

# MINUTES

## LOWER LOUP NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

February 24, 2022

Ord, Nebraska

The February 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 February 24, 2022. Chairman Citta called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

### CALL TO ORDER

#### Directors in attendance:

James C. Adams  
Darwin B. Anderson  
Robert L. Bauer  
John Coffey  
Gary A. Kruse  
Todd Nitsch  
Chad J. Podolak  
Henry J. Thoene, Secretary

Rollie D. Amsberry, Treasurer  
Timothy E. Bartak  
Joseph L. Citta, Chairman  
N. Richard Hadenfeldt  
Larry Mohrman  
Alan D. Petersen  
Dean G. Thede  
Rick Vlach

#### Directors absent:

Beth Boesch  
Randy Kauk  
Gerald Smith

James Eschliman, Vice Chairman  
Matt Lukasiewicz

#### Staff in attendance:

Russell G. Callan, General Manager  
Kim A. Lyons, Financial Secretary  
Larry D. Schultz, I&E Coordinator  
Alan Bartels, Information Specialist  
Richard L. Woollen, District Forester  
Jason Moudry, Water Programs Specialist

Tylr Naprstek, Asst. General Manager  
Irene F. Kreifels, Administrative Assistant  
Cameron Conrad, Water Modeling Coord.  
V. Anne Freeman, Water Programs Sec.  
Brian Kolar, Projects Technician  
Dell Harris, Water Resources Specialist

#### Guests in attendance:

Bryce Bauer, LDC, NRCS, Ord  
Jerry Thieman, Petersburg

Jim Nelson, Cairo  
Tony Thieman, Petersburg

## 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, and 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, Citta, Coffey, Hadenfeldt, Kruse, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Thede, Thoene, Vlach. Directors Absent: Boesch, Eschliman, Kauk, Lukasiewicz, Smith.

## EXCUSED ABSENCES

Citta stated that Directors Boesch, Eschliman, Kauk, Lukasiewicz and Smith had asked to be excused.

**Vlach motioned, seconded by Anderson, to excuse Directors Boesch, Eschliman, Kauk, Lukasiewicz, and Smith. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.**

## MINUTES

Chairman Citta asked for corrections and/or additions to the January 27, 2022, Board meeting minutes. Thoene stated there was a motion in the Programs/Projects minutes that did not represent his vote. It was determined that the correction would be in next month's minutes.

**Kruse motioned, seconded by Petersen, to approve the January 27, 2022, Board meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.**

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Russell Callan, General Manager, highlighted expenditures of \$110,357.10 to Chief Construction for the building addition; \$5,588.80 to B-Systems Inc for one new desktop and one new laptop computer; and payments of \$3,771.36; \$2,000.00; and \$8,000.00 to multiple producers for Area 30 flowmeter cost-share. Callan also highlighted expenditures of \$11,957.40 to Edghill Motors Inc for a new lawnmower; \$125,100.00 to Aqua Geo Frameworks LLC for the AEM Study; \$15,997.36 to JEO Consulting Group for work on the Hazard Mitigation Plan; and multiple payments to tree planters for refunds from the Executive Travel tree discount funds. Adams asked if all the Executive Travel Funds were used. Callan stated they were not.

**Coffey motioned, seconded by Thoene, to approve the February 24, 2022, 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

Tony and Jerry Thieman were present to discuss issues near Petersburg with domestic wells going dry during peak irrigation. Tony stated he had two wells go dry and that his neighbors had been having problems. He stated that looking ahead at the year, he thinks there will be issues and wanted to know if there was any help that the NRD could offer with the situation. Tony also stated they had the same problem in 2012 and one of his pumps burned up. At the time they were able to lower the pump an additional 20 feet and get by; however, last year the issue happened again. Tony stated that there had been at least 12 wells within three miles of his place that had been put in and when they start them up, he loses water. He read in the minutes that there would be a study done and monitoring wells put in, and stated that was great, but does not help right now.

Jerry Thieman stated he was just wondering if the Board had any answers. He stated he did not want to promote cutting back on water use. He said his well was at 216 feet and was dropped another 16 feet in 2012.

Tony stated his well was at 240 feet and was lowered an additional 20 feet in 2012 and wondered if there were any programs to help with drilling new wells since the cost would be a lot for a small producer.

Citta stated that the NRD did not have a program to address this issue right now, but discussion could be held at the Committee meetings to see what could be done.

Callan stated that, presently, the NRD did not have a program that paid for drilling.

Adams asked if it could go under the livestock well program. Callan stated livestock wells go into the planned grazing systems; however, the Board could discuss options.

## FORESTER'S REPORT

Richard Woollen, District Forester, reported on the Nebraska Forest Restoration Partnership dollars and the forestry improvements they would be used for. He said the funds would be used in addition to NRD cost-share. Woollen also reported that 40,000 to 50,000 trees had been sold so far and that, while most species are still available, the nursery was getting low on some species.

## NRCS REPORT

Bryce Bauer, NRCS, Ord, reported that a new State Conservationist, Rob Lawson, had been hired. He also stated that staff had been working on finishing up EQIP rankings, which were due by next Friday, with new contracts being worked on Monday.

These arrived at 4:28 p.m.

Bauer also reported that the 2023 Local Work Group would be held March 30<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. at the Lower Loup NRD. He said this would be the time to make changes if anyone had any suggestions.

Bauer stated that most offices were now at 75% capacity, so producers were allowed in, one at a time. He said he had not seen the final reopening plan but is expecting it in spring.

## INFORMATION & EDUCATION REPORT

### Hazard Mitigation Plan

Larry Schultz, Information & Education Coordinator, reported that the Hazard Mitigation Plan was currently in public review, including communities and counties involved with the plan who are reviewing their portion of the plan. After review, JEO will take any changes and assemble the final document to be sent to NEMA in mid-March and then onto FEMA after that. He expects final approval by September or October.

Schultz also reported that the *In the Loup* newsletter had been mailed. He reported that Alan Bartels, Information Specialist, had designed most of the newsletter. He said that there had been several calls on trees and certifying irrigated acres. Schultz also reported that the website had been revamped to allow for flexibility with tree sales. It was also reported that *Irrigation Leader* magazine had an article with an interview of Dean Edson and Jim Eschliman.

### Great Backyard Bird Count

Bartels reported that the Great Backyard Bird Count was held on February 19<sup>th</sup> and that there were 22 participants that visited the arboretum. He said there were a total of 326 birds spotted in the arboretum and along the trail and creek. Amongst some of the birds that were spotted were woodpeckers, thrashers, hawks, and bald eagles. The event was founded by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society in 1997 and over 160,000 people around the world participated in the event in 2021.

Bartels also reported that the *Irrigation Leader* would have a feature on the NRD.

Bartels reported that about 250 photos had been received so far for the photo contest.

## ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

### Davis Creek Recreation Area

Tylr Naprstek, Assistant General Manager, reported that the wi-fi costs at Davis Creek had been reduced significantly due to a change in ownership with the provider for the lake. He reported that Memorial Day weekend and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July camp sites were already booked, and that Labor Day was getting close to full. He said that camp host spots had been filled for this year, but he was still taking volunteers.

### Pibel Lake Recreation Area

Naprstek reported that about two-thirds of the ice was clear and that geese had already started to move in. He said that he would meet with Nebraska Game and Parks tomorrow to get information on how to better control the geese population. Naprstek also reported that the lake would be used as an NDEE sampling site again this year and that sensors would be put out once the ice clears.

### Irrigated Acres Violations

Naprstek reported that out of 38 potential violations, only one landowner has yet to make contact with the LLNRD. Naprstek also reported that staff has been pulling historical 578 forms from the Farm Service Agency. He said that some offices have announced that forms prior to 2010 would be destroyed and that the Kearney office would not pull anything older than 3 years, so he has reached out to the Director.

## WATER RESOURCES COMMITTEE

### LLNRD Drought Plan

Naprstek reported that there were six or seven directors present at the meeting held on February 17<sup>th</sup> and said that valuable feedback had been received. Mohrman thought the use of a phone polling system was helpful. Naprstek stated that, in November, the NRD was challenged to find options. He said feedback was received ranging from being too strict to not strict enough, but most were agreeable. Naprstek said that a report from JEO would be coming soon.

### 2021 Water Quality Report

Naprstek reported that everyone should have a copy of the 2021 Water Quality Report and presented a spreadsheet showing the nitrate trends in the 30 different water quality subareas across the District. He stated that most nitrate areas were trending up and reviewed various areas in the District that the NRD would be closely monitoring.

**Tohne motioned, seconded by Adams, to approve the 2021 Water Quality Report. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.**

Naprstek stated that letters had been sent out to producers showing their nitrate results from samples that were taken in 2021.

#### Wheeler County Nitrates

Naprstek reported that water quality reports in the townships of Wheeler County were examined and there were some areas that were getting close to Phase 2 management and the current Phase 2 area meets Phase 3 criteria. Staff will continue to monitor samples in these areas.

#### Boone County – Well Drawdown Area

Naprstek reported that the NRD was working with Sue Lackey of UNL Conservation and Survey Division on test hole sites and monitoring wells would be installed. He said they were hoping there would be four that could be sampled this spring/summer. Citta recommended that the Committee discuss drawdown areas and if there are things the NRD should be doing. Podolak stated he would like to see what other NRDs were doing to address these issues.

#### Lower Platte River Basin Coalition

Naprstek said that the final report for the first 5-year increment was in and was currently being reviewed. He said the NRD was slightly under 10% of its groundwater allotment for the year and that surface water rights were being relinquished for groundwater irrigation.

#### Columbus Recharge Project

Callan stated that the NRD was still waiting on parts and that he would meet with Rutjens and get a timeline of when the project would be finished. He said some of the control parts were still not in, but that Rutjens had been good at getting parts installed when they came in.

#### Other

Callan reported there was nitrate information sent out to the iPad. He also showed a video put out by circleofblue.org, on the relation of nitrates to cancer. He said this would be discussed more at the Directors Retreat.

Kruse asked if the Area 30 flowmeters were 100% complete. Naprstek stated there were 4-5 that were done but invoices had not been received yet.

### PROGRAMS/PROJECTS COMMITTEE

#### FEMA Buyout

Kruse reported that the process for the FEMA buyout was moving along and that appraisals had been done on the properties involved. Discussions have been held with Mary Baker and it was thought that within a month the sellers should have time to look at the appraisals and decide. Callan reported that the NRD's cost would be 25% of the appraised value.

### Ice Jam Monitoring Project

Kruse reported that Platte County Emergency Management had contacted the NRD about a partnership for video monitoring the river.

### Columbus Recreation Group

Kruse reported that there was a group from Columbus that was looking at the Loup River for kayak and canoe routes. He said they were looking at a site in Genoa, one in Monroe, and one on the property the NRD is looking at from the FEMA buyout. Kruse stated they may come to give a presentation to the whole Board.

### Loup Power Joint Fishing Pier Project

Kruse reported that Loup Power had originally planned to install two fishing piers; however, they did not receive the Nebraska Game and Parks grant, so they were adjusting down to one pier. The Committee discussed assistance equal to half of what would have been contributed for the two.

**Kruse motioned, seconded by Bauer, to provide funding for the Loup Public Power Fishing Pier Project not to exceed \$35,200 for one pier. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.**

### Mud Creek Project

Callan reported that, given cost-benefit ratios, it appeared that dry dams and a bypass at an estimated cost of \$6 million, which would be reimbursed with a WFPO grant, were likely options for the Ansley area.

It was reported that a meeting with Ansley should be held within a couple months and that 90% designs would come here first and then be sent on to Ansley for review.

### Sargent Flood Project

The city submitted their hazard mitigation grant application and hope to hear by late summer or fall if funding will be awarded. Brian Kolar, projects technician, stated that NEMA would do the preliminary review and then plans would be sent to LLNRD and then on to FEMA for final review.

### North Loup Flood Mitigation

It was determined that the dry dam was not cost effective. The Village was continuing to work on cleaning out the bypass channel. The most viable solutions are a levee and channel widening with a bypass straight to the river.

### Bowman Lake Request

No update.

### Building Update

Callan stated construction was on schedule and that insulation had been installed and framers would be coming soon to prepare for doors.

### Other

Callan reported that there was a drainage issue in Greeley County. He said he would be in contact with the County Attorney regarding the issue.

## VARIANCE COMMITTEE

Thoene reported that Jon Abegglen had his first hearing and was wanting to rotate or transfer acres off grassland acres. Staff will review the details and figure the stream depletion. More information will be available next month.

## MANAGER'S REPORT

### Litigation Update

No update. Callan said he was still waiting on information on the instream flow application.

### New Hires

No new hires.

### Non-action Reports

Callan stated that the Directors Retreat was approaching, and that Don Blankenau, Jesse Bell, and Glenn Johnson were scheduled to speak. Coffey asked about sending information to the iPad on the presentations. Callan stated another item to discuss at the retreat was Committee meeting dates and times to make them more convenient.

## NARD REPORT

Eschliman was not present to report. Callan stated that there was a lot of activity in the Legislature.

## NRC REPORT

Hadenfeldt reported that there was a meeting the day prior in Kearney and that online streaming of meetings were discussed. In the end, they voted not to do so. He reported that meeting dates were set for the next year and that meetings would be held in April, August, and October. Hadenfeldt stated that the value of the columns used for scoring were also discussed.

## LOUP BASIN RC&D REPORT

Adams reported that the RC&D was holding a raffle for a shotgun to raise funds and that they were working on a grant application. He stated that a cardboard recycling event was coming up and that the bricks had been received for the new VFW building but will wait until spring to begin construction.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS/FUTURE MEETING TOPICS

It was announced that the Directors Retreat would be held March 8<sup>th</sup> and that Committee meetings may not be held in March or could be held during the retreat.

## ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Board, Chairman Citta declared the meeting adjourned at 5:35 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 March 24, 2022, at 4:00 p.m., at the Headquarters Office in Ord, Nebraska.

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Henry J. Thoene  
Secretary