

**UPPER ELKHORN NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
February 23, 2026 -- 2:30 P.M.  
O'Neill, Nebraska**

**CALL TO ORDER, STATEMENT OF ADVERTISEMENT AND OPEN MEETING LAW NOTIFICATION:**

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors was called to order. The statement of advertisement; and the open meetings law posting were all noted at 2:30 P.M. by Vice Chairman Cameron Smith.

**DIRECTORS PRESENT:**

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

**DIRECTORS ABSENT:**

Trevor Gotschall      John Vogel

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Dennis Schueth, General Manager  
Joslynn VanDerslice, Water Resources Manager  
Wayne Frederick, Water Resources Technician  
Brett Sholes, Agronomy Resource Technician  
Grant Mathis, Water Resources Technician  
Beth Walsh, Information & Education/Chemigation Coordinator

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Derek Vogt – Lower Loup NRD  
Jason Moudry – Lower Loup NRD  
Brandon Peterson – NRCS O'Neill  
Amy Timmerman – UNL Extension

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA:**

⇒ It was moved by Chris Dierks and seconded by Gene Kelly to adopt the agenda. **AYE:** Anderson, Beckman, Blair, Dierks, Frank, Fritz, C. Gotschall, Kelly, Rice, Sanderson, Schueth, Smith, Tanderup. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **ABSENT:** T. Gotschall & Vogel. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**JANUARY BOARD MEETING MINUTES:**

The minutes of the January Meeting were reviewed by the Directors. ⇒ It was moved by Chris Dierks and seconded by Bruce Anderson to approve the minutes of the January Meeting. **AYE:** Anderson, Beckman, Blair, Dierks, Frank, Fritz, C. Gotschall, Kelly, Rice, Sanderson, Schueth, Smith, Tanderup. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **ABSENT:** T. Gotschall & Vogel. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**FEBRUARY POLICY ISSUES MEETING MINUTES:**

The minutes of the January Meeting were reviewed by the Directors. ⇒ It was moved by Chris Dierks and seconded by Art Tanderup to approve the minutes of the February Policy Issues Meeting. **AYE:** Anderson, Beckman, Blair, Dierks, Frank, Fritz, C. Gotschall, Kelly, Rice, Sanderson, Schueth, Smith, Tanderup. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **ABSENT:** T. Gotschall & Vogel. **MOTION CARRIED.**

### **TREASURERS REPORT:**

The January treasurers report was reviewed by the Directors. ⇒ **It was moved by Marv Fritz and seconded by Chris Dierks to approve the January Treasurers Report. AYE: Anderson, Beckman, Blair, Dierks, Frank, Fritz, C. Gotschall, Kelly, Rice, Sanderson, Schueth, Smith, Tanderup. NAY: None. ABSTAIN: None. ABSENT: T. Gotschall & Vogel. MOTION CARRIED.**

### **PUBLIC FORUM-INPUT:**

**Jason Moudry and Derek Vogt, Lower Loup NRD:** Staff from the Lower Loup NRD attended the UENRD board meeting to present information regarding their vadose zone sampling program. Staff at the LLNRD have been working in the field collecting soil samples as a part of an ongoing project that began back in April 2023 in response to a continuing trend of increasing groundwater nitrate levels in parts of the LLNRD. They feel a greater emphasis should be placed on reducing the amount of nitrate that is making it to the aquifer, so the LLNRD is collecting samples to determine how much nitrogen is getting past the root zone. Nitrogen fertilizers are an important resource for the agricultural community, but in some areas, the fertilizer is not entirely used up by the growing crop. When this happens, nitrate continues to migrate through the soil profile and ultimately ends up in the water table. The LLNRD has partnered with the United States Geological Survey, (USGS), to study the movement of nitrate and leaching beyond the root zone. Three primary fertilizer application practices including fall fertilizer, manure application, and side dress application are being studied. To do this, soil samples are being collected to a depth of 8 feet throughout the growing season. Deeper soil samples will then be collected to a depth of 30 feet to see how much nitrogen has escaped the root zone and is no longer available to the crop. By sampling continually throughout the entire season, more understanding will be gained on how quickly nitrogen leaches through the soil profile and affects our groundwater.

### **AGENCY & STAFF REPORTS:**

**NARD Report:** Gene Kelly reported that the legislative conference went well and he was happy to see so many Senators attend the reception. Gene gave an update on the NARD Foundation and requests for this quarter which included the NRD Recreation Exploration, Lead Graduation banquet, and ACE Camp. He reported that the office loan is down to \$56,656 and renewed with an interest rate of 6.36%. Nebraska will host the Project Learning Tree National Conference in Nebraska City in March which brings together educators from across the country who have developed and are promoting PLT curriculum. The NARD is also a member of the Nebraska Chamber Water Study, so the Association has a seat at the table so we can work with the Chamber on potential growth in electricity generation, ag processing or other businesses that might utilize a large volume of water. The NARD Risk Pool is stable. The checking and savings accounts are at \$5,180,431 with total program equity of \$9,625,087. At the beginning of the fiscal year the net income was minus \$210,675 but at the end of December there was a net income of \$495,189. The Loss Control Committee recommended and it was approved to add the Hinge Program which is a remote physical therapy program and includes prescribed PT. Most insurance companies are offering similar programs. Gene also reviewed upcoming meetings on the NARD calendar. There was a NACD meeting recap in which the NRDs were acknowledged for their 100% dues payment, Orval Gigstad, Andy Bishop and Jeff Steffen awards. Dennis Schueth handed out an updated bills informational sheet and it was reported that 10 of the bills the NRDs are watching have been named priority bills. There has also been support for the Environmental Trust and that these funds should not be raided or used for any other purpose than what they were intended.

**NeDWEE Report:** Chris Dierks reported that there is a meeting scheduled for February 25<sup>th</sup> in Kearney. The Commission is also concerned about the NSWCP fund and the other funds that they administer with all the cuts that the Governor is making.

**NRCS Report:** Brandon Peterson's report was mailed out to the Directors. Brandon Peterson reported on the EQIP and CSP application deadlines. They have received their EQIP initial allocations and the Bazile area is

receiving \$509,155 and the UENRD is receiving \$1,194,730. The UENRD allocation is well above the initial allocation last year and he noted that cost share rates have increased so they will see how many contracts they are able to fund. CRP and general CRP enrollments are occurring until March 9 and April 17 respectively.

#### **RC&D Report:**

**North Central RC&D:** Marv Fritz reported that they have set the dates for the tire amnesty events. The Springview event will be April 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> and the O'Neill event will be June 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. Marv also mentioned that the North Central RC&D office may be moved to O'Neill.

**Loup Basin RC&D:** No Report.

**Northeast RC&D:** Art Tanderup reported that they have received a weed grant but with budget cuts at the state level, they may not receive the funding. They are still working on various other grants and possibly going after some private funding. Art also reported that they are working on their dues structure.

**Information & Education Report:** Beth Walsh's report was mailed out in the Directors packets. Beth reported that an updated list of the UENRD directors and the NRD officers and representatives was provided in the Directors folders.

**Water Resources Department Reports:** Joslynn VanDerslice's report was mailed out in the Directors packets. The non-compliance list was handed out to the board. Approximately half to the Phase II reports that have been turned in and the compliance mailing will go out shortly for 1300 fields. Nitrogen certification classes were held last week with around 100 cooperators attending. Joslynn reviewed the nitrogen certification class surveys.

**Bazile Groundwater Management Area Report:** Marcus Blunk's report was mailed out in the Directors packet. It was also noted that they are looking for individuals for on farm research projects.

**UNL Extension:** Amy Timmerman reported on the Master Irrigator class being held in Norfolk March 6<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>. The last local nitrogen certification class will be held March 5<sup>th</sup> in Stuart. She also discussed some On the Farm information.

#### **EXCUSED ABSENCES:**

⇒ It was moved by Matt Beckman and seconded by Cody Frank to excuse the absence of Trevor Gotschall and John Vogel. **AYE:** Anderson, Beckman, Blair, Dierks, Frank, Fritz, C. Gotschall, Kelly, Rice, Sanderson, Schueth, Smith, Tanderup. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **ABSENT:** T. Gotschall & Vogel. **MOTION CARRIED.**

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

##### **Legislative, Finance and Planning:**

- 1. Action on Current bills:** The Committee met prior to the Board meeting and reviewed the current bills, accounts receivable and bank statements. ⇒ It was moved by Marv Fritz and seconded by Gene Kelly to approve the current bills for payment. **AYE:** Anderson, Beckman, Blair, Dierks, Frank, Fritz, C. Gotschall, Kelly, Rice, Sanderson, Schueth, Smith, Tanderup. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **ABSENT:** T. Gotschall & Vogel. **MOTION CARRIED.** There were no cost share applications to review. ⇒ It was moved by Curtis Gotschall and seconded by Chris Dierks to allocate up to \$7,000 from the Water Enhancement Fund for the purchase of GPS survey equipment. **AYE:** Anderson, Beckman, Blair, Dierks, Frank, Fritz, C. Gotschall, Kelly, Rice, Sanderson, Schueth, Smith, Tanderup. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **ABSENT:** T. Gotschall & Vogel. **MOTION CARRIED.** This item was discussed by the WRWS Committee to improve the static water level monitoring program for the NRD.

**Water Resources & Watershed:** The Committee met prior to the Board meeting and discussed several issues on their agenda.

- 1. Groundwater Irrigated Acre Expansion for 2026 and Groundwater Acre Transfers:** Curtis Gotschall noted the Groundwater Irrigated Acre transfers reviewed by the WRWS Committee. ⇒ **It was moved by Curtis Gotschall and seconded by Chris Dierks to approve the February Transfer requests that met the transfer criteria pending completion of signatures and all the paperwork. AYE: Anderson, Beckman, Blair, Dierks, Frank, Fritz, C. Gotschall, Kelly, Rice, Sanderson, Schueth, Smith, Tanderup. NAY: None. ABSTAIN: None. ABSENT: T. Gotschall & Vogel. MOTION CARRIED.**
- 2. Other:** Curtis also reported that the Committee is going to start holding an additional monthly meeting to help with progress on the Groundwater Management Area Rules and Regulations as well as other agenda items. Once the Committee has developed recommendations for the board, they will schedule a meeting with the full board in an effort to discuss the changes before taking a vote.

**COALITION/TASK FORCE UPDATE:**

**Niobrara River Basin Alliance:** No Report

**Lower Platte River Basin Water Management Plan Coalition:** There are meetings scheduled for the technical committee and the managers committee.

**Nebraska Habitat Conservation Coalition (Piping Plover):** The annual coalition meeting will be held this spring.

**Nebraska Ground Water Management Coalition:** No Report

**ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT:**

Dennis Schueth's report was mailed out in the Directors packets and a copy is kept on file at the NRD office.

**MARCH BOARD MEETING:**

The next Upper Elkhorn NRD Board Meeting will be held on March 23, 2026 at 2:30 PM.

⇒ **It was moved by Gene Kelly and seconded by Matt Beckman to adjourn the meeting at 4:45 PM. AYE: Anderson, Beckman, Blair, Dierks, Frank, Fritz, C. Gotschall, Kelly, Rice, Sanderson, Schueth, Smith & Tanderup. NAY: None. ABSTAIN: None. ABSENT: T. Gotschall & Vogel. MOTION CARRIED.**

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 February 23, 2026 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.

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Gene Kelly, Secretary/Treasurer