

MINUTES OF THE

NEBRASKA NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING

AUGUST 10, 2000

Those in attendance were:

Richard Jiskra, Chair	Roy Stewart, Member
Jim Van Marter, Member	Wayne Davis, Member
Wayne Madsen, Member	Mike Onnen
Don Roberts, Member	Robert Moore
Richard Mercer, Member	Milton Moravek
Don Larson, Member	Paul Zillig
Joseph Hergott, Member	Lynn Heng
Roger Korell, Member	Dayle Williamson, Staff
LeRoy Pieper, Member	Steve Gaul, Staff
Beverly Donaldson, Member	Tom Pesek, Staff
Vince Kramper, Member	Gayle Starr, Staff

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Commission Chair, Richard Jiskra in the Rockbrook meeting room of the Holiday Inn in Hastings, Nebraska, at approximately 8:30 a.m.

NOTICE OF THE MEETING

Notice of the meeting was placed in the LINCOLN JOURNAL STAR and the HASTINGS TRIBUNE on August 2, 2000, notifying the public of the meeting.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIAL

The following items of informational material were distributed during the course of the meeting and a copy of each is attached to the file copy of the minutes.

1. Nebraska Resources Development Fund Present Financial Status Report, August 7, 2000.
2. Nebraska Resources Development Fund Quarterly Report – July 31, 2000.
3. Draft letter to Richard Beran on Lake Ericson Project.
4. Status of Small Watersheds Flood Control Fund.
5. Letter from Nemaha NRD on Upper Little Nemaha Site 31 Project
6. Soil & Water Conservation Fund, Expenditures by Month 1992-2000.
7. NSWCP Fund Distribution 2000-2001.
8. Nebraska Department of Natural Resources – Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Fund – Republican Basin

Ground Water Meter Program.

9. Natural Resources Enhancement Fund Receipts
10. Water Well Decommissioning Cash Fund
11. Water Well Decommissioning Fund report.
12. NRCS report to the NNRC and NARD.

MINUTES

Motion was made by Kramper and seconded by Van Marter to approve the minutes of the June 14, 2000, Commission meeting as distributed. Motion carried.

Aye: Pieper, Larson, Kramper, Korell, Madsen, Van Marter, Stewart, Roberts, Hergott, Davis, Donaldson, Mercer, Jiskra

Nay: None

Not Present: Hahn, Watermeier, Bartak

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EXPENDITURES

Motion was made by Roberts and seconded by Korell to approve the expenditure report for June, 2000. Motion carried.

Aye: Larson, Kramper, Korell, Madsen, Van Marter, Stewart, Roberts, Hergott, Davis, Donaldson, Mercer, Pieper, Jiskra

Nay: None

Not Present: Hahn, Watermeier, Bartak

Gayle Starr noted that with the merger of the two agencies the expenditure report provided to the Commission would be in a somewhat different format than previously and would primarily deal with the various funds administered by the Commission.

ADVISOR'S COMMENTS

Steve Chick, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service, distributed a report to the Commission and commented on a number of items. He commented that the Center for Rural Affairs had been instrumental in getting an additional \$216,390 of EQIP funds targeted for producers utilizing non-traditional type practices that facilitate using standing crops as an alternative to confined feed lots. He also noted that they have been able to get \$188,000 for emergency watershed program funds to assist with problems caused by heavy rains in early June in Thurston County. Chick updated the Commission on the status of various legislative items relating to the NRCS budget. He also pointed out that the House had unanimously passed HR 728, the aging watershed rehabilitation bill, with Congressman Bereuter providing strong support.

Lynn Heng commented that the watershed rehabilitation bill, if passed and funded, would be very helpful in the Nemaha NRD since they have a number of watershed structures, many of which are nearing their design life span.

DEPARTMENT REPORT

Dayle Williamson extended Roger Patterson's apologies for not being able to be present. Williamson explained that Roger had been called to an emergency meeting in Sacramento relative to the Nebraska-Wyoming North Platte River situation.

Dayle explained that the moving process to locate the merged agency together was well underway but would probably not be finalized for at least a month. He noted that Dave Vogler had been hired to fill the attorney slot and provide assistance to Jim Cook and that James Williams had been hired to fill the Engineer's position in the Floodplain Management program.

Williamson distributed some information concerning stream flows in the state and pointed out the new situation this year regarding the need to meet instream flows on the Platte River.

Williamson also distributed the most recent drought monitor map and reviewed the current drought situation in Nebraska.

Williamson also explained that the three states and the federal government have discussed an extension and the states will be discussing this possibility with their Governors' prior to the next Governance Committee meeting.

Governance Committee Statement on the above issue. The Platte River Cooperative Agreement ends December 31, 2000. Because of the complex nature of the proposed Program and the amount of work remaining before a program can be implemented, an extension of the Cooperative Agreement period is being considered. The topic will be fully discussed and a decision made during upcoming Governance Committee meetings.

ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST

Vince Kramper and Richard Mercer explained that the Environmental Trust Board had met earlier in the week at Ogallala. They added that this was their annual meeting to review their program and that they had spent a great deal of time talking about the newly authorized endowment fund. They also noted that they had reviewed the geographic distribution of grant awards throughout the state and noted that the law requires them to reach an equal geographic distribution over time.

Dayle Williamson added that the department would be submitting an application requesting funds for help with the carbon sequestration study required by LB 957. It was noted that applications are due by September 15.

PLATTE AND REPUBLICAN RIVER ACTIVITIES

Dayle Williamson reported that other than the Cooperative Agreement program that he had already discussed there was very little new information to report to the Commission regarding these two basins. Steve Gaul added that he and other staff members had been meeting with a Republican Basin group appointed by the Governor but that because of the lawsuit he was unable to discuss the meeting details.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Steve Gaul noted that there had been some change in the emphasis of the agency planning activities as a result of the merger. He added that four former DWR personnel had been assigned to the Planning and Assistance Division to deal

with water rights mapping, stream gaging, and interstate water issues. He added that as a result of meetings with local entities and a survey of NRD and irrigation personnel, there was interest in planning assistance to NRDs.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Tom Pesek distributed the Resources Development Fund status report and quarterly report and reviewed each of them. He then distributed a draft letter from the Director concerning the Lake Ericson Project proposal. Robert Moore, representing the Lower Loup NRD, made some brief comments on the project. Motion was made by Hergott and seconded by Larson to advise the Lower Loup NRD that it may proceed with an application and feasibility report for the Lake Ericson Project and that it is to address comments and questions contained in the letter from the Director of Natural Resources. Motion carried.

Aye: Kramper, Korell, Madsen, Van Marter, Stewart, Roberts, Hergott, Davis, Donaldson, Mercer, Pieper, Larson, Jiskra

Nay: None

Not Present: Hahn, Watermeier, Bartak

Paul Zillig, representing the Lower Platte South NRD, distributed a letter outlining the attempts by the NRD to resolve the road closing issue between the NRD Board and the Cass County Commissioners regarding Weeping Water Site 7g. Zillig then briefly described what has occurred and responded to a number of questions from Commission members concerning the status of site 7g and the potential for resolving the differences.

Lynn Heng, Manager of the Nemaha NRD, indicated that because of the involvement of a pipeline it would be impossible to construct site 31 of the Upper Little Nemaha Watershed Project. He outlined three alternatives that he intends to present to his Board at their next meeting. He explained that the alternatives would probably result in a request for an increased allocation for the project. He noted that funds available from FEMA were paying a considerable amount of the cost for that side so the request to the Resources Development Fund would probably be quite small. The Commission concluded that no action was appropriate until the NRD board had made a decision on which alternative they would choose.

There was considerable discussion about the Resources Development Fund and the calculation of benefits for flood control and other uses as well as some discussion of the rate of return. It was requested that the Commission's staff provide a history and description of the calculation of the benefits for Resources Development fund projects.

Tom Pesek distributed the Small Watersheds Flood Control Fund status report and briefly reviewed it. Gayle Starr distributed status reports for the Soil and Water Conservation Fund Republican Basin Water Meter program, the Natural Resources Enhancement Fund and the Water Well Decommissioning Fund and briefly described each of them.

NEXT MEETING

It was determined that the next meeting would be in Kearney in connection with the NARD annual meeting on September 26 and 27 with committee meetings the afternoon of the 26th and the Commission meeting the morning of the 27th.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Jiskra expressed appreciation to the Little Blue NRD for hosting the Commission members and providing a tour of parts of their NRD. The meeting was then adjourned at approximately 11:20 a.m.

Chairman
Director of Natural Resources