenance needs to be done and the landowners will be contacted. He said

the NRD has agreements with all the property owners in the drainage area to do the maintenance and said some areas are being maintained and some are not.

Callan said there are a couple projects being addressed within the drainage area. He said there has been some siltation on the west end, so a contractor had been hired to recreate that area. He said a couple culverts have been added on the south end. Callan said that Ruby's Slough has some sheet piling partway through it that protects the grade of the wetland, and said some siltation has built up and the area has gotten wider. He said the NRD made a request to the Corps of Engineers to pull the sheet piling out and regrade the area, and said the COE granted that request. Callan also reported that there were some vegetation issues in the main drain that need to be addressed.

Buffalo County – Ravenna Lake

Callan reported that the Ravenna Lake is owned by the county and has primitive camping facilities. He said the county has a contract with Game and Parks and had the lake dredged which helped the fishery, but the lake sits stagnant and has had some water quality issues. He said the NRD is looking at the lake as a potential recharge site, and said water could be added to the lake via a small canal/pipeline from the South Loup River. Callan said that staff has met with Buffalo County representatives and said they were interested in what the NRD was doing at the lake. He said the county passed a resolution allowing the NRD access to the ground.

Koehlmoos said that the NRD is considering a recharge/augmentation project and public recreation area at the lake. He said it might be considered a small project for Water Sustainability Funds. He said no feasibility study has been done.

Kauk asked if the NRD had been contacted recently by a Ravenna community group regarding campsites at the lake for the total solar eclipse on August 21st. Callan said it was discussed, but no action was taken.

Columbus Area Water Resources Assessment

Callan gave a powerpoint presentation on the Columbus Area Water Resources Assessment Project. He said staff began noticing groundwater declines in the area between Columbus and the ethanol plant about four years ago. He said HDR began working on the project looking for a chance to offset the drop caused by City of Columbus water use, irrigation, and the ethanol plant. Callan said an option considered would be to put in a series of check dams that would act as recharge ponds when necessary.

Callan said another aspect of the assessment was the possibility of taking water from the canal, via pipe, to Christopher's Cove. He said that wasn't necessarily being considered anymore because other projects would have the same benefit to the area as the Christopher's Cove project.

Callan said there have not been any negotiations with the City of Columbus yet, but staff hopes to meet with project representatives in the next couple weeks.

ELM Update

Callan reported that he had talked to Steve Peterson at the Legislative Conference and he said that NRD staff should probably have a draft copy of the ELM project to review in about three weeks. Callan said the project was started in 2003. Callan said that Peterson will present the final review to the Board in April or May.

Davis Creek Recreation Area – Phase II

Water Modeling Coordinator Tylr Naprstek reported that there would be a pre-bid meeting on January 31st at NRD Headquarters for the Phase II portion of the Davis Creek Recreation Area Project showcasing the plans and construction ideas.

Naprstek said that the contract with Reserve America from Texas was recently finalized. He said that Calamus and Sherman Reservoirs use the services of Reserve America for camping reservations.

Naprstek said Phase II includes an access road from the existing picnic shelter on the east to the boat launch facility, a floating boat dock, 36 parking stalls, pit latrine, electrical lighting, fish cleaning station, RV dump that is piped to an onsite lagoon, and potentially adding security cameras for monitoring lake levels,. He said an invasive cleanout would need to be considered due to a potential zebra mussel problem.

Callan said that approximately 70% of the project will be paid for with outside funds.

Koehlmoos said staff would be looking for a part-time camp host.

Kruse passed along thanks to the NRD Board and staff from Jim Scow, Chairman of the Platte County Board of Supervisors, for their participation with the bank stabilization project on the Loup River west of Monroe.

Koehlmoos said the NRD is considering the purchase of a drone.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Lower Platte River Basin Coalition Update

Koehlmoos reported that John Engel of HDR will be giving a Lower Platte River Basin Coalition report to the Board in February. Koehlmoos said the draft has been distributed for review and corrections are being made.

Callan said that Engel would also be speaking to the Board in February about the joint project with Central Platte NRD on the South Loup.

Report of 2016 Board Attendees

Koehlmoos referred the Board to the 2016 Directors Attendance Chart included in the agenda. He said that, per state statute, if someone is on the Board as an elected official, they are allowed two consecutive unexcused absences before the Board is required to take action to hold a hearing to determine if the person will stay on the Board or not.

NARD REPORT

Director's Report

Eschliman thanked Dean Rasmussen for his 24 years of service on the NARD Board. He said Rasmussen was honored at the Legislative Conference.

Eschliman said he attended the legislative bills meeting and the Legislative Committee meeting at the Conference. He said the Risk Pool is short about \$45,000. He said there was no action on the Planning/Budget Committee.

Rasmussen reported that he moderated a session with Callan, Lyndon Vogt, and Pat O'Brien.

Boesch said she attended the Legislative Conference and is pleased about the cooperation among the NRDs. She said the New Directors session was informative and encouraged all new directors to attend in coming years.

NRC REPORT

Commissioner's Report

Hadenfeldt reported that he participated in a telephone conference call for possible rules changes. He said the Rules Committee will meet in Kearney on February 21st to finalize the rules and then present them to the NRC the next day. He said there will be a meeting in June to finalize the rules.

RC&D REPORTS

Loup Basin RC&D

Rasmussen thanked the Directors for their assistance at the Legislative Conference.

Rasmussen reported that Loup Basin will be having a scrap tire collection in Burwell. He said the RC&D received a grant from Environmental Quality Control for \$79,000.

PrairieLand RC&D

Gellermann said there was no report.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Board, Eschliman declared the meeting adjourned at 6:19 p.m.

Roster for attendance of this meeting and tally of votes cast on motions at this meeting are being filed with the official minutes of this meeting at the Lower Loup Natural Resources District's Headquarters Office, 2620 Airport Drive, Ord, Nebraska. Publication notification of this meeting was made via a newspaper in each county within the District. The next Board of Directors meeting will be held February 23, 2017, at 5:00 p.m., at the Headquarters Office in Ord, Nebraska.

Henry J. Thoene
Secretary