

8/20/2026	DRAFT NRD's 2026 Annual Conference DRAFT				
Sunday, September 27, 2026				Moderator	
11 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	NRD Golf Outing		Meadowlark Hills		
6:00 - 8:00 p.m.	Pre-Registration		Younes Conference Center - South		
7:00-11:00 p.m.	President's Reception - Everyone Welcome		Younes Conference Center - Diamond 7-8		
Monday, September 28, 2026 Full day of activities at Younes Conference Center - South					
7:30 a.m.	Registration				
8:30 a.m.	Opening Remarks & Agency Reports - Rob Lawson-NRCS, Bobbie Kriz-Wickham-FSA (ivited), Jesse Bradley -NDWEE			Ryan Reuter, NARD President - North Platte NRD	
9:30-10:30 a.m.	**General Session: Perkins County Canal - Jesse Bradley & Matt Manning			Ryan Reuter, NARD President - North Platte NRD	
9:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. Ruby 6	NRD Administrator's Committee Meeting				
10:30-10:45 a.m.	Break Sponsored by HDR				
Breakout Sessions					
10:45-11:45 a.m. Diamond 1	Nebraska's Energy Future: Demand, Growth, and Generation	Nicole Sedlacek, Nebraska Public Power District	Nebraska's energy landscape is rapidly evolving as demand for electricity continues to grow, driven by economic development, data centers, electrification, and other emerging needs. Nebraska Public Power District will discuss the factors behind increasing electrical demand, efforts to expand power generation and transmission, and what these changes mean for communities and natural resources across the state.	John Yoakum, Lower Platte South NRD	
10:45-11:45 a.m. Diamond 2	Presentation by JEO (Topic Pending)			Paul Bethune, Upper Big Blue NRD	
10:45-11:45 a.m. Crystal 1	**NRCS/Producer Panel on Regen Ag			Andrew Tonnies, Lower Platte North NRD	
12:00-1:30 p.m. Diamond Ballroom	Luncheon Co-Sponsored by Valmont Industries				
12:00-1:30 p.m. Diamond Ballroom	Luncheon - Governor Pillen (tentative) ; NARD Conservation Awards: Outstanding Community Conservation, Outstanding Soil Conservation, Outstanding Water Conservation, NRD Director of the Year, Tree Planter of the Year, and Educator of the Year.			Ryan Reuter, NARD President - North Platte NRD. Dr. Orval Gigstad, Native Vegetation and Forestry Committee Chair - Nemaha NRD. Deb Hansen, NARD I&E Committee Chair - Lower Niobrara NRD	
Breakout Sessions					
1:45-2:45 p.m. Diamond 1	**Farm Bill Update	Jordan Dux, Nebraska Farm Bureau Senior Director of National Affairs	Learn the latest developments surrounding the federal Farm Bill. This session will provide an overview of current legislation, key policy discussions in Congress, and potential impacts on Nebraska agriculture, conservation programs, and natural resources management. Attendees will gain insight into the issues shaping the future of federal agricultural policy and what they could mean for producers, conservation partners, and rural communities.	Mason Hoffman, Little Blue NRD	
1:45-2:45 p.m. Diamond 2	Presentation by Houston Engineering (Topic Pending)			Gary Loftis, Lower Elkhorn NRD	
1:45-2:45 p.m. Crystal 1	**ONE RED	Alexa Davis & Sarah Staroska, DWEE		Terry Martin, Upper Republican NRD	
2:45-3:00 p.m.	Break Sponsored by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska				
3:00-4:30 p.m. Diamond Ballroom	Business Session			Paul Bethune, NARD Legislative Committee Chair - Upper Big Blue NRD	

Breakout Sessions					
3:15 - 4:15 Diamond 1	USDA Farm Service Agency Update	Bobbie Kriz-Wickham, Hilary Maricle, Patrick Lechner	An update from the Nebraska USDA Farm Service Agency highlighting everything from disaster response programs, to commodity price support, conservation and farm loan needs, there is a great deal going on at your FSA County Office. In this session, FSA representatives will review program information that is important to NRD farm and ranch constituents.		
3:15 - 4:15 Diamond 2	Media Training: Communicating with Confidence	Steve White, KRVN Farm Director	Whether you're preparing for a television interview, radio appearance, podcast, or newspaper story, effective communication is essential. This practical media training session is designed to help NRD managers, directors, and staff become more confident and effective spokespersons. Learn how to deliver clear messages, stay comfortable on camera and on the air, respond to questions with confidence, and represent your NRD professionally when working with the media.	Marcia Lee, Central Platte NRD	
3:15 - 4:15 Crystal 1	Presentation by HDR (Topic Pending)				
	Banquet and Auction Co-Sponsored by Olsson				
4:30 - 6 p.m. Crystal 2-4	Vendor Reception				
6 p.m.	Banquet - Inductions into NARD Hall of Fame			Ryan Reuter, NARD President - North Platte NRD	
Following Banquet	Closing the NARD Foundation Silent Auction				
Tuesday, September 29, 2026 Full day of activities at Younes Conference Center - South					
7:45-9:15 a.m.	Basin Meetings				
Ruby 6	Upper Platte River Basin Meeting			Hosted by South Platte NRD	
Diamond 2	Elkhorn - Missouri River Basin Meeting			Hosted by Upper Elkhorn NRD	
Diamond 3	Blue River Basin Meeting			Hosted by Little Blue NRD	
Diamond 1	Niobrara River Basin Meeting			Hosted by Upper Niobrara White NRD	
Crystal 1	Lower Platte River Basin Meeting			Hosted by Lower Platte North NRD	
Ruby 5	Republican River Basin Meeting			Hosted by Middle Republican NRD	
8:00 a.m.	Registration				
9:00-9:30 a.m.	Break service located in the Vendor Hall - Crystal 2-4				
Breakout Sessions					
9:30-10:30 a.m. Diamond 1	**NRCS Programs Update		Nebraska State NRCS office will provide an update and overview of USDA-NRCS programs.	Larry Reynolds, Tri-Basin NRD	
9:30-10:30 a.m. Diamond 2	GIS	Ryan Kroemer, NRCS		Chris Higgins, Upper Loup NRD	
9:30-10:30 a.m. Diamond 3	Tick Talk: Understanding Ticks and Tick-borne Diseases	Shaun Cross, University of Nebraska Medical Center Assistant Professor - Department of Environmental, Agricultural, and Occupational Health	Ticks and the diseases they transmit are a growing public health concern across the U.S. for outdoor workers, like ag producers and natural resources professionals, who are at an increased risk. This workshop will give clear and easy-to-understand overview of how ticks live, where they are found, how to prevent their bites, and the diseases they cause. We will cover topics such as how to recognize common ticks and protect yourself while working outdoors. Participants will learn how to prevent tick bites, what symptoms to watch for after a bite, and when to seek medical care.	Orval Gigstad, Nemaha NRD	
9:30-10:30 a.m. Crystal 1	Ag in the Classroom: Bringing Natural Resources Education to Life	Brooke Carpenter, Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation Director of Education	Discover how Ag in the Classroom can be used to engage students of all ages while teaching important concepts related to agriculture and natural resources. This interactive session will provide an overview of Nebraska's Ag in the Classroom resources and demonstrate hands-on lessons that educators and outreach professionals can immediately incorporate into their programs. Whether you work in education, conservation, agriculture, or public outreach, you'll leave with practical curriculum ideas, ready-to-use activities, and new tools for connecting audiences to Nebraska's natural resources.	Deb VanMatre, Central Platte NRD	

10:30-10:45 a.m.	Break Sponsored by Kearney Visitors Bureau				
Breakout Sessions					
10:45-11:45 a.m. Diamond 1	Stewardship Through Strategy in Natural Resources Management: Balancing Risk, Resources, and Stakeholder Needs	Matt Drelicharz, Nebraska Science Team Lead / Environmental Scientist / Regional Asset Management Point of Contact; EA Engineering, Science, and Technology, Inc.	Nebraska’s Natural Resources Districts are entrusted with protecting natural resources, serving their communities, and responsibly managing taxpayer dollars across a wide range of programs and projects all while meeting the 12 Responsibilities outlined in statute – a huge challenge. This presentation explores a practical framework that can support existing decision-making processes by bringing together information such as infrastructure condition, criticality (consequence of failure), costs, levels of service, and community benefit. Attendees will learn how inventories, condition assessments, and risk-based prioritization can help document institutional knowledge, improve transparency, and provide a consistent basis for evaluating competing project priorities, funding requests, and resources needs. The goal is not to replace experience and professional judgment, but to complement them with a repeatable approach that supports project prioritization, long-term planning, stewardship, and communication with boards, stakeholders, and the general public.	Russel Schmidt, Lewis and Clark NRD	
10:45-11:45 a.m. Diamond 2	ACREE: Nebraska’s Free Irrigation Scheduling App	Dr. Xin Qiao, UNL Associate Professor, Panhandle Research & Extension Center	The ACREE app was released in April 2025 as a mobile irrigation scheduling tool designed to support irrigation management across Nebraska. The app estimates soil water depletion using basic field agronomic information from producer and estimated crop water use from nearby Nebraska Mesonet weather stations. Based on these inputs, ACREE tracks crop water use and estimates the amount of water remaining in the soil profile.	Joe Anderjaska, Middle Republican NRD	
10:45-11:45 a.m. Diamond 3	Presentation by Olsson (Topic Pending)			Steven Kelley, Lower Big Blue NRD	
10:45-11:45 a.m. Crystal 1	Panel: Grants 101	Julie Wragge, Lower Elkhorn NRD; Becky Ravenkamp, Lewis & Clark NRD; and Lori Laster, Papio NRD	Whether you are new to grants or looking to strengthen your process, this panel discussion will provide practical insight from NRD professionals with firsthand experience in grant prospecting, application development, grant management, and reporting. Representatives from three NRDs will share lessons learned, successful strategies, common challenges, and tips for building competitive applications and managing grants effectively. Attendees will leave with ideas, resources, and real-world examples they can apply within their own districts.	Jim Eschliman, Lower Loup NRD	
12:00-1:30 p.m.	Luncheon - Years of Service Recognition and NARD Foundation Raffle Drawing			Ryan Reuter, NARD President - North Platte NRD	
1:30 p.m.	Business Session			Paul Bethune, NARD Legislative Committee Chair - Upper Big Blue NRD	
3:00 p.m. or immediately following the Business Session. Diamond 7	NARD Board of Directors Meeting				
	**Continuing Education Credits are being requested for these sessions.				