

MINUTES

LOWER LOUP NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

June 24, 2021

Ord, Nebraska

The June meeting of the Board of Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District was held at the Headquarters Office, 2620 Airport Drive, Ord, Nebraska, on June 24, 2021. Chairman Citta called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Directors in attendance:

James C. Adams
Darwin B. Anderson
Robert L. Bauer
Joseph L. Citta, Chairman
Jim Eschliman, Vice Chairman
Randy Kauk
Larry Mohrman
Alan D. Petersen
Gerald Smith
Henry J. Thoene, Secretary

Rollie D. Amsberry, Treasurer
Timothy E. Bartak
Beth Boesch
John Coffey
N. Richard Hadenfeldt
Gary A. Kruse
Todd Nitsch
Chad J. Podolak
Dean G. Thede
Rick Vlach

Directors absent:

Matt Lukasiewicz

Staff in attendance:

Russell G. Callan, General Manager
Irene F. Kreifels, Administrative Assistant
Larry D. Schultz, I&E Coordinator
Dell R. Harris, Water Resources Specialist
V. Anne Freeman, Water Programs Sec.

Tylr Naprstek, Assistant General Manager
Kim A. Lyons, Financial Secretary
Cameron Conrad, Water Modeling Coord.
Richard L. Woollen, District Forester
Lauren Keefe, Forestry Technician

Guest in attendance:

Bryce Bauer, LDC, NRCS, Ord
Dan Snow, UNL Water Science Center

James Nelson, Cairo

VERIFICATION OF MEETING NOTICE AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Chairman Citta asked for verification of the meeting notice. General Manager Russell 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 website, and in the eight field office locations.

ROLL CALL

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

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Citta stated that Director Lukasiewicz had asked to be excused.

Boesch motioned, seconded by Smith, to excuse absent director, Lukasiewicz. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

MINUTES

Chairman Citta asked for corrections and/or additions to the May 27, 2021, Board meeting minutes. None were heard.

Thoene motioned, seconded by Anderson, to approve the May 27, 2021, Board meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Russell Callan, General Manager, highlighted expenditures of \$45,004.11 to JEO for the Mud Creek WFPO; \$8,000.00 to the City of Ord for the Dane Creek Flood Project; \$1,896.12 to the City of Columbus for bills to the dump station in Columbus for trash cleared out of the Lost Creek Channel; and \$4,275.00 to Petska Backhoe & Plumbing for pumping of the outhouses and fish cleaning station at Davis Creek. Callan also highlighted \$51,335.12 to NARD for stock tree purchases for the tree program; \$3,200.00 to EA Engineering for the Cover Crop Study in Buffalo County; \$179,840.70 to Rutjens Construction for work on the Columbus Recharge Project; \$5,000.00 and \$8,000.00 to Travis Sprout and Rodney Clark, respectively, for Cover Crop cost-share in the Clear Creek Pibel Lake Watershed for soil moisture sensors.

Boesch asked about the expenditure of \$14,639.14 to CMBA Architects. Callan stated it was for the building addition. The expense of \$21,862.16 to Central Platte NRD was also discussed as being for shared salaries for field office secretaries. Kauk asked about the soil moisture sensor and if the cost was for just one each; it was reported that there were 13 total between the producers. Coffey asked what the wildlife habitat cost-share entailed, and it was explained that the cost-share was provided for allowing public hunting and fishing access.

Eschliman motioned, seconded by Amsberry, to approve the June 24, 2021, Treasurer's Report. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

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

None

UNL AREA 30 ISOTOPE ANALYSIS – DAN SNOW, WATER SCIENCE CENTER

Dan Snow, UNL Water Science Center, presented results on the Area 30 study that was completed. He provided background on Area 30 and gave a project breakdown showing the number and types of wells in the area. Snow showed the 2019 groundwater nitrate levels and the historical trends for the area. He also showed the surface geology and reviewed the depth to water, as well as fertilizer and land use.

Snow reviewed the study objectives, explained the nitrate isotope analysis as a fingerprinting of sources, and explained the difference in fertilizer organics and denitrification. Dan highlighted the summary of the 20 samples taken in 2020 and stated that there were a couple of wells with ammonia present. He stated that 2/3 of the wells were irrigation and the rest were domestic and livestock. He showed that the highest nitrate concentrations were near the center and in the southeast region of the study area. Discussion was held on the difference of gravity vs. pivot irrigation and the effect on nitrogen leaching. Most isotopes showed both manure AND commercial fertilizer sources.

FORESTER'S REPORT

Richard Woollen, District Forester, reported that the new Forestry Technician position was filled and introduced Lauren Keefe as the new technician housed in the Lower Loup NRD office.

Woollen also provided Directors with a summary of the Buffer Strip Program and highlighted the LLNRD's acre and payment totals.

NRCS REPORT

Bryce Bauer, NRCS, reported that the applicant selected for the Broken Bow soil conservationist had turned down the position. He also discussed EQIP reviews that were taking place. He reported that the offices were currently staffed at 50% and would remain so until 70% of the United States was vaccinated.

Working Lands for Wildlife, a program geared toward cutting redcedar trees in the eastern Sandhills, has an upcoming application deadline of July 10th.

Bauer reported that he had not heard anything new on Biden's 30x30 plan. Podolak asked about the basics of the program. Bauer reported that there were several groups working together to save the grassland and the state wanted to shift the focus to target fringe areas, then move on to larger areas.

INFORMATION & EDUCATION REPORT

Hazard Mitigation Plan

Larry Schultz, I&E Coordinator, reported that the Hazard Mitigation Plan meeting had been held virtually and so far about half of the entities had been involved. He reported that these were planning meetings to determine what the entities wanted to be included in their portion of the plan.

2021 NCF Envirothon

Schultz reported that the Envirothon contest is less than a month away and would be held virtually, mostly sourced out of Lincoln. He stated there would be teams from all states, as well as Canada and China, taking part in the contest. He stated that the state contest was held virtually as well and that organizers were working on things that could be sent to the kids who cannot travel and different games. He said that some type of scavenger hunt would be done.

Water Matters

Schultz reported that the *Water Matters* publication had been sent out to the water quality management areas and that all Directors should have a copy. He said it was also available on the NRD website.

Citta asked how many teams from Ord would be taking part in the Envirothon contest and Schultz reported there would be one team from Ord. He stated it was suggested that the students spend a day in Lincoln and that specialists be brought in to go over some training with them. It was discussed that the NRD generally contributes to the cost of the team's travel and that a contribution could be made this year to help with travel and lodging for their training in Lincoln.

Boesch motioned, seconded by Smith, to contribute \$500 for food and lodging costs for the Envirothon contest team. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Davis Creek Update

Tylr Naprstek, Assistant General Manager, reported that the repeater tower had been installed by the maintenance shed and that all equipment was functional. He stated he contacted Alma Beland from Region 26 about the cost-share on the equipment and found that all the current equipment is on loan because everything is on backorder. Naprstek also reported that there had been increasing use of the tent camping areas and that there had been some cases of people leaving their equipment unused.

Pibel Lake

Naprstek reported that there was a data link available that showed the different water quality parameters that were being measured at the lake. He also stated he had a meeting scheduled with Nebraska Game and Parks for goose management options.

Cover Crop Study

Naprstek reported that the study was in its final year and everything was operational. He stated that all the readings were not in yet, but he and Moudry would be meeting with Dan Bigbee from EA Engineering about format of the final report.

Chemigation

Naprstek reported that permits finally hit the 3,000 mark. He stated that some have had mainline check valves that have failed, but replacements were available. Naprstek also reported that he and Harris had been working on surface water violations and would be mailing violation letters based on DNR mapping.

WATER RESOURCES COMMITTEE

South Loup Drought Resiliency Study

Naprstek reported that USGS had given an update on the drought resiliency study for the South Loup River and that they tested for isotopes to determine how old the water was. He stated that the study sampled noble gases and tridium.

Nitrates, Groundwater Quality and Health

Naprstek reported that Moudry had given a presentation to the Committee on an Upper Big Blue NRD and University of Nebraska Medical Center research study that linked pediatric brain cancer to common agricultural contaminants. He stated there were many studies on this issue.

Areas 28, 29, & 30 Chemigation Cost-Share Discussion

Naprstek presented information on total active chemigation permits in NRD Groundwater Management Areas 29 & 30. Discussion was held on implementing cost-share for chemigation as a possible way to expand the chemigation program.

Columbus Recharge Project

Callan stated he met with Rutjens on Tuesday and construction was taking place. He stated they were installing about 800 feet of pipe a day. He said that Kolar had been monitoring progress today. Boesch asked about the county requesting observation and wanted to know if they would be covering some of the costs. Callan stated that Gilmore was contracted to do some monitoring and the NRD staff would handle the remainder of time to keep costs down. He added that the stipulation of having full-time construction observation was changed when the permit was issued from the county.

PROGRAMS/PROJECTS COMMITTEE

Garfield County Fairground Request

Kruse reported that Thoene gave a presentation at the Committee meeting, and it was discussed that the NRD could participate in the restroom project which fell under the "Public Safety" category. It was estimated that the total restroom project would be \$50,000. Kruse reported that the Committee agreed on a \$7,500 limit on participation.

Kruse motioned, seconded by Petersen, to participate in the Garfield County Fairgrounds Restroom Project at 15% rate, not to exceed \$7,500.00.

Coffey asked if the Board was opening a can of worms and if every fairground group may approach wanting to redo things. Kruse stated that is why it was limited to the restrooms for public safety. Eschliman stated that a question came up about amount of use the restrooms would get and were told they would be used all year round. Thoene added that there were also 105 camper hookups and that activities were held on the grounds all year round.

Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

Middle Loup Public Power and Irrigation District Participation Request

Kruse reported that the irrigation district was upgrading to a Rubicon control system and had requested NRD participation.

Callan stated that Gerry Sheets planned on being present for the meeting; however, they were having canal problems. Callan stated that the request was not a water savings program but an efficiency program. He said that all the acres under this irrigation district pay money to the NRD via taxes levied on irrigated acres and that, so far, all the committed money for the project

was from the irrigation district and FEMA funds. Naprstek reported that Middle Loup Public Power & Irrigation District was adding a \$5 per acre fee to help raise more funds.

Citta asked that if this was not a water savings program, how did it help to save water and where did the NRD fit in? Adams stated wherever they were more efficient there would be water savings. Callan stated it would be more efficient, but he was not sure about savings. Hadenfeldt stated that the automation gives quicker reaction time, so if it rains, gates can be closed. Thoene stated that some years ago the NRD had discussed putting more water in canals for recharge so the NRD may get more request.

Boesch motioned, seconded by Adams, to participate in the Middle Loup Public Power & Irrigation District Canal Control Structure Project, not to exceed \$100,000.00.

Hadenfeldt stated that the Water Sustainability Fund turned down the project, but they may be able to get further assistance if they have more people involved. Kauk asked if the NRD could request numbers to see if there was some efficiency to see if it helped on this canal system.

Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Adams, Amsberry, Anderson, Bartak, Bauer, Boesch, Coffey, Eschliman, Hadenfeldt, Kruse, Nitsch, Petersen, Smith, Thede, Thoene, Vlach. Directors voting no: Citta, Kauk, Mohrman, Podolak. Director not present: Lukasiewicz.

Valley County Water Trail

Naprstek stated the North Loup Water Trail wanted to set up a canoe launch and the Vets Ground was willing to provide access on their land. He stated they were going through the steps to have a dock and restrooms installed this year. Naprstek stated they also wanted to have a pull-out spot at Anderson Island. He said there were several partners involved. They have requested \$18,000.00.

North Loup Flood Mitigation

Kruse reported that the Committee discussed what portion would be the responsibility of North Loup. He stated that the city would be doing work within city limits and the NRD would be looking at cleanouts and dams, etc. The Committee discussed how much the city would help with after the project was started and Callan was checking into what portion can go under the WFPO.

Sargent East IPA

Callan stated he had not heard anything from the Sargent East landowners involved in the IPA. Kruse stated that if the NRD did not hear from them, a decision would need to be made. The residents would need to know that the project would move forward, but they could either stop it or allow it to proceed. Mohrman stated the project should move forward. Citta stated it could be put on the agenda next month and also said a hearing could be held and make the decision to continue or IPA landowners could stop it. Kruse asked if anyone else had heard

anything. Thoene stated he heard that they might not move forward. Callan stated the NRD still must do the IPA. The residents would have to petition to stop it.

Building Addition

Callan showed the bids that were received from Hackel Construction and Chief Construction. He stated there was a difference of about \$100,000 and four months of construction time. The budget for the project was discussed. There was discussion held on the difference in what would be done with the wall repair with each bid -- one was to replace and the other to repair. Discussion was held on where the companies were located. Kruse stated it was discussed that either company could get the necessary materials. Kruse stated the Committee recommendation was to accept the bid from Chief Construction.

Kruse motioned, seconded by Boesch, to accept the Chief Construction bid of \$1,298,000.00 for the building addition.

Vlach stated he felt that removing and replacing the wall would be better than repairing the existing structure. Thoene stated he would prefer to keep it local. Mohrman stated local is great but there was equal opportunity to bid, Chief had done work for the NRD before, and he didn't know if repair of the wall or replacement would be better. Amsberry stated that the last addition was done by Chief Construction. Bartak stated the bid was not looking at the same thing. Mohrman stated if Chief bid it with repair, and they looked at it, they must think they can fix it. Kruse asked what the bid specs stated. Callan stated it said they needed to make it not leak. Coffey asked what wall was being repaired. Callan stated the firewall between the shop and offices and that it had been repaired before.

Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, Bauer, Boesch, Citta, Eschliman, Hadenfeldt, Kauk, Kruse, Mohrman, Petersen, Podolak, Thede. Directors voting no: Anderson, Bartak, Coffey, Nitsch, Smith, Thoene, Vlach. Director abstaining: Adams. Director not present: Lukasiewicz.

Thalheim Property

Callan stated there was some property by Scotia that abuts the river, and the owner wants to donate the land to the NRD. He said he wanted to give it to the NRD because of assistance he received for care for his wife. Callan stated the property had a house and a couple of ponds and river access potential. He said there were a couple different options on how the transfer of ownership could be done. Callan said he would discuss options with the NRD's attorney and would look at having the landowner come to a Committee meeting.

St. Edward Channel Cleanout

No update.

Village of Belgrade

Kruse stated there was discussion held on a project for bank stabilization. He said representatives would be back for a second presentation.

Ravenna Hike and Bike Trail

Kruse stated this was the first discussion and that Ravenna residents were considering putting in a trail. He said they were looking into putting in white rock; however, the NRD had not participated in white rock trails before. Smith stated he did not think it would be ADA compliant.

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE LR23 REPORT

Callan reported that a LR23 request had come in. He stated that staff put together a list of everything that had been done since the NRD was formed and the information was sent in. It was discussed that questions had arisen as to if the NRDs were still performing according to their original purpose. Callan stated that staff went through all the projects and highlighted which categories they fell under. Callan presented the Board with the response that was sent along with the descriptions and costs of each project and study completed. Podolak asked what drove the request and Callan stated that Erdman and Briese introduced it.

Smith motioned, seconded by Mohrman, to approve the submittal of the LR23 information. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Litigation Update

No update.

New Hires

Callan reported that Ryan Hellbusch started as a water sampler in Fullerton.

30 x 30 Plan

Callan stated he did not have much information on the plan but there were some links in the agenda for review. Eschliman handed out some information flyers and stated that some counties, etc. were passing resolutions regarding the plan. He stated that the NRD could do a resolution on the plan. Callan stated we can have one ready for the next meeting, but he needed to know which way to go on it. Citta stated that 95% of Nebraska land is privately owned so this would affect us. Eschliman stated that NARD was planning on passing a resolution this fall. Boesch stated she felt that the NRD should wait and go with NARD. Citta stated it would be a good idea to look at a draft and consider.

Non-action Reports

No non-action reports.

FY 2022 BUDGET WORK SESSION

Callan went over the following budget codes and the suggested amounts for budget.

Code 475 – Buffer Strip Program - \$170,000
Code 462 – Arboretum Budget - \$10,000
Code 438 – Special Projects – \$1,329,340
Code 473 & 301 – Water Quality Fund - \$110,000
Code 301&303 – State and Federal Grant Funds - \$4,000,000
Code 422 – Scrap Tire Collection - \$0.00
Code 471 – Water Well Decommissioning Fund - \$30,000
Code 470 & 440 – Land Treatment - \$440,000
Code 441 – Project Construction - \$7,000,000
Code 443 – Project Land Rights - \$700,000
Code 445 – Project Legal Costs - \$70,000
Code 447 – Assessment Projects - \$2,500 (Duncan East IPA)
Code 448 – Assessment Projects - \$300 (Lost Creek IPA)
Code 466 – FEMA Hazard Mitigation Plan - \$125,000
Code 449 & 309 – Stock and Stock Purchases - \$160,000
Code 165 – Machinery & Equipment - \$58,000
Code 476 – Community Forestry Program - \$35,000
Code 477 – Prescribed Burn Program - \$30,000
Code 441.01 – Park and Recreation Financial Assistance Program - \$12,000
Code 163 & 161 – Capital Improvements & Land - \$1,300,000

**Smith motioned, seconded by Kruse, to tentatively approve FY 2022 Budget Part 2.
Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.**

NARD REPORT

Eschliman reported that the Papio NRD Basin Tour had taken place and provided a book and map of places that were visited for everyone view. Mohrman, Boesch, and Kauk highlighted various aspects of the tour.

NRC REPORT

Hadenfeldt reported that the next meeting would be held in August.

RC&D REPORT

Adams reported that Saturday would be Burwell city-wide garage sales and that the RC&D was holding a raffle drawing to help raise money for the new legion post in Burwell.

ANNOUNCEMENTS / FUTURE MEETING TOPICS

Boesch asked when a Board retreat would be held. Date is to be determined.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Board, Citta declared the meeting adjourned at 7:45 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 July 22, 2021, at 5:00 p.m., at the Headquarters Office in Ord, Nebraska.

Henry J. Thoene
Secretary