

# MINUTES

## LOWER LOUP NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

December 19, 2024

Ord, Nebraska

The December 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 December 19, 2024. Chairman Thoene called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

### CALL TO ORDER

#### Directors in attendance:

James C. Adams  
Darwin B. Anderson  
Jeremy Eschliman  
Justin W. King  
Gary A. Kruse  
Larry Mohrman, Secretary  
Alan Petersen  
Gerald Smith  
Alexander L. Vlach

Rollie D. Amsberry, Treasurer  
Robert L. Bauer  
Randy Kauk  
Thomas L. Knutson  
Matt Lukasiewicz  
Todd Nitsch  
Chad J. Podolak  
Henry J. Thoene, Chairman  
Rick Vlach, Vice Chairman

#### Directors absent:

Timothy E. Bartak  
James Eschliman

Colton R. DeBower

#### Staff in attendance:

Russell G. Callan, General Manager  
Irene Kreifels, Administrative Assistant  
Alan Bartels, I&E Coordinator  
Dell Harris, Water Resources Specialist  
Ann Freeman, Water Programs Secretary  
LeeAnn Smith, Water Admin. Assistant  
Brian Kolar, Projects Technician

Tylr Naprstek, Assistant General Manager  
Kim A. Lyons, Financial Secretary  
Brant Bechtold, Information Specialist  
Kevin Gustafson, District Engineer  
Jason Moudry, Water Programs Specialist  
Aron Lewis, Dist. Conservation Forester  
Makenzi Woollen, Financial Assistant

#### Guests in attendance:

Bryce Bauer, DC, NRCS, Ord

N. Richard Hadenfeldt, Dannebrog

## VERIFICATION OF MEETING NOTICE AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Chairman Thoene 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

Thoene stated that Directors DeBower and James Eschliman had asked to be excused.

**Adams motioned, seconded by Nitsch, to excuse absent Directors DeBower and Eschliman. Motion carried by roll call vote. Directors voting yes: Adams, Amsberry, Anderson, Bauer, Jeremy Eschliman, Kauk, King, Knutson, Kruse, Lukasiewicz, Nitsch, Mohrman, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, Thoene, A. Vlach, R. Vlach. Directors absent: Bartak, DeBower, James Eschliman.**

The 2024 Board of Directors Attendance Roster was handed out for review. Callan explained the Board of Directors Attendance Policy and reminded the Directors that it is important for them to notify the office if they will be absent from a meeting or it will be counted as unexcused.

## MINUTES

Thoene asked for corrections and/or additions to the November 21, 2024, Board meeting minutes. With no changes being heard, Thoene announced that the Minutes would stand approved.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Russell Callan, General Manager, highlighted expenditures of \$188,872.50 to NLC, LLC for the Davis Creek Road Improvement Project; and \$4,437.91 to Capital One for the Loup Public Power bill for the electrical on the Columbus Recharge Project. Callan highlighted additional expenditures of \$41,895.00 to JEO for work on the WFPO Projects and on the Sargent Flood Project

**R. Vlach motioned, seconded by Adams, to approve the December 19, 2024, Treasurer's Report. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.**

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

Thoene asked for public comments. None were heard.

## FORESTER'S REPORT

Aron Lewis, District Conservation Forester, reported that he has been working on tree sales, site visits and answering calls on coconut mats. He stated the shipment arrived last Tuesday and that we have received a lot of interest.

Lewis added that he has been signing up new projects for the NFRP and Wildland Urban Interface Programs and that he wrote another Wildland Urban Interface Program grant application for more funding for this District. Lewis stated that he attended a grant scoring conference and will be scoring grants for other States as part of the grant process.

Lewis also reported that he attended a prescribed burn of about 3,000 acres at the Nature Conservancy in Valentine. He said it was a two-day burn and that the first day they blacklined the entire unit and the second day they did interior ignition.

Lewis added that the University shuts down from December 23 to January 2, so he would not be working during that time.

Jeremy Eschliman asked if the Government shutdown would affect his schedule. He replied that it would not.

## NRCS REPORT

Bryce Bauer, NRCS, reported that he had not heard anything official about the Government shutdown; however, an email was received today advising to prepare for it and that more information would be coming. He said that if they decide to shut down, they usually report to work the next work day long enough to secure everything until the office reopens.

Callan added that in the event of a shutdown, the field office secretaries will not be able to work in those offices either.

Bauer stated that staff is working on about 400 EQIP contracts within the 10 counties, which is about the same as usual. He stated that they still have the IRA (Inflation Reduction Act) funds which gives producers another opportunity to get their projects approved. He added that every year the rules change for the program but will have more information soon. Bauer added that the LLNRD makes up about 10% of the State so they would get about 10% of EQIP and CSP money, averaging approximately \$25 million for the District. The IRA money will be an additional \$40 million, statewide.

Bauer added that he, Callan, and Naprstek had a meeting with Emily Webster, the RCPP coordinator in the State Office and got the rough agreements from her. He said he would like to have the agreement finalized by Inauguration Day.

Bauer also announced that the Lower Loup East DC, Miles Anderson, will be starting around January 6<sup>th</sup> in Albion, after he returns from DC detail in Valentine.

## INFORMATION & EDUCATION REPORT

### NARD Legislative Conference

Alan Bartels, I&E Coordinator, reported that the Legislative Conference will be held in Lincoln January 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> and that lodging arrangements have been made.

### Washington D.C. Conference

Bartels reported that the Washington D.C. conference is scheduled for March 31<sup>st</sup> through April 2<sup>nd</sup> this year, so tentative plans will be to book for departure on the 29<sup>th</sup> and return on the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

### Nitrate Vulnerability Model/Nutrient Management Plans

Tylr Naprstek, Assistant General Manager, reported that letters were mailed and that there were 52 areas designated as "High." He added that he had met with all but two; however, they had been in contact. He stated that most of the meetings consisted of NRD staff, the operator, and their crop consultant. He added that during the meeting they review the model and their current fertilizer program. He also added that some signed plans have already been received. This process has been a great opportunity to promote the Nitrate Reduction Act cost-share program.

### Flow Meter Maintenance

Naprstek reported that Ed Drozd, NRD Technician from Columbus, has been out with Seim Ag and out of 145 meters to be maintained, 48-52 have been completed. He added that the flow meters in Area 29 were all fully maintained last year, so those will be OK for a couple of years. Naprstek also stated that Ryan Hellbusch, Water Quality Technician from Columbus, is taking care of Area 30 and is about half done.

Naprstek added that a letter was mailed last week with flow meter readings on all sites that have been read. He said the letter states that meter maintenance is required and that manufacturer's specifications need to be adhered to.

Naprstek added that the NRD maintains the meters in Water Quality Management Areas, but not meters outside those areas.

## Drought Update

Naprstek showed the drought impact model readouts which showed not much change overall, with the western portion of our District still being in the “Severe” category and the eastern portion moving into “Moderate” status, with a slight improvement in Platte and Nance Counties, both being in “Moderate” status instead of “Severe.” He also showed the regional forecast and local surface water flow numbers, as well as the instream flow status.

## PROGRAMS/PROJECTS COMMITTEE

Kruse stated there were no action items, only reports.

### Dannebrog Flood Study

Kruse reported that the Silver Jackets conducted a flood study.

Kevin Gustafson, District Engineer, explained that the Silver Jackets is a group of employees of the Army Corps of Engineers. He stated that they get involved in local flooding, natural disaster type of preparedness and similar projects. He added that they conducted a flooding study in Dannebrog due to Hope Creek running from Sherman Lake and looked at the impact downstream on the Loup River. Kruse added that the Silver Jackets do studies but do not have funding to assist with projects. Gustafson stated they partnered with the city. Gustafson showed the Oak Creek watershed below Sherman Dam and Dannebrog on the map.

### Davis Creek Road Project

Kruse reported that the concrete work is not done yet and most likely will not be finished this year. Gustafson added that it is about 40% complete and that the project will be halted for Christmas and start again after the New Year depending on weather conditions. Gustafson showed aerial footage of the work that has been completed.

### St. Edward BRIC Grant

Kruse reported that preliminary work done by Kirkham Michael would not reduce flooding in downtown St. Edward. JEO is working to evaluate other options to mitigate flood issues.

### Mud Creek WFPO

Kruse reported that funding has been submitted for approval and no news has been received.

### Mira Creek WFPO

Kruse reported that a public meeting was held in North Loup.

Gustafson added that members of the public did not show up for the meeting. He added that the plan has been put out for public comments and that NRCS has received some comments from governmental offices. Nebraska Game and Parks had no comments. The Nebraska Department of Transportation wants to review the modeling, and the EPA had comments about wetland impacts, floodplain buyouts, and air quality impacts.

### Sargent Flood Project

Kruse reported that about 60% of design plans are done and have been submitted for review.

Gustafson added that staff received the design last week so it will be reviewed and comments sent to JEO, then will be moved into final design.

### Other

Kruse reported that we were notified of funds available for stream monitoring equipment between St. Paul and Columbus.

Gustafson added that the funds would come from DNR. He added that some potential sites were identified during the flood resiliency study and that information was still being gathered for the program.

Podolak asked about analysis on the Columbus dike to see if repairs were needed. Callan replied that it was just recertified so he thinks it is done. Kruse asked if they were looking to extend it. Callan replied that they were looking at that as an option. Gustafson stated he heard there may be potential alternatives.

## ENGINEER'S REPORT

Gustafson showed the plot of instream flow readings from the North and Middle Loup Rivers by St. Paul. He stated that the peak flow was in June with 10,000 cfs. He showed the difference from 2023 to 2024 and added that there were about the same number of days with less flow than required. He also reviewed the daily averages for the year.

## WATER RESOURCES COMMITTEE

### District Rules and Regulations Update

Nitsch reported that the Committee was given updates on the public meetings held in Palmer and St. Paul and that there were good turnouts and discussions.

### Large Water User Rule

Nitsch stated that Blankenau is still working on the revision and that fall fertilizer restrictions need to be discussed again.

Callan stated that fall fertilizer is not included in the upcoming hearing. He added that he is in communication with Blankenau to see if the hearing can be held in Ord or if it needs to be held in St. Paul.

**Nitsch motioned, seconded by Smith, to schedule a Public Hearing on Rules and Regulations Changes for 3:00 p.m. on February 20<sup>th</sup>. Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, Anderson, Bauer, Jeremy Eschliman, Kauk, King, Knutson, Kruse, Lukasiewicz, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Thoene, Smith, A. Vlach, R. Vlach. Director abstaining: Adams. Directors absent: Bartak, DeBower, James Eschliman.**

#### 2024 Flow Meter Report

Nitsch reported that Jason Moudry, Water Programs Specialist, gave a presentation on flow meter readings from 2023 and 2024 in Areas 28, 29, and 30. He reported to the Committee that 1,100 meters were read in 2023 and 1,223 in 2024, showing how many of them were cost-shared. Each year a letter is sent to producers showing their annual water usage report compared to average water use by county and crop.

#### Vadose Soil Study Update

Nitsch reported that Moudry also reported about the samples being taken near St. Edward. He stated that some of the results showed more than 300 lbs. of nitrogen at 8 foot depth and how easily nitrogen can get beyond the root zone and be lost. Nitsch added that Moudry also talked to them about the bromide tracer and how it moves like nitrogen through the soil. He also stated that changes are coming to the UNL recommendations stating not to apply fall fertilizer anywhere.

Moudry stated that he and Chris Hobza, USGS, will be presenting on the vadose study at the Legislative Conference.

### VARIANCE COMMITTEE

#### Archer Daniels Midland Co. (ADM, formerly MCP) Variance Request

Smith reported that the Committee recommended approval of the ADM variance relinquishing surface water rights and converting them to groundwater.

**Smith motioned, seconded by Kruse, to approve the ADM variance request to relinquish surface water rights and convert them to groundwater. Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Adams, Amsberry, Anderson, Jeremy Eschliman, Kauk, King, Knutson, Kruse, Lukasiewicz, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Thoene, Smith, A. Vlach, R. Vlach. Director abstaining: Bauer. Directors absent: Bartak, DeBower, James Eschliman.**

Smith added that next month there will be a couple of other variance requests brought to the Board for a vote.

## MANAGER'S REPORT

### Resolution: N. Richard Hadenfeldt

Callan introduced Resolution Number FY2025-006 as follows:

*Resolution Number FY2025-006  
RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE N. RICHARD HADENFELDT  
FOR 35 YEARS OF SERVICE*

*WHEREAS, the Lower Loup Natural Resources District has provided long-standing service in the conservation of natural resources to the residents of the Loup River Basin,*

*WHEREAS, N. Richard Hadenfeldt provided 35 years of exemplary service and valuable advice to the District as a member of the Board of Directors, and*

*WHEREAS, N. Richard Hadenfeldt served the citizens of the District with expert engineering knowledge and with thoughtful consideration given to every issue and vote,*

*BE IT RESOLVED, by unanimous vote, the Board of Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District extends recognition and commendation to N. Richard Hadenfeldt.*

### Resolution: James C. Adams

Callan introduced Resolution Number FY2025-007 as follows:

*Resolution Number FY2025-007  
RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE JAMES ADAMS  
FOR 37 YEARS OF SERVICE*

*WHEREAS, the Lower Loup Natural Resources District has provided long-standing service in the conservation of natural resources to the residents of the Loup River Basin,*

*WHEREAS, James Adams provided 37 years of exemplary service and valuable advice to the District as a member of the LLNRD staff and then the Board of Directors, and*

*WHEREAS, James Adams served the citizens of the District through his professional experience and with thoughtful consideration given to every issue and vote,*

*BE IT RESOLVED, by unanimous vote, the Board of Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District extends recognition and commendation to James Adams.*



Resolution: Darwin B. Anderson

Callan introduced Resolution Number FY2025-008 as follows:

*Resolution Number FY2025-008*

***RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE DARWIN ANDERSON  
FOR 50 YEARS OF SERVICE***

*WHEREAS, the Lower Loup Natural Resources District has provided long-standing service in the conservation of natural resources to the residents of the Loup River Basin,*

*WHEREAS, Darwin Anderson provided 50 years of exemplary service and valuable advice to the District as a member of the Board of Directors, and*

*WHEREAS, Darwin Anderson served the citizens of the District through his professional experience and with thoughtful consideration given to every issue and vote,*

*BE IT RESOLVED, by unanimous vote, the Board of Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District extends recognition and commendation to Darwin Anderson.*

**Knutson motioned, seconded by Podolak, to adopt the Years of Service Resolutions FY2025-006 - Hadenfeldt; FY2025-007 - Adams; and FY2025-008 – Anderson. Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, Anderson, Bauer, Jeremy Eschliman, Kauk, King, Knutson, Kruse, Lukasiewicz, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Thoene, Smith, A. Vlach, R. Vlach. Director abstaining: Adams. Directors absent: Bartak, DeBower, James Eschliman.**

New Hires

Callan reported that Makenzi Woollen was hired for the Financial Assistant position.

NARD Report

Thoene stated there was no report.

NRC Report

Amsberry reported that the next meeting will be on February 19<sup>th</sup> and that there are still open positions on the Board.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS, NARD REPRESENTATIVE/ALTERNATE, NARD ANNUAL CONFERENCE VOTING DELEGATE/ALTERNATE, AND LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE VOTING DELEGATE/ALTERNATE**

Thoene asked for nominations for Chairperson.

Adams nominated Thoene, seconded by Kruse.

No further nominations were made.

**Smith motioned, seconded by Kauk, to close nominations and to appoint Thoene as Chairman. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.**

Thoene asked for nominations for Vice Chairperson.

Anderson nominated R. Vlach, seconded by Smith.

No further nominations were made.

**Kruse motioned, seconded by King, to close nominations and to appoint R. Vlach as Vice Chairman. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.**

Thoene asked for nominations for Secretary.

**R. Vlach nominated Mohrman, seconded by Petersen. With no other nominations being heard, vote was held. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.**

Thoene asked for nominations for Treasurer.

Kruse nominated Amsberry, seconded by Nitsch.

**Mohrman motioned, seconded by Smith, to cease nominations and to appoint Amsberry as Treasurer. Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Adams, Anderson, Bauer, Jeremy Eschliman, Kauk, King, Knutson, Kruse, Lukasiewicz, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Thoene, Smith, A. Vlach, R. Vlach. Director abstaining: Amsberry. Directors absent: Bartak, DeBower, James Eschliman.**

Thoene reported that Eschliman agreed to remain the NARD Representative.

**Knutson motioned, seconded by King, to appoint James Eschliman as the NARD Representative and Thoene as the Alternate. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.**

Thoene stated that the Legislative Conference Alternate would need to be changed since James Eschliman will not be attending.

Director Smith volunteered.

**With no further interest expressed, vote was held to appoint Thoene as the NARD Annual Conference Voting Delegate and James Eschliman as the Alternate and Thoene as the Legislative Conference Voting Delegate and Smith as the Alternate. Motion carried by**

**electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Adams, Amsberry, Anderson, Bauer, Jeremy Eschliman, Kauk, King, Knutson, Kruse, Lukasiewicz, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Thoene, A. Vlach, R. Vlach. Director abstaining: Smith. Directors absent: Bartak, DeBower, James Eschliman.**

**2025 Board Officers:** Chairperson – Henry Thoene  
Vice Chairperson – Rick Vlach  
Secretary – Larry Mohrman  
Treasurer - Rollie Amsberry

**NARD Representative** – James Eschliman  
**Alternate** – Hank Thoene

**NARD Annual Conference Voting Delegate** – Henry Thoene  
**Alternate** – James Eschliman

**Legislative Conference Voting Delegate** – Henry Thoene  
**Alternate** – Jerry Smith

**APPROVAL OF 2025 BOARD MEETING CALENDAR, DESIGNATION OF OFFICIAL NEWSPAPERS & BANKS, SET MAXIMUM COST LIMIT PER PLATE FOR AWARDS DINNER AND MAXIMUM FOR 2025 AWARDS**

Callan pointed out that the February Board Meeting and hearing will be a week early due to GMDA Conference being held the fourth week of the month. He also pointed out that in August there will not be a Board meeting but will be held in September due to the deadline for the County Assessor Certification of Values.

Newspapers, banks, and awards were reviewed as follows:

Newspapers - The Grand Island Independent is the only District-wide daily publication that covers the NRD. In the past we have designated it as our District-wide paper but have also utilized The Albion News, The Burwell Tribune, The Custer County Chief, The Columbus Telegram, Cedar Valley News, The Nance County Journal, The Ord Quiz, The Phonograph-Herald, The Ravenna News, and The Sherman County Times for meeting announcements and legal notices.

Banks – First Interstate Bank in Ord has been the main repository for the Lower Loup NRD's funds, and First National Bank in Ord serves as the secondary repository. The following banks are additional repositories for Lower Loup NRD funds – Cornerstone Bank, North Loup, NE; Pathway Bank, Ord, NE; BankFirst, Ord, NE; Farmers & Merchants Bank, Ericson, NE; Citizens Bank & Trust Company, Loup City, NE; State Bank of Scotia, Scotia, NE; Citizens State Bank, Spalding, NE; and Heartland Bank, Ord, NE; and Nebraska Public Agency Investment Trust (NPAIT), Lincoln, NE.

Awards – The current maximum Awards Dinner per-plate cost limit at \$70 and the awards maximum limit at \$125.

**Smith motioned, seconded by Anderson, to approve the 2025 Calendar and to keep all newspapers, banks, and awards amounts the same. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.**

### ANNOUNCEMENTS/FUTURE MEETING TOPICS

None heard.

### ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Board, Chairman Thoene declared the meeting adjourned at 5:10 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 January 23, 2025, at 4:00 p.m., at the Headquarters Office in Ord, Nebraska.

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Larry Mohrman  
Secretary