

WSF 2021 Status Report # 5244

PROJECT: Lower Loup NRD Drought Management Plan –
WSF Application #5244 (awarded December 18, 2019)

DATE: MARCH 22, 2021
(SECOND ANNUAL REPORT DUE
ON OR BEFORE APRIL 1, 2021)

See Application 5244 Section A #7 For Project Tasks Summary and Timeline

PROJECT PROGRESS APRIL 2020 TO APRIL 2021:

The Lower Loup Natural Resources District (LLNRD) hired JEO Consulting Group (JEO) for the development of a drought management plan within the District. Following an initial March 2020 planning meeting with JEO, a drought management workshop was tentatively planned for late April or early May 2020. The goal of the workshop was to bring stakeholders across the LLNRD together to gain a better understanding of how communities, water providers, and affected groups respond when confronted with drought events. However, following the COVID-19 outbreak and social distancing requirements starting in mid-March, the in-person drought workshop was postponed. The LLNRD contemplated the option of hosting a virtual drought workshop at several points in 2020, but it was ultimately decided that an in-person event would yield much better results and waiting until stakeholders were available to safely meet in-person was the best and only option.

The final deliverable of this project will be a robust and up-to-date drought management plan for the District, and the information gathered at the in-person drought workshop is expected to shape the core of that plan. However, some sections of the plan are less reliant on the workshop results and thus were partially completed in 2020, specifically those sections that require the gathering and compiling of existing data and maps. Following is a list of some of the sections of the plan that are at or near completion: introduction to drought management, outlining of the LLNRD profile, current drought related planning efforts, historical drought occurrence and extent, past drought impacts, water quantity and quality concerns, economics, seasonal vulnerabilities, health implications, U.S. drought monitor classification, continued/completed projects regarding mitigation and drought management actions. Of course, some of these sections in the plan will be supplemented by the information gathered at the important in-person workshop, once that takes place.

LLNRD and JEO met virtually on July 21, 2020, to discuss the planning process and collaborate on developing the drought management plan. LLNRD and JEO met again virtually on September 2, 2020, to review the status of the plan and discuss next steps, at which time it was decided to postpone the in-person drought workshop until sometime in Fall 2021.

ANTICIPATED ACTIVITIES FROM NOW UNTIL NEXT ANNUAL REPORT DUE APRIL 1, 2022:

LLNRD is planning to host a drought workshop at the Valley County Fairgrounds with public stakeholder participation as soon as a reasonable number of identified stakeholders are available and comfortable to safely meet in-person in 2021. This will most likely take place in the Fall after harvest when producers are available. Once the drought workshop is completed, JEO will compile the information and incorporate into the partially completed drought management plan, with the goal of identifying drought-specific vulnerabilities and best management practices to be implemented to reduce drought impacts. JEO will work with the LLNRD to identify potential water recharge projects throughout the District and develop a protocol for local drought monitoring and forecasting with the goal of preparing District residents ahead of drought conditions. All project activities and a developed plan are currently planned for completion by April 2022.

ANTICIPATED CASH FLOW FOR REMAINDER OF THE PROJECT:

\$52,260 - The LLNRD and Water Sustainability Fund (WSF) have funding obligations towards this project (\$87,100 total project costs) under grant award #5244.

LIKELIHOOD THAT BENEFITS PROJECTED IN APPLICATION 5244 WILL BE REALIZED:

Based on the previous project results and experience with working through the WSF the project has been slowed by the inability to host an in-person drought management workshop with identified stakeholders but is on target for achieving all benefits described in the original application.