RED RIVER JOINT WATER RESOURCE DISTRICT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
ORIGINATING AT THE CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
HERITAGE CONFERENCE ROOM
WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA
MARCH 11, 2026
9:30 A.M.

A meeting of the Red River Joint Water Resource District (RRJWRD) Executive Committee was held on March 11, 2026. The meeting was called to order at 9:31 a.m.

Present were Josh Ihry, Steele County Water Resource District; Don Kemp, Pembina County Water Resource District; Keith Weston, Southeast Cass Water Resource District; Tom Perdue, Grand Forks County Water Resource District; Arv Burvee, Richland County Water Resource District; Michael Wyum, Sargent County Water Resource District (Alternate); Andy Neset, Traill County Water Resource District (Alternate); Melissa Hinkemeyer, Director, Secretary; Amy Hepper, Treasurer; Elizabeth Smith, Administrative Assistant; Rita Nelson, Accounting Assistant; Sean M. Fredricks, Ohnstad Twichell, P.C.; Yaping Chi and Abigail Franklund, North Dakota Department of Water Resources (NDDWR); Dani Quissell, North Dakota Water Users Association; Brian Fuder, Red River Retention Authority (RRRA); Nathan Trosen, Moore Engineering, Inc.; Mike Opat and Zach Herrmann, Houston Engineering, Inc.; Duane Breitling, Cass County Commissioner; Robert Sip, Red River Watershed Management Board; and LuAnn Kemp, Pembina County Water Resource District Secretary-Treasurer.

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

Minutes
It was moved by Manager Kemp, seconded by Manager Weston to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2026, meetings (two sets), as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

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

Treasurer's report
The Treasurer presented the financial report to the Board.

Manager Kemp moved to approve the following:
- Financial report, as presented
- Payment of the wire transfers, as presented

Manager Perdue seconded the motion. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously

Letter of Engagement to the Office of the State Auditor for 2025 audit services

A motion was made by Manager Weston and seconded by Manager Perdue to approve the Letter of Engagement to the Office of the State Auditor for 2025 audit services for the Red River Joint Water Resource District. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Sean Fredricks noted Water Resource Districts are required to conduct an audit every two years.

Cost-share request – Pembina County Water Resource District – Tongue River Dams Dam Safety Compliance Feasibility Study

Manager Kemp and Zach Herrmann stated Pembina County Water Resource District is requesting cost-share for the Tongue River Dams Dam Safety Compliance Feasibility Study. Manager Kemp and Mr. Herrmann discussed the necessity of the feasibility study and the benefits of conducting the study. Manager Kemp noted the State Water Commission recently considered the project for cost-share funding and approved cost-share funding to address the issues at Olga Dam but did not fund the portion of the study for the remaining three dams in the request as they determined they were ineligible for cost-share funding. Manager Kemp noted that since the State Water Commission only funded the feasibility study for Olga Dam, Pembina County Water Resource District is amending their cost-share request to the RRJWRD to only address Olga Dam. The total cost of the Olga Dam dam safety compliance feasibility study is $237,000, with a request to the RRJWRD of 90% cost-share of the non-federal, non-state share of the project, not to exceed $85,320.

Additional discussion was held on the amended cost-share request and the master plan for Olga Dam. The Board also discussed the need for additional funding for Water Resource Districts to address necessary dam improvements. Sean Fredricks noted federal maintenance districts can be implemented for federally-built dams that were given to Water Resource Districts to operate and maintain. The Board discussed the possibility of providing cost-share to defray costs for Water Resource Districts to create federal maintenance districts.

A motion was made by Manager Perdue and seconded by Manager Weston to recommend approval of the Pembina County Water Resource District cost-share request regarding the Olga Dam Dam Safety Compliance Feasibility Study to the Full Board for up to 90% cost-share of the non-federal, non-state share of the project, not to exceed $85,320. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Meeting with Grand Forks County Commission

The Secretary noted RRJWRD was invited to meet with the Grand Forks County Commission at their May 5, 2026, meeting to discuss the state of the RRJWRD and associated activities. The Board noted topics to include in discussion at the meeting. The Secretary, Yaping Chi, and Brian Fuder, Chairman Ihry and Manager Perdue plan to attend the meeting on behalf of the RRJWRD. The Board directed the Secretary to coordinate with Yaping Chi to prepare a draft list of discussion points for the meeting with the Grand Forks County Commission for the Board to review at the April Full Board

meeting.

Strategic planning for restoration and reconstruction of flood retention dams in the Red River Basin

The Board briefly discussed the process of creating federal maintenance districts for restoration and reconstruction of flood retention dams in the Red River Basin. Mr. Fredricks briefly discussed the process and benefits of creating federal maintenance districts. The Board directed the RRJWRD member districts to submit a list of federally-built dams in their districts that do not have an established maintenance district. The Board will continue discussion on this matter, including potential cost-share to create federal maintenance districts at a future meeting.

Dam ownership

Mr. Fredricks reviewed North Dakota Century Code 16-16.1-40, if a federal agency constructs a dam but no longer maintains it the local Water Resource District assumes responsibility and ownership of the dam. A federal assessment district can be created to generate maintenance funding for these facilities. Discussion was held on the possibility of conveying ownership of dams to private landowners that are interested in owning the dams, such as small stock dams. The Board directed Mr. Fredricks to continue looking into the possibility of conveying ownership of dams to private landowners that are interested in owning the dams. Discussion on this matter will continue at a future meeting.

Legislative update

Dani Quissell updated the Board on interim legislative activities that impact water resource districts. Ms. Quissell noted the upcoming Water Topics Overview Committee meeting and Agriculture and Water Management Committee meeting and topics that may be discussed that may impact water resource districts.

Strategic planning for restoration and reconstruction of flood retention dams in the Red River Basin continued

Manager Weston reviewed a draft strategic plan for restoration and reconstruction of flood retention dams in the Red River Basin. Manager Weston noted this strategic plan would be utilized to prioritize the structures that were constructed by a federal agency and are now local water resource districts' responsibility to own and maintain for cost-share funding opportunities from the RRJWRD. Manager Weston noted this is a 10-year plan that will allow the RRJWRD to prioritize the structures based on location and size within their respective watershed along with immediate restoration and rehabilitation needs. Chairman Ihry stated this would be helpful in prioritizing cost-share requests for these types of projects in the future. Manager Weston indicated it may be helpful to get input from other entities and partners as well, and have the Board consider an updated draft strategic plan to present to the Board at the next meeting.

A motion was made by Manager Kemp and seconded by Manager Weston to approve proceeding with a strategic planning effort for restoration and reconstruction of flood retention dams in the Red River Basin, as discussed. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

NDDWR Sovereign Lands

Ms. Chi inquired if the Board is interested in education at a future meeting from the NDDWR Sovereign Lands Manager on sovereign lands in North Dakota and how it impacts water resource districts. Ms. Chi noted the NDDWR Sovereign Lands Manager is willing to present and answer any questions the Board may have on the topic. The Board directed Ms. Chi to invite the NDDWR Sovereign Lands Manager to the June RRJWRD Full Board meeting to present and have a discussion on sovereign lands in North Dakota.

Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) update

Mr. Fuder updated the Board on the activities of the RRRA. The RRRA continues to consider the possibility of partnering retention with water supply in the Red River Basin through construction of permanent or semi-permanent retention facilities. Mr. Fuder stated the demand for water will increase through time and water supply is limited. Mr. Fuder suggested forming a working group to discuss multi-purpose retention in North Dakota in more detail. The Board agreed.

Mr. Fuder next reported on the status of the requests for congressionally directed spending for construction ready projects in the Red River Basin. Mr. Fuder noted the Wild Rice Corridor Habitat Restoration project received a committal of $50,000 in funding through a federal bill that is in process. The RRRA will reapply this year for additional funding for the Wild Rice Corridor Habitat Restoration project and other construction-ready projects through congressionally directed spending. The RRRA continues to seek avenues for federal funding of retention projects in North Dakota and Minnesota. Mr. Fuder indicated he is seeking a RRJWRD representative to join him in Washington D.C. in April to engage in discussions with congressional delegates and federal agencies regarding the congressionally directed funding requests, retention, and other RRJWRD-related discussions. Managers Kemp and Neset indicated they may be interested in attending on behalf of the RRJWRD.

A motion was made by Manager Weston and seconded by Manager Perdue to approve reimbursement of travel, per diem, and miscellaneous business expenses for up to three members of the RRJWRD to join Mr. Fuder in Washington, D.C. from April 13-16, 2026, on behalf of the RRJWRD. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

The RRRA continues to coordinate a visit of the Natural Resources Conservation Service Chief Conservationist. Mr. Fuder noted they are working on an updated itinerary and logistics of the visit and the associated discussion Mr. Fuder indicated the RRRA will be seeking the RRJWRD's participation in the event and financial partners in the future.

Mr. Fuder discussed the Red River Watershed Management Board and Minnesota Flood Damage Reduction Work Group annual joint conference being held in Moorhead, Minnesota on March 17 and 18, 2026, and encouraged the Board to attend. Rob Sip noted the schedule of events and topics to be discussed at the conference.

Mr. Fuder briefly presented the 2026 RRRA draft priority projects and noted updates that were made from the 2025 priority projects. Mr. Fuder indicated the RRRA will consider

approval of the 2026 priority projects at their next meeting.

Mr. Fuder noted the RRRA entered into a three-article agreement highlighting the activities of the RRRA in the North Dakota Water Magazine, and the March edition is published and available for viewing.

Mr. Fuder stated the next RRRA meeting is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on March 25, 2026, at the Cass County Highway Department.

Manager Burvee left the meeting at this time.

Member WRDs project reports

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

Manager Kemp indicated that Pembina County Water Resource District has been focused on the Tongue River Dams Dam Safety Compliance Feasibility Study and associated cost-share requests and thanked the RRJWRD for their recommendation for approval of the feasibility study for Olga Dam to the Full Board. Manager Kemp also noted they are working with Enbridge Power and Minnkota Power Cooperative regarding utility crossings on water resource district facilities. Pembina County Water Resource District held a vote for the reconstruction of Drain #5 and the vote passed, they will bid the project this spring. Manager Kemp also noted the Red River Basin Commission met last week and he appreciated representing the RRJWRD at the meeting.

Manager Perdue reported that Grand Forks County Water Resource District is working to improve Drain #4 in south Grand Forks. The drain was determined to have state-wide significance by the NDDWR so they will be working through that process. Manager Perdue also noted they are working with the City of Grand Forks regarding land transfers, they are establishing an assessment district for one of their dams and realigning a drain for that project and are working on Emergency Action Plans for their dams.

Manager Weston reported Southeast Cass Water Resource District is working on snagging and clearing efforts along the Sheyenne River and Wild Rice River and are working on the design for their Wild Rice River low head dam hazard mitigation project.

Manager Neset reported that Traill County Water Resource District is replacing crossings, maintenance of facilities, and working towards reconstructing two legal assessment drains.

Manager Wyum reported that Sargent County Water Resource District is moving forward with a few legal drain projects following the completion of the assessment benefit methodology and are hoping to hold a vote on those soon. Manager Wyum also noted the Silver Lake Dam project hopes to continue work early this summer.

Chairman Ihry indicated that Steele County Water Resource District is working on drain reassessments and improvements to Drain #1 and are meeting with township officers this month to discuss subsurface water management systems and share information on their

beaver dam removal cost-share program.

Education
Mr. Fredricks noted North Dakota Water Resource Districts Association is hosting a training session for Water Resource District staff regarding subsurface water management permit processes on March 23, 2026.

Mr. Fredricks noted the assessment benefits methodology study for water resource district projects is now complete and water resource districts can move forward with assessment votes and apply for available cost-share funding for conveyance projects.

State Water Commission Meetings
Ms. Chi noted the State Water Commission pre-commission meeting is on March 19, 2026, and the next State Water Commission meeting is on April 8, 2026.

NDDWR updates
Ms. Chi noted the NDDWR welcomed a new research economist to their team. Ms. Chi also noted water resource districts have received a request from the NDDWR to submit their updated list of projects for the NDDWR 2027-2029 Water Development Plan. The deadline to submit these project lists is April 30, 2026.

Next meeting
The next RRJWRD Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on May 13, 2026, at the Cass County Highway Department.

Adjournment
There being no further business to be considered by the Board, the meeting adjourned without objection at 11:44 a.m.

APPROVED:

_____
Josh Ihry
Chairman

ATTEST:

_____
Melissa Hinkemeyer
Secretary