MINUTES OF RED RIVER JOINT WATER RESOURCE DISTRICT FULL BOARD
ORIGINATING AT THE CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
HERITAGE CONFERENCE ROOM
WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA
JUNE 11, 2025
9:30 A.M.

A meeting of the Red River Joint Water Resource District (RRJWRD) Full Board was held on June 11, 2025, at 9:30 a.m.

Present were Josh Ihry, Steele County Water Resource District; Keith Weston, Southeast Cass Water Resource District; Bruce Anderson, Barnes County Water Resource District; Tom Perdue, Grand Forks County Water Resource District; Gerald Melvin, Maple River Water Resource District; Ben Varnson, Nelson County Water Resource District; Jay Colwell, North Cass Water Resource District; Don Kemp, Pembina County Water Resource District; Arv Burvee, Richland County Water Resource District; Richard Sundberg and William A. Hejl, Rush River Water Resource District; Andy Neset, Traill County Water Resource District; Larry Tanke, Walsh County Water Resource District; Melissa Hinkemeyer, Director, Secretary-Treasurer; Amy Hepper, Accountant; Elizabeth Smith, Administrative Assistant; Rita Nelson, Accounting Assistant; Sean M. Fredricks, Ohnstad Twichell, P.C.; Randy Gjestvang, North Dakota Department of Water Resources (NDDWR); Jack Dwyer, North Dakota Water Users Association; Brian Fuder, Red River Retention Authority Executive Director; Mike Opat and Gabe Bladow, Houston Engineering, Inc.; Kurt Lysne and Nathan Trosen, Moore Engineering, Inc.; Morrie Lanning, Barr Engineering Co.; Rob Sip, Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB); Chuck Fritz and Danni Halvorson, International Water Institute; Tasha Krueger, Steele County Water Resource District; James Bergman, Craig Jones, and Gary Babinski; Border Township Associative Group. Sargent County and Ransom County Water Resource Districts were absent.

Approval of agenda
It was moved by Manager Melvin, seconded by Manager Perdue, and unanimously carried to approve the order of the agenda, as presented.

Minutes
It was moved by Manager Neset, seconded by Manager Weston, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the April 9, 2025, meeting, as presented.

Financial Report
It was moved by Manager Perdue and seconded by Manager Tanke to approve the Financial Report, as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

2026 Budget

Chairman Ihry noted the RRJWRD is budgeting for planned projects that are not yet ready for construction such as several costly dam rehabilitations that are currently in the planning phase. Chairman Ihry stated the intent of the RRJWRD is to be prepared for construction of projects at any time.

A motion was made by Manager Melvin and seconded by Manager Kemp to approve the Red River Joint Water Resource District 2026 budget as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Cost-share request – International Water Institute – River Watch and River of Dreams

Danni Halvorson gave an overview of the River Watch and River of Dreams programs. Mr. Halvorson reported the IWI was notified that the River Watch and River of Dreams programs were approved for a NDDEQ Section 319 grant. The grant requires 40% local cost-share for the programs, which the RRJWRD has previously funded. The 40% local match covers 18 months of the River Watch and River of Dreams programs at a total cost of $132,466. The cost-share request was recommended for approval by the RRJWRD Executive Committee.

It was moved by Manager Weston and seconded by Manager Perdue to approve the cost-share request from IWI for the River Watch and River of Dreams Programs in the total amount of $132,466 commencing July 1, 2025, and ending December 31, 2026. Upon roll call vote, the following member water resource districts voted in favor: Steele County, Southeast Cass, Barnes County, Grand Forks County, Maple River, Pembina County, Richland County, Rush River, Traill County, Walsh County, and Nelson County. North Cass voted against the motion. The motion carried.

Legislative Updates

Sean Fredricks and Jack Dwyer reported on the conclusions of the legislative session that impact the water resource districts including cost-share percentages, economic analyses, benefit determination, and an interim study regarding watershed districts. Mr. Fredricks encouraged Managers to reach out to legislators and thank them for their time and support of water resource districts.

Mr. Fredricks noted that North Dakota Senator Cindy Schreiber-Beck recently passed away. Ms. Schreiber-Beck was very instrumental in supporting water management in the Red River Basin. The Board expressed condolences to the family of Ms. Schreiber-Beck.

Border Township Associative Group presentation

James Bergman presented the objectives of the Border Township Associative Group (BTAG) which includes keeping the water in the Red River as close to the center as possible to eliminate or minimize flood damages to the Oslo, Minnesota area. Mr. Bergman discussed existing conditions and previous flooding events at Oslo, Minnesota. Mr. Bergman indicated there are bridges that need to be widened to allow adequate flow through the Oslo area. The BTAG group encouraged the RRJWRD to support their efforts

in reducing flood damages near Oslo. The Board indicated they are supportive of BTAG's efforts.

North Dakota Department of Water Resources Red River office

Randy Gjestvang discussed the *Red River Valley Office Agreement* with the NDDWR for a shared engineer located in Fargo and associated office space. The Agreement expires June 30, 2025. Mr. Gjestvang stated he will be retiring from his current position and the NDDWR is inquiring if the RRJWRD is still interested in renewing the agreement and therefore filling the position. Chairman Ihry indicated the Executive Committee wishes to maintain this relationship with the NDDWR and asked the NDDWR to be involved in the hiring process. The Full Board agreed. Brief discussion was held on the cost associated with the Agreement. The Board thanked Mr. Gjestvang for his years of service and dedication throughout his time with the NDDWR and the RRJWRD.

Chairman Ihry stated he has been communicating with the NDDWR regarding the process of filling the position. The NDDWR has not opened the position yet but the RRJWRD will be part of the process when they do.

A motion was made by Manager Tanke and seconded by Manager Anderson to approve and authorize the Chairman to sign the *Red River Valley Office Agreement* in the amount of $175,000 for the 2025-2027 biennium contingent upon approval by the NDDWR. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) Update

Brian Fuder discussed a recent trip to Washington DC to meet with North Dakota and Minnesota congressional delegates and NRCS staff. Mr. Fuder updated the Board on congressionally directed spending for flood mitigation projects in the Red River Basin. Two projects in Minnesota have moved forward to the next step of the process. Mr. Fuder indicated he will likely travel to Washington DC again this year to meet with congressional delegates. Mr. Fuder encouraged the member districts to brainstorm ideas to move retention projects forward in the Red River Basin.

Discussion was held on hosting a leadership summit including federal and state delegates to raise awareness for retention in the Red River Basin.

Mr. Fuder noted the next RRRA meeting has been rescheduled for July 1, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. in West Fargo, North Dakota.

SB2180 – Resolution of Policy

Mr. Fredricks reviewed the draft public comment policy resolution created to outline the guidelines of public comment at Red River Joint Water Resource District meetings. SB2180 goes into effect August 1, 2025.

A motion was made by Manager Weston and seconded by Manager Melvin to approve and authorize the Chairman to sign the *Resolution of Policy Regarding Public Comment Requirements at Regular Meetings* regarding Red River Joint Water Resource District as

presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Member WRDs project reports

Member Water Resource Districts reported on current activities in their districts.

Manager Anderson reported that Barnes County Water Resource District is in the process of forming joint water resource districts with Maple River Water Resource District for a new legal assessment drain project and with LaMoure County Water Resource District for a joint project. They are also involved in the Sheyenne River Joint Water Resource District and their study on Sheyenne River bank erosion.

Manager Perdue reported that Grand Forks County Water Resource District is working to remodel Drain #4 in south Grand Forks, processing applications for subsurface water management systems, managing their recreational areas, and doing general maintenance on their facilities.

Manager Melvin reported that Maple River Water Resource District is in the process of forming a joint water resource district with Barnes County Water Resource District for a new legal assessment drain, they are processing applications for subsurface water management systems, receiving notifications to install subsurface water management systems, and are processing utility permits.

Manager Varnson reported that Nelson County Water Resource District is finishing up spring maintenance and snagging and clearing projects, working to improve attendance at Water Resource District meetings, and trying to keep projects moving towards completion.

Manager Colwell reported that the North Cass Water Resource District has invited landowners who are interested in turning the Costello Drain into a legal assessment drain to another informational meeting and are processing applications for subsurface water management systems.

Manager Kemp indicated that Pembina County Water Resource District has been moving forward with a project on the Tongue River to restore the original channel of the river and improve flood protection for Bathgate and are hoping to meet with Cavelier County and Canada soon to discuss shared facilities.

Manager Burvee reported that Richland County Water Resource District is working on spring maintenance and processing applications for subsurface water management systems.

Manager Sundberg reported that Rush River Water Resource District has been processing applications for subsurface water management systems and utility permits, working with the Metro Flood Diversion Authority on a few drain transitions into the Metro Flood Diversion Channel, and are doing some initial planning on side slopes flattening on the Rush River.

Manager Weston indicated the Southeast Cass Water Resource District has been reconstructing segments of two urban drains and are working on the Wild Rice River Low Head Dam hazard mitigation project.

Chairman Ihry indicated that Steele County Water Resource District is working through a few drainage complaints and are processing applications for subsurface water management systems. Chairman Ihry noted Steele County Water Resource District is working through some concerns with these applications.

Manager Neset reported that Traill County Water Resource District is removing some crossings of their facilities, installing culverts, and has one legal drain that may be reconstructed this summer.

Manager Tanke reported that Walsh County Water Resource District is working on a FEMA project and reassessments.

Next meeting

The next scheduled Full Board meeting is Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. at the Cass County Highway Department in West Fargo, North Dakota.

Adjournment

There being no further business to be considered by the Board, the meeting adjourned without objection.

APPROVED:

_____
Josh Ihry
Chairman

ATTEST:

_____
Melissa Hinkemeyer
Secretary