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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
SEPTEMBER 9, 2026
9:30 A.M.

A meeting of the Red River Joint Water Resource District (RRJWRD) Full Board was held on September 9, 2026. 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; 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; Andy Neset, Traill County Water Resource District; Melissa Hinkemeyer, Director, Secretary; Elizabeth Smith, Administrative Assistant; Sean M. Fredricks, Ohnstad Twichell, P.C.; Matthew Lindsay, Amy Winkelman, Abigail Franklund, and Yaping Chi, North Dakota Department of Water Resources (NDDWR); Brian Fuder, Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) Executive Director; Dani Quissell, North Dakota Water Users Association; Kurt Lysne and Nathan Trosen, Moore Engineering, Inc.; Mike Opat, Bret Zimmerman, and Jacob Wognum, Houston Engineering, Inc.; Daniel Thomas and Brent Hanson, United States Geological Survey (USGS); Robert Sip, Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB); LuAnn Kemp, Pembina County Water Resource District Secretary-Treasurer, Lori Chistianson, Grand Forks County Water Resource District Secretary-Treasurer; Sarah Johnston, Walsh County Water Resource District Secretary-Treasurer; Danni Halvorson, International Water Institute (IWI); Gary Eaton, Asterra; Todd Leake and Lonnie Leake, Grand Forks County residents. Nelson County, North Cass, Ransom County, and Walsh County Water Resource Districts were absent.

Approval of agenda
It was moved by Manager Sundberg, seconded by Manager Weston, and unanimously carried to approve the order of the agenda, as amended.

Minutes
It was moved by Manager Melvin, seconded by Manager Neset, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the June 10, June 15, and July 17, 2026, meeting, as presented.

Public Comment
Chairman Ihry opened the public comment period.

Todd and Lonnie Leake indicated they farm in Grand Forks County and have concerns

regarding the rehabilitation of Upper Turtle River Dam # 9, also known as Larimore Dam. During construction the dam was damaged by a large stormwater event and was subsequently repaired, however in 2020 there was a stormwater event that caused springs to form from the area that was previously damaged. The dam is high hazard, and they are looking for additional information on the rehabilitation plans to ensure the issue will be accounted for and resolved. The Board indicated the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is leading the rehabilitation effort for Larimore Dam, and they are currently in the planning process. Questions regarding the planning process should be directed to the NRCS. Manager Perdue briefly discussed the current rehabilitation plans. Lonnie Leake requested Larimore Dam be moved up on the RRJWRD's strategic planning priority list due to limited funding in Grand Forks County. Chairman Ihry thanked Todd and Lonnie Leake for expressing their concerns.

Financial Report

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

It was moved by Manager Perdue and seconded by Manager Melvin to approve the Financial Report as presented. 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 Water Resource Districts Association is working on bill drafts for the upcoming legislative session including extending bonding capacities, increasing maintenance levies incrementally, and stream crossing determinations. Ms. Quissell also reported on the NDDWR's proposed changes to their cost-share policy based on revenue forecasts. Ms. Quissell noted water trainings for Managers and staff will continue this fall. Topics for training can be submitted to the Water Resource Districts Association. The Board discussed the proposed changes to the State Water Commission cost-share policy in more detail.

Cost-share request – USGS J*oint Funding Agreement* for streamflow monitoring for the period of October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027 (FY 2027)

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, 2026, through September 30, 2027 (FY 2027). 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. Mr. Hanson indicated the Metro Flood Diversion Authority is partnering with the USGS on stream gaging as well, which helps reduce the percentage increase for inflation regarding the gages.

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, 2026, through September 30, 2027 (FY 2027) in the amount of $147,040. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Cost-share request – Walsh County Water Resource District – Soukup Dam Rehabilitation

Sarah Johnston stated Walsh County Water Resource District is requesting cost-share for the Soukup Dam Rehabilitation. Ms. Johnston noted they considered both decommissioning and rehabilitating the Dam and the Water Resource District decided to rehabilitate the Dam. The total cost of the Soukup Dam Rehabilitation is $246,000, with a request to the RRJWRD of 90% cost-share of the non-federal, non-state share of the project, not to exceed $110,700. Ms. Johnston briefly reviewed the project plans and noted the NDDWR is constructing the project and providing 50% cost-share. The RRJWRD Executive Committee recommended approval of the cost-share request.

A motion was made by Manager Weston and seconded by Manager Burvee to approve the Walsh County Water Resource District cost-share request regarding the Soukup Dam Rehabilitation for up to 90% cost-share of the non-federal, non-state share of the project, not to exceed $110,700. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Cost-share request – Pembina County Water Resource District – Senator Young Dam and Olson Dam Watershed Rehabilitation Plan

Manager Kemp stated Pembina County Water Resource District is requesting cost-share for the Senator Young Dam and Olson Dam Watershed Rehabilitation Plan. It was noted that the current request is an amendment in scope and cost to a previously approved cost-share request for the Senator Young Dam Rehabilitation on May 12, 2021. Manager Kemp described the project and need for rehabilitation of the two dams. The project is part of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) dam rehab program. The dams are near the end of the NRCS planning process. The total cost of the Senator Young Dam and Olson Dam Watershed Rehabilitation Plan is $2,129,589, with a request to the RRJWRD of 65% cost-share of the non-federal, non-state share of the project, not to exceed an additional $196,300 for a total RRJWRD commitment of $280,268.50. The RRJWRD Executive Committee recommended approval of the cost-share request.

A motion was made by Manager Melvin and seconded by Manager Neset to approve the Pembina County Water Resource District cost-share request regarding the Senator Young Dam and Olson Dam Watershed Rehabilitation Plan for up to 65% cost-share of the non-federal, non-state share of the project, not to exceed an additional $196,300 for a total RRJWRD commitment of $280,268.50. Upon roll call vote, the following member districts voted in favor: Barnes County, Grand Forks County, Maple River, Pembina County, Richland County, Rush River, Southeast Cass, Steele County, and Traill County. Sargent County was absent for the vote. The Chairman declared the motion carried.

Asterra Presentation – Satellite-based Subsurface Seepage Monitoring

Gary Eaton from Asterra presented on satellite-based subsurface seepage monitoring technology. The technology was originally developed for municipal and industrial use identifying leaks in pipes. Asterra recently developed a product that will identify seepage in dams. Mr. Eaton described how the technology works and its benefits for several purposes. The product develops a soil moisture map of the area imaged by the satellite and can be reimaged over time to develop trends. Mr. Eaton noted the limitations of the product including the inability to image through concrete and past the surface of water

and is inconsistent in snow. The product is also limited in depth to around 6 feet in the United States. Mr. Eaton estimated 12-15 images would be needed to cover all the dams identified by the RRJWRD in the Red River Basin. The Board discussed the cost and value of the product. Following discussion, the Board tabled the matter until January 2027 to continue discussions at the RRJWRD Full Board meeting.

Dam ownership

Under 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 discussed the process to create federal maintenance districts and noted he has also drafted a deed to convey ownership of dams to private landowners that are interested in owning the dams, such as small stock dams. The draft document is currently in review by real estate professionals. The RRJWRD may consider cost-share for member districts to form federal maintenance districts regarding dams that fall into this category.

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

Yaping Chi reviewed the criteria for the draft strategic plan for restoration and reconstruction of flood retention dams in the Red River Basin. Ms. Chi noted she has met with the member districts' engineering firms to conduct site inspections. There are a few inspections remaining that are scheduled for later this month. The inventory list should be complete by the end of September and will be reviewed by the strategic plan advisory group. The plan is to bring the final inventory list to the November RRJWRD Executive Committee meeting for consideration with final distribution at the December RRJWRD Full Board meeting.

Manager Weston noted the inspections have identified an erosion issue at the Kratochvil Dam in Walsh County. Jacob Wognum noted Houston Engineering, Inc. is working with Walsh County Water Resource District to address the issue. It was also noted the Elm River Dam #3 inlet was found to have sediment that should be removed. The Board indicated the strategic planning effort has proven to be beneficial.

Red River Retention Authority update

Brian Fuder updated the Board on activities of the RRRA. Mr. Fuder briefly discussed the joint conference with the RRWMB, RRJWRD, and the Minnesota Flood Damage Reduction Work Group. The conference is in the planning stages and will be held March 16 and 17, 2027.

Mr. Fuder reported he is preparing for the Big Iron Farm and Construction Show that will be held September 15-17. Mr. Fuder noted the next RRRA meeting is scheduled for September 16 at 10:00 a.m. at the Cass County Highway Department during this event.

Mr. Fuder stated the next water management advisory committee meeting will be September 18, 2026, at 9:30 a.m. at the Red River Basin Commission office.

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 LaMoure County Water Resource District on a project.

Manager Perdue reported that Grand Forks County Water Resource District is considering decommissioning or rehabilitating a dam in Turtle River State Park.

Manager Melvin reported that Maple River Water Resource District is processing subsurface water management system applications, processing complaints, conducting regular maintenance, and noted the Cornell Township 80 Drainage Improvement District vote was successful.

Manager Kemp indicated that Pembina County Water Resource District recently started to drawn down water on Renwick Dam for some repairs, is working on a flood control project on the Tongue River and have been conducting routine inspections and maintenance.

Manager Burvee reported that Richland County Water Resource District is processing subsurface water management system applications and is working on legal drain improvement projects for construction next year.

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 conducting regular maintenance activities and is working with a power company to provide right of way which would lead to additional maintenance funds for the drain.

Manager Wyum reported that Sargent County Water Resource District has been working on projects that can move forward now that the assessment benefit methodology is complete.

Manager Weston reported that Southeast Cass Water Resource District is working on drain reconstruction projects, a low head dam mitigation project, and inlets to the Metro Flood Diversion channel.

Chairman Ihry indicated that Steele County Water Resource District is processing subsurface water management system applications and notifications, processing complaints, and regular maintenance activities.

Manager Neset reported that Traill County Water Resource District is conducting tree and weed removal and bringing a reconstruction project to a vote of the assessment district.

Education

Mr. Fredricks reviewed the legal drain assessment district voting process as described in North Dakota Century Code. Mr. Fredricks indicated an assessment benefit analysis is required per parcel in the assessment district for projects going through an assessment vote. Mr. Fredricks also discussed appeal options regarding legal assessment drain projects.

Next meeting

The next scheduled Full Board meeting is December 10, 2026, 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 11:54 a.m.

APPROVED:

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Josh Ihry
Chairman

ATTEST:

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Melissa Hinkemeyer
Secretary

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