MINUTES

LOWER LOUP NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

September 24, 2026 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 24, 2026. Chairman Thoene called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Directors in attendance:

Rollie D. Amsberry, Treasurer
Robert L. Bauer
James Eschliman
Justin W. King
Gary A. Kruse
Alan Petersen
John Shadle
Clifford Sterner
Alexander L. Vlach
Timothy E. Bartak
Colton R. DeBower
Jeremy Eschliman
Thomas L. Knutson
Larry Mohrman, Secretary
Chad J. Podolak
Gerald Smith
Henry J. Thoene, Chairman
Rick Vlach, Vice Chairman

Directors absent:

Randy Kauk
Todd Nitsch

Staff in attendance:

Russell G. Callan, General Manager
Kim A. Lyions, Administrative Assistant
Brant Bechtold, I & E Specialist
Kevin Gustafson, District Engineer
LeeAnn Smith, Water Programs Asst.
Dan Ruterbories, Rangeland Mgmt. Spec.
Tylr Naprstek, Assistant General Manager
Alan Bartels, I & E Coordinator
Dell Harris, Water Resources Specialist
Abigail Lyons, Agronomist
Jason Moudry, Water Programs Specialist
Brian Kolar, Projects Technician

Guests in attendance:

Trent Findley, NRCS, St. Paul
Tyler Petersen, St. Paul

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 Kauk and Nitsch had asked to be excused.

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

MINUTES

Thoene asked for corrections and/or additions to the September 3, 2026, Board meeting minutes.

Sterner stated that in the school lands portion he thinks the East and West for Columbus and North Platte are inverted.

No other changes being heard, Thoene announced that the minutes will stand approved with corrections.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Russell Callan, General Manager, highlighted expenditures of $7,263.71 to Insight Public Sector, Inc. for Adobe subscriptions for the office; and $1,994.09 to Loup Power District for electricity and water for the Columbus Recharge operations. Callan also highlighted additional expenditures of $36,040.00 to EP Electric Pump for SCADA system upgrades for the Columbus Project.

King motioned, seconded by Mohrman, to approve the September 24, 2026, 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

Thoene asked for public comments; none were heard.

FORESTER'S REPORT

Callan reported that Aron Lewis is still on paternity leave, but he wanted to give everyone a heads-up that next month there will be discussion on tree cost-share. He added that NSWCP money was pulled from the State so we will need to make a decision if we will do anything with it. There will be more information next month.

NRCS REPORT

Trent Findley, NRCS, St. Paul, reported that they were notified that the EQIP application deadline is October 16th, so they have been working with producers to finalize plans. He also reported that staff participated in some outreach events, including a field day in Fullerton on September 1st for 4th grade students. He added that the event included educational activities such as aquatics, forestry, wildlife, rangeland, pastureland, and soils. There were 76 kids who participated from 4 area schools.

Findley also reported that the Area 4 Range Judging Contest was held in Boone County on September 9th and there were 465 students present.

Findley also reported that CRP plans for 2026 are done and that staff has been meeting with producers to complete status reviews on current contracts.

INFORMATION & EDUCATION REPORT

MUDFEST

Alan Bartels, I&E Coordinator, reported that MUDFEST was held in the Arboretum and that students were present from 5 schools. He added that Central Platte NRD, Lewis and Clark NRD, Lower Niobrara NRD, Lower Elkhorn NRD, JEO, and the Nebraska Extension all helped with 7 fun and educational presentations. Bartels stated that there were 132 students present and showed pictures of the day's activities.

Fall Directors Tour

Bartels showed photos from the Fall Lower Loup NRD Director's Tour.

James Eschliman stated that it was a good tour, but it will be better in two years when more has developed with the projects.

Callan stated that he was thinking of doing a tour every two years and doing a Board Retreat on the off years.

NRD Annual Conference

Bartels reminded everyone that the NRD Annual Conference will be held Monday and Tuesday in Kearney and stated that he sent out the agenda to everyone yesterday.

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

2026 Beach Watch and Ambient Lake Sampling

Tylr Naprstek, Assistant General Manager, reported that Beach Watch and ambient lake samplings are done for the year. LeeAnn Smith, Water Programs Assistant, has taken responsibility for all the lake sampling. Naprstek added that the sampling has been used as a training opportunity for new LLNRD employees and interns preparing them for taking surface water sites samples. He stated that there are 4 sites that were sampled across the LLNRD. Naprstek stated that there are 52 public recreation lakes with 57 total sites across Nebraska that are sampled. He added that we try to sample on Mondays so it can be posted by Friday if one triggers. They test from mid-May to mid-September. He also added that readings of 8.0 ppm of blue-green algae microcystin and E. coli above 235 colonies/100 ml would trigger a health alert. He stated that there is an interactive map that people can pull up to see results.

Naprstek discussed the causes of blue-green algae blooms and stated that the main cause is nutrient loading, usually an excess of nitrogen or phosphorus. He also added that light, water temperature, and flow can all have an effect. Naprstek also stated that if you see algae, it does not mean it is harmful, as there are a lot of different factors involved. The sampling process helps DWEE put together information that is needed to refine the different kinds of algae and how it develops.

Naprstek stated that E. coli is different. It is a bacteria that's present in the large intestines of large mammals, humans, mice, and avian waste and that long-term runoff events that flush the waste into the waterway can cause a spike.

Naprstek also showed an interactive map and discussed results for each site, showing Nunda Shoal and Homestead Knolls at Calamus Reservoir, Pibel Lake, Davis Creek, and Sherman Lake.

Jeremy Eschliman asked if we get public complaints about E. coli. Naprstek stated that it could come up in future management of the South Loup, if we continually see high levels year after year. E. coli is always present to a certain extent due to wildlife and grazing adjacent to the river, adding that we have studied before and the last studies showed the primary source was rodent and human feces. He added that now DWEE has a total maximum daily load of what is tolerable and, beyond that, additional projects can be done.

Petersen asked if the lagoon, which is right off the river, at Kamp Kaleo should be tested. Naprstek stated that if kids get in that water and if there is algae bloom going on, it would not hurt, adding that it might change from day-to-day dependent on weather and rain, etc. The rec areas are usually not shut down, but public notification is given about the alert. Incidental water

contact such as minor wading, fishing, or incidental non-immersion swimming usually don't affect too much. Skiing or tubing behind a boat could be more problematic.

Monroe Recharge RFP

Naprstek reported that the draft has been sent out using Beacon Bid adding that he appreciates the process of using the service. He added that, in the past, if someone had a question, each question would have to be dealt with individually and then attempt to circulate that information to everyone. With the Beacon Bid process, someone simply fills out the Q&A section which populates both the questions and answers and posts publicly, which everyone can access. Naprstek said that they will be looking at a feasibility study for structure design and eventually construction around the Monroe area, looking at groundwater and instream augmentation, as well as the wetland rehab. He added that staff will meet with landowners one-on-one to be sure they know what is going on. Prior to getting to this process, a copy was run through Loup Power District to hear their comments and to implement FERC requirements wherever possible. Loup Power District's responses seem to be favorable. He added that the deadline for RFPs is October 2nd.

Podolak asked on the list if there is another project from a recharge perspective after Monroe that is of high interest. Callan stated that we are trying to figure out what to do at Loup City which pumps water into the river 365 days a year. Kevin Gustafson, District Engineer, is working on seeing if there is some place we can go with that water from a recharge perspective. Naprstek stated that we have been working with DWEE and various irrigation districts to review possible extended diversions, adding that there may be potential by Fullerton. Twin Loups Irrigation District is being reviewed, as we don't want any more water going down into Mira Valley.

Meter Maintenance RFQ

Naprstek reported that a request for proposals has been put together for the re-hiring of a company to do the meter maintenance program in the three water quality management areas. He added that everyone who has worked with our cost-share in the past received a copy of a map showing where all the meters would potentially be located. He added that flow meter maintenance, which includes greasing the gaskets and checking flow meter operations, is done every three years.

Naprstek stated that the maintenance program started with Northern Ag and that we have recently been using Seim Ag LLC from Chapman, adding that they have good rapport and stand by their work. Hopefully some new contractors will get in the mix for the new year maintenance program. He also added that the due date for the proposals is November 2nd and he expects that the program will expand as Water Quantity Areas 18 & 20 meters age.

Drought Status

Naprstek reported that the drought report looks better than it had been and that he will be stopping the drought status report unless something drastically changes between now and April,

until Spring SWLs, adding that the drought report will always be available on request. Drought reports can also be seen on KOLN channels 10/11.

ENGINEER'S REPORT

Fullerton Dam

Kevin Gustafson, District Engineer, reported that the design for the Fullerton Dam should be completed in 2027 and that we have received the 30% design from EA Engineering with two alternatives. Both alternatives include placement of rock rip rap in the channel downstream of the dam, along the west bank both upstream and downstream of the dam and along the east bank for a short distance upstream of the dam. A portion of the east bank upstream, and the area of the powerhouse gate will be filled with earthfill and protected with a turf reinforcement mat (TRM). Steel sheet pile will be placed at the downstream end of the rock in the channel to help keep it in place.

Alternative 1 will consist of earthfill and TRM extending downstream from the rock rip rap on the east bank. The area between the riprap on the east bank and the existing powerhouse will be filled with earthfill to collect runoff from off site to a pipe through the powerhouse area to the bypass channel.

Alternative 2 will extend the riprap on the east bank and the area between the rip rap on the east bank and the powerhouse will be filled with earthfill to direct off-site runoff over the bank and into the main channel.

Knutson asked about the estimated cost for the alternatives. Gustafson replied that it is really early in the process; however, Option 1 is looking close to $1.5 - $2.1 million and that Option 2 is looking at somewhere around $1.8 - $2.5 million, adding that there is less rock in Option 1 and less earth-fill required.

Bauer asked if putting in the structure and riprap would cause any issues upstream. Gustafson stated that it should have little to no effect and may even lower levels.

Podolak asked if they were looking at using the old channel at the powerhouse. Gustafson stated it will all be cut off, adding that there will be more draining in Option 1 and the idea is to move the whole channel back to where it was before the dam was put in.

Jeremy Eschliman asked if either option takes out the powerhouse. Gustafson replied that their recommendation will be to tear it out because it would be easier to do the needed work if it is gone. Jeremy Eschliman asked Fullerton's thoughts. Gustafson stated he will get in front of the Programs/Projects Committee next month and that he hopes to visit with Fullerton before that.

Kruse asked where contractors would come from to do this kind of work. Gustafson answered that he thinks that local contractors could do the work.

Jeremy Eschliman asked about the payment arrangements for the project. Callan stated that Fullerton has contacted Lyions and that we will work with them to put a plan in place.

Columbus Area Flood Mitigation Study

Gustafson stated that the kickoff meeting was held this week on the project and that it is in the preliminary stages. JEO is working with Columbus, and Gustafson is sitting in on their stakeholders' group and showed the major drainage area systems between St. Paul and Columbus. He added that they are looking to see which drainage areas may have a bigger impact on flooding and ice jamming the Columbus area.

Podolak asked what solutions there could be to mitigate. Gustafson stated that is what they are trying to figure out and that he does not know if anything has been determined yet, but they are looking at what options are available.

Pibel Lake Trail

Gustafson reported that the Pibel Lake Trail project was sent out for bids on September 10th and that the opening is scheduled for 2:00 p.m. on October 8th. He added that he hopes to get bids to the Programs/Projects Committee on October 18th and in front of the whole Board at the October meeting.

Gustafson added that Beacon Bid gets the word out very well and that we have had 22 entities interested in the projects, adding that, of those, 16 were either suppliers or earthwork and/or concrete contractors. He stated that there have also been construction cost data services that want to know what kinds of bids we are getting.

Broken Bow Flood Mitigation

Gustafson showed the floodway through Broken Bow and stated that he is sitting in on the stakeholders' group for this project, also. The first meeting is in the beginning of October.

Mud Creek WFPO

Gustafson reported that the geotechnical investigation is going on and that there will be another meeting next week to see where things are at, he added that they are trying to finish in the pasture range grass and then, after harvest, will go to the planted ground. Gustafson stated that there was a meeting held with JEO and the dam safety people at DWEE to let them know where we are at with the project.

Mira Creek WFPO

Gustafson stated that there is nothing new with the project, adding that Alan Gering wanted an updated design cost for Mira Creek. Gustafson stated that he gave them updated numbers and that we will be going for design funding again.

Callan asked for design cost. Gustafson stated it will be about $2.5 million. Callan reminded everyone that it would be paid 100% by NRCS funding.

Mohrman asked if there was any news on the BRIC grant. Callan replied that he has not heard anything new.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Water Strategies

Callan stated that there is work being done on the Twin Loups title transfer and added that we are talking with Twin Loups and Bureau of Reclamation about the recreation area. He stated that the Bureau is also talking about Calamus with Nebraska Game and Parks.

Litigation

No update.

New Hires

No new hires.

Non-Action Reports

Callan stated that in the Supplemental Agenda there are questions in the back for the Fall Conference Basin Meeting, just to get people talking.

Callan stated that he received a request for appointment to Lukasiewicz's open position from Dave Herrington and his letter will be in the November agenda. Callan stated that the same day he received a request from Tyler Petersen, who is present at the meeting.

Tyler Petersen introduced himself and stated that he farms by St. Paul and has had discussions with Naprstek and Callan. He stated that he is not here because he has a problem with anything the Board is doing and is not here to bicker, adding that he thinks the Board is doing a good job and he would not mind being a part of it. He also stated that he has filed as a write-in for the open position.

Jeremy Eschliman asked if the election is November 3rd, when do they take office. Callan replied January 1st.

James Eschliman asked if one filed for a write-in, and we appoint the other, it would only be for a month? Callan stated yes, that it has been done in the past, with Dennis Hirschbrunner.

NARD REPORT

Thoene stated that there will be a meeting next week. James Eschliman added that there was a committee meeting by Zoom this week and the resolution process was approved.

NRC REPORT

Amsberry reported that there will be a meeting Tuesday after lunch in Kearney.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/FUTURE MEETING TOPICS

Callan stated that there will be committee meetings next month.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Board, Chairman Thoene declared the meeting adjourned at 5:56 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 in the Grand Island Independent. The next Board of Directors meeting will be held October 22, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., at the Headquarters Office in Ord, Nebraska.

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Larry Mohrman
Secretary