

MINUTES

LOWER LOUP NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

April 23, 2020

Ord, Nebraska

The April meeting of the Board of Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District was held at the Headquarters Office, 2620 Airport Drive, Ord, Nebraska, and via teleconference on April 23, 2020. Chairman Citta called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Directors in attendance at LLNRD Headquarters:

Alan D. Petersen
Rick Vlach

Dean G. Thede

Directors in attendance via teleconference:

James C. Adams
Darwin B. Anderson
Robert L. Bauer
Joseph L. Citta, Chairman
Jim Eschliman, Vice Chairman
Larry Mohrman
Chad J. Podolak
Henry J. Thoene, Secretary

Rollie D. Amsberry, Treasurer
Timothy E. Bartak
Beth Boesch
John Coffey
Gary A. Kruse
Todd Nitsch
Gerald Smith

Directors absent:

N. Richard Hadenfeldt
Matt Lukasiewicz

Randy Kauk

Staff in attendance:

Russell G. Callan, General Manager
Irene F. Kreifels, Administrative Assistant
Larry D. Schultz, I&E Coordinator
Cam Conrad, Water Modeling Coordinator

Tylr Naprstek, Assistant General Manager
Kim A. Lyons, Financial Secretary
Richard L. Woollen, District Forester

Guests in attendance via teleconference:

Jim Cannia, Aqua Geo Frameworks

ROLL CALL

Roll call was conducted. Directors present: Adams, Anderson, Bartak, Bauer, Boesch, Citta, Coffey, Eschliman, Kruse, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, Thede, and Vlach. Directors joining later: Amsberry and Thoene. Directors absent: Hadenfeldt, Kauk, and Lukasiewicz.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Citta stated that Directors Hadenfeldt, Kauk, and Lukasiewicz had asked to be excused.

Bauer motioned, seconded by Coffey, to excuse absent directors. Motion carried by roll call vote. Directors voting yes: Anderson, Bartak, Bauer, Boesch, Citta, Coffey, Eschliman, Kruse, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, Thede, and Vlach. Directors not present for vote: Amsberry and Thoene. Director not voting: Adams. Directors absent: Hadenfeldt, Kauk, and Lukasiewicz.

NOTICE OF OPEN MEETING LAW POSTING

Chairman Citta referred those in attendance at the Headquarters office to the open meeting law information posted in the Board room and said that meeting material was available at the entrance to the Board room. Citta also announced that, in accordance with Governor Ricketts' policy to allow meetings to be held by teleconference and to allow for social distancing in the Board room, General Manager Callan would monitor attendees for symptoms of illness, and anyone showing symptoms would be asked to leave.

VERIFICATION OF MEETING NOTICE AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Chairman Citta asked for verification of the meeting notice. Callan stated that the agenda was current, and that the meeting notices were properly published in all newspapers, posted at the NRD Headquarters office in Ord, on the NRD web site, and in the eight field office locations.

MINUTES

Chairman Citta asked for corrections and/or additions to the February 27, 2020, Board meeting minutes. No corrections were heard.

Kruse motioned, seconded by Boesch, to approve the February 27, 2020, Board meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried by roll call vote. Directors voting yes: Anderson, Bartak, Bauer, Boesch, Citta, Coffey, Eschliman, Kruse, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, Thede, and Vlach. Directors not present for vote: Amsberry and Thoene. Director not voting: Adams. Directors absent: Hadenfeldt, Kauk, and Lukasiewicz.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Russell Callan, General Manager, highlighted expenditures of \$8,622.00 to USGS for the South Loup bacterial assessment; \$1,280.52 to HDR Engineering Inc. for work on the Columbus Recharge project; \$4,237.50 to the Flatwater Group Inc. for services related to instream flow; and JEO expenditures of \$4,638.55 for drought mitigation and \$26,587.12 for the North Loup drainage project.

Boesch asked about expenses for lien searches. Callan informed the Board that those expenses are in turn billed to the producers to off set the cost of lien searches related to irrigated acre transfers.

Amsberry joined via teleconference at 5:11 p.m.

Eschliman motioned, seconded by Kruse, to approve the April 23, 2020, Treasurer's Report and pay all bills. Motion carried by roll call vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, Anderson, Bartak, Bauer, Boesch, Citta, Coffey, Eschliman, Kruse, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, Thede, and Vlach. Director not present for vote: Thoene. Director not voting: Adams. Directors absent: Hadenfeldt, Kauk, and Lukasiewicz.

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

There were no public comments.

FORESTER'S REPORT

Richard Woollen, District Forester, reported that orders were cut off early due to COVID-19; however, the NRD had received their order for distribution. Woollen stated that he was currently working from home and NRD staff was handling distribution. Woollen reported that he was working on buffer strip program renewal requests, as quite a few had been received.

Woollen mentioned that the third-year ponderosa pine reforestation effort in the Niobrara Valley and Pine Ridge had been completed. He said the ponderosa pine forest had been destroyed by wildfire.

Thoene joined via teleconference at 5:18 p.m. Thoene reported that he was joining late due to a storm-related power outage.

NRCS REPORT

Callan reported that no one from NRCS was able to join the meeting. He stated that most of the NRCS staff was working from home on CSP renewals. He said job offers had been made to fill soil conservationist positions in Burwell and St. Paul and an offer would be made to fill the program assistant position in the Ord office.

INFORMATION & EDUCATION REPORT

Pandemic Cancellations

Larry Schultz, Information & Education Coordinator, reported that most of the NRD educational events in the state have been cancelled due to COVID-19. This includes the State Envirothon and the NCF Envirothon, most Arbor Day events, ACE camp, and the Children's Groundwater Festival.

Newsletter – *Water Matters*

Schultz reported that the *Water Matters* newsletter had been sent out. He reported that, in the newsletter, nitrates and flowmeter requirements were addressed, as well as recommendations on nitrate yields.

Boesch commended staff on their work on the newsletter and asked if the newsletter was currently sent to news media. Schultz answered that it was sent to all local reporters.

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Davis Creek

Tyler Naprstek, Assistant General Manager, reported that all campsites were currently closed for overnight camping; however, staff was working on getting things ready for when sites could safely be opened again. Naprstek reported that there had been an increase in daily use of the lake. He said that reservations are currently closed on the Reserve America site until May 8th and that postings had been made at the rec area. He reported that the playground equipment, bathrooms, and shower houses were closed; however, docks remained open.

Citta stated that the NRD was following the Game and Parks and City guidelines for closures of camping facilities.

Pibel Lake

Naprstek reported that the auxiliary spillway was working as designed and that the structure was handling the overflow of water.

Buffalo County – Aerial Electromagnetic Survey (AEM)

Naprstek introduced that Jim Cannia of Aqua Geo Frameworks who gave a presentation to the Water Resources Committee on the AEM flights that were completed and would give a presentation later in the meeting.

Cover Crop Study

Naprstek reported that staff had removed soil moisture equipment for planting season.

Boesch asked about any feedback that had been received regarding closures of Davis Creek and Pibel to overnight camping. Naprstek reported that some people who had reservations had asked for camping to be allowed; however, they were satisfied with refunds being offered in lieu of camping at this time.

Thoene asked if the cover crop cost-share payments on the Treasurer's Report were in conjunction with NRCS. Callan said that the cost-share applicants are first encouraged to apply through NRCS and then the NRD will assist where NRCS was unable to.

Thoene reported that Adams could listen to the meeting but could not participate due to technical difficulties.

Naprstek reported that the cover crop cost-share payments would be reimbursed through a grant process covering 60% of the NRD's costs.

WATER RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Aerial Electromagnetic Report – Buffalo County

Naprstek reported that Jim Cannia was on the line with a presentation prepared.

Cannia gave a power point presentation on the Buffalo County AEM flights that were completed. He showed pictures of the equipment used for the flights, as well as a map highlighting flight paths that were followed. Declining groundwater levels in Buffalo County were discussed, as well as information found on various levels of aquifer materials that were discovered during the flights. Cannia explained the different types of aquifer related lithologies, including coarse, aquifer, marginal, and non-aquifer materials. Cannia highlighted the water table in the area, where the aquifer sits, and where hydrologically connected areas are located. Managed aquifer recharge area locations were also discussed. Cannia stated that GIS maps were being provided along with Google Earth maps of the area so interested parties could click on different areas and the maps would show the information that had been gathered for that specific area. He said that landowners would be able to extract the hydrogeologic information from their properties as well as cross-section profiles.

Citta asked if anything could be done in areas that are challenged for recharge. Cannia referred to isolated areas and discussed the possibility of taking available water from the South

Loup River and injecting it into the aquifer where needed. He reported that this method was used in Colorado.

Smith motioned, seconded by Bauer, to approve the report from Aqua Geo Frameworks on the data from the AEM flights over the LLNRD's portion of Buffalo County. Motion carried by roll call vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, Anderson, Bartak, Bauer, Boesch, Citta, Coffey, Eschliman, Kruse, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, Thede, Thoene, and Vlach. Director not voting: Adams. Directors absent: Hadenfeldt, Kauk, and Lukasiewicz.

GeoCloud Interlocal Agreement

Naprstek reported that the 3-year GeoCloud Interlocal Agreement timeline was up, and staff had requested to participate again, along with other NRDs and various entities involved. He said the agreement allows participants to share data such as that from the Buffalo County AEM flights.

Smith motioned, seconded by Thoene, to approve the interlocal agreement allowing the LLNRD to continue participating in the GeoCloud. Motion carried by roll call vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, Anderson, Bartak, Bauer, Boesch, Citta, Coffey, Eschliman, Kruse, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, Thede, Thoene, and Vlach. Director not voting: Adams. Directors Absent: Hadenfeldt, Kauk, and Lukasiewicz.

2020 Spring Static Water Level & Transducer Reports

Naprstek review the 2020 Spring Static Water Level & Transducer Reports with the Board. He presented a slideshow of the static water levels broken down by counties. He reported that groundwater levels were showing an upward trend, having increased District-wide, except for a few locations in the very eastern end of the NRD. Naprstek showed each area in comparison of the 1982 static water levels to current 2020 readings. He highlighted areas of concern shown on the map.

Cam Conrad, Water Modeling Coordinator, discussed maps showing the one- and five-year changes in water levels, as well as the ten-year comparison.

Smith motioned, seconded by Thoene, to accept the 2020 Spring Static Water Level & Transducer Reports. Motion carried by roll call vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, Anderson, Bartak, Bauer, Boesch, Citta, Coffey, Eschliman, Kruse, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, Thede, Thoene, and Vlach. Director not voting: Adams. Directors absent: Hadenfeldt, Kauk, and Lukasiewicz.

LLNRD Acre Violations Update

Naprstek gave updates on acre violation letters that had been sent out. He reported receiving contact from most of the producers and that he was working with a few to get them into compliance. Naprstek said that a lot of the violations were acres that had been moved around and were, in fact, not violations.

PROGRAMS/PROJECTS COMMITTEE

WFPO Grant

Kruse reported on the WFPO grant for the Mud Creek Watershed Project. He reported that four proposals were received. Naprstek reviewed the process for scoring each proposal and that the cost would be covered by grant assistance. He reported that he, Callan, and Kolar took part in the scoring of the proposals and reviewed the various pros and cons of each.

Kruse motioned, seconded by Eschliman, to accept JEO's proposal of \$723,240 for the Mud Creek Watershed Project in Custer and Sherman Counties. Motion carried by voice vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, Anderson, Bartak, Bauer, Boesch, Citta, Coffey, Eschliman, Kruse, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, Thede, Thoene, Vlach. Director not voting: Adams. Directors absent: Hadenfeldt, Kauk, Lukasiewicz.

Horseshoe Dike Repair Request – Loup Power District

Kruse reported on the repairs to Horseshoe Dike on the Loup River in Nance County. He said that the repairs were estimated to be \$250,000 and that 75% of costs would be covered by FEMA. He reported that Loup Power District was seeking NRD funding to cover 50% of the remaining costs. He said the request would be discussed again in May.

North Loup Flood Mitigation

Kruse reported that JEO was working on the North Loup Flood Mitigation project and outlined some different options. It was reported that the options had been made available to the residents of the area for review and feedback.

Village of Sargent Drainage Issues

Kruse reported that Olsson staff had given updates on the Sargent Drainage issues. Callan stated that he had received a draft of a presentation that was being reviewed in-house and that more information should be available by the time of May's Committee meeting.

Sargent East Drainage

Callan reported that he had been in contact with NRCS for engineering outlines and had received some feedback on what could be done. He stated that the information would be reviewed at the Committee meeting in May.

Platte County Flood Zone Buyout

Kruse reported that there were 17 parties interested in the buyout with an estimated total cost of \$2,722,775. It was reported that the local match would be \$680,693.

NGPC – Open Fields and Waters Program

Naprstek reported that the Open Fields and Waters Program through Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) had begun. He reported that the program intends to open fishing and hunting in different locations. He said the program would allow landowners to enroll acres with NGPC and receive between \$4-\$8 per acre depending on the habitat.

It was reported that the contracts would run from 1 to 5 years and, upon signup into the program, landowners would receive 50% of the incentive payment after the first month and the additional 50% the following May. He said participants would receive incentive payments for allowing hunting/fishing on their properties, in addition to incentives for enrolling in CRP to provide habitat development. Callan reported there would be about \$30,000 per year contributed by the NRD.

Kruse motioned, seconded by Petersen, to approve the creation and participation of a LLNRD incentive program in the Open Fields and Waters Incentive Program. Motion carried by roll vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, Anderson, Bartak, Bauer, Boesch, Citta, Coffey, Eschliman, Kruse, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, Thede, Thoene, and Vlach. Director not voting: Adams. Directors absent: Hadenfeldt, Kauk, and Lukasiewicz.

MANAGER'S REPORT

COVID-19 Operations

Callan reported that the NRD office had been closed to the public since March 23rd and that field staff had been staying out of the office as much as possible. He also reported that some staff had been working from home and that things have been going well.

Litigation Update

Callan stated that the instream flow application was still in the works and data was being sent as requested; however, DNR operations had been slowed due to COVID-19.

New Hires

Callan reported that Kaden Dawe and Christy Berghorst have started employment for the tree planting season.

Non-action Reports

Callan reported that in the supplemental agenda there was a spreadsheet included of the vehicles that were recently put up for bid. He stated that one of the trailers would be kept due to low bid amounts.

The Board questioned the status of the NRCS internship program for this year. Callan stated that NRCS does not want anyone new in the offices now, but the program may begin later, depending on the COVID-19 situation.

NARD REPORT

Eschliman reported that there was a meeting in March in Lincoln and that he was elected president for the next year. He also reported that there was a Zoom meeting held last Friday and would be another meeting tomorrow to discuss employee benefits and risk pool management.

NRC REPORT

Hadenfeldt was not present to give report.

RC&D REPORT

Adams was not able to report due to technical difficulties.

ANNOUNCEMENTS / FUTURE MEETING TOPICS

Citta announced that the May Committee and Board meetings may be online again due to COVID-19 restrictions.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Board, Citta declared the meeting adjourned at 7:10 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 May 28, 2020, at 5:00 p.m., at the Headquarters Office in Ord, Nebraska.

Henry J. Thoene
Secretary