MINUTES OF RED RIVER JOINT WATER RESOURCE DISTRICT FULL BOARD
ORIGINATING AT THE CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
HERITAGE CONFERENCE ROOM
1201 MAIN AVENUE WEST
WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA
APRIL 8, 2026
9:30 A.M.

A meeting of the Red River Joint Water Resource District (RRJWRD) Full Board was held on April 8, 2026. The meeting was called to order at 9:32 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; 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; 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, Ohnstad Twichell, P.C.; Duane Breitling, Cass County Commissioner; Dani Quissell, North Dakota Water Users Association; Matthew Lindsay, Yaping Chi, and Abigail Franklund, North Dakota Department of Water Resources (NDDWR); Brian Fuder, Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) Executive Director; Zach Herrmann, Houston Engineering, Inc.; Nathan Trosen, Moore Engineering, Inc.; Morrie Lanning, Barr Engineering, Inc.; Danni Halvorson, International Water Institute; LuAnn Kemp, Pembina County Water Resource District Secretary-Treasurer; Tasha Krueger, Steele County Water Resource District Secretary-Treasurer; Lori Christianson, Grand Forks County Water Resource District Secretary-Treasurer; and Daniel Thomas, United States Geological Survey (USGS). Walsh County, Ransom County, Traill County, and Nelson 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 amended.

Minutes
It was moved by Manager Sundberg, seconded by Manager Weston, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2026, meeting, as presented.

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

Department of Water Resources update

Matthew Lindsay gave an update on the activities of the NDDWR. Mr. Lindsay is now the transboundary section manager and Yaping Chi is now on the International Red River Water Board Hydrology Committee. Mr. Lindsay also discussed a recent Red River Data Workshop hosted by the Corps of Engineers, a meeting on Red River flooding in the Oslo Minnesota area, new administrative code, and an upcoming State Water Commission meeting. It was noted the State Water Commissioners will be hosting meetings this summer in their respective watersheds. The Devils Lake annual outlet operations meeting will be held next Monday in Devils Lake.

Ms. Chi stated she plans to attend the State Water Commissioner hosted meetings in Fargo and Grand Forks and encouraged the Board to attend if they are able. Ms. Chi noted the Lower Red River Regional Detention Study will need to provide an update to the NDDWR on the status of the project. The Project recently found a new path forward utilizing local engineering consultants. Ms. Chi also noted she discussed the possible support for Border Township Associative Group (BTAG) initiatives, however, they could not come to an agreement that aligned with the RRJWRD's mission and thus a letter of support was not drafted.

Financial Report

The Treasurer gave a brief overview of the Financial Report and the obligated funding report for the RRJWRD.

Discussion was then held on the 2027 budget. The Board indicated support for continuing to levy 1.5 mills. Sean Fredricks briefly discussed a resolution pertaining to the 2027 budget.

It was moved by Manager Sundberg and seconded by Manager Kemp to approve the Financial Report as presented, and approve and authorize the chairman to sign the *Resolution Approving 2027 Budget*. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

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. The RRJWRD Executive Committee recommended approval of the

cost-share request for the Olga Dam dam safety compliance feasibility study for 90% cost-share of the non-federal, non-state share of the project not to exceed $85,320. Discussion was held on the need for strategic planning of dam maintenance and rehabilitation in the Red River Basin in North Dakota. Strategic planning will identify and prioritize the structures in need of maintenance and rehabilitation.

A motion was made by Manager Weston and seconded by Manager Melvin to approve the Pembina County Water Resource District cost-share request regarding the Olga Dam dam safety compliance feasibility study 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.

Legislative Update

Dani Quissell updated the Board on interim legislative activities that impact Water Resource Districts. Ms. Quissell discussed the recent Water Topics Overview Committee meeting where the results of a study on the State Water Commission cost-share policy were presented. The State Water Commission is considering cost-share policy changes due to projected revenue shortfalls in the upcoming bienniums. Managers are encouraged to attend upcoming State Water Commissioner hosted meetings to provide feedback on various cost-share policy alternatives described in the study. Ms. Quissell noted the Committee also heard a presentation regarding the watershed model study during the meeting.

Ms. Quissell noted the interim Agriculture and Water Management Committee met recently to discuss a study on the economic contributions of irrigation and drainage. The study results will be presented at a meeting on June 17, 2026, at NDSU. Discussion during the Committee meeting also included a proposed resolution to the Economic Analysis for drainage projects.

Ms. Quissell briefly discussed available cost-share funding for conveyance projects from the State Water Commission and noted the new administrative rules for the NDDWR effective April 1, 2026.

There will be a staff training on audits on April 20, 2026. The 2026 North Dakota Water Resource Districts Association and North Dakota Water Users Association Joint Summer Water Meeting will be held July 15 and 16, 2026 in Watford City.

The Board discussed ways to support continuing State Water Commission cost-share funding for projects. Ms. Quissell will reach out with additional information in the near future regarding ways to support continuing State Water Commission cost-share funding for projects.

Ownership of Dams

Sean 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. Mr. Fredricks and the Board discussed options for conveyance of ownership of dams to private landowners.

Federal Maintenance Districts

Mr. Fredricks indicated Water Resource Districts should inventory the dams in their districts and determine which facilities could benefit from creation of a federal maintenance district to generate maintenance funding for these facilities. The Board discussed the possibility of approving cost-share funding for creation of federal maintenance districts. Chairman Ihry indicated Board members should discuss this with their local Water Resource Districts at their upcoming meetings.

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

Manager Weston reviewed a draft strategic plan to prioritize dam restoration and reconstruction needs in the Red River Basin. The Board discussed the inventory of dams and how the prioritized list could assist them in the future. The Board also discussed the ranking criteria for prioritizing needs. Brian Fuder stated the RRRA is supportive of RRJWRD's proactive efforts to maintain the existing retention facilities in the Red River Basin. Manager Weston will continue working on the strategic planning effort with assistance from various stakeholders and Ms. Chi.

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. Discussion was held on talking points for the meeting.

Manager Burvee left the meeting at this time.

North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund – Annual meeting proxy

The Secretary reported a letter was received from the North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund providing notice of their upcoming annual meeting and proxy for the election of officers. Discussion was held on the candidates.

A motion was made by Manager Weston and seconded by Manager Kemp to authorize the Secretary to sign and return the North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund annual meeting proxy for the election of officers, as discussed. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Red River Retention Authority Update

Mr. Fuder updated the Board on the activities of the RRRA. Mr. Fuder noted he will be in Washington D.C. with Robert Sip, Don Kemp, and Andy Neset next week to engage in discussions with congressional delegates and federal agencies regarding the congressionally directed funding requests, retention, and other RRJWRD and RRWMB related discussions.

Mr. Fuder also discussed a water supply advisory group he is leading to be proactive and consider future water supply needs of the Red River Basin and how retention may help meet those needs.

Mr. Fuder also noted flood outlooks from the National Weather Service indicate there are minimal flooding concerns at this time.

Mr. Fuder indicated he has been working on coordinating the date of the Basin United Summit with the rescheduled visit of the NRCS Chief Conservationist. Mr. Fuder briefly discussed a potential date and location for the event. More information will be available at a later date.

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 processing subsurface water management system applications, making improvements to assessment drains, and working with the Barnes County Commission on their Water Resource District budget.

Manager Perdue reported that Grand Forks County Water Resource District is inventorying and considering improvements to dams in their district as well as seeking additional information regarding the costs of potential damages related to dam failures.

Manager Melvin reported that Maple River Water Resource District is processing subsurface water management system applications and working to modify and improve assessment drains.

Manager Colwell reported that the North Cass Water Resource District is conducting annual maintenance and repairs on their facilities.

Manager Sundberg reported that Rush River Water Resource District has been working with the Metro Flood Diversion Authority on drain transitions into the Metro Flood Diversion Channel. The Rush River Water Resource District is also working with Cass County to replace bridges and flatten the side slopes on the Rush River.

Manager Kemp indicated that Pembina County Water Resource District is conducting routine maintenance and recently held a successful vote of an assessment district to extend a legal assessment drain. Mr. Kemp also noted they recently completed the tabletop exercise portion of their Emergency Action Plan updates.

Manager Wyum reported that Sargent County Water Resource District has been processing subsurface water management systems applications and are working on projects that can move forward now that the assessment benefit methodology is complete. Mr. Wyum also noted the Silver Lake Dam Project will continue work when weather allows.

Manager Weston reported that Southeast Cass Water Resource District is working through the permitting process associated with the Metro Flood Diversion Project and processing utility permits and easement requests for various projects.

Chairman Ihry indicated that Steele County Water Resource District is working on drain reassessments for Drain #4 and improvements to Drain #1.

Danni Halvorson updated the Board on the activities of the International Water Institute (IWI). Mr. Halvorson discussed a funding request from the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality for the IWI River Watch program. Mr. Halvorson also noted other IWI projects including rural floodplain mapping and Prioritize Target and Measure Application (PTMApp).

Next meeting

The next scheduled Full Board meeting is June 10, 2026, at 9:30 a.m. at the Cass County Highway Department, West Fargo, North Dakota.

Adjournment

There being no further business to be considered by the Board, the meeting adjourned without objection at 11:59 a.m.

APPROVED:

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Josh Ihry
Chairman

ATTEST:

_____
Melissa Hinkemeyer
Secretary