

**NORTH PLATTE NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

March 12, 2026
3:00 P.M.

1. Call Meeting to Order

This meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Roger Eirich. Notice of the meeting was given to the public by publishing a legal notice on March 5, 2026, in the Scottsbluff Star Herald.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Meeting attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Inform Public of Open Meetings Act

Eirich informed the meeting attendees that this meeting would be conducted in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, which is posted by the door for public inspection.

Attendance

Board Members Present: Kent Andreas, Chuck Henkel, Pete Lapaseotes, Ryan Reuter, Mark Westphal, Dan Weinreis, Roger Eirich

Board Members Absent: Dave Deines, Lane Darnall

Others Present:

Members of the Public: Darrell & Lynette Blackstone

North Platte NRD Staff: Danielle Madden, Lydia Hendrickson, Ken Ridgeway, Scott Schaneman

NRCS: Georgette Jordening

Adaptive Resources, Inc. (ARI): Thad Kuntz

Simmons Olsen Law Firm: Megan Dockery

Documentation Provided

The following documents were made available at the meeting for the Board of Directors and public review:

1. Agenda
2. Minutes of the February 12, 2026, Board of Directors meeting
3. Treasurer's Report & Accounts Payable
4. Manager's Report
5. DWEE Drought Conditions Update Presentation
6. Blackstone Amended Variance Request VAR-2025-01
7. NRCS Cost-Share Docket
8. Draft One Red Program Outline Informational Sheet

4. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Board reviewed the minutes of February 12, 2026, regular Board meeting.

A motion was made by Andreas, seconded by Westphal, to approve the minutes of February 12, 2026, regular monthly meeting. Motion passed.

Aye: Andreas, Henkel, Lapaseotes, Reuter, Westphal, Weinreis, Eirich

Nay: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Deines, Darnall

5. Treasurer's Report and Accounts Payable

Ryan Reuter reviewed the monthly expenses from the Treasurer's Report with the Board.

A motion was made by Henkel, seconded by Andreas, to accept the Treasurer's Report and pay the bills. Motion passed.

Aye: Andreas, Henkel, Lapaseotes, Reuter, Westphal, Weinreis, Eirich
Nay: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Deines, Darnall

6. Comments from the Public

Georgette Jordening with NRCS informed the Board that NRCS has been receiving calls from approved NSWCP applicants and they've been working on designs and rankings, CRP signups are still open, and they've been helping with matters relating to the wildfire in Garden County.

7. Manager's Report

Scott Schaneman reviewed his Manager's Report with the Board:

March has always been a very busy month for me. I spent much of last week in Lincoln attending several different meetings. I had meetings scheduled all day last Tuesday at DWEE discussing several different topics ranging from Task Force to nitrogen management in the North Platte NRD with DWEE staff. Wednesday was spent at NARD for managers meeting, and Thursday morning was spent with Ann Jablonski from Governor Pillens office, and in the afternoon at NRCS for State Technical Committee. Even though it was a very busy week, a lot of good information was provided that will be beneficial to the District.

On the surface water registration side, the Pathfinder Irrigation District paperwork has been steadily rolling in, and recently registration paperwork has been sent out to the patrons of the North Port Irrigation District. Reminder letters have been mailed to those landowners that have not returned their registration paperwork. This will continue to be an open line of communication with landowners of surface water acres to get them the paperwork needed to register their acres or remind them that their paperwork is past due. District staff will continue to work with the patrons of those Irrigation Districts that still need to register their acres, and we fully expect to be busy with this process throughout the remainder of the year.

Several upcoming events worth mentioning. The Platte River Recovery and Implementation Program (PRRIP) Governance Committee has scheduled a two-day meeting in Kearney on March 10th and 11th. This will be my first meeting on the Governance Committee. Rounding out the month, there will be a Full Task Force meeting in Lincoln on March 25th in which all task force members will be approving and signing the report to be sent to the Governor. As a reminder I wanted to also include in upcoming events the Urban Conference which will be held in conjunction with the KNEB Spring Show at the Weborg Center on April 18th.

District staff will be getting geared up for the Spring field work season, starting with Spring water levels beginning on March 16th. Also, on March 16th the Water Department Staff will be replacing batteries in 125 Seametrics flow meters. The Water Department will also be involved in the replacement of 10 Seametrics that are scheduled for warranty replacement also in March. Regarding the Resource Conservation Department, Todd has scheduled for Tuesday March 10th a tree pruning workshop, which normally is a well-attended event. Todd and Ken continue to work with landowners interested in the tree row renovation program, as well as consulting and taking orders for the upcoming tree planting season.

As a quick reminder to those Board members that are on the District Operations Committee, there is a meeting scheduled for March 19th to discuss a potential violation regarding a well that was used in 2025 that did not have a permanently installed flowmeter.

8. Legislative Update

Schaneman provided an update to the Board about various Legislative Bills currently being discussed that relate to natural resources districts. Schaneman advised that there is a budget shortfall, but the Governor has submitted a budget, which has been reviewed by the Appropriations Committee and some of the numbers have been changed. The budget must be approved by day 50, which is next week.

Legislature is currently looking to cut \$32.7 million from the NET Fund. The Appropriations Committee reduced this to \$5 million. A \$2 million transfer from NET to Nebraska Soil & Water Conservation Fund is still being considered.

The North Platte NRD receives roughly \$87,000 and allocates another \$160,000 from our budget for NSWCP.

A proposal of \$8 million moving from the NET to the WRCF was reduced to \$6 million by the Appropriations Committee.

Discussions continued on the proposed 2% spending cap. All political subdivisions would be subject to the spending cap, including NRDS. This means wherever we are currently at with our budget, we would be restricted and cannot increase more than 2% annually. This would be difficult for NRDs because operations ebb and flow, which results in changes to property tax request. NRDs have projects that vary year to year, resulting in changes to budgeted operating funds and property tax requests. Unfortunately, this may result with the NRDs having to increase to budgets to the max allowance in order to protect funds for future projects. There are currently lobbyist trying to explain this operation to the Senators, and we're hopeful NRDs won't be included under any changes.

LB807 – Has changed a little bit. This Bill proposed to take the authority for riparian management from the Department of Ag and transfer the authority to DWEE. The Nebraska Department of Ag would still manage the issues, but DWEE would process all funding. This is currently on the Governor's desk.

LB761 – This Bill proposes changes to water well fees. Having a budget deficit caused review of these fees. Currently a register water well is \$40, with a proposed increase to \$200. There is also a

consideration to create a department of water quality and quantity cash fund and raise permit fees for CAFOs for expansions.

LB 596 – This is the proposed Bill to address publication requirements. Newspaper publications are not done daily anymore, so digital newspapers have been included, and the allowance for publication on websites was removed (need to clarify). We would be required to still publish notices at least 4 times a year in an actual newspaper for meeting dates, special events, etc. This Bill is in general file.

LB1096 – This Bill would require NRDs and other entities who have critical infrastructures (i.e., HWS) to no longer allow or do business with international companies aligned with national threat entities. This may require some changes regarding parts, services, or other items used or needed by the District. This Bill has had a special hearing.

9. 2026 NSWCP Report

Schaneman provided information on the NSWCP Applications received this year:

NC-14 - \$153,356.46 in funding allocated
NC-17 - \$67,970.63 in funding allocated
NC-10 - \$9,922.21 in funding allocated

\$231,249.30 total funds allocated
68 total Applications approved

10. Basin Drought Plan

Schaneman presented to the Board on the current Basin Drought Plan:

A Basin Wide Drought Plan has been drafted and approved. We are in the middle of a serious drought right now and a few questions need addressed:

Triggers have been met under the Plan, what action needs to be taken?

First of all, the NRD Drought Plan should be primary to the Basin Plan, but the Basin Plan includes communication when triggers are met. The NRD Plan includes communication, education, and public outreach. DWEE is creating a plan for outreach.

52% of the District is in D3 drought, which has exceeded the trigger and is now in “drought alert”. The District is shown in ED3 and ED4 on Evaporation Index (Pages 8 & 9 of DWEE’s presentation).

Below Lake McConaughy is still above triggers and have not hit the need for further action.

This tracking reflects identical tracking from the 2002 drought conditions. South Platte appears to be in same position but might be slightly worse than the NPNRD.

Seminole Reservoir and Pathfinder are really low on storage.

A meeting will be held tomorrow at PREC about drought, insurance, and preventative plans.

Future conversations will be had on the NPNRD Drought Plan, triggers and conditions continuing to persist how they are now.

11. Discussion and Consideration of Amended Variance VAR-2025-01 Blackston Farms Inc.

Schaneman advised that the Water Resources Committee has met and reviewed the amended variance request, the Board had the chance to review the request, and the public hearing was held prior to this Board meeting where information and testimony was presented.

A motion was made by Westphal, seconded by Reuter, to approve the Blackstone Farms' Amended Variance Application with the following conditions:

- Blackstone Farms, the North Platte NRD, and the Upper Niobrara White NRD must enter into a satisfactory Agreement in the same or substantially similar form as the draft agreement presented at the public hearing, and that all parties to such Agreement perform their obligations, duties and promises as outlined in the Agreement, specifically to include:
 - o Blackstone Farms permanently decertifies its 260 Upper Niobrara White NRD acres, described in the Agreement as the North Tract; and
 - o Blackstone Farms decommissions or converts the four North Tract wells, identified as G-063580, G-063581, G-063003, and G-063002, as described in the Agreement; and
 - o Blackstone Farms provides all required offsets as described in the Agreement; and
- Blackstone Farms applies for, receives approval, and meets any requirements or conditions of a new certification from the North Platte NRD, including but not limited to an annual allocation of 14 acre inches.

Motion passed.

Aye: Andreas, Henkel, Lapaseotes, Reuter, Westphal, Weinreis, Eirich

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Deines, Darnall

12. Discussion and Consideration to Use 2025 Cost Docket for 2026

Schaneman explained there have been some issues getting a final docket for 2026 for the NRD to use for NSWCP Applications, so the NRD needs to use the 2025 cost docket for applications that were approved this year. It was the recommendation made by the State Conservationist to use the 2025 cost docket.

Schaneman recommended approving the 2025 cost docket with the following amendments:

Practice 380 – use the 2024 \$0.39 per linear foot versus \$0.74 per linear foot. If someone applies for this cost share practice, they could get more money than what the project actually costs. These numbers were the recommendation from the District's Resources Coordinator.

Practice 953 – allow rubber tanks to be authorized. The 2025 cost docket does not allow rubber tire tanks, but we want to allow for this common practice because there's nothing wrong with them and we would like them to be included. Georgette Jordening added that rubber tanks were ran under the fiberglass tanks line item in the cost docket last year, but DNR returned them because rubber tanks were not listed on docket. These will need to be specific.

A motion was made by Henkel, seconded by Andreas, to approve use of the 2025 cost docket with the amendments to Practice 380 and Practice 953 as proposed by Scott Schaneman. Motion Passed.

Aye: Andreas, Henkel, Lapaseotes, Reuter, Westphal, Weinreis, Eirich

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Deines, Darnall

13. Governor's Water Policy Task Force and Future Implementation of One Red Programs

Schaneman explained the Task Force was assigned development of a program directed towards water quality and quantity to enhance conservation and reduction of carbon in the State. \$307 million was provided in funding; half for programs with DWEE and half for programs of the task force.

The task force is presenting a program which will target 10,000 producers in State. Producers will receive a sign-up bonus of \$2,000 on a minimum of 80 acres and a maximum of 500 acres. Producers must agree to provide information on the acres back to DWEE (location, size, nitrogen application, irrigation information, etc.) through Producer Connect. Signups must also be made through Producer Connect with either NRCS, their local NRD, or a crop consultant. If information is provided by the end of the season, producers would get extra \$500 reporting bonus. They would qualify for the same bonus every year after that for up to 3 years (\$3,500 total).

Producers could obtain \$9,000 through other programs as well. Producers could enroll in nitrogen use efficiency programs, where two options are available:

Equipment and technology – 100% cost share up to \$9,000 maximum (Soil Sampling included – 100% cost share)

Soil Health \$15/acre

Flow meters and telemetry can qualify for funding. Statewide metering is no longer the way this program is going because different NRDs measure and track water in different ways, so creating a program for everyone to participate in would be difficult.

The program has to be rolled out by fall, otherwise other deadlines will be missed, and funds will have to be returned.

Thad Kuntz brought up whether or not audits would be considered in the process. He questioned if the NRD would have to do audits to make sure information is presented correctly in Producer Connect or that farmers are doing what they're supposed to do.

Another question was posed about the technology option: What happens if producers buy moisture probes but never put them in the ground? Schaneman advised that the NRD only has so much responsibility and obligation when it comes to cost share. The NRD can make sure producers purchase the equipment, but it's up to them to use it.

Additional Question: What about the information backflow to DWEE if producers are not using equipment, etc.? Schaneman advised that may be something DWEE will have to figure out or enforce if it's a requirement of their participation and receipt of cost share funds.

The NRDs want to recoup the costs for staff time to help administer these programs. DWEE proposed paying a flat fee to NRDs, but DWEE also considered hiring a special employee to be in the NRD offices who would be assigned to just the One Red program.

14. Adjourn

There being no further business, Eirich called for a motion to adjourn.

A motion was made by Henkel, seconded by Reuter, to adjourn the meeting at 4:01 pm. Motion Passed.

Aye: Andreas, Henkel, Lapaseotes, Reuter, Westphal, Weinreis, Eirich

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Deines, Darnall

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