LOWER REPUBLICAN NRD
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Lower Republican NRD Meeting Room, 30 North John, Alma, NE
July 9th, 2026, 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 1:31pm, inviting everyone to join in prayer. He noted that the current version of the statutes governing public meetings is posted on the south wall of the boardroom and on the district website. Guests were asked to sign the attendance roster.

Excused Absences: None.

Directors present: Brian Ballou, Dave Bartels, Don Duffy, Lee Fintel, Troy Fletcher, Chris Grams, Matt Harrison, Tim Kahrs, Marlin Murdoch, Toby tenBensel, and Brad Wulf.

Others present: Jerry Kovarik, NRCS; Spencer Moore, Harlan Co NRCS; Aaron Herring, Franklin Co NRCS; John Thorburn, TBNRD.

Staff present: Todd Siel, Nick Simonson, Mary Goebel.

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

Agenda
LRNRD Board Meeting Minutes, 6/2026
LRNRD/RWP Treasurer's Report, 6/2026
NRCS Staff Report, 7/2026
LRNRD Staff Report, 7/2026

Comments from the Public: None.

Motion #1 by Dave Bartels, seconded by Tim Kahrs, to approve the June minutes as presented. Motion carried. Ayes 11 Nays 0, Absent 0.

Motion #2 by Brad Wulf, seconded by Troy Fletcher, to approve the LRNRD and Rural Water Treasurer's reports. Motion carried. Ayes 11 Nays 0, Absent 0.

NRCS Staff Report: Jerry Kovarik updated the board on Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Grassland CRP. Jerry also let the board know that the offices will be short staffed in August. He encourages producers to call and make appointments. Jerry introduced Spencer Moore and Aaron Herring to the board. A full report is in the minute book.

LRNRD Staff Report: Nick provided a staffing update. As we move forward with the reorganization, we will be looking for someone to fill the information and education duties along with the tree program and NSWCP. There may be additional duties that are tied to the field offices when the secretary's position is vacant. We will also need to decide on a Rural Water superintendent. A full report is in the minute book.

League Association of Risk Management (LARM): The LRNRD insurance coverage through LARM is up for renewal. Discussion was had on the choice of time commitment. A 3-year term provides the lowest cost.

Motion # 3 by Tim Kahrs, seconded by Toby tenBensel, to approve the League Association of Risk Management (LARM) insurance coverage and to authorize the General Manager to sign the 3-year 180-day notice LARM Renewal Resolution. Motion carried. Ayes 11, Nays 0, Absent 0.

Variance Requests: Staff approved variance requests were presented to the board. At the time of the Board meeting, we were waiting on signature for one that will require a motion from the board for approval.

Rural Water Update: With everything back online after the painting and a couple of tests, the system looks good. With the upgrades we made to the VFDs and the contract with Maguire Iron, the process went very smoothly. There are still a few things that needed to be done. Usage is very high because ponds are dry. We continue to work on the Riverton Expansion Project. We are focusing on the additional water source within an area identified north of Red Cloud. Water samples need to be obtained from several wells around the area. Siel has prepared the FY2027 draft Rural Water budget for the board's review.

Motion #4 by Matt Harrison seconded by Chris Grams, to approve the Draft FY2027 Rural Water Budget. Motion carried. Ayes 11 Nays 0, Absent 0.

Republican River Compact Administration (RRCA): The final determination was made that we are in a Water Short year per the USBOR. Harlan County Lake (HCL) inflows for January through May were about 25,190 acre-feet, or 22,455 acre-feet short of our estimated inflows of 47,647 acre-feet. Due to the lack of inflows, the HCL shutoff elevation was adjusted to 1928.74.

Platte Republican High Flow Diversion: The grazing lease for 2025 has not been paid yet. An invoice will be sent for 2025 and the first half of 2026. Siel has prepared the FY2027 draft PRD budget for the board's review.

Motion #5 by Tim Kahrs, seconded by Toby tenBensel, to approve the Draft FY2027 Platte Republican High Flow Diversion Budget. Motion carried. Ayes 11 Nays 0, Absent 0.

Flag Creek Update: Olsson has not sent an update on the pipeline yet.

NCORPE: No update. There is a regular board meeting scheduled for August.

Watershed & Flood Prevention Operations Environmental Assessment Plan and Design (WFPO EA Plan): After discussing the Thompson Creek project with Olsson and speaking with NRCS, we all believed it was best to withdraw from this project. We have submitted our final reimbursement request and once that is processed, we will submit our formal request to withdraw from the project. The West Turkey Creek project is still in final review. Once we have received word that the Programmatic Agreement has been approved, we will vote on our resolution to submit the project to NHQ.

WaterSmart Grant: Not many installs are going in now because of pumping. Just doing maintenance and following up on ones that are not communicating.

NSWCP: On June 30, 2026, the Lancaster County District Court issued an injunction on funding for Nebraska Environmental Trust money. Funds cannot be spent until that is lifted. We currently have some applications that are done, one submitted to the state for reimbursement, that are not going to be paid. Asking the board to approve the payment for these contracts with the understanding that we will get reimbursed, if the Attorney General and DWEE approve spending local funds.

Motion #6 by Don Duffy, seconded by Toby tenBensel, to approve paying the completed NSWCP contracts as long as the Attorney General and DWEE approve spending local funds. Motion Carried. Ayes 10, Nays 0, Abstain 1, Lee Fintel, Absent 0.

NARD Update: Nick provided a benefits update on our health plan. The NRD Basin tour went well and everyone enjoyed it. Presented the board with the amendment for the 457 in-plan Roth roll-over.

Motion #7 by Chris Grams, seconded by Lee Fintel, to approve the 457 in-plan Roth amendment. Motion carried. Ayes 11, Nays 0, Absent 0.

Other Business: We will discuss storage with the Senior Center at $.50 a square foot next Tuesday at their meeting. Discussion was had about property valuation changes for each county and about water transfers.

Motion #8 by Matt Harrison, seconded by Troy Fletcher, to move the Board and NRCS staff into Closed Session at 3:03pm to discuss Contractual Negotiations, Imminent Litigation, and Personnel. Motion carried. Ayes 11, Nays 0, Absent 0.

Motion #9 by Matt Harrison, seconded by Toby tenBensel, to move that the Board come out of Closed Session at 3:55pm and declare that no actions of the board, official or unofficial, were taken during said Closed Session. Motion carried. Ayes 11, Nays 0, Absent 0.

The next regularly scheduled board meeting will be on August 13th, 2026, at 1:30pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:58pm.

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Secretary Date

Recorded and distributed by: Mary Goebel, Administrative Assistant
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