

James River Water Development District



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JAMES RIVER WATER DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES MARCH 12, 2026

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Wiese called the meeting of the James River Water Development District (JRWDD) Board of Directors to order at 9:30 AM on March 12, 2026 at the District Office in Huron, South Dakota, with some members participating via Zoom.

ROLL CALL: The following people were in attendance:

DIRECTORS PRESENT

Dan Klimisch – Utica
LeRoy Braun – Mellette
Mike Wiese – Aberdeen
Dennis Bennett – Huron
Robert Braun – Aberdeen (via ZOOM)
Pat Cerry – Yankton
Randy Stanley – Groton

DIRECTORS ABSENT

Carol Millan – Mitchell
John Rubendall – Mitchell

STAFF PRESENT

Rocky Knippling, District Manager/SCWP Coordinator
Judy McDonald, CFO
Dave Bartel, Project Coordinator
Shane Deranleau, Watershed Coordinator
Matt Cavane, Watershed Coordinator

OTHERS PRESENT: Rob Roeber-Cottonwood Lake, Mike Sedlacek-Yankton County Highway Superintendent, Steve Charron-SD Lakes and Streams, Suzanne Smith-Spink County Commissioner, Zach Haddix-USACE, Matt Hayes-Davison CD, Hanna Peterson-Sanborn CD, Jean Fagerland-Marshall CD (Via Zoom), Jody Hauge-Aurora CD (Via Zoom)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: **Motion** by Director Klimisch, seconded by Director Stanley, to approve the agenda as printed. **Motion carried.**

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: Chair Wiese asked if any Directors had a conflict of interest regarding any agenda item. Director Klimisch acknowledged his role as a Yankton County Commissioner and stated he would be abstaining from the vote regarding the Yankton County Stone Church Bridge Riprap funding. No other conflicts were noted for the current agenda. The following standing disclosures are ongoing until otherwise disclosed:

- Director Mike Wiese is currently a Brown County Commissioner
- Director Dan Klimisch is currently a Yankton County Commissioner

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Steve Charron with the SD Lakes and Streams Association provided an update on zebra mussel infestations and the status of House Bill 1157. He thanked the Board for their financial support of the Environmental Impact Study and Deb Soholt will present the final findings at an upcoming meeting.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 15, 2026 MINUTES: Motion by Director Bennett, seconded by Director Cerny to approve the Minutes as presented. **Motion carried.**

UPDATE FROM US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS ON UPSTREAM RESERVOIRS AND 2026 RELEASES: Zachary Haddix, Hydraulic Engineer from US Army Corps of Engineers, gave an update on the upstream reservoirs and 2026 releases. He noted that while recent years saw high volumes, 2026 is projected as a medium flow year. The maximum combined releases from Jamestown and Pipestem reservoirs will be at 750 cfs and releases will be adjusted based on spring and summer rainfall. Dam safety modifications and inspections will continue over the next three years.

2026 TREE PLANTING SUPPORT TO CONSERVATION DISTRICTS: The District office received several letters from the local Conservation Districts for continued support to help producers within the District with tree planting efforts. **Motion** by Director L. Braun, seconded by Director Cerny to authorize cost-sharing assistance to the Conservation Districts as follows; Beadle, Brown, Davison, Hanson, Hutchinson, Sanborn, Spink, and Yankton Conservation Districts will be awarded \$18,000 each; Marshall Conservation District will be awarded (75%) \$13,500 and Aurora Conservation District will be awarded (55%) \$10,000 to help producers with tree planting efforts in the amount of **\$167,500. Motion passed.** These funds will expire on December 31, 2026.

PHEASANTS FOREVER PRESCRIBED FIRE PROGRAM: Members from Pheasants Forever Prescribed Fire Program presented a request for \$50,000 for project assistance funds to support the implementation of prescribed fire on private lands. The program will focus its efforts on the Lower James River, Lower Missouri River, and the Lower White River watershed where eastern red cedar encroachment is more prevalent in the state. **Motion** by Director Klimisch, seconded by Director Stanley to authorize a one-time payment of **\$10,000** to Pheasants Forever Prescribed Fire Program for implementation of prescribed fire on private lands within the James River District. **Motion passed.**

YANKTON COUNTY STONE CHURCH BRIDGE RIPRAP: Mike Sedlacek, Yankton County Highway Superintendent, presented a request for \$100,000 for project assistance funds for riprap at Structure #68-030-018 (Stone Church Bridge). Total cost to replace the bridge is \$7.5 million, with \$176,610 for riprap. **Motion** by Director R. Braun, seconded by Director L. Braun, to approve \$50,000 in funding assistance for Yankton County Highway Department. A substitute motion by Director Cerny, seconded by Director Bennett, to approve \$75,000 was made. The substitute motion failed (Voting Nay: R. Braun, L. Braun, and Wiese). The original motion to approve **\$50,000** was voted on. **Motion passed.** Director Klimisch abstained from the voting, citing his conflict of interest as a Yankton County Commissioner. These funds will expire on March 12, 2028.

DAVISON CONSERVATION DISTRICT: COMPACT TRACK LOADER: Matthew Hayes, Davison Conservation District Manager, presented a request for \$15,000 for project assistance funds to support the purchase of a compact track loader for continued ongoing efforts to control invasive eastern red cedar trees in Davison, Hanson, and Sanborn Counties. The Board discussed the Conservation District's current service rates and the need for a more self-sustaining model moving forward. **Motion** by Director Klimisch, seconded by Director L. Braun to authorize a one-time payment of **\$10,000** to Davison Conservation District toward the purchase. **Motion passed.**

SOUTH CENTRAL WATERSHED AND WATER QUALITY MONITORING UPDATE: Shane Deranleau provided an update on the South Central Watershed Project (SCWP), noting current budget constraints and the implementation of client batching for future funding cycles.

- \$793,000 in Nonpoint Source funding was awarded out of the \$1.6 million requested
- \$20 million in RCPP funding has been allocated over five years specifically for feedlot projects.

Deranleau further noted that water quality sampling will continue as scheduled and the State is currently preparing the contract for 604(b) funds. **Motion** by Director Cerny, seconded by Director L. Braun, to authorize the Chairman to sign the 604(b) water sampling contract upon receipt. **Motion passed.**

REPORTS: Staff, Directors, and Committees reported on the following activities of the District:

- Legislative Update: Staff provided updates on the 2026 Legislative Session, specifically regarding SB 46, SB 47, and SB 48, and their potential impact on District operations.
- Staff provided updates on current projects.
- Director Cerny reported on her research into the requirement for a District advisory committee. It was determined that such a committee is not a requirement.
- Investment Opportunity: Director Klimisch reported on the South Dakota Finance Investment Trust (SD FIT) as a potential vehicle for maximizing return on District funds. The Finance Committee will follow up on.
- Manager's Report: District Manager Rocky Knipping provided updates on the following:
 - Aurora County: Discussion regarding a request for funds for a grass drill. The Board reiterated that previous assistance for drills was a one-time allocation to all Conservation Districts within the JRWDD; no further funding for grass drills will be authorized at this time.
 - Lake Byron: A bank stabilization project is anticipated for the near future.
 - Yankton County: Noted that an additional riprap project for a separate bridge is forthcoming.
 - Lake Mitchell: Reported that the project is currently delayed due to permitting requirements.
 - James River Operations Meeting: Scheduled for April 8, 2026; meeting details and Zoom information will follow.

JANUARY FINANCIAL REPORT: The Board reviewed the financial reports for the month ending January 31, 2026, as prepared by Judy McDonald. The reports detailed a total cash position of \$741,311.50 and monthly expenditures totaling \$159,194.79. Significant expenditure highlights noted included the 2026 annual office rent, as well as project payments to Davison County and the City of Northville. It was further noted that the District received over \$600,000 in federal reimbursements from 2025 vouchers from the 319 funds and ARPA funds since the start of the year. **Motion** by Director L. Braun, seconded by Director Bennett, to approve the January 2026 financial reports as prepared. **Motion passed.**

EXECUTIVE SESSION: At 11:48 AM, **motion** by Director Cerny, seconded by Director Klimisch, to enter Executive Session pursuant to SDCL 1-25-2(1) for personnel matters regarding 2026 salary adjustments. Chair Wise declared the Board out of Executive Session at 11:53 AM. **Action Out of Executive Session:**

Motion by Cerny, seconded by L. Braun to approve a 3% salary increase for staff members Rocky Knipping, Judy McDonald, Shane Deranleau, and Matt Cavaneer, and a 2% increase for Blaine Hieb, effective January 1, 2026. **Motion passed.**

BOARD OF DIRECTOR AND STAFF REIMBURSEMENTS: The Board reviewed the staff travel expense submissions, which were provided for informational purposes. Directors reported on the specific meetings and activities related to their reimbursement requests. **Motion** by Director Cerry, seconded by Director Stanley, to approve all reimbursements in accordance with established District policy. **Motion passed.**

ADJOURN: Being no further business, Chair Wiese declared the meeting adjourned at 11:57 AM.

Respectfully submitted:

Robert Braun, Secretary

DRAFT