

**UPPER ELKHORN NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
June 23, 2025
O’Neill, Nebraska**

CALL TO ORDER:

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by Chairman Chris Dierks. The meeting was advertised in the Holt County Independent, the official NRD newspaper, and a copy of the Open Meetings Act was posted for public review.

DIRECTORS PRESENT:

Bruce Anderson	Matt Beckman	Kevin Blair	Chris Dierks	Cody Frank
Marv Fritz	Curtis Gotschall	Gene Kelly	Tony Sanderson	Allen Schueth
Cameron Smith	Art Tanderup	John Vogel		

DIRECTORS ABSENT:

Trevor Gotschall Aaron Rice

STAFF PRESENT:

Dennis Schueth - General Manager
Joslynn VanDerslice - Water Resources Manager
Wayne Frederick – Water Resources Technician
Beth Walsh - Information & Education Coordinator
Jeff Langan - Administrative Secretary
Cole Jesse – Natural Resources Technician

GUESTS:

Brandon Peterson – NRCS, O’Neill, NE
Jason Thiele – Nebraska Game & Parks, Norfolk, NE
Amy Timmerman – UNL Extension

ADOPTION OF AGENDA:

⇒ It was moved by Bruce Anderson and seconded by Art Tanderup to adopt the agenda. **AYE:** Anderson, Beckman, Blair, Frank, Fritz, C. Gotschall, Kelly, Sanderson, Schueth, Smith, Tanderup & Vogel. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **ABSENT:** T. Gotschall & Rice. **MOTION CARRIED.** Chairman Dierks not voting.

MINUTES:

The minutes of the May Meeting were reviewed by the Directors. ⇒ It was moved by Gene Kelly and seconded by Matt Beckman to approve the minutes of the May Meeting. **AYE:** Anderson, Beckman, Blair, Fritz, C. Gotschall, Kelly, Sanderson, Schueth, Smith, Tanderup & Vogel. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** Frank. **ABSENT:** T. Gotschall & Rice. **MOTION CARRIED.** Chairman Dierks not voting.

TREASURERS REPORT:

The May treasurers report was reviewed by the Directors. ⇒ It was moved by Gene Kelly and seconded by Marv Fritz to approve the May Treasurers Report. **AYE:** Anderson, Beckman, Blair, Frank, Fritz, C. Gotschall, Kelly, Sanderson, Schueth, Smith, Tanderup & Vogel. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **ABSENT:** T. Gotschall & Rice. **MOTION CARRIED.** Chairman Dierks not voting.

PUBLIC FORUM-INPUT:

Nebraska Game & Parks Commission – Scott Wessel/Jason Thiele: Jason Thiele with the Nebraska Game & Parks, Norfolk Office attended the board meeting. Jason reviewed the projects and programs that the G & P has available to help promote conservation and wildlife habitat. They have been forming partnerships with the private sector and other agencies to conserve Nebraska's natural resources, state parks and wildlife as well as providing opportunities for outdoor recreation and managed hunting. This presentation was geared to providing the UENRD board with a look at the possible partnerships which could be beneficial to both groups.

AGENCY & STAFF REPORTS:

NARD Report: Gene Kelly reported that he attended the Association meeting June 9 in Valentine in conjunction with the NARD Basin Tour. The NARD Board approved the Hall of Fame ballots; sponsorship requests for Big Red Wrap-up, NARD annual meeting auction and raffle; and Nebraska Farm Bureau Ag in the classroom. The Board approved the NARD joining a new organization called National Special Districts Association which was started two years ago. Since the NARD is a member, all 23 NRDs become eligible for private grants for projects. The National Special Districts Association will also be pursuing legislation to establish the fairness and accessibility act to create a formal definition of the special district in federal law. This would recognize special districts as local governments for the purpose of ensuring that districts have access to all appropriate forms of federal financial assistance. This organization would also have some private foundation funding available for grant requests. Dean Edson's contract has been extended 6 months to coincide with the Association's benefits schedule which follows the calendar year. A summary of the legislative bills was provided in the Director packets. NARD Conservation Award winners were selected and they will be recognized at the Annual Conference in Kearney. The Risk Pool meeting was held following the NARD Board Meeting. The Risk Pool financials are on track and they are switching the re-insurance to HM Life Ins Co. There will be no increase to the premiums this upcoming year. Gene Kelly also attended the Basin Tour of the Niobrara River Basin. Gene highlighted the tour which included the Minor Ranch, the Niobrara Vineyards, Cub Creek, Shane Lechtenberg's Farm, the Lower Niobrara office; and, the Spencer Dam.

DNR Report: Chris Dierks reported that they have met and the Water Sustainability Fund scoring sheets have been sent out.

NRCS Report: Brandon Peterson, O'Neill NRCS office, mailed his report out to the Directors. Brandon reported that NRCS is finishing up writing and obligating EQIP contracts. They funded 17 contracts for over 1.6 million dollars. They have been notified that they will not be receiving any IRA funds including any RCPP. They did rank 4 applications through CSP and were able to get all 4 applications funded. There was a signup for CRP but with the limited number of acres the competition will be tight. They are also completing compliance reviews for the Food Security Act portion of the Farm Bill to verify that producers of selected tracts are complying with HEL and Wetlands provisions of their contracts. Just a reminder that you can get the latest news and updates on Farmers.gov.

RC&D Report:

North Central RC&D: Marv Fritz reported that the RC&D had a booth at the Sandhills Expo in Bassett. The Lick Tub challenge was held and some of the winners donated their prize money back to the RC&D which amounted to \$300. They are also having a drawing for a bench made out of recycled tires. Those who pay their RC&D dues by a certain date will be eligible for the drawing.

Loup Basin RC&D: No report.

Northeast RC&D: Art was unable to attend the last meeting.

Information & Education Report: Beth Walsh's report was mailed out in the Directors packets. Beth reported that she has been busy with Chemigation and scheduling this past month. Again, a good deal of the applications came in the week before the deadline so there are a lot to process in a short amount of time. Most of the renewal applications have been processed and now she is focusing on the applications with issues regarding missing legal descriptions, applications permitted by more than one landowner and applications that were sent in as renewals that should actually be new. Cole Jesse and Wayne Frederick have begun inspections.

Water Resources Report: Joslynn VanDerslice's report was mailed out in the Directors packets. Joslynn reported that the annual Voluntary Integrated Management Plan meeting to update our plan with DNR will be held on July 16 and Directors are invited to attend. Transducer and Telemetry equipment is here. Water sampling will be starting as pivots get up and running for this season. A new Phase II noncompliance list was not printed for this meeting since it has not changed. Joslynn reviewed the updated static water level data discussed at the May board meeting. She noted that adding the new well data has made for some interesting results and discussion. The data from SW Holt county was reviewed and included the different triggers. Cole Jesse, Natural Resources Technician, gave a report on the 2025 Tree Program. There were 16,247 machine plant trees and 14,461 hand plant trees for a total of 30,708 in the UENRD. The UENRD also machine planted 3,230 trees in the LNNRD. There was 29.19 miles of weed barrier installed in the UENRD and 4.21 miles installed in the LNNRD. Cole also noted that Brett Sholes did suffer a rotator cuff injury while installing weed barrier which sidelined him from finishing the season. It was also noted that based on the workload of the UENRD, it may not be feasible to continue contracting with the LNNRD for planting their trees and installing their weed barrier.

Bazile Management Report: Lisa Lauver's report was mailed out in the Directors packets. Amy Timmerman reported that they have hired an Extension Educator for the BGMA and she is very excited for him to start. July 8, 2025 is the Regenerative Ag Field Day near McLean. A flyer was included in the Director's packet for the Bow Creek one and three day bus tours. September 18 & 19 is the Great Plains Water Conference in Omaha.

UNL - Holt County Extension Agent: Amy Timmerman reported that the reduction in federal funding has hit UNL hard with a 20 million dollar deficit but they have approved the 25-26 budget. It was also reported that there will be a 3% increase in student tuition. Amy distributed flyers on a new initiative that she is trying called Tailgate Talks. These are two hour interactive sessions to share ideas, ask questions and connect with other cooperators facing similar challenges. These are scheduled for June 30 and July 1, 2025. More information can be found on Extensions website. There is also a Cover Cropping for Cattle program July 17 at the Middle Niobrara NRD. Amy also reported that during O'Neill Summerfest, UNL's Buy Fresh Buy Local Nebraska program is coordinating a Local Food Showcase (a celebration of local food of Holt County) on Saturday July 19th. They reached out to her office to see if there was anybody interested in doing an interactive activity during this showcase. She has elected to do the edible aquifer activity which shows how an aquifer works. Amy will also be doing this activity at the Woman in Ag Conference.

EXCUSED ABSENCES:

⇒ It was moved by Cody Frank and seconded by Gene Kelly to excuse the absence of Trevor Gotschall & Aaron Rice. **AYE:** Anderson, Beckman, Blair, Frank, Fritz, C. Gotschall, Kelly, Sanderson, Schueth, Smith, Tanderup & Vogel. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **ABSENT:** T. Gotschall & Rice. **MOTION CARRIED.**
Chairman Dierks not voting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Legislative, Finance and Planning Committee: The Committee met prior to the board meeting and reviewed the list of current bills to be paid, accounts receivable, bank statements and cost share requests.

- 1. Action on Current Bills and Cost-Share requests:** ⇨ It was moved by Marv Fritz and seconded by Tony Sanderson to approve the current bills for payment. **AYE:** Anderson, Beckman, Blair, Frank, Fritz, C. Gotschall, Kelly, Sanderson, Schueth, Smith, Tanderup & Vogel. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **ABSENT:** T. Gotschall & Rice. **MOTION CARRIED.** Chairman Dierks not voting. There was one cost share application reviewed for a cross fence project. ⇨ It was moved by Marv Fritz and seconded by Bruce Anderson to approve the Costshare application pending funding. **AYE:** Anderson, Beckman, Blair, Frank, Fritz, C. Gotschall, Kelly, Sanderson, Schueth, Smith, Tanderup & Vogel. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **ABSENT:** T. Gotschall & Rice. **MOTION CARRIED.** Chairman Dierks not voting.

Water Resources and Watershed Committee: The Committee met prior to the board meeting. John Vogel reported that the items discussed by the Committee were already covered under previous agenda items.

- 1. Certification and Groundwater Acre Transfers-Applications:** None.
- 2. Update on Groundwater Rules & Regulations:** No update.

Personnel, Education, Promotion and Equipment Committee: The Committee met prior to the board meeting.

- 1. Water Resources Technician Position:** Art Tanderup reported that we have hired a Water Resources Technician, and he will start in September.
- 2. FY 25-26 Equipment List:** Art Tanderup reported that they are reviewing the equipment list and when they have all the information it will be shared with the full board.

COALITION/TASK FORCE UPDATE:

Niobrara River Basin Alliance: Dennis Schueth reviewed the Irrigation Leader Article regarding the Niobrara Basin Alliance. He reviewed the possibility of the next DNR basin review to determine whether or not the basin is fully appropriated. Dennis commented that it is nice to have Jesse Bradley leading the organization because he knows the history of the project. The Alliance is still working on the subordination agreements.

Lower Platte River Basin Water Management Plan Coalition: Already covered in the Water Resources Manager report.

Nebraska Habitat Conservation Coalition (Piping Plover): No Report.

Nebraska Ground Water Management Coalition: No Report.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT: Dennis Schueth's report was mailed out in the Director's packets. A copy is included with the official copy of the minutes in the office. Minutes of the June meeting of the Governor's Water Quality and Quantity Task Force were included in the Directors packets. This meeting was generally a meet and greet and they will move forward with developing recommendations to be presented in a year. The Sandhills Expo Producer Panel sponsored by the UENRD, MNNRD, LNNRD and NeDNR seemed to be successful and generated good discussion on cover crops. Curtis Gotschall was a member of the panel. Dennis reported that we have received a request from the Flatwater Press regarding UENRD wages. He mentioned that the LPSNRD Manager has been put on administrative leave.

JULY BOARD MEETING:

The next regular board meeting will be held at 7:00 PM on July 28, 2025, at the NRD office in O'Neill.

⇒ It was moved by John Vogel and seconded by Marv Fritz to adjourn at 9:05 PM. AYE: Anderson, Beckman, Blair, Frank, Fritz, C. Gotschall, Kelly, Sanderson, Schueth, Smith, Tanderup & Vogel. NAY: None. ABSTAIN: None. ABSENT: T. Gotschall & Rice. MOTION CARRIED. Chairman Dierks not voting

I, the undersigned Secretary/Treasurer of the Upper Elkhorn Natural Resources District hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the proceedings had and done by the Board of Directors on June 23, 2025 that all of the subjects included in the foregoing proceedings were contained in the agenda for at least twenty-four hours prior to said meeting, the minutes of the Chairman and the Board were in written form and available for public inspection within ten working days and prior to the next convened meeting of said body, that all news media requesting notification of the time and place of said meeting and the subjects to be discussed at said meeting.

Gene Kelly - Secretary/Treasurer