MINUTES OF RED RIVER RETENTION AUTHORITY
ORIGINATING AT THE CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
HERITAGE CONFERENCE ROOM
WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA
JUNE 17, 2026
10:00 A.M.

A meeting of the Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) was held on June 17, 2026. Josh Ihry called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

Present were John Finney, Josh Ihry, Bill Petersen, Greg Holmvik, and Keith Weston, Board members; Pat Fridgen, Ted Preister, and Ben Bergey, non-voting members; Brian Fuder, Executive Director; Melissa Hinkemeyer, Secretary; Amy Hepper, Treasurer; Elizabeth Smith, Administrative Assistant; Rita Nelson, Accounting Assistant; Sean M. Fredricks, Ohnstad Twichell, P.C.; Robert Sip, Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB); Yaping Chi, North Dakota Department of Water Resources (NDDWR); Bruce Anderson, Barnes County Water Resource District; Jacob Gust, Rush River Water Resource District; Morrie Lanning, Barr Engineering Co.; and Mike Opat, Houston Engineering, Inc. Board Member Tom Perdue was absent.

Approval of agenda
It was moved by Greg Holmvik, seconded by Keith Weston and unanimously carried to approve the order of the agenda, as presented.

Minutes
It was moved by Keith Weston and seconded by Bill Petersen to approve the minutes of the March 25, 2026, meeting, as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Administrative Items
The Treasurer presented the Financial Report of the RRRA.

It was moved by Bill Petersen and seconded by Keith Weston to approve the financial report and wire transfers as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

The Secretary and Brian Fuder reviewed the 2027 budget. The Board discussed the 2027 budget.

A motion was made by Keith Weston and seconded by John Finney to approve the Red River Retention Authority 2027 budget as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

North Dakota Water Magazine

Mr. Fuder briefly reviewed the article published in the June issue of the North Dakota Water Magazine. The article introduces the RRRA and discusses water resiliency and the role of retention to address flood reduction, groundwater recharge, water supply during drought conditions, and water quality improvement to the magazine's audience. The article also highlighted the importance of coordination and partnership across the Red River Basin. Mr. Fuder reported the final RRRA article will be published in fall 2026. Mr. Fuder indicated following the final issue he will reach out to North Dakota Water to inquire about engagement of the articles.

Outreach

Rob Sip reported that the Red River Watershed Management Board hosts a joint conference with the Minnesota Flood Damage Reduction Work Group (MNFDRWG) annually and have invited the RRJWRD and are also inviting the RRRA to join in hosting this conference. The conference typically entails a day and a half of speakers, training, and this year also included a facilitated discussion regarding water supply and management. The conference is held in March with planning beginning prior. A joint conference with all four entities would allow for more all-encompassing topics and issues and create a closer working relationship between staff. The current cost of the conference is approximately $30,000-40,000, not including sponsorships and the registration fee. The RRJWRD has agreed to join in hosting this conference.

Mr. Fuder indicated the RRRA Basin United Summit is no longer moving forward due to multiple scheduling conflicts including unresolvable conflicts with the Natural Resources Conservation Service Chief Conservationist schedule. Mr. Fuder suggested the RRRA focus their efforts instead on the joint conference with the RRWMB, MNFDRWG, and RRJWRD. Mr. Fuder noted a joint conference with all four entities would allow for more all-encompassing topics and issues and create a closer working relationship between staff. Mr. Fuder would join the conference planning committee and planning will start this fall.

A motion was made by Bill Petersen and seconded by Keith Weston to participate in a joint conference annually with the RRWMB, MNFDRWG, and the RRJWRD and appoint Brian Fuder to represent the RRRA on the planning committee. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Executive Director report

Mr. Fuder suggested the RRRA consider pursuing becoming a federal special district. The Red River Basin is frequently divided between federal regulatory agencies such as FEMA and the Corps of Engineers. A special district would provide consistency across the Red River Basin as well as provide opportunity to have a bigger influence federally. Sean Fredricks noted the potential of RRRA being a special district was discussed at the creation of the RRRA, at the time it was not pursued. Keith Weston agreed the RRRA should revisit the idea of becoming a federal special district. This would allow the RRRA to assist project sponsors with activities such as land acquisition for projects. John Finney provided additional background on the history of the RRRA and indicated the Board

should determine the future direction of the RRRA before pursuing any changes. Mr. Fuder stated the special district may provide additional legitimacy and visibility in Washington D.C. This could also provide benefits to the member entities (RRWMB and RRJWRD) to handle federal matters such as federal funding for projects. Mr. Fuder noted a special district would also entail additional administrative and financial commitments.

Keith Weston asked Mr. Fuder to conduct additional research on similar existing federal districts including their capabilities, authorities, and budgets. Josh Ihry also suggested determining what the process would be to pursue a special district. The Board discussed potentially shifting their focus to partner retention with other opportunities and needs such as water supply, irrigation, agricultural, and recreation. Jacob Gust stated future drought conditions will create water supply needs and the best solution would be to recharge aquifers however it would take time and significant funding to accomplish this.

The Board discussed next steps for the RRRA including the following:

- Research existing federal special districts that would be similar to the RRRA
- Consider reevaluating the goals of the RRRA
- Consider growing the RRRA to an entity that could generate funds to provide assistance for retention projects
- Increase promotion of the RRRA at local Water Resource District and Watershed District meetings.

Morrie Lanning gave additional historical background and noted the importance of working together to continue to make progress in managing water resources in the Red River Basin. Mr. Lanning encouraged the RRRA to consider alternative solutions to forming a special district.

The Board briefly discussed reviewing and potentially updating their governing documents.

Next Mr. Fuder discussed the Red River water management advisory committee he is leading to be proactive and consider future water supply needs of the Red River Basin and how retention may help meet those needs. The advisory group is made up of various Water Resource and Watershed District members and technical staff who are holding meetings to discuss producing an annual report to show water supply needs in the Red River Basin. Mr. Fuder noted a working group has been started in Minnesota to discuss retention use for water supply and they hope to bring the two groups together to form a basin-wide plan including identification of potential projects now and in the future. Mr. Fuder noted legislators are planning to join the advisory group as well.

Mr. Fuder then reported on the status of the requests for congressionally directed spending for construction ready projects in the Red River Basin. Mr. Fuder noted the Wild Rice Corridor Habitat Restoration project received a committal of $50,000 in funding through a federal bill that is in process. The project is in the beginning stages of securing an additional $400,000 in funding. As retention projects in the Red River Basin become shovel ready the RRRA will pursue construction funding federally.

Mr. Fuder also indicated he is pursuing project updates from the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Agency and partner reports

Ben Bergey updated the Board on the activities of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). Mr. Bergey noted he is involved with the MNFDRWG and they have an upcoming meeting and tour scheduled. Mr. Bergey also discussed the outcome of the recent Minnesota legislative session with $9 million allocated for flood hazard mitigation projects. $13 million in additional funding was received from the Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Fund for flood reduction projects in northwest Minnesota.

Pat Fridgen updated the Board on the activities of the North Dakota Department of Water Resources (NDDWR). Mr. Fridgen indicated the NDDWR 2026 Commissioner-Hosted Basin meetings have been scheduled for this summer. Additional meeting information is available on the NDDWR website. Mr. Fridgen also noted the State Water Commission is updating their cost-share program based on budget forecasts.

Mr. Sip reported on the recent RRWMB meeting including comments from the Minnesota Plumbing Board regarding reuse of stormwater.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for September 16, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. at the Cass County Highway Department, West Fargo, ND.

Adjournment

There being no further business to be considered by the Board, the meeting adjourned without objection at 11:36 a.m.

APPROVED:

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Josh Ihry
Co-Chair

John Finney
Co-Chair

ATTEST:

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Melissa Hinkemeyer
Secretary