



LOWER REPUBLICAN NRD BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Lower Republican NRD Meeting Room, 30 North John, Alma, NE
February 12, 2026, at 1:30 pm.

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 with an invitation to prayer at 1:30 pm. The chairman announced that the current version of the statute governing public meetings is posted on the south wall of the boardroom and on the district website.

Excused Absences: Tim Kahrs.

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

Others present: Brad Edgerton, FCID, Nolan Little, TBNRD, Chelsea Erickson, Kansas DWR, Luke Deaver, Holdrege, Jarrod McCartney, Red Cloud.

Staff present: Todd Siel, Nick Simonson, Shirlee Poyser.

MATERIAL E-MAILED OUT PRIOR TO THE MEETING & AVAILABLE AT THE MEETING

Agenda

LRNRD Board Meeting Minutes, 1/2026

LRNRD/RWP Treasurer's Report, 1/2026

NRCS Staff Report, 2/2026

LRNRD Staff Report, 2/2026

Comments from the Public: Brad Edgerton, Frenchman Cambridge Irrigation District, addressed the board regarding Frenchman Valley CBCU and RRCA Accounting.

Jarrold McCartney, Chairman of the Red Cloud Community Fund, presented the renovation plans for the Hardwick Park Project to the board. They are looking for donations to purchase trees for planting in the park.

Motion #1 by Don Duffy, seconded by Chris Grams, to approve the January board minutes and Penalty Hearing minutes as presented. Motion carried. Aye 10, Nays 0, Absent 1, Tim Kahrs.

Motion #2 by Troy Fletcher, seconded by Dave Bartels, to approve LRNRD and Rural Water Treasurer's reports. Motion carried. Aye 10, Nays 0, Absent 1, Tim Kahrs.

NRCS Staff Report: Quinn Barnas from NRCS provided an update on the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), the Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP), and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). A copy of this report is in the minute book.

LRNRD Staff Report: Harlan County Reservoir is currently 62.2% full, 2.3 feet lower than at this time last year. The lake numbers indicate that Harlan is holding 24,157 acre-feet less than it was at this time last year. The positive news is that our inflow continues to hold steady, and the January inflow was about 1,600 acre-feet higher than last year, with virtually no precipitation.

SBS Farms Penalty Hearing: Luke Deaver, Hearing Officer, distributed the draft Order Imposing Penalties on SBS Farms, Inc., also known as SBS Farm, Inc., SBS Farms, Furnas County, SBS Farms Furnas County, Inc., Robert Bishop, Tamara Bishop, and Julie Smith. The board went into deliberative session to further discuss the draft Order. After coming out of deliberative session, Luke Deaver stated that directors were ready to advance to a vote on the proposed Order and noted typographical errors to be corrected before proceeding.

Copies of the signed final Order will be distributed, and the original will be placed in the minute book.

Motion #3 by Brad Wulf, seconded by Matt Harrison, to approve the Order Imposing Penalties, with typographical corrections, for SBS Farms, Inc., SBS Ranch, Inc., Robert Bishop, Tamara Bishop, and Julie Smith. Motion carried. Aye 9, Nays 0, Abstain 1 – Chris Grams, Absent 1 – Tim Kahrs.

Variance Requests: Two contiguous-acre trades have been approved, one in Harlan County and the other in Franklin County. The variance request in Harlan County is for Terry Woollen, located north of Alma on the highway. He had drip irrigation on a field for about 20 years, but the system finally needed replaced. Due to ongoing issues with the drip system, he decided to replace it with a wiper pivot. The acres he is moving are on the same half section, across the draw to the east. The second variance request involves Mark Koch and includes removing end guns from two wiper pivots southeast of Upland. Removing the end guns and moving the stops will allow the pivots to cover the same number of acres that the end guns were watering.

Rural Water Expansion Project: Miller and Associates are making good progress on the Riverton Expansion. We are verifying whether permits or easements are required for the new lines and appurtenances that will serve Riverton, as well as for the new well and transmission line north of Red Cloud. We still plan to prioritize the Riverton connection to ensure they have reliable water by late next summer or fall. We are also continuing to search for a site to place a well and water tower north of Red Cloud. There is an existing issue with the livestock setups that were not properly installed. Several years ago, DWEE identified a livestock tank that did not have proper backflow prevention. DWEE believes that if a failure occurred in the system's pressure, it could cause backflow into the system.

RRCA Update: As everyone knows, 2026 is a Compact Call Year. While Harlan County Lake continues to fill, we are still well below our target storage level. USBOR reported a capacity increase of 4,000 acre-feet for January. We will need some help from Mother Nature if we want to avoid ending the 2026 irrigation season at a very low elevation.

NCORPE Update: We have been pumping about 50 cfs to the headwaters of Medicine Creek since around January 12th. Things are progressing as expected, and Harry Strunk has gained approximately 4,000 acre-feet of storage in the last 30 days. The plan is to start releasing the water required for compliance by the end of February. Spillway work is planned, so releasing water will be necessary to maintain storage while contractors work below Medicine Creek Dam.

WaterSmart: We have installed more than 1,000 meters in Phase 1 and an additional 90 meters in Phase 2.

NARD Update: Staff members Todd, Nick, Mary, and Miranda, along with Directors Don, Marlin, and Dave, attended the January legislative session. There are a couple of bills that we will be monitoring, but a majority of the session will be dominated by the Unicameral trying to fill the budget gap. Our meeting date will be Day 26 of the 60-day session. The budget must be presented by Day 40.

Other Business: The South Central Water Conference was on February 5. Matt Manning served as the keynote speaker. Nick Simonson also delivered a presentation. Tim Anderson from Sutton, who is running for District 38, will be at the March board meeting.

The next regularly scheduled board meeting will be held on March 12, 2026, at 1:30 pm.

The meeting concluded at 3:38 pm.

Secretary

Date