RED RIVER JOINT WATER RESOURCE DISTRICT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
ORIGINATING AT THE CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
HERITAGE CONFERENCE ROOM
WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA
MAY 13, 2026
9:30 A.M.

A meeting of the Red River Joint Water Resource District (RRJWRD) Executive Committee was held on May 13, 2026. The meeting was called to order at 9:32 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; Melissa Hinkemeyer, Director, Secretary; Amy Hepper, Treasurer; Elizabeth Smith, Administrative Assistant; Rita Nelson, Accounting Assistant; Sean M. Fredricks, Ohnstad Twichell, P.C.; Yaping Chi, 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.; Zach Herrmann, Mike Opat, and Jacob Wognum, Houston Engineering, Inc.; Duane Breitling, Cass County Commissioner; Danni Halvorson and Chuck Fritz, International Water Institute (IWI); and Rob Sip, Red River Water Management Board (RRWMB). Arv Burvee, Richland County Water Resource District was absent.

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

Minutes
It was moved by Manager Kemp, seconded by Manager Ihry to approve the minutes of the March 11, 2026, meeting, 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. Discussion was held on investment of funds into an additional Certificate of Deposit as a financial institution that is a depository for the RRJWRD has offered a special rate.

A motion was made by Manager Ihry and seconded by Manager Perdue to invest $2.5 million in a new Certificate of Deposit for 6 months at 3.9%. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Brief discussion was held on engineering costs reflected in the financial report. The Secretary and Treasurer noted the costs include work by engineering firms for the assessment benefit methodology creation.

Manager Ihry 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.

Cost-share request – International Water Institute – Red River Basin 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 12 months of the River Watch and River of Dreams programs at a total cost of $90,327.

It was moved by Manager Ihry and seconded by Manager Perdue to recommend approval of the cost-share request from IWI for the River Watch and River of Dreams Programs in the total amount of $90,327 commencing January 1, 2027, and ending December 31, 2027, to the Full Board. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Legislative update

Dani Quissell updated the Board on interim legislative activities that impact water resource districts. The North Dakota Water Resource District Association is developing comments on the State Water Commission's proposed changes to their cost-share policy. The comments will be developed into talking points for Water Resource Districts to bring to the State Water Commissioner hosted basin meetings this summer. Ms. Quissell encouraged Water Resource Districts to attend the basin meetings to provide comments on cost-share policy as well as highlight water needs in your specific area. 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. Ms. Quissell noted the North Dakota Water Resource Districts Association and North Dakota Water Users Association Joint Summer Water Meeting will be held in Watford City, North Dakota on July 15 and 16, 2026.

Cost-share request – Grand Forks County Water Resource District – Grand Forks County Dams Emergency Action Plans (EAP)

Manager Perdue and Jacob Wognum stated Grand Forks County Water Resource District is requesting cost-share for Emergency Action Plan updates for eight dams. A tabletop exercise and necessary modeling will be included with the updates. The total cost of the Emergency Action Plan updates for eight dams is $255,000, with a request to the RRJWRD of 65% cost-share of the non-federal, non-state share of the project, not to exceed $33,150.

A motion was made by Manager Perdue and seconded by Manager Kemp to recommend approval of the Grand Forks County Water Resource District cost-share request regarding the Emergency Action Plan updates for eight dams to the Full Board for up to 65% cost-share of the non-federal, non-state share of the project, not to exceed $33,150. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Cost-share request – Maple River Water Resource District – Maple River Dam T-180 Emergency Action Plan

Nathan Trosen stated Maple River Water Resource District is requesting cost-share for the update of the Maple River Dam T-180 Emergency Action Plan. A tabletop exercise will be included with the updates. The total cost of the update of the Maple River Dam T-180 Emergency Action Plan is $12,500, with a request to the RRJWRD of 65% cost-share of the non-federal, non-state share of the project, not to exceed $1,625.

A motion was made by Manager Perdue and seconded by Manager Ihry to approve of the Maple River Water Resource District cost-share request regarding the update of the Maple River Dam T-180 Emergency Action Plan for up to 65% cost-share of the non-federal, non-state share of the project, not to exceed $1,625. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Cost-share request – Maple River Water Resource District – Upper Maple River Dam Emergency Action Plan

Nathan Trosen stated Maple River Water Resource District is requesting cost-share for the update of the Upper Maple River Dam Emergency Action Plan. A tabletop exercise will be included with the updates. The total cost of the update of the Upper Maple River Dam Emergency Action Plan is $10,000, with a request to the RRJWRD of 65% cost-share of the non-federal, non-state share of the project, not to exceed $1,300.

A motion was made by Manager Kemp and seconded by Manager Perdue to approve of the Maple River Water Resource District cost-share request regarding the update of the Upper Maple River Dam Emergency Action Plan for up to 65% cost-share of the non-federal, non-state share of the project, not to exceed $1,300. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Trosen thanked the staff for their prompt inclusion of this item on the meeting agenda.

Yaping Chi inquired about the cost difference between Grand Forks County Water Resource District's request and Maple River Water Resource District's requests. Zach Herrmann noted Grand Forks County Water Resource District's EAPs require modeling work.

Meeting with Grand Forks County Commission - update

The Secretary noted the RRJWRD met with the Grand Forks County Commission at their May 5, 2026, meeting to discuss the state of the RRJWRD and associated activities and benefits of the RRJWRD. Discussion was held on the Commission meeting. The Secretary and Treasurer noted they will be providing additional information to the Grand

Forks County Commission per their request. Manager Ihry noted as a downstream member, Grand Forks County also receives benefits from upstream projects which are hard to quantify. Manager Ihry indicated he plans to personally reach out to the Commission members to discuss this matter further.

Succession planning

Manager Ihry suggested Water Resource Districts begin considering how they might fill future open positions on their Boards. Manager Kemp provided insight into the challenges they are facing in filing an open position in Pembina County. Manager Ihry inquired how to involve the younger generations in water management.

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

Yaping Chi and Manager Weston reviewed a draft strategic plan for restoration and reconstruction of flood retention dams in the Red River Basin. 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. Ms. Chi 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. Ms. Chi discussed proposed prioritization criteria including the weight system and point scale. Ms. Chi indicated it will be important to get input from member districts before the June RRJWRD Full Board meeting where the Board will discuss a cost estimate for dam inventory work. The strategic plan is anticipated to be finalized at the September RRJWRD Full Board meeting. Ms. Chi will circulate the draft strategic plan prioritization information for the member districts to review and provide feedback on by June 1, 2026.

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. Mr. Fredricks noted he is drafting a deed to convey ownership of dams to private landowners that are interested in owning the dams, such as small stock dams. Discussion on this matter will continue at a future meeting.

Proposed annual conference with the Minnesota Red River Watershed Management Board

Rob Sip reported that the Red River Watershed Management Board hosts a joint conference with the Minnesota Flood Damage Reduction Work Group (MNFDRWG) annually and they are interested in inviting the RRJWRD and RRRA to join in hosting this conference. The conference typically entails a day and a half of speakers, training, and this year also included a facilitated discussion regarding water supply and management. The conference is held in March with planning beginning prior. A joint conference with all four entities would allow for more all-encompassing topics and issues and create a closer working relationship between staff. The current cost of the conference is approximately

$30,000-40,000, not including sponsorships and the registration fee.

Brian Fuder discussed the benefits of one joint effort between all parties including ability to draw a wider range of attendees and a unified basin. Brief discussion was held on inviting the Red River Basin Commission however their reach is primarily international and broader than flood damage reduction. The Executive Committee directed the Secretary to include this item on the upcoming Full Board meeting agenda.

Summer event and tour in Minnesota

Mr. Sip indicated several Minnesota entities are partnering to host an event and tour in Detroit Lakes on August 25 and 26, 2026. Mr. Sip briefly discussed the schedule of events and topics for the event and tour. Mr. Sip invited the RRJWRD to attend this event and tour.

Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) update

Mr. Fuder updated the Board on the activities of the RRRA. Mr. Fuder reported on the recent trip to Washington D.C. 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 joined Mr. Fuder and Mr. Sip on the trip. The group was able to meet with all North Dakota and Minnesota congressional delegates, the Corps of Engineers, Federal Highway and Department of Transportation, and the International Joint Commission. Manager Kemp stated he appreciated the opportunity to meet with decision makers and discuss issues and priorities in the Red River Basin. Mr. Fuder noted there have been meetings held since the trip with departments such as the Department of the Interior, United States Department of Agriculture, and United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

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 updated the Board on the working group formed to discuss multi-purpose retention in North Dakota in more detail.

Mr. Fuder noted the 2026 RRRA priority projects list has been approved and handouts are available for member districts to utilize.

Mr. Fuder indicated the RRRA Basin United Summit is no longer moving forward due to multiple scheduling conflicts including unresolvable conflicts with the Natural Resources Conservation Service Chief Conservationist schedule. The RRRA will be focusing their efforts instead on the joint conference with the RRWMB and MNFDRWG.

Mr. Fuder noted the second article highlighting the activities of the RRRA in the North Dakota Water Magazine is drafted and will be available for viewing in the June edition.

Mr. Fuder stated the RRRA has concerns about the limited staff at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in North Dakota and thence the ability to make significant progress on projects in the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. The Board

directed Mr. Fuder to invite the NRCS to a future RRJWRD meeting to present on the status of the ND NRCS.

Member WRDs project reports

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

Chairman Ihry indicated that Steele County Water Resource District is working on drain reassessments and improvements to Drain #1, conducting weed control on their facilities, and processing subsurface water management system applications.

Manager Kemp indicated that Pembina County Water Resource District conducted a tabletop exercise for their EAPs, met with Cavalier County regarding upcoming projects, and is appreciative of the dam prioritization work.

Manager Perdue reported that Grand Forks County Water Resource District is working on preparing their campground facilities for the season and thanked the Board for recommending approval of their cost-share request for EAP updates.

Manager Weston reported that Southeast Cass Water Resource District has been working on reconstructing segments of two urban drains, working on the Wild Rice River Low Head Dam hazard mitigation project, and conducting weed control on their facilities.

Education

Mr. Fredricks noted there are changes to the processing of permits through the NDDWR. For instance, the NDDWR is now managing the statewide significance proceedings and has changed the proceedings for surface drain permits and complaints. Mr. Fredricks reviewed the changes and noted member water resource districts should develop necessary permit and complaint forms as the NDDWR is not providing those forms with the new changes to their processes. The Board discussed the changes.

Next meeting

The next RRJWRD Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on July 8, 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 11:32 a.m.

APPROVED:

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Josh Ihry
Chairman

ATTEST:

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Melissa Hinkemeyer
Secretary