



LOWER REPUBLICAN NRD
BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Lower Republican NRD Meeting Room, 30 North John, Alma, NE
February 13, 2025, at 1:30pm

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING:

Meeting notices were published in the Harlan County Journal, posted in the District NRCS Offices, and on the district website at www.lrnrd.org.

Chairman Marlin Murdoch called the meeting of the Lower Republican NRD Board of Directors to order at 1:30 PM, inviting everyone to join in prayer. He noted that the current copy of the statute regarding public meeting laws is posted on the south wall of the boardroom as well as being available on the district website.

Excused Absences: Brad Wulf.

Directors present at the NRD Office: Brian Ballou, Dave Bartels, Don Duffy, Lee Fintel, Troy Fletcher, Chris Grams, Matt Harrison, Tim Kahrs, Marlin Murdoch, Toby tenBensel.

Others present: John Thorburn, TBNRD, Jerry Kovarik, NRCS.

Staff present: Todd Siel, Nick Simonson, Kristen Heft.

MATERIAL E-MAILED OUT BEFORE THE MEETING & AVAILABLE AT THE MEETING

Agenda

LRNRD Board Meeting Minutes, 1/25

LRNRD/RWP Treasurer's Report, 1/25

NRCS Staff Report, 2/25

Comments from the Public: None.

Motion #1 by Tim Kahrs seconded by Don Duffy to approve the January minutes as presented. Motion carried. Ayes 10 Nays 0, Absent 1 Brad Wulf.

Motion #2 by Chris Grams seconded by Matt Harrison to approve LRNRD and Rural Water Treasurer's reports. Motion carried. Ayes 10 Nays 0, Absent 1 Brad Wulf.

NRCS Staff Report: The NRCS report was emailed out before the meeting. Jerry Kovarik stated that they are currently in a "hold" status regarding the 65 IRA Act Now EQIP applications and EQIP IRA applications due to the change in administration. A copy of this report is in the minute book.

LRNRD Staff Report: Siel and Simonson provided the NRD manager's report. The Harlan County Reservoir is currently 69.9% full or at 1,938.0 acre-feet.

Annual Audit Report: The FY 2024 annual audit was reviewed by Dana F Cole, LLC, and submitted to the Nebraska State Auditor's office in mid-January. The auditors confirmed that the Lower Republican Natural Resources District (LRNRD) met all requirements and found no issues in the report. Additionally, Siel announced that the LRNRD is engaging a new accounting firm.

Motion #3 by Toby tenBensel seconded by Don Duffy to accept the FY2024 audit report and FY2024 financial report presented by Dana F. Cole & Company LLP. Motion carried. Ayes 10 Nays 0, Absent 1 Brad Wulf.

Variance Request: Two-acre trades have been approved in Webster County: one for Armstrong Family Farms, LLC, and another for Steve and Dave Gebers in collaboration with Don Robb. Additionally, Jim Flodine's trade involves relocating a well for convenience and adjusting the acreage to facilitate pivot irrigation on the same tract of land.

Rural Water Update: Currently, there is no updated information on the Riverton Extension Project. The new administration is prioritizing budget cuts, with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) being a key target for these reductions. We support efforts to decrease spending but remain hopeful that this project successfully passes the review process.

RRCA Forecast: The Bureau has forecasted the shutoff elevation for Harlan County Lake, setting the minimum irrigation supply for the Bostwick Irrigation Districts. The Nebraska Bostwick minimum is set at 42,800 acre-

feet, while Kansas Bostwick is at 57,900 acre-feet. We recently met to discuss possible management actions that would increase the Kansas Bostwick supply to 68,000 acre-feet, but no decisions have been made to execute any of those actions.

Platte Republican High Flow Diversion: Currently, there are no updates regarding the status of the PRD permit application.

Flag Creek Update: No update.

NCORPE: The next quarterly meeting will be held in North Platte. The main topic of discussion will be the consideration of a solar lease with Meadowlark. The Meadowlark Project in Gothenburg aims to harness renewable energy, which is crucial for achieving its objectives. We are actively reaching out to various stakeholders regarding this initiative. In January, Todd met with five senators during our visit to Lincoln. Further discussions on this matter will take place during the meeting.

Watershed & Flood Prevention Operations Environmental Assessment Plan and Design (WFPO EA Plan): A request for additional funding has been submitted.

WaterSMART Telemetry Meters: Our second grant for the remaining 1,800 meters has been approved, with an official start date of February 1, 2025. Although we have concerns about funding, similar to those faced with the Rural Water Grant, we feel more confident that this funding will be secure. However, we're not yet ready to make any large purchases until the situation improves.

NARD Update: During the last week of January, the Legislative Conference took place in Lincoln. Participants included Dave Bartels, Chris Grams, Marlin Murdoch, Don Duffy, Todd Siel, Mary Goebel, and Nick Simonson. We reviewed approximately 50 bills and constitutional amendments; some were heavily debated.

A major topic of discussion was the proposed merger of the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (NDEE) with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR). This merger faced opposition from the Nebraska Association of Resource Districts (NARD) due to uncertainties surrounding the new agency and potential financial implications.

Additionally, a bill was introduced to have the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) fund Weed Management Agencies. This proposal suggests doubling the annual grant funding from \$3 million to \$6 million.

Other Business: none

Motion #4 by Matt Harrison seconded by Chris Grams to move that the Board go into Closed Session at 2:33 pm to discuss Contractual Negotiations, Imminent Litigation, and Personnel. Motion carried. Ayes 10 Nays 0, Absent 1 Brad Wulf.

Motion #5 by Matt Harrison seconded by Chris Grams to move that the Board come out of Closed Session at 4:24 pm and declare that no actions of the board, official or unofficial, were taken during said Closed Session. Motion carried. Ayes 10 Nays 0, Absent 1 Brad Wulf.

The next board meeting is scheduled for March 13th at 1:30 PM, at the LRNRD office.

The meeting concluded at 4:25 PM.

Secretary

Date