

MINUTES

LOWER LOUP NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

September 22, 2022

Ord, Nebraska

The September 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 September 22, 2022. 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
Robert L. Bauer
John Coffey
N. Richard Hadenfeldt
Randy Kauk
Matt Lukasiewicz
Alan Petersen
Gerald Smith
Henry J. Thoene, Secretary

Rollie D. Amsberry, Treasurer
Timothy E. Bartak
Beth Boesch
James Eschliman, Vice Chairman
Dennis Hirschbrunner
Gary A. Kruse
Larry Mohrman
Chad J. Podolak
Dean G. Thede

Directors absent:

Todd Nitsch

Rick Vlach

Staff in attendance:

Russell G. Callan, General Manager
Irene F. Kreifels, Administrative Assistant
Alan Bartels, I & E Coordinator
Dell Harris, Water Resources Specialist
Richard Woollen, District Forester
Mike Bechtold, IT Specialist

Tylr Naprstek, Asst. General Manager
Kim A. Lyons, Financial Secretary
V. Anne Freeman, Water Programs Sec.
Brian Kolar, Projects Technician
Jason Moudry, Water Programs Specialist

Guests in attendance:

Bryce Bauer, Liaison DC, NRCS, Ord

Jim Nelson, Cairo

VERIFICATION OF MEETING NOTICE AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Chairman Eschliman asked for verification of the meeting notice. General Manager Russell Callan stated that the agenda was current, and that the meeting notices were properly published in all newspapers, posted at the NRD Headquarters office in Ord, on the NRD website, and in the eight field office locations.

Anderson motioned, seconded by Kruse to adopt the agenda. Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, Anderson, Bauer, Boesch, Coffey, Eschliman, Hadenfeldt, Hirschbrunner, Kauk, Kruse, Lukasiewicz, Mohrman, Podolak, Smith, Thede, Thoene. Directors not present for vote: Adams, Bartak, Petersen. Directors absent: Nitsch, Vlach.

ROLL CALL

Roll Call was conducted. Directors present: Amsberry, Anderson, Bauer, Boesch, Coffey, Eschliman, Hadenfeldt, Hirschbrunner, Kauk, Kruse, Lukasiewicz, Mohrman, Podolak, Smith, Thede, Thoene. Directors Absent: Adams, Bartak, Nitsch, Petersen, Vlach.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Eschliman stated that Directors Nitsch and Vlach had asked to be excused.

Boesch motioned, seconded by Bauer, to excuse Directors Nitsch and Vlach. Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, Anderson, Bauer, Boesch, Coffey, Eschliman, Hadenfeldt, Hirschbrunner, Kauk, Kruse, Lukasiewicz, Mohrman, Podolak, Smith, Thede, Thoene. Directors absent: Adams, Bartak, Nitsch, Petersen, Vlach.

MINUTES

Eschliman asked for corrections and/or additions to the September 1, 2022, Board meeting minutes. None were heard.

Kauk motioned, seconded by Mohrman, to approve the September 1, 2022, Board meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, Anderson, Bauer, Boesch, Coffey, Eschliman, Hadenfeldt, Hirschbrunner, Kauk, Kruse, Lukasiewicz, Mohrman, Podolak, Smith, Thede, Thoene. Directors not present for vote: Adams, Bartak, Petersen. Directors absent: Nitsch, Vlach.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Russell Callan, General Manager, highlighted expenditures of \$3,993.00 to LRE Water for the WSF grant application for AEM Flights in Buffalo County and \$3,000.00 to Tremel Surveying Inc. for easement mapping in Columbus. He also noted expenditures of \$35,271.49 to B-Systems Inc. for server upgrades; \$12,800.00 to EA Engineering for the Cover Crop Study; \$8,863.00 to USGS for stream gage operations; \$31,668.47 to JEO Consulting Group for WFPO work; and \$631,299.70 to Rutjens Construction for work on the Columbus Recharge Project.

Adams asked about payments to Dewayne Russell for grass seeding from last month. Callan stated he would look into it and get back to him.

Thoene motioned, seconded by Boesch, to approve the September 22, 2022, Treasurer's Report. Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, Anderson, Bauer, Boesch, Coffey, Eschliman, Coffey, Hadenfeldt, Hirschbrunner, Kauk, Kruse, Lukasiewicz, Mohrman, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, Thede, Thoene. Director abstaining: Adams. Directors absent: Bartak, Nitsch, Petersen.

The Treasurer's Report Approval Policy states that the approved expenditures are to be published and each director who has per diem and/or reimbursement of expenses included in such financial reports, abstains from voting for the approval of his or her own per diem and/or expense reimbursement.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Eschliman asked for comments from the public. None were heard.

FORESTER'S REPORT

Richard Woollen, District Forester, reported that another round of interviews would be held on October 7th for the Conservation Forester position.

Woollen also reported that seedlings would go up to \$1.10 each this year, with container trees being more and that Bessey Nursery Clients Day would be held October 12th.

Woollen also reported that all status reviews on Nebraska Buffer Strip contracts had been completed and that the Nebraska Dept. of Ag would reimburse a portion of the costs. He said that fall payments would be mailed in October.

NRCS REPORT

Bryce Bauer, NRCS, Ord, reported that advertising had closed for both RC jobs in St. Paul and Burwell. He said that applications were received for each position.

Bauer reported that CSP payments would start October 1st and that the deadline was November 15th. He said that 150-200 producers would receive payments. Bauer also reported that 2023 CSP contracts and renewals were being worked on. Bauer reported that a core area meeting would be held October 6th at the NRD. A meeting addressing cedar tree issues will be held September 28th in Ericson.

INFORMATION & EDUCATION REPORT

Area IV Range Judging Contest

Alan Bartels, I&E Coordinator, reported that the NRD and NRCS hosted range judging near Weissert and that scoring was done today. He said there were 21 schools with 500 competitors. He reported that State Range Judging would be hosted by Upper Niobrara White and NRCS in Dawes County on September 29th.

North Central Land Judging Contest

Bartels also reported that October 12th the NRD would host the North Central Land Judging Contest and that the State Land Judging Contest would take place October 19th, hosted by North Platte NRD.

Kauk asked about the scores for the Range Judging. Bartels informed him that there was not yet an official tally.

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Davis Creek

Tylr Naprstek, Assistant General Manager, reported that the lake was at wintering elevation. He said that both boat docks remain in the water; however, the handicap dock was dry. He stated that staff would winterize the fish cleaning station and shower house in mid-October, depending on weather. He said that the campgrounds were full for the upcoming Junk Jaunt weekend. Naprstek also stated that Davis Creek was highlighted in the new *Valley County Venture* publication, which was handed out to Directors.

Chemigation & Water Sampling

Naprstek reported that chemigation inspections were done and staff had started sampling the 146 monitoring wells located across the District. He said staff had finished Area 28 and would move on to Area 30. Transect wells would be next, as well as working on static water level readings and flowmeter inspections, followed by domestic well sampling.

Drought Monitoring

Naprstek showed the most recent drought monitor map and explained that there was not much change from the last map, with most of the District still being in severe drought.

PROGRAMS/PROJECTS COMMITTEE

Ericson Dam Discussion

Kruse reported that the Committee discussed Ericson Lake's plans to upgrade the SCADA system which monitors and operates the water levels and the dam outlet gates at a cost of \$48,000. He stated that nobody from the Ericson Dam group was present for this meeting. He said that Ericson Lake previously had requested funding for the SCADA upgrades. Joe Wadas was going to talk to other possible participants and come back to the Committee with an official request.

Mud Creek WFPO

Kruse said that Gustafson reported to the Committee that there would be a 90% agency progress meeting in the fall. Naprstek added that the plan would be reviewed, and it would be determined if it was at an acceptable level to move forward.

Mira Creek (North Loup) WFPO

Kruse stated that an open house was held September 8th in North Loup with approximately 17 in attendance. Naprstek presented slides that were available for viewing at the open house. Slides consisted of 1) history of the flooding; 2) an overview of the watershed; 3) goals of the watershed plan; 4) evaluation of flood risks not chosen; and 5) proposed alternative plans, which are at 60%, not the acceptable 90%.

Kauk asked how well received the information was by the people of North Loup. Callan stated there was good discussion. Mohrman asked if, overall, they were OK with the project. Callan said questions were brought up about access during construction and similar concerns that would be addressed.

Naprstek stated there would be another public meeting held and the process will continue.

Sargent Flood Project

It was reported that NEMA is reviewing the HMGP application and then it will go to FEMA for final review. NEMA has said that we were on their priority funding list. A funding decision is expected sometime in April. Naprstek stated there was one alternative and that the City had been meeting with Gustafson and would be working on the Jessie Street crossing, as money was received from a Community Block Grant for the repairs. The City had applied for the community Block Grant on their own.

Building Update

Callan reported that a cleaning crew would be coming in Sunday to finish up the odds and ends of the remodel. He said the shop door was supposed to be installed on Friday. Callan

stated that some roof repair still needed to be done and re-skinning the front of the building where the window was put in which will take place after the door is installed.

Other

Kruse reported that Gustafson had been meeting with the Villages of Palmer and Litchfield on drainage issues.

WATER RESOURCES COMMITTEE

LB 1014e Section 51, ARPA Funding

Naprstek reported that there was ARPA funding through NDEE of up to \$4000 from the American Rescue Act of 2021 for private well owners to install reverse osmosis systems to counteract nitrates. He said that starting January 1, 2023, anyone with over 10 ppm is eligible for funding to install a new system. To qualify, private wells must be registered with DNR and a sample from the state lab at Dept. of Health and Human Services with nitrates of over 10 ppm must be obtained. If approved for funding, the unit must be a certified reverse osmosis system and must be installed by a professional.

Naprstek added that funding would go to municipal use as well. He said the split is \$1.2M for private property owners and \$2.8M for municipal.

Nitrate Management Discussion

Naprstek reported the next nitrate management meeting would be held October 25th from 6-8 p.m. at the NRD office. Expected attendees include municipalities, producers, as well as consultants. Naprstek also reported that there was a luncheon discussion held with a Sentinel Irrigation representative on Committee meeting day.

Long-Range Implementation Plan Discussion – Water

Naprstek stated the Long-Range Implementation Plan draft, which is updated annually, was available and would be sent to the tablets for review before the next meeting. It was also noted that the 2022-2032 Master Plan, which is revised every 10 years, had been approved by DNR.

Drought Management Plan

Naprstek reported that JEO returned the plan with the final adjustments and that staff would be reviewing. He stated it may be before the Board by next month.

2022 Irrigated Acres Allocation – Update

Naprstek reported that 18 applications were received in the North Loup Basin for 800 acres and 26 applications in the Middle Loup Basin for 1,341 acres. He said staff would begin inspections and they may be available for review at the next Committee meeting.

Adams asked that if a producer was next to a water mound area, could they come to the variance committee to apply for acres. Naprstek stated that anyone can come to the variance committee with those requests.

Columbus Recharge Project – Open House Update

Naprstek stated that the open house went well. He reported on difficulties with switches at the well site. Kolar reported that some issues had been resolved. He said the pumps were presently turned off and that pumping would begin again next week to assess things. Naprstek reported that water did make it over River Road.

Adams asked if there was water in the Platte River yet. Boesch and Hirschbrunner stated that there was not. Hirschbrunner stated that Lost Creek Channel was also dry. Callan stated that it would stay dry while adjustments were made to get the system running. Mohrman asked if the City would be in control after that. Callan said that they would, and that the SCADA system would run through the treatment plant. Kauk asked if figures were being run to see how much would need to be pumped to keep a steady flow. Callan stated that they were reviewing information and trying to figure in irrigation, evaporation, etc. He also stated that it would be shut down in the winter. Mohrman stated he thought the system could not be turned down due to overheating. Kolar said that the system was water cooled so there would be limits.

Other

Naprstek reported that the final report on the AEM flights in Nance County should be available in February or March.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Litigation Update

Callan reported that he still had not heard anything on the Platte Republican Diversion.

New Hires

Callan stated there were no new hires; however, Bartels moved into the I&E Coordinator position and his previous position as Information Specialist would be advertised.

Non-action Reports

None

NARD REPORT

Eschliman reported that the NARD Conference would be Monday and Tuesday of next week in Kearney.

NRC REPORT

Hadenfeldt reported that meetings had been held on rule changes and that there would be another meeting in October. He also stated that the scoring committee should be meeting soon.

RC&D REPORT

Adams reported that there would be a barn raising celebration when the walls of the new Legion building go up.

ANNOUNCEMENTS / FUTURE MEETING TOPICS

Callan announced that meetings will be moving to 4:00 p.m. starting in November. He also stated that Lillian Creek would be coming up as a future meeting topic and that information would be given on what has been done so far on the project and to see if the Board wanted to continue.

Hadenfeldt asked about having an award in Larry Schultz's name for range judging or something similar. Callan stated that there were scholarships given for Envirothon with which it could go.

Kauk asked about last month's discussion on the resolution on farming practice sustainability. He expressed that he was against the resolution. Boesch stated she did not think it was needed. Kauk asked if there would be discussion at the NARD Conference. Eschliman stated that in caucus they would decide if they would do anything with it. He said that the NARD Executive Committee reviewed it, and nobody had a problem with it. Callan stated that none of the NRDs were against sustainable farming practices but was concerned that the NRDs were being used to promote something that was outside of NRD purposes and authorities.

Boesch stated that we are trying to fight nitrate issues and thought things were not sustainable the way they were if nitrates needed to be lower. Podolak asked if all NRDs would fall under the resolution if passed. Callan stated that resolutions give Dean Edson at the NARD office direction as to how to work with the Legislature. Eschliman stated that it would be an NARD resolution if it gets passed.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Board, Chairman Eschliman declared the meeting adjourned at 6:02 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 October 27, 2022, at 5:00 p.m., at the Headquarters Office in Ord, Nebraska.

Henry J. Thoene
Secretary