

MINUTES

LOWER LOUP NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

July 25, 2024

Ord, Nebraska

The July 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 July 25, 2024. Vice Chairman R. Vlach called the meeting to order at 4:58 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Directors in attendance:

Rollie D. Amsberry, Treasurer
Colton R. DeBower
N. Richard Hadenfeldt
Justin W. King
Matt Lukasiewicz
Todd Nitsch
Chad J. Podolak
Rick Vlach, Vice Chairman

Timothy E. Bartak
James Eschliman
Randy Kauk
Gary A. Kruse
Larry Mohrman, Secretary
Alan Petersen
Gerald Smith

Directors absent:

James C. Adams
Robert L. Bauer
Henry J. Thoene, Chairman

Darwin B. Anderson
Thomas L. Knutson
Alexander L. Vlach

Staff in attendance:

Russell G. Callan, General Manager
Kim A. Lyions, Financial Secretary
Brant Bechtold, Information Specialist
Kevin Gustafson, District Engineer
Jason Moudry, Water Programs Specialist
Aron Lewis, Conservation Forester

Tylr Naprstek, Assistant General Manager
Alan Bartels, I&E Coordinator
Dell Harris, Water Resources Specialist
Brian Kolar, Projects Technician
Ann Freeman, Water Programs Secretary

Guests in attendance:

Bryce Bauer, NRCS, Ord

VERIFICATION OF MEETING NOTICE AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Vice Chairman R. Vlach asked for verification of the meeting notice. General Manager Russ Callan stated that the agenda was current with revisions, 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.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

R. Vlach stated that Directors Adams, Anderson, Bauer, Knutson, and Thoene had asked to be excused.

Eschliman motioned, seconded by Smith, to excuse absent Directors Adams, Anderson, Bauer, Knutson, and Thoene. Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, DeBower, Eschliman, Hadenfeldt, Kauk, Kruse, Lukasiewicz, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, R. Vlach. Directors not present for vote: Bartak, King. Directors absent: Adams, Anderson, Bauer, Knutson, Thoene, A. Vlach.

MINUTES

R. Vlach asked for corrections and/or additions to the June 24, 2024, Board meeting minutes.

King arrived at 4:59 p.m.

Kauk motioned, seconded by Nitsch, to approve the June 24, 2024, Board meeting minutes. Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, DeBower, Eschliman, Hadenfeldt, Kauk, Kruse, Lukasiewicz, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, R. Vlach. Directors not present for vote: Bartak, King. Directors absent: Adams, Anderson, Bauer, Knutson, Thoene, A. Vlach.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Russell Callan, General Manager, highlighted expenditures of \$28,778.94 to JEO Consulting Group Inc. for WFPO work and \$1,372.50 to JEO Consulting Group Inc. for the Pibel Lake Expansion grant application. Callan also noted additional expenditures of \$24,125.00 to USGS for the Nitrate Legacy Project and \$17,750.00 to USGS for the Vadose Sampling Project.

Kauk asked about the NARD dues and how they determine the amount. Callan stated it started out based on the amount of land in the District and added that he does not know the exact breakdown, but it is based on population and budget.

Kruse motioned, seconded by DeBower, to approve the July 25, 2024, Treasurer's Report. Motin carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, DeBower, Eschliman, Hadenfeldt, Kauk, King, Kruse, Lukasiewicz, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen,

Podolak, Smith, R. Vlach. Directors not present for vote: Bartak. Directors absent: Adams, Anderson, Bauer, Knutson, Thoene, A. Vlach.

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

R. Vlach asked for public comments. None were heard.

FORESTER'S REPORT

Aron Lewis, Conservation Forester, reported that some of the projects he is working on are still in shutdown until Wednesday due to the long-eared bat being present. He added that he has been doing site visits for forestry improvement and windbreak renovations, as well as checking on sick trees.

Lewis stated that the Nebraska Forest Service switched to Arc Pro and that the summer staff meeting was held last month. He stated that they visited the nature reserve and saw a burn scar where Ponderosa pine are being replanted, as well as a community forestry project in downtown Valentine.

Lewis added that he thinks that Pibel Lake may have the nation's biggest cottonwood tree and that officials will be coming to take measurements to confirm. He stated that a plaque will be awarded if it breaks the current record held in Beatrice.

Amsberry asked the status of the visitors center at Halsey. Lewis said they are working on a discovery center, but he does not know what all will be in the building. Callan added that ACE Camp was moved to Kamp Kaleo this year and that Lower Loup NRD has taken over most of the responsibility that comes with it.

NRCS REPORT

Bryce Bauer, NRCS, Ord, reported that new employees have started. He said that Brooks Bechtold is the new Natural Resource Specialist in the Ord office and Ellie Norleen is the new Soil Conservationist in Albion.

Bauer added that the RCPP application has been submitted and he is expecting to hear something back in August, with the agreements to be in place by September 30th. He stated that the Nature Conservancy also wrote an RCPP project for the Sandhills that covers parts of Iowa and Missouri for water development and cutting brush.

Bauer stated that he asked for an additional half million dollars for EQIP. It was received and used to fund pivots out of four offices.

King asked what “RCPP” stands for. Bauer stated Regional Conservation Planning Partnership. Bauer added that the funds can be used for gravity or pivot irrigation, nutrient management, and irrigation management. He stated that it could also be used for cover crops or a stand-alone nutrient management program, adding that high nitrate areas would be priority, but the funds are open for District-wide use.

INFORMATION & EDUCATION REPORT

Central Community College Youth Summer Camps

Alan Bartels, I&E Coordinator, reported that Bechtold held a monarch migration madness camp at Aagaard Farm that talked about habitat.

Bartak arrived at 5:13 p.m.

Bartels stated that a photography camp was held for CCC’s Ord campus. He stated that 90-minute sessions were held that covered the basics of camera operation, photography basics and NRD basics. He added that a guided photography walk was held in the Arboretum.

Hazard Mitigation Plan

Bartels reported that he and Naprstek had met with JEO for the 2027 Hazard Mitigation Plan updates and that he will be working on sending out RFPs for later review. He added that JEO has done the last two versions of the plan for the NRD.

NRD Annual Conference – Kearney

Bartels reported that the Annual Conference will be in Kearney September 23-24.

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER’S REPORT

Recreation Areas

Naprstek reported that the NRD has been sampling for NDEE Beach Watch at Sherman, Davis Creek, Pibel and Calamus lakes. He said that samples are being taken for blue-green algae and E. coli and that results can be viewed on NDEE’s Beach Watch website. Naprstek added that staff is also doing ambient lake samples at Pibel with NDEE.

Naprstek reported that there was a church camp present at Davis Creek last weekend and that the lake is at maximum capacity. He added that there is some streambank erosion and some trees are floating, so people are being warned to watch for them. He stated that one of the tent camping spots had to be removed due to the high-water levels.

Nitrate Vulnerability Model – Nutrient Management Plan

Naprstek showed the trigger areas and stated that nutrient management plans will have to be developed in those areas. He stated there are a lot of repeat offenders and that about half of the 42 sites already have a plan in place. He highlighted the medium-high level areas and added that all the sites are required to be soil sampled, and have water analysis done by the NRD. He added that the ones that apply manure also must take samples. Naprstek showed an example of the mailing that is sent out containing the last 3 years of sampling data.

Naprstek showed the results from Area 30 and stated there is only one repeat from last year. He also showed some results from Area 29 and stated that there is preference to have a minimum of two, but preferably 3, years of data before triggering.

DeBower asked how many years of low readings must be obtained before they are taken off the list. Naprstek stated that producers must make a plan, and it can be reviewed after that. Callan added that there is not a sunset on the plan; however, it can be revisited.

Naprstek added that all management areas will be assessed because we have data from them. Podolak asked if the data is available online. Naprstek stated that it is not yet, but Callan added that the information is in the newsletter all the time.

Chemigation Inspections

Naprstek reported that there are over 700 inspections completed and that there has been an instance where a tech found people chemigating without proper permits and licensing. He added that an emergency permit was issued right away. He stated there was another in Buffalo County that was all hooked up and ready to go; however, the producer removed the pump to ensure it was not used until proper permits were obtained.

Lukasiewicz asked how many are inspected each year. Naprstek stated there are about 3,700 total and one-third are checked every year. He added that new permits are prioritized in June as new permits must be inspected before they are used; however, old, permitted locations can be used and technicians will inspect when they can get there.

Flow Meter Cost-Share

Naprstek reported that the NRD has received about 180 applications for cost-share and that there has been some confusion with the irrigation contractors on the process. He added that the application must be received before the work is completed. Field staff would do a site check to see what needs to be done prior to approval, and that the meter needs to be inspected after installation to complete the process.

WQMA Cover Crop Cost-Share

Naprstek reported that this is the third year for cost-share in Area 29 in Wheeler County and for Area 30 in Platte County. He stated that in Area 29, it started out following corn crop

only, but it has not had as much interest as anticipated. He stated that information has been put out in newsletters, direct letters to the producers and that Dan Ruterborries, Rangeland Management Specialist, has been contacting producers as well.

CITY OF FULLERTON – 2024 SOURCE WATER GRANT

Naprstek reported that Alan Chopik with the City of Fullerton has approached the NRD for a Source Water Grant Partnership. He stated that they are looking to decommission a couple wells on the water system and stray wells in the wellhead protection area. He added that they are looking to get rid of 20-25 wells in the vicinity.

Naprstek showed a map and outline of the project area. He stated that it extends about one mile outside of the wellhead protection boundary to eliminate contamination. He added that the study that was recently completed recommended to close old wells. Callan stated that we can run the project through the Committee, however, it is in a target area. He added that our participation would double the program.

Eschliman motioned, seconded by Podolak, to approve participation with the City of Fullerton for a Source Water Grant Partnership. Motion carried by electronic vote all present voting yes.

ENGINEER'S REPORT

Mud Creek WFPO

Kevin Gustafson, District Engineer, reported that JEO has submitted information to NRCS and that they will get together and work on it. He stated that they are hoping to get scheduled to get the plan finalized and the funding request sent into HQ.

Pibel Lake Expansion

Gustafson reported that JEO did the wetland determination and that there will be an impact to 0.048 acres from the camping and trail areas. He added that the State Historic Preservation Office is requiring a survey of nine acres to make sure nothing will be disturbed.

Sargent Flood Project

Gustafson stated that this week JEO has been in Sargent having one-on-one meetings with the landowners. He added that they are looking at a potential change to the channel location to avoid the State Communications tower. Gustafson showed a map of the location of the tower and where they are looking to move the channel to avoid it. He added that a public meeting will be held in August.

Dannebrog Silver Jackets Meeting

Gustafson reported that the NRD received an invitation for a meeting on a study they will be doing near Dannebrog. He stated that the group is led by the Corps of Engineers and that the State and local agencies are working to access the flood risk. He stated that Oak Creek and Middle Loup River have had studies completed. Gustafson added that he attended the meeting, and they are focusing on flood proofing by nonstructural measures. He stated that they are looking at installing barriers or raising and lifting structures or installing vents to equalize pressure in a flooding event. He added that there was discussion about building a levee around town to keep water out. Their project is estimated to be \$8 million.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Budget Hearing Date/Time

Callan stated that the Board needed to set the date and time for the budget hearing.

Kruse motioned, seconded by Amsberry, to set the budget hearing for August 29th, at 5:10 p.m. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

Water Strategies Update

Callan stated he did not get Water Strategies update in the supplemental agenda but has one if anyone wants to see it.

Litigation Update

Callan stated that we are still waiting on Platte-Republican Diversion information.

New Hires

None.

Non-action Reports

Callan stated that Governor Pille's Proclamation is in the supplemental agenda for review. He added that the sessions started today and that next week he, Eschliman and the other NRD managers will meet with the Governor.

NARD REPORT

Eschliman stated he had nothing new to report.

NRC REPORT

Amsberry reported that Tuesday and Wednesday the scoring committee worked on applications. He stated that all applications below \$250,000 qualified and that there were \$816,000 total funds between those applications. He added that there were four large requests over \$250,000. He stated that the whole board will meet August 14th for approval.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/FUTURE MEETING TOPICS

Hadenfeldt announced that he is retiring from the Board due to health issues.

Amsberry motioned, seconded by Eschliman, to enter Executive Session at 5:58 p.m. Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, Bartak, DeBower, Eschliman, Hadenfeldt, Kauk, King, Kruse, Lukasiewicz, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, R. Vlach. Director not voting: Mohrman. Directors absent: Adams, Anderson, Bauer, Knutson, Thoene, A. Vlach.

Smith motioned, seconded by Kruse, to exit Executive Session at 6:33 p.m. with no action taken. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Board, Vice Chairman R. Vlach declared the meeting adjourned at 6:34 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 August 29, 2024, at 5:00 p.m., at the Headquarters Office in Ord, Nebraska.

Larry Mohrman
Secretary