



LOWER REPUBLICAN NRD

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Lower Republican NRD Meeting Room, 30 North John, Alma, NE

April 10, 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](http://www.lrnrd.org).

Vice-Chairman Dave Bartels called the meeting of the Lower Republican NRD Board of Directors to order at 1:31 PM. He noted that the current copy of the statute regarding public meeting laws is posted on the south wall of the boardroom and is available on the district website. Troy Fletcher led the group in prayer.

Excused Absences: Marlin Murdoch, Tim Kahrs, Chris Grams, Brad Wulf.

Directors present at the NRD Office: Brian Ballou, Dave Bartels, Don Duffy, Troy Fletcher, Lee Fintel, Matt Harrison, Toby tenBensel.

Others present: Sasha Hahn, TBNRD, Jerry Kovarik, NRCS, Ben Robison, West Bennett, Alee Shicksnider, Jamie Bialis, Randy Bialis.

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

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

Agenda

LRNRD Board Meeting Minutes, 3/25

LRNRD/RWP Treasurer's Report, 3/25

NRCS Staff Report, 4/25

LRNRD Staff Report, 4/25

**Comments from the Public:** None.

**Motion #1 by Toby tenBensel, seconded by Matt Harrison, to approve the March minutes as presented.**

**Motion carried. Ayes 7 Nays 0, Absent 4 Marlin Murdoch, Tim Kahrs, Chris Grams, Brad Wulf.**

**Motion #2 by Toby tenBensel, seconded by Troy Fletcher, to approve LRNRD and Rural Water Treasurer's reports. Motion carried. Ayes 7 Nays 0, Absent 4 Marlin Murdoch, Tim Kahrs, Chris Grams, Brad Wulf.**

**NRCS Staff Report:** The NRCS report was emailed out before the meeting. Jerry Kovarik updated the board on EQIP and CSP. 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 74% full, which is 0.9 feet lower than it was at this time last year. Simonson presented a graph of HCL inflows and how this year compares to the past few years.

Scholarships have been awarded by LRNRD to three high school seniors that reside in the district and will be majoring in an agricultural or natural resources related field: Casey Conway from Campbell, Gage Booe from Oxford and Alex Casper from Hildreth. Each student will be awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to the college or university of their choice.

Simonson thanked the Board for allowing him to attend the annual NRD meetings held in Washington DC. He reported there were a lot of positive things to take away from the trip and it was a great experience overall. He was able to meet with several agency folks and several policy experts for different groups related to conservation.

Managers Siel and Simonson discussed legislative issues The Merger Bill – LB 317 – has passed the first round of floor debate and is currently in Enrollment and Review. They will schedule it for Select File debate, or second round, once the E&R process is over. It seems that there is more support than we expected as it passed 31-2-13 with 3 excused absences. An omnibus bill has also come out of the Natural Resources committee but most of the measures that are included are not significant to the NRD system. The only one that has a direct connection is the allocations on municipalities that ties them to the IMPs. This is a non-issue for the Lower at

this time but would allow us to have a say in industrial development on a municipal water system. Senator Jacobsen brought a bill on behalf of the Governor that would have regulated Agricultural Data and the privacy laws surrounding it. This bill has not passed out of committee, but we do want to make sure we keep tabs on it as it could prove problematic to our irrigation water use data collection. Today is day 59 of the 90 day session so we are 2/3s done and a lot of work will start on the budget soon.

The Alma FFA chapter was in attendance and asking for financial support for their trip to National Land Judging in Oklahoma. In the past, the board has typically approved up to \$1,000 for expenses, but Manager Siel informed the directors that we had neglected to send payment for last year's event that was approved by the board. It was suggested that we donate \$2,000 this year due this oversight.

**Motion #3 by Matt Harrison, seconded by Troy Fletcher, to approve donating \$2,000 to the Alma FFA chapter for expenses incurred at the National Land Judging contest in Oklahoma. Motion carried. Ayes 7 Nays 0, Absent 4 Marlin Murdoch, Tim Kahrs, Chris Grams, Brad Wulf.**

**Variance Requests:** The directors reviewed four variances needing board approval: Randy Bialis – VR #25-005 and VR#25-006, Danny Black – VR #25-001, and Mike Hynek – VR #25-007. Copies of each Variance Request are in the minute book.

**Motion #4 by Toby tenBensel, seconded by Don Duffy, to approve Variance Request #25-005 and Variance Request #25-006 for Randy Bialis. Motion carried. Ayes 7 Nays 0, Absent 4 Marlin Murdoch, Tim Kahrs, Chris Grams, Brad Wulf.**

**Motion #5 by Toby tenBensel, seconded by Don Duffy, to approve Variance Request #25-001 for Danny Black. Motion carried. Ayes 7 Nays 0, Absent 4 Marlin Murdoch, Tim Kahrs, Chris Grams, Brad Wulf.**

**Motion #6 by Don Duffy, seconded by Lee Fintel, to approve Variance Request #25-007 for Mike Hynek. Motion carried. Ayes 7 Nays 0, Absent 4 Marlin Murdoch, Tim Kahrs, Chris Grams, Brad Wulf.**

**Rural Water Update:** Siel is interviewing a candidate for the Rural Water Superintendent opening next week. We are still working to get the double obstruction light on the tower in working order.

**RRCA Forecast:** We have not spoken directly with the Bureau about the inflows to Harlan County Lake yet, but they are still at or below the average. We will continue to monitor inflows and will know more when we get closer to the end of May.

**Platte Republican High Flow Diversion:** A prescribed burn was held at the PRD property, along with much of the surrounding properties. The total area within the burn boundary was approximately 1,400 acres. Sasha Hahn, Tri-Basin NRD, provided additional details on the burn process. We have a meeting scheduled with Nebraska Game and Parks on May 1<sup>st</sup> to discuss aquatic invasive species.

**Flag Creek Update:** No update.

**NCORPE:** Simonson and Fletcher attended the NCORPE meeting held in North Platte on March 25<sup>th</sup> and provided an update.

**Watershed & Flood Prevention Operations Environmental Assessment Plan and Design (WFPO EA Plan):** Nick reported on a discussion with federal NRCS folks while he was in Washington DC. We are hopeful that additional funding will be available to finish up both WFPO evaluations.

**WaterSMART Telemetry Meters:** We are continuing with installations of meters under the first grant and are making plans for moving forward with the start of the second grant.

**NARD Update:** Duffy reported that the annual NRD Basin Tour is scheduled for June 9-10, 2025, in the Niobrara River Basin. Anyone interested in signing up for the tour can register with NARD or Todd and Nick can help with getting the registration completed. The deadline for sign up is May 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Other Business:** Simonson shared information on proposals for updating our website. We may look for another bid before making any decisions. Siel opened a discussion on Pooling Agreements and whether we want to consider adding language to the agreements. We will inquire with legal counsel on the pros and cons of any possible changes.

**Motion #7 Matt Harrison seconded by Toby tenBensel, to move the Board go into Closed Session at 3:06 pm to discuss Contractual Negotiations, Imminent Litigation, and Personnel. Motion carried. Ayes 7 Nays 0, Absent 4 Marlin Murdoch, Tim Kahrs, Chris Grams, Brad Wulf.**

**Motion #8 by Matt Harrison seconded by Toby tenBensel, to move that the Board come out of Closed Session at 3:44 pm and declare that no actions of the board, official or unofficial, were taken during said Closed Session. Motion carried. Ayes 7 Nays 0, Absent 4 Marlin Murdoch, Tim Kahrs, Chris Grams, Brad Wulf.**

Discussion was held to change the May board meeting time to accommodate directors that will be in the middle of planting season. A virtual meeting option will be added so directors and the public will have the option to either attend in-person or participate online.

**Motion #9 by Toby tenBensel, seconded by Matt Harrison, to set the May 8th board meeting for a 7:30 am start time. There will be a virtual option for both directors and the public. Motion carried. Ayes 7 Nays 0, Absent 4 Marlin Murdoch, Tim Kahrs, Chris Grams, Brad Wulf.**

The next board meeting is scheduled for May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 7:30 AM, at the LRNRD office and via Zoom.

The meeting concluded at 3:59 PM.

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Secretary

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Date