MINUTES OF RED RIVER JOINT WATER RESOURCE DISTRICT FULL BOARD
ORIGINATING AT THE CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
HERITAGE CONFERENCE ROOM
WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA
SEPTEMBER 10, 2025
9:30 A.M.

A meeting of the Red River Joint Water Resource District (RRJWRD) Full Board was held on September 10, 2025. The meeting was called to order 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, Rush River Water Resource District; Andy Neset, Traill County Water Resource District; Michael Wyum, Sargent County Water Resource District; Melissa Hinkemeyer, Director, Secretary; Amy Hepper, Treasurer; Elizabeth Smith, Administrative Assistant; Rita Nelson, Accounting Assistant; Sean M. Fredricks and Keigan Bannerman, Ohnstad Twichell, P.C.; Randy Gjestvang and Yaping Chi, North Dakota Department of Water Resources (NDDWR); Jack Dwyer and Dani Quissell, North Dakota Water Users Association; Brian Fuder, Red River Retention Authority Executive Director; Ted Preister, Red River Basin Commission; Mike Opat and Zach Herrmann, Houston Engineering, Inc.; Kurt Lysne and Nathan Trosen, Moore Engineering, Inc.; Chuck Fritz, International Water Institute; Tasha Krueger, Steele County Water Resource District; Daniel Thomas and Brent Hanson, United States Geological Survey (USGS). Walsh County and Ransom County Water Resource Districts were absent.

Approval of agenda

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

Minutes

It was moved by Manager Weston, seconded by Manager Neset, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the June 11, July 16, and August 7 (two sets), 2025, meetings, as presented.

Financial Report

The Treasurer gave a brief overview of the Financial Report for the RRJWRD.

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

Cost-share request – USGS *Joint Funding Agreement* for streamflow monitoring for the period of October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026 (FY 2026)

Brent Hanson discussed the USGS *Joint Funding Agreement* for cost-share on stream gages in the Red River Basin for the period of October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026 (FY 2026). The RRJWRD has partnered with the USGS in the cost-share of stream gages in the Red River Basin for several years. The data gathered by the stream gages is valuable to determine real-time river levels during events and is useful in other applications as well.

It was moved by Manager Weston and seconded by Manager Melvin to approve and authorize the Chairman to sign the *Joint Funding Agreement* with the USGS for streamflow monitoring for the period of October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026 (FY 2026) in the amount of $145,640. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Daniel Thomas thanked the Board for their continued support and stated the USGS remains committed to providing the best data possible.

Public Comment

There were no speaker cards submitted for public comment at this meeting.

North Dakota Water Resource Districts Association dues

Dani Quissell discussed increased membership dues starting in 2026 for the North Dakota Water Resource Districts Association (NDWRDA) policy program. Several joint water resource districts fund the program, and the proposal is to increase dues to account for a larger legislative presence and work during the interim.

A motion was made by Manager Melvin and seconded by Manager Weston to approve the 2026 dues for the NDWRDA as proposed. Upon roll call vote the following Districts voted in favor: Barnes County, Grand Forks County, Maple River, Nelson County, North Cass, Pembina County, Richland County, Sargent County, Southeast Cass, Steele County, and Traill County Water Resource Districts. Rush River Water Resource District was absent. The motion passed.

Legislative Update

Ms. Quissell updated the Board on interim legislative activities that impact Water Resource Districts. Manager Weston will be participating in the economic analysis discussion at the upcoming Water Topics Overview Committee meeting.

Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) Update

Brian Fuder updated the Board on the activities of the RRRA. The RRRA is pursuing congressional directed spending for three projects in the Minnesota portion of the Red River Basin that are construction ready. All three projects are in process, and Mr. Fuder hopes to have an update for the Board at a future meeting. The next RRRA meeting is Wednesday, September 17, 2025. Mr. Fuder discussed an upcoming tour of the Red River Basin with the Chief Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in the Grand Forks area on October 8, 2025. Mr. Fuder discussed the

tour and stated a panel discussion will occur following the tour. Mr. Fuder also noted the RRRA has a booth at the Big Iron Farm and Construction Show happening at this time.

Long Term Operation and Maintenance Cost of Dams

Manager Weston recently learned about the potential decommissioning of Sukup Dam and is concerned there may be other smaller dams that without assistance for maintenance and rehabilitation will be decommissioned. Manager Weston proposed the RRJWRD consider an incentive to keep dams functioning in the Red River Basin. The Board discussed reaching out to the NRCS to discuss possibilities regarding funding for these dams in some capacity. The Board discussed dams that would benefit from this type of program in their districts. Mr. Fuder agreed with supporting local districts ability to maintain retention structures. The Board discussed possibly funding creation of federal maintenance districts as a way for local districts to support operation and maintenance of federally built dams in their districts. Randy Gjestvang suggested meeting with Sukup Dam stakeholders to discuss alternatives for Sukup Dam. The Board agreed. Additional discussion be held on this topic at a future meeting.

North Dakota Water Resource Districts Association Benefits Methodology

Zach Herrmann briefly updated the Board on the status of the development of the benefits methodology for Water Resource District projects. The group working on this methodology will meet again soon to finalize the methodology.

Border Township Associative Group (BTAG) Letter of Resolution

The Secretary noted following their presentation at a previous meeting, BTAG sent a letter of resolution for the Board to consider. The resolution states the RRJWRD supports BTAG and their approach to remove obstructions from the Red River and keep the water in the Red River as close to the center of the river as possible to eliminate or minimize overall damage to the area. The Board directed the Secretary to invite BTAG to the January meeting to discuss this request in more detail.

Lower Red River Regional Detention Study Status

Ted Preister briefly updated the Board on the status of the Lower Red River Regional Detention Study. The Corps of Engineers has exhausted their funding and is working on ways to resume the study. Mr. Preister suggested transferring work from the Corps to local engineers to help balance the local and federal funding. The RRBC is committed to completing the study.

International Water Institute (IWI) update

Chuck Fritz reported the IWI map portal will need software and hardware updates soon that may lead to a request for funding from the RRJWRD.

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 processing subsurface water management system applications.

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, pursuing legal drain improvement projects, and general operation and maintenance activities.

Manager Varnson reported that Nelson County Water Resource District is finishing up snagging and clearing projects and general operation and maintenance activities.

Manager Colwell reported that the North Cass Water Resource District has been working on improvements to their legal assessment drains, design of upcoming projects, and coordination with Cass County on replacement of a box culvert.

Manager Kemp indicated that Pembina County Water Resource District has opened bids for the Renwick Dam spillway reconstruction project and will be reconstructing a drop structure on the Red River this fall as well as replacing a bridge with culverts.

Manager Burvee reported that Richland County Water Resource District is working on 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, 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. They are also working with a contractor for weed control on their facilities.

Manager Wyum reported that Sargent County Water Resource District has been working on erosion repair on Silver Lake Dam, creating a maintenance district for two legal assessment drains and considering an extension to a legal assessment drain, along with routine maintenance and subsurface water management system applications.

Manager Weston indicated the Southeast Cass Water Resource District has been reconstructing segments of two urban drains and the Cass County Joint Water Resource District is pursuing a retention project on the Upper Maple River through the NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

Chairman Ihry indicated that Steele County Water Resource District is working on a

reassessment vote for Drain #1, finishing FEMA funded projects, working on drain cleanouts, and wrapping up the Elm River Dam Nos. 1, 2, and 3 projects.

Manager Neset reported that Traill County Water Resource District is reconstructing a legal assessment drain, replacing crossings, and completing maintenance of their facilities.

Education
Mr. Fredricks discussed processing of subsurface water management system applications and notifications.

Meeting text reminders
The Secretary noted staff are working on a meeting text reminder option.

Thompson-Varnson Steamboat Award
Chairman announced the 2025 winner of the RRJWRD Thompson-Varnson Steamboat Award will be Randy Gjestvang. The award will be presented at the 62nd Annual Joint North Dakota Water Convention in December.

North Dakota Department of Water Resources Red River office
The Board thanked Mr. Gjestvang for his 41 years of dedication and service to the RRJWRD and presented him with a plaque. The Board wished him well in his retirement.

Next meeting
The next scheduled Full Board meeting is Wednesday, December 11, 2025, at 12:00 p.m. at the Bismarck Hotel and Conference Center, Bismarck, North Dakota.

Adjournment
There being no further business to be considered by the Board, the meeting adjourned without objection at 11:20 a.m.

APPROVED:

_____
Josh Ihry
Chairman

ATTEST:

_____
Melissa Hinkemeyer
Secretary