

MINUTES

LOWER LOUP NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

September 4, 2025

Ord, Nebraska

The August 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 September 4, 2025. Chairman Thoene called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Directors in attendance:

Rollie D. Amsberry, Treasurer
Colton R. DeBower
Jeremy Eschliman
Thomas L. Knutson
Larry Mohrman, Secretary
Alan Petersen
Gerald Smith
Alexander L. Vlach

Robert L. Bauer
James Eschliman
Randy Kauk
Gary A. Kruse
Todd Nitsch
John Shadle
Henry J. Thoene, Chairman
Rick Vlach, Vice Chairman

Directors absent:

Timothy E. Bartak
Chad J. Podolak

Justin W. King

Staff in attendance:

Russell G. Callan, General Manager
Irene Kreifels, Administrative Assistant
Alan Bartels, I & E Coordinator
Dell Harris, Water Resources Specialist
Aron Lewis, Conservation Forester

Tyler Naprstek, Assistant General Manager
Kim A. Lyons, Financial Secretary
Brant Bechtold, Information Specialist
Makenzi Woollen, Financial Assistant
Jason Moudry, Water Programs Specialist

Guests in attendance:

Bryce Bauer, NRCS, Ord

Senator Dan McKeon, Amherst

VERIFICATION OF MEETING NOTICE AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Chairman Thoene asked for verification of the meeting notice. General Manager Russ 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.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Thoene stated that Directors Bartak, King, and Podolak had asked to be excused.

R. Vlach motioned, seconded by Bauer, to excuse absent Directors Bartak, King, and Podolak. Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, Bauer, DeBower, James Eschliman, Jeremy Eschliman, Kauk, Knutson, Kruse, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Shadle, Smith, Thoene, Alex Vlach, Rick Vlach. Directors absent: Bartak, King, Podolak.

MINUTES

Thoene asked for corrections and/or additions to the July 24, 2025, Board meeting minutes.

Knutson motioned, seconded by Jeremy Eschliman, to approve the July 24, 2025, Board meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Russell Callan, General Manager, highlighted expenditures of \$14,518.07 to B-Systems for new computers, and \$3,997.74 to Wadas Inc. for a new air conditioning unit. Callan also highlighted an expenditure of \$9,102.91 to Ward Laboratories, Inc. for water and soil samples. Smith asked about maintenance payments for Pibel Lake and Davis Creek made to Speed Services, LLC, for \$1,050.00 and \$3,770.00, respectively. Callan stated that it was for pumping out the toilets.

Smith also asked if there is a limit on flow meter cost-share. Callan stated that it is limited to \$2,000.00 per meter, per well.

Mohrman motioned, seconded by Petersen, to approve the September 4, 2025, 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

Senator Dan McKeon stated that he is trying to be out as much as he can and talked briefly about the most recent session. He also stated that his door is always open to visit, or he can be emailed and will address the issue, when he can.

Shadle motioned, seconded by Jim Eschliman, to suspend the Regular Meeting until after the Public Hearing on the Lower Loup NRD FY 2025-2026 Budget and the Special Hearing to Set the Final Tax Request. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

PUBLIC HEARING ON LOWER LOUP NRD FY 2025-2026 BUDGET

Henry Thoene: I am Henry J. Thoene, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District.

Our purpose for this meeting here this evening is to hear public comments on the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Budget of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District. Notice of this public hearing has been published according to law in The Grand Island Independent and The Columbus Telegram.

The time is 5:11 p.m. I will formally open the Budget Hearing. I will ask for comments from the public concerning the proposed budget. I will ask that you give your name, legal residence, and whom you represent.

None heard.

Henry Thoene: OK, hearing no comments, I will now ask for comments from the Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District.

None heard.

Henry Thoene: No comments? If there are no other comments, I will close this hearing at 5:12 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING TO SET FINAL TAX REQUEST FOR FY 2025-2026

Henry Thoene: I am Henry J. Thoene, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District.

Our purpose for meeting here this evening is to take testimony relating to the governing Board's decision to set the levy at a different amount than the Platte County Clerk's preliminary property tax rate as established pursuant to Nebraska Revised Statute 77-1601.02.

Notice of this public hearing has been published according to the law in The Grand Island Independent and The Columbus Telegram.

The time is 5:13 p.m. I will formally open the Hearing. I will ask for comments from the public. I will ask that you give your name, legal residence, and who you represent.

None heard.

Henry Thoene: Hearing none, I will now ask for comments from the Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District.

None heard.

Henry Thoene: Hearing none, if there are no other comments, I will close this hearing at 5:14 p.m.

The Board of Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District will now proceed with the regular agenda. All those in attendance are welcome to remain.

Smith motioned, seconded by DeBower, to resume the Regular Board of Directors meeting. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

LLNRD FY 2026 BUDGET

Callan explained that our tax asking is down 16% and the levy is down 24% this year. He stated that the valuation increased, and we are asking for less than last year. He added that we get into cycles when we go up for projects and other years when we go down. Callan also stated that we have \$1.8 million in unused budget authority, and our budget is down by about \$30,000.

Resolution Number FY2026-001 was presented to the Board as follows:

RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE BUDGET OF THE LOWER LOUP NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026

WHEREAS, the Lower Loup Natural Resources District, a political subdivision organized under the laws of the State of Nebraska; and

WHEREAS, said Board of Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District has held two (2) Budget Work sessions to hear suggestions as to what reoccurring expenses and new projects the District will incur in the coming Fiscal Year 2025-2026; and

WHEREAS, said Board of Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District has compiled a list of proposed funding sources to help cover those expenses and projects planned for Fiscal Year 2025-2026; and

WHEREAS, said Board of Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District recommends a budget expenditure of \$21,505,572.00 for Fiscal Year 2025-2026; and

WHEREAS, said Board of Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District has held a public hearing in compliance with the provisions of State Statute Sections 13-501 to 13-513, for the purpose to hear support, opposition, criticism, suggestions, or observations from the general public and the Board of Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District relating to their proposed budget and no dissenting comments were heard;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District assembled on this 4th day of September, 2025, adopt Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget as presented.

Mohrman motioned, seconded by Smith, to adopt Resolution FY2026-001: RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE BUDGET OF THE LOWER LOUP NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

FINAL TAX REQUEST FOR FY 2025-2026

Callan stated that the next resolution pertains to the additional one percent increase. He added that it allows the budget amount to go over by that much. He stated that we take it every year, and it does not count against us or for us; however, it is the accountant's suggestion to use it.

Resolution Number FY2026-002 was presented to the Board as follows:

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE ADDITIONAL ONE PERCENT INCREASE

WHEREAS, the Lower Loup Natural Resources District has completed and approved their FY-2026 Budget; and

WHEREAS, a special public hearing was held on September 4, 2025, as required by law, to hear and consider comments concerning the property tax request; and

WHEREAS, Nebraska Revised Statute 13-519 provides a governmental unit may exceed the limit provided in subsection (1) of this section for a fiscal year by up to an additional one percent upon the affirmative vote of at least seventy-five percent of the members of the governing body constituting a quorum authorized to conduct business; and

WHEREAS, the Governing Body of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District has determined the one percent allowable increase is necessary for the financing of proposed District programs and projects;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District approves the adoption of the additional one percent increase allowed to their FY-2026 budget.

Kruse motioned, seconded by Knutson, to adopt Resolution FY2026-002: RESOLUTION TO APPROVE ADDITIONAL ONE PERCENT INCREASE. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

Resolution Number FY2026-003 was presented to the Board as follows:

**RESOLUTION
TO
SET THE PROPERTY TAX REQUEST**

WHEREAS, Nebraska Revised Statute 77-1601.02 provides that the property tax request for the prior year shall be the property tax request for the current year for purposes of the levy set by the County Board of Equalization unless the Governing Body of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District passes by a majority vote a resolution setting the tax request at a different amount; and

WHEREAS, a special public hearing was held as required by law to hear and consider comments concerning the property tax request; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District that the property tax request for the current year be a different amount than the property tax request for the prior year;

WHEREAS, the total assessed value of property differs from last year's total assessed value by 11 percent;

WHEREAS, the tax rate which would levy the same amount of property taxes as last year, when multiplied by the new total assessed value of property, would be \$0.029569 per \$100 of assessed value;

WHEREAS, the Lower Loup Natural Resources District proposes to adopt a property tax request that will cause its tax rate to be \$0.024841 per \$100 of assessed value;

WHEREAS, based on the proposed property tax request and changes in other revenue, the total operating budget of Lower Loup Natural Resources District will change from last year's by 0 percent;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Governing Body of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District, by a majority vote, resolves that:

- 1. The 2025-2026 property tax request be set at \$5,449,758.00.*
- 2. A copy of this resolution be certified and forwarded to the Platte County Clerk on or before October 15, 2025.*
- 3. Any levy which is not in compliance with this section and section 77-1601 shall be construed as an unauthorized levy under section 77-1606.*

James Eschliman motioned, seconded by Nitsch, to adopt Resolution FY2026-003: RESOLUTION TO SET THE PROPERTY TAX REQUEST. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

James Eschliman stated he appreciated that numbers were able to be brought down some.

FORESTER'S REPORT

Aron Lewis, Conservation Forester, reported that he has been working on windbreak renovations, forest stand improvement projects, and wildland urban interface projects. He added that he has been putting windbreak renovation contracts into place. He stated that on his forest stand improvement projects, all but one have hired contractors and have them cutting already. He stated they have until June 30th, when the grant expires, to get their project done. Lewis stated he is getting maps and plans ready for the wildland urban interface projects.

Lewis stated that he did a summer burn at the end of August, and they got a 70%-75% kill. He added that the end of summer is usually a great time to do burns; however, this year has been tougher due to all the rain received.

Lewis added that he would be going to Omaha tomorrow to help with Forest Fest, put on by the Nebraska Forest Service. He added that they have a property in Plattsmouth where they set up games and vendors.

Lewis stated he will also be going to the NRD Forestry meeting in Scottsbluff on Monday and Tuesday, then Husker Harvest Days on Wednesday, and an NRCS Windbreak Class on Thursday. He stated he will be in Kansas the 24th and 25th for a Society of American Foresters Conference.

NRCS REPORT

Bryce Bauer, NRCS, DC West, reported that staff has been working on CSP payments, adding that all paperwork needs to be turned in during September and payments will be made in October. He stated that, in the past, they have sent out reminder postcards; however, this year they called each producer. Bauer added that they have also been working on 2026 EQIP applications, stating there are some pivot applications, but more are for brush burning.

Bauer stated that on September 10th, Conservation Days will be held in the park and NRCS staff will help. He added that Ritch Nelson is coming September 11th to help Lewis with a windbreak training in Ord. He added that they will also be helping with MUDFEST on the 19th.

Bauer stated he has not heard anything new on the Farm Bill or their budget. He added that they have been on travel restrictions and will not be attending the NARD Annual Conference on September 29-30. He said local staff will help with Husker Harvest Days.

Bauer also gave thanks for the intern sponsorship, adding that Riley Bishop's summer internship ended on August 13th, and it worked out great.

INFORMATION & EDUCATION REPORT

Educational Events

Alan Bartels, I&E Coordinator, reported that he worked at the State Fair on August 22nd, during classroom days. He added that there were 9 NRDs and the Association assisting the 3,000 students and 500 teachers that went through the activities.

Bartels reported that he taught the wildlife session on August 28th during the 8th Grade Field Day at Upper Loup NRD, adding that USGS and NRCS helped.

Bartels stated that five schools have signed up for MUDFEST, adding that last year it capped at 100 students, and it has grown to possibly 130 this year.

Range Camp Scholarships

Bartels reported that we have received range camp scholarship requests from Ord, Arcadia, and Wheeler Central, adding that students completing camp get \$75 from the Larry Schultz Outdoor Education Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Bartels also reported that he will be attending Husker Harvest Days next week and that Bechtold will be at Conservation Days.

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Recreation Areas

Tylr Naprstek, Assistant General Manager, reported that water levels at Davis Creek are plummeting to get down to wintering levels of 2,056 feet, adding that other irrigation districts are shutting down for the year. He estimated that the lake is still 60% full, adding that staff is moving docks regularly.

Naprstek stated that reservations were full for Labor Day weekend; however, only about half came out, due to the rainy, cool weather. He added that there is another surge of reservations at the end of the month for Junk Jaunt.

Naprstek reported that Pibel Lake looks good. He added that there will be an archaeological survey done this fall for the Recreation Trail grant, and that we would be looking at Spring or Fall of 2026 to begin construction.

Naprstek added that the summer bacterial sampling at area recreation sites will continue through the end of September, and that nothing has triggered yet for harmful algae blooms or E. coli bacteria at any of the four sampled locations.

Chemigation Inspections

Naprstek reported that the field techs have been out and that numbers are slightly down this year. He stated that about 1,300 systems have been checked and that 71 had failed mainline check valves, adding that some information was wrong on permits and the phone numbers listed were no longer good. He stated if they don't catch up with the producer this year, the permits will be new next year and require inspection.

Water Quality Sampling

Naprstek stated they try to collect water samples along with the chemigation inspections, as well as across our WQMA, stating that Area 29 is done and the rest of the District has been slower. He added that they do not make producers fire up their system just to get a sample. He said that we will end this year slightly down in sample numbers; however, we will still have enough data to analyze.

Aerial Infrareads

Naprstek stated that flights for 4-band, high-definition imagery has started later than normal this year. He stated that they fly at about 12,000 feet up and if the pilot cannot see the field due to cloud cover or smoke in the air, he does not fly. Naprstek stated that in 2018 they flew late, starting August 24th and were able to finish September 17th; and in 2019, which was another wet year, they were not until August 27th and completed the flights October 4th, adding that the database comes back quickly once the area is flown.

GWMP Stakeholders Meeting #1

Naprstek reported that the first stakeholders meeting was held last week, adding that 27-29 people were invited and 18-19 came, adding that the attendees add a lot of variety of professions to the mix.

Kruse added that there was very active participation with the constituents that came.

Petersen stated there was not a question that staff could not answer.

Amsberry added that there was a lot of good conversation that carried on after the meeting.

Smith stated there were good suggestions made and stated it was good to see members of the stakeholder's group return and new members show up.

Kruse asked what the meeting schedule was. Naprstek answered that there will be a debriefing meeting with Olsson. The second stakeholder meeting will be in late January or early February, adding that reminder notifications are sent by letter, email, and text messages.

It was added that flow meters were brought up with varying opinions on them and that Twin Platte NRD tried to do an hourly meter and project out usage; however, that method leaves a 40-60% chance of error. Callan added that we started out that way in Area 28 and it was almost impossible to get it to work.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Water Strategies Update

Callan reported that Water Strategies is the group out of Washington, DC, that we do a lot of work with. We recently used their services when drafting a letter to our Congressional representatives in Washington, DC.

Litigation Update

There is nothing new to report on the Platte-Republican Diversion.

New Hires

No new hires. Callan stated he is looking for someone to work on the vadose zone study and there is an ad out for the Water Quality Technician position in Columbus that was recently vacated by Ryan Hellbusch.

Non-action Reports

No report.

Amsberry asked if a response letter was received on the RCPP funding being pulled. Callan stated Rob Lawson has reached out and a time was set up to meet for an informal review of some sort. He added that he does not think we will get anywhere with it, but Lawson is supposed to give a formal response within 30 days. We will most likely apply again in the new funding cycle. Callan stated he also thinks that people will be hesitant to sign up because they went through all the time and effort, and then it fell through.

James Eschliman asked if ads are out for the vacant Director positions. Callan stated that we are running Adams' position for the second time and Lukasiewicz's for the first. He added that he did receive a call for Adams' spot, but the interested person lived in the wrong area.

NARD REPORT

James Eschliman reported that there will be a committee Zoom meeting the week before Annual Conference and there will be an NARD Board of Directors meeting at Annual Conference.

NRC REPORT

Amsberry reported that there has not been a meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/FUTURE MEETING TOPICS

Callan announced that Committee meetings will be November 18th, due to Veterans Day.

Callan stated he has not heard anything on the title transfer with Twin Loups. Knutson stated the irrigation district has been talking to a lot of other counties and entities to help work through the process.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Board, Chairman Thoene declared the meeting adjourned at 5:54 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 September 25, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., at the Headquarters Office in Ord, Nebraska.

Larry Mohrman
Secretary