



LOWER PLATTE SOUTH natural resources district

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Memorandum

Date: May 14, 2025

To: Executive Subcommittee members

From: Mike Sousek, General Manager

RE: Executive Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

The Executive Subcommittee met at 12:00pm on Wednesday, May 14, 2025, at the NRD Office Large Conference room in Lincoln NE. Subcommittee members in attendance included Chair Andersen, Dave Landis, Christie Lamberty, Tom Green, Lisa Lewis and John Yoakum. NRD staff members in attendance include Dave Potter, Chris Barber and Mike Sousek.

The first item on the agenda was the consideration of setting the cost-of-living adjustment for fiscal year 2026. Below is the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data as it relates to the consumer price index for all urban consumers in the Midwest. From January 2024 to January 2025, the consumer price index increased by 3.4%. **It was motioned by Dave Landis, seconded by Tom Green to recommend to the Board of Directors to approve a 3.4% cost of living adjustment to salaries for all classifications of employees that will take effect on July 1, 2025. Motion passed unanimously.**

Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U)

Series Id: CUUR0200SA0, CUUS0200SA0


Not Seasonally Adjusted

Series Title: All items in Midwest urban, all urban consumers, not seasonally adjusted

Area: Midwest

Item: All items

Base Period: 1982-84=100

Download:  [xlsx](#)

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual	HALF1	HALF2
2015	221.545	222.301	223.550	223.797	224.732	225.946	225.853	225.830	225.184	225.050	224.009	222.722	224.210	223.645	224.775
2016	223.301	223.196	224.621	225.609	226.476	227.835	226.786	227.097	227.636	227.358	226.673	226.794	226.115	225.173	227.057
2017	228.279	228.633	228.824	229.682	229.705	229.780	229.820	230.443	231.030	230.660	231.084	230.548	229.874	229.151	230.598
2018	232.028	232.512	232.931	233.913	235.065	235.455	235.346	235.276	235.524	235.680	234.292	233.458	234.290	233.651	234.929
2019	233.837	235.444	236.793	237.510	238.219	238.288	238.760	238.786	238.847	239.243	238.850	238.734	237.776	236.682	238.870
2020	239.690	240.421	239.163	236.474	237.291	239.259	240.430	241.362	241.878	241.740	241.316	241.453	240.040	238.716	241.363
2021	242.552	244.477	246.246	248.169	250.582	253.042	254.671	255.142	255.709	257.793	258.911	259.609	252.242	247.511	256.973
2022	261.657	263.988	267.312	268.639	272.673	277.072	276.525	275.875	276.549	276.908	276.436	275.182	272.401	268.557	276.246
2023	277.332	278.672	280.330	281.927	282.656	283.741	284.640	285.122	285.276	284.981	284.539	283.908	282.760	280.776	284.744
2024	284.731	286.346	288.301	289.718	290.355	290.779	292.256	292.559	292.547	292.291	292.022	292.533	290.370	288.372	292.368
2025	294.404	295.232	296.227												

Second on the agenda, management proposed an additional \$31,750 increase to our FY26 budgeted salary expenditure for the purpose of merit considerations. Merits were based on evaluation performance and meeting identified expectations. After a brief discussion, **it was recommended by John Yoakum, seconded by Dave Landis, to recommend to the Board of Directors to approve \$31,750 for fiscal year 2026 merit increases. Motion carried unanimously.**

Third on the agenda is a recommended change to Operating Policy G-3: Procedure for Hiring Consultants for Professional Services. Please refer to the attached G-3 draft policy. The last known change to this policy occurred in January of 2008. The recommended changes, while few, capture current practices that identify qualified consultants and encourage competitive pricing amongst those interested in working for the district. The second change adjusts the threshold set for procedures and increases efficiency in district business simultaneously reflecting a 2025 cost adjustment from 2008. See attached Average Cost of Engineering. **It was recommended by John Yoakum, seconded by Dave Landis to recommend to the Board of Directors to approve the G-3: Procedure for Hiring Consultants for Professional Services policy as attached. Motion passed unanimously.**

Next on the agenda was a discussion on shifting engineering work in-house through contract employment with a recruiting full-time staff component. The district has attempted multiple times to advertise an open position to fill the District Engineer position. These attempts have not been successful. The information collected from our year-old salary survey indicates we are within the range of acceptable compensation. Conversations with other firms indicated we are above average for engineers beginning their professional licensed career. With Tom Riley already under contract to help

with our DMR project, the plan would be to facilitate another contract with another professional engineer. Thus, giving us two licensed engineers under contract working on a per hour basis. The second engineer would in essence be working part-time hours estimated to average 20 hrs. per week. Between Tom Riley and the second engineer, we can begin working on our needed projects in-house and not hire a firm. Identified projects that are in the immediate queue would include channel repair in Beal Slough, culvert repairs on trails, 310 St. bridge removal and culvert design. This is roughly \$200,000 worth of work that can be done in-house to offset the second contract in-house engineer cost. We also have a host of other engineering needs in the hooper that we can begin designing in-house and prepare for construction in future fiscal years. See attachments Future Dam Rehabs, SCL Future Projects and the accompanying Inspection of Salt Creek Structures 2022. The district has a plethora of needed work and doing this work in-house will ultimately save the constituents of the district money.

The second component of the discussion, the district would hire a third full-time employee who has recently graduated or is working on obtaining a professional engineering license. This employee will need years of experience to obtain that professional engineering license. We would have our two contract engineers training this third up and coming engineer on all things related to NRD type of work. Preparing him to become our one and only full-time engineer and transition out from contract in-house engineers. The committee instructed staff to continue to work on this plan and bring an update back when ready.

The last item on the agenda for board consideration was the NRCS 2026 Operational agreement. This yearly agreement has not changed from the previous year other than the date. This agreement sets boundaries for time and money being invested by the district for support staff in the service field offices of NRCS. **It was recommended by Tom Green, seconded by John Yoakum to recommend to the Board of Directors to approve and have the General Manager sign the 2026 Operational Agreement between LPSNRD and USDA/NRCS. Motion passed unanimously. See attached Operational Agreement.**

The final topic on agenda was the executive committee LRIP documents dealing with accomplishments and Fiscal Year 2026 budget request and the Fiscal Year 2027-2030 actions and proposed expenditures. See attached LRIP document. **It was recommended by Dave Landis, seconded by John Yoakum to submit the final FY26 actions and budget request and the FY27-30 actions and proposed expenditures to the Finance and Planning Subcommittee for inclusion in the first draft of the FY2026 Budget and LRIP. Motion carried unanimously.**

MJS

cc: Dave Potter, Chris Barber, Donna Reid

G-3: PROCEDURE FOR HIRING CONSULTANTS FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

If the estimated cost of hiring a consultant for engineering services is more than \$100,000 , or for any other professional services is more than \$5,000, then the following procedure shall apply:

1. A list of all consultants interested in providing professional consultation services will be compiled and maintained by the District.
2. For professional services that are identified by the General Manager and Chair as being for ongoing projects and/or studies or “basic professional services.”
 - a. The General Manager shall develop and keep updated background information on all firms interested in providing the specific services.
 - b. The General Manager shall develop a scope of services, shall select a qualified consultant, and negotiate an agreement for services subject to approval of the Board of Directors as provided in Paragraph 4.
3. For professional services that are identified by the General Manager and approved by the Chair as being for new major projects and/or studies:
 - a. Consultants having the appropriate qualifications may be mailed a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) or Request for Proposals (RFP), and a notice of the RFQ or RFP will be published in appropriate news media for three consecutive weeks. The RFQ or RFP will include a general description of the project.
 - b. A selection team appointed by the General Manager shall review and evaluate the proposals and select a minimum of three consultants who have submitted proposals, unless fewer have submitted proposals. Factors to be considered in this selection shall include consultant qualifications, past performance of the consultant, and other information provided in response to the RFQ or RFP. The consultants so selected shall be those deemed to be the most qualified to perform the required services.
 - c. The selection team will conduct interviews with the consultants selected to determine their interest in the project and ability to furnish the required service, any recent changes in their qualifications, their current and projected work load, and their willingness to meet time and price requirements. The team will rank the consultants in order of their preference, considering past performance, adequacy of staff and resources, consultant location in relation to project and familiarity with the

area, approach to the project, and other pertinent factors,

- d. The General Manager will proceed to negotiate a proposed contract with the number one ranked consultant until an agreement is reached or officially terminated. In the event negotiations are terminated, the number two firm will be contacted to begin negotiations with them. This procedure will be repeated until an agreement is reached. If unable to negotiate a satisfactory agreement with any of the three final ranked consultants, the committee may select additional firms in order of preference according to the procedures previously described, or the process may be terminated.
- 4. At the conclusion of negotiations, the General Manager or assigned staff shall write a memo to the Board reviewing the selection process, and make a recommendation to the Board as to the best qualified consultant and the services agreement.

2026 OPERATIONAL AGREEMENT
between the
LOWER PLATTE SOUTH NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT
and the
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

This Agreement covers the utilization of District funds to accelerate technical assistance and assist providing secretarial assistance to the county level Service (Natural Resources Conservation Service) offices in the District. The general intent for how these funds are to be utilized is outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement dated January 28, 2020.

The District will employ a secretary for both Lancaster and Cass County Service Field Offices. The District will coordinate the employment of secretaries in Butler, Otoe, Saunders, and Seward County Service Field Offices with neighboring Districts. The secretary will be employed for the purpose of receptionist, telephone operation, and clerical duties, including preparation of materials for mailing, filing, and record keeping.

The District will employ occasional technicians for each of the six county Service Field Offices. These technicians will assist with work that directly results in the design, layout, inspection, and certification of soil and water conservation practices in the District, and the paperwork directly related to the installation of these practices. Occasional technicians may also be hired for special natural resource projects at the direction of the General Manager.

The Service DC (District Conservationist) will be responsible for planning when these occasional technicians are to be utilized and they will conduct all interviews and recommend hiring such personnel. Occasional technicians will be limited to less than 40 working hours/week, not be eligible for benefits, and will be paid monthly an hourly wage between \$16.00/hour to \$26.00/hour, depending on their capabilities, job duties, and experience.

The District budgeted funds for 1,000 hours of occasional technical assistance to the Service for FY 2025. These hours are allocated to each of the Service Field Offices in the following manner:

Butler County	50 hours
Cass County	500 hours
Lancaster County	300 hours
Otoe County	50 hours
Saunders County	50 hours
Seward County	50 hours

The District will employ one full-time technician to work out of the Cass County Service Offices and two full-time technicians to work out of the Lancaster County Service Office. The District will be solely responsible for the decisions concerning the employment status of these employees. The District will coordinate the employment of full-time technicians in the Butler, Otoe, Saunders, and Seward County Field Offices with neighboring Districts.

The full-time technicians will work out of the Cass and Lancaster County Service Offices. The NRD's policy concerning the prioritized jobs on which these employees are to work are as follows:

1. Design, layout, inspection, and certification of soil and water conservation practices in the District and the paperwork directly related to the installation of these practices. Promote non-structural conservation practices such as cover crops, buffer strips, reduced tillage, etc.
2. Special projects and programs of the District as directed by the NRD General Manager. These special projects and programs may require work District-wide.
3. General office support as needed at the NRCS Office.

All District employees will only be available to work on jobs that are consistent with District policy. District technical employees are to be available to assist with conservation practice design and layout without regard to whether cost-share assistance is to be provided.

This Agreement will remain in effect until July 1, 2026, or until succeeded by another Operational Agreement, and is subject to all the terms and conditions of the Memorandum of Agreement as identified above. This Agreement may be modified or terminated at any time by mutual consent of the parties hereto or may be terminated by either party by giving thirty (30) days notice in writing to the other party.

LOWER PLATTE SOUTH NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

General Manager

Date

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE, USDA

State Conservationist

Date