

MINUTES

LOWER LOUP NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

September 25, 2025

Ord, Nebraska

The September 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 25, 2025. Chairman Thoene called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Directors in attendance:

Rollie D. Amsberry, Treasurer
Colton R. DeBower
Jeremy Eschliman
Justin W. King
Gary A. Kruse
Todd Nitsch
Chad J. Podolak
Gerald Smith
Rick Vlach, Vice Chairman

Robert L. Bauer
James Eschliman
Randy Kauk
Thomas L. Knutson
Larry Mohrman, Secretary
Alan Petersen
John Shadle
Henry J. Thoene, Chairman

Directors absent:

Timothy E. Bartak

Alexander L. Vlach

Staff in attendance:

Russell G. Callan, General Manager
Irene Kreifels, Administrative Assistant
Alan Bartels, I & E Coordinator
Dell Harris, Water Resources Specialist
Kevin Gustafson, District Engineer

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:

Miles Anderson, DC East, NRCS, Albion

Tyler Kaps, Lammers, Abel & Kaps, CPAs PC

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 and A. Vlach had asked to be excused.

Smith motioned, seconded by Petersen, to excuse absent Directors Bartak and A. Vlach. Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, DeBower, James Eschliman, Jeremy Eschliman, Kauk, Knutson, Kruse, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Shadle, Smith, Thoene, R. Vlach. Director's not present for vote: Bauer, King, Podolak. Directors absent: Bartak, A. Vlach.

MINUTES

Thoene asked for corrections and/or additions to the September 4, 2025, Board meeting minutes. With no corrections being heard, Thoene announced that the minutes will stand approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Russell Callan, General Manager, highlighted expenditures of \$5,050.85 to Transit Works for survey equipment upgrades; \$7,045.00 to Lammers, Abel & Kaps, CPAs, PC for audit services; and \$22,905.52 to Olsson for work on the Groundwater Management Plan.

Bauer, King, and Podolak arrived at 5:03 p.m.

Callan also highlighted additional expenditures of \$39,000.00 and \$9,852.00 to USGS for vadose zone project work and stream gauges, respectively; and \$2,973.50 to Platte Valley Communications for new Wi-Fi equipment for Davis Creek Recreation Area.

Rick Vlach motioned, seconded by James Eschliman, to approve the September 25, 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

There were no public comments.

LLNRD FY 2025 AUDIT REPORT

Tyler Kaps of Lammers, Abel and Kaps, CPAs gave an explanation and review of the audit to the Directors and answered questions that were presented. He stated the audit turned out well with no discrepancies. The full audit report can be viewed at the office of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District during regular business hours.

Callan added that the NRD will also have a single audit this year since over \$750,000 of Federal funds were expended in last fiscal year.

Smith motioned, seconded by Knutson, to accept the FY 2025 Audit Report. Motion carried by roll call vote, all present voting yes.

FORESTER'S REPORT

Aron Lewis, Conservation Forester, was not present. Callan stated there was an update included in the agenda packet.

NRCS REPORT

Miles Anderson, NRCS, DC East, reported that David Reilly and Lisa Reynoldson have been recognized for their years of service, with 20 years and 10 years, respectively.

Anderson reported that staff was involved in an outreach activity in Fullerton. He stated that the 4th Grade Field Day was a success with 80 students attending from Palmer, Fullerton, and Twin River. He added that there were 4-5 conservation topics, including soil erosion.

Anderson also reported that there were two Area Range Judging and State contests yesterday, adding that there were 500 kids at the contest in Keya Paha County. He added that there will be another land judging event in a few weeks.

Anderson reported that the Statewide DC meeting was held earlier in the day and that there are major program changes for planners in offices. He stated they are looking at how to get conservation on the ground and that the State offices are getting trained. He added that it has not been completed at the National level yet, stating that they will get a crash course on upcoming programs soon.

Anderson added that EQIP and CSP are their two main programs and they are working to get things orientated for next year. He added that they are finishing up with CRP and that totals are down a little. He stated that Albion had 8 continuous and 7 grassland; Fullerton had 3 continuous; and St. Paul had 4 continuous, 1 general, and 1 grassland. He added that staff is also working to get CRP status reviews completed.

Anderson reported that November 21st is the deadline for CSP and EQIP signups, adding that after the deadline, producers can still sign up but may or may not receive approval.

INFORMATION & EDUCATION REPORT

Educational Events

Alan Bartels, Information & Education Coordinator, reported that MUDFEST was held last week with 124 students present from 5 different schools. Unfortunately, the event was stopped after about 1½ hours, due to lightning. Bartels added that *Pure Nebraska* was present and showed the video that aired on the event.

Bartels added that *Pure Nebraska* also did a segment on Davis Creek Recreation Area that will air Friday.

Bartels reminded everyone that the Kearney conference will be held this Sunday through Tuesday.

Online Outreach

Brant Bechtold, Information Specialist, reported that he has been working on recording short audio clips to be posted on YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, to reach a large audience quickly. He added that one was made on scheduling final irrigation, and it received about 500 views. The clip was played for those present. Bechtold reported that they are trying to keep each clip between 30 seconds and 1 minute, adding that the metrics show that about 25% of people have listened for 35 seconds or more. Bechtold stated that there may be some using Bartels and the technicians in the future.

Thoene asked if there were updates on the website. Bechtold stated he has been working on the dead links and has made the buttons bigger, so they are easier to see. He added that the new clips will be available on our website as well.

Jeremy Eschliman asked what the target population is. Bechtold stated they want to reach a variety and will have tags to try to reach out on several topics. Callan added that they have talked about doing some on lawn watering, fixing leaks, etc.

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Recreation Areas

Tylr Naprstek, Assistant General Manager, reported that most of the reservations for Davis Creek have tapered off, adding that the upcoming weekend is full for Junk Jaunt. He reported that the water level reached wintering level and there are still two functional docks, adding that the handicap dock sunk on the tail end due to holes, so it has been pulled for repairs.

Naprstek reported that the final beach analysis samples will be taken next week, adding that there were no triggers at any of the four sites we sampled this year. Naprstek stated that the ambient lake sampling at Pibel Lake has been completed for the year.

Naprstek also stated that the shower house at Davis Creek will stay open until temperatures are consistently below freezing at night, then will be winterized.

Monitoring Well Sampling

Naprstek reported that staff has been out checking wells and showed a map with monitoring well locations, as well as information on what project they are related to. He added that most of them have a dedicated pump or use a mobile pump, adding that Sandhills pumps require use of HydraSleeves. He explained that it is a sleeve with a weight on the bottom, is put down and then pulled back up to take the sample. He added that these are used when there is low flow or they can't get a pump down. He also stated that there are 151 dedicated sites, and some have dedicated pumps, adding that every five years a full Household Complete analysis is run, but most years just nitrates are tested.

Kauk asked about the sleeve and how it works. Naprstek explained that it sits compressed in the well and with upward pressure it pulls water in. Naprstek also stated that some wells have bentonite, and they do not want to agitate it, adding that after the tube is pulled the next sleeve stays till next year's sample.

WATER RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Nance County Modeling Project

Nitsch reported that the Committee received an update on the project, adding that Federal funds have been denied. The Committee discussed funding the remainder of the project for \$98,000 a year for two years and passed a motion for recommendation.

Nitsch motioned, seconded by Smith, to fund the Nance County Modeling Project for \$98,000 a year for two years.

Jeremy Eschliman asked what the cost was and what the project was. Naprstek informed the Board that the NRD had AEM flights conducted over Nance County and found a management area where it was thought that the aquifer ran out. He added that this project will couple with what wells are showing and with the flight data to re-draw the aquifer boundary. Naprstek added that the low water situation impacts any wells going into that area, so we need to budget the water. He also added that the data will be modeled to see how the water level will react to various management changes.

Podolak asked what alerted us to the issue. Naprstek stated that the Sprunk/Swanson interference, as well as the water issues in Genoa contributed, adding that Jared Abraham of AGF stated it is probably the most restrictive aquifer in the NRD.

Vote was held. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

Nitsch added that he feels that, based on test holes and monitoring well data, this will help determine an accurate line.

Nitrate Vulnerability Model

Nitsch reported that Neal Fulton, Agronomist in Fullerton, was present at the Committee meeting and gave data on the fields, showing the results and triggers found. He added that 11 cooperators will receive letters and will need nutrient management plans, and 44 cooperators with “Medium to High” levels will get letters stating they are close to the threshold and information will be provided on reducing nitrates. Naprstek added that some meetings are already set up with the producers.

Groundwater Management Plan

Nitsch reported that a stakeholder meeting was held on August 28th at the Lower Loup NRD office. He stated there was good attendance and discussion. He said that the presentation and responses were shown, and top concerns were water quantity for ag, drought level triggers, and education outreach. He added that there will be more meetings in late February or early March.

Thoene asked how the data was gathered. Naprstek explained the survey platform used and showed what the most responses were. He added that answers were scaled in size based on number of matching responses.

Large Water User Discussion

Nitsch reported that the Committee was given an update on the new model and what constitutes a large water user in the District. He added that transmissivity and saturated thickness are key indicators. He also stated that the model shows maximum pumping for each area, having the gallons per minute number put into the rule. Callan added that this is a big topic with the Governor’s Task Force as well.

Drought Management Status

Nitsch reported that most areas have fallen back to monitor status with some monitor “Extreme” based on Spring static water levels.

Vadose Sampling Update

Nitsch reported that Jason Moudry, Water Programs Specialist, gave an update on the USGS partnered vadose project. He stated that over 4,800 samples have been taken.

It was added that Board members could attend the Fall Tour November 3rd in Gothenburg, at the water utilization center. It was also announced that Moudry would be presenting on vadose zone, bucket charts and nitrate aging at Fall Conference along with Chris Hobza, USGS.

Kruse asked what the timeline was for the Governor’s Task Force. Callan stated that Jesse Bradley, DWEE Director, would like information for Governor Pillen in December, hoping to

finalize in March. Callan added that there are a lot of big topics coming up. Shadle added that there are subcommittees and there is talk of nitrates, metering, etc.

Callan stated there is a big push on surface and groundwater, adding that the large water user discussion is going on with the task force, also. He added that each subcommittee has focus targets, i.e., finance, revenue streams, water quality, agronomist licensing, nitrate education, fall-applied fertilizer, etc. Callan stated that when everything is finalized, our data will be put together with theirs, so if someone is farming multiple locations, there will be one central location for data.

PROGRAMS/PROJECTS COMMITTEE

Fullerton Dam Removal

Kruse reported that the Committee discussed the Fullerton Dam Removal project. He added that it is located on the Cedar River and used to be a powerhouse. Kruse stated there have been drownings at the dam, and several locals want it removed. He added that Kevin Gustafson, District Engineer, has been working with the group, and a meeting will be held with the City to discuss the process.

City of Ord Park Project

Kruse reported that the City of Ord is looking for \$600,000 for new park equipment, adding that the NRD generally participates at a \$3,000 level for ongoing projects. He stated the Committee discussed participating with a higher amount and decided to keep it at the current level.

Monroe Drainage with Platte County

Kruse reported that there are drainage issues north of the Loup Power Canal by Monroe. He added that it is a high safety risk due to mud flowing over the road. He added that Loup Power has drainage on the north side of the canal that is cleaned out now. He also stated that the county has plans to put in a box culvert and new channel on the east side of the road through the Loup drainage system. He added that this will be a \$.5 million project and they are asking the NRD for help.

Monroe Area Recharge Project

Kruse reported that the Committee has been discussing potential areas, and there are some wetlands that may be able to be used for recharge, but nothing concrete yet. Callan stated that, at the Bayer Monsanto tour, there was a project that puts water from the canal into a site and offsets compact issues with the Platte River recovery.

Thoene asked if it was in city limits. Callan stated it is an area where we just required flow meters.

Pibel Dam Erosion & Grant

Kruse reported that Gustafson is ordering Flexamat to use for bank stabilization, adding that it's unknown if we will receive it this fall or next spring. He also stated that Gustafson has been looking at camping improvements on the east side and seeing how to scale it down so the project could be carried out. It was added that JEO is working on trail design.

Mud Creek WFPO - Ansley

Kruse stated there was no update.

Mira Creek WFPO – North Loup

Kruse stated there was no update.

Sargent Flood Project

Kruse reported that the 90% design is in for review and they hope to complete it by the end of the year.

Other

Kruse stated that the well at Davis Creek is drilled and we are still waiting on the solar panel.

ENGINEER'S REPORT

Monroe Channel Cleanout

Kevin Gustafson reported that the channel at Monroe has been cleaned from the road to Cherry Creek.

Fullerton Dam Removal

Gustafson reported that letters of invitation were sent out for a meeting on the Fullerton Dam that is going to be held on October 2nd at 10:00 a.m. He added that letters were sent to Dam Safety, DWEE, City of Fullerton, Nance County Emergency Management as well as NDOT, Nebraska Central Railroad, and State Senator Lippincott, U.S. Senators Ricketts and Fischer, and Congressman Smith.

Callan stated they have not asked if we are participating, but he feels we need to be part of the project, but first it will be important to attend the meeting to see what plans are being made. Kruse stated that the City Administrator thinks they will come up with a lot of the cost to decommission the dam.

Jeremy Eschliman asked if there was an estimated project cost. Gustafson stated he estimates between \$1-2 million, adding that there will have to be work done on diversion as well, not just removing the dam, which consists of two bays approximately 25 feet each. Bauer stated he thinks we should be a participant in some aspect.

Knutson asked if the city has started with an engineering firm. Gustafson stated they did 6-7 years ago when they were looking at taking the old powerhouse and making it into a museum; however, nothing for the dam itself.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Water Strategies Update

Callan stated there was a printout in front of everyone.

Litigation Update

Callan stated there is no update.

New Hires

Callan reported that Ken Sheets will be starting October 6th and will be working on the grant process for the new vadose project.

Non-action Reports

None.

NARD REPORT

Thoene stated he did not have an update. James Eschliman said there were not any resolutions turned in, adding that the next meeting is on Tuesday after the NARD Conference.

NRC REPORT

Amsberry reported that their next meeting is Tuesday after the NARD Conference.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/FUTURE MEETING TOPICS

Callan reminded everyone of the upcoming tour and meeting at Fullerton.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Board, Chairman Thoene declared the meeting adjourned at 6:36 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 October 23, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., at the Headquarters Office in Ord, Nebraska.

Larry Mohrman
Secretary