

Lane

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Lane said the findings were problematic but not devastating. Many of the practices had been corrected before the audit was complete, and the board could address the rest of them, he stated.

However, the heat was turned up on the JRWDD during this legislative session by District 3 Sen. Al Novstrup (R-Aberdeen), who introduced a bill that would dissolve the organization. Unless JRWDD manager Darrell Raschke resigned, Novstrup said he would pursue passage of the legislation.

Lane spoke with his fellow board members and said they all agreed that, given the circumstances, Raschke could no longer be effective in his position. On Feb. 15, Lane said he asked Raschke to resign immediately.

Between the time that he spoke with board members and made the request of Raschke, Lane said some board members had backed off on their conviction that Raschke needed to resign immediately.

At that point, Lane said, he had no more patience for the situation. "When I resigned, some of my board members had a difference of opinion on the actual definition of the word 'immediately,'" he said. "I decided to give them an example."

Raschke wouldn't resign until Monday during a special meeting of

the JRWDD.

Since then, Novstrup has said he will continue to push for the dissolution of the district based on new allegations of board wrongdoing that he has not yet disclosed and because Lane is no longer a part of the board. Novstrup said he believed Lane would be instrumental in fixing what he sees as wrong with the JRWDD.

"Any one person on that board shouldn't make a big difference on whether you have or don't have legislation to replace it," Lane said. "I sincerely thank Sen. Novstrup for his efforts. I also thank the people on the board for theirs. They may disagree, but they are pursuing the best interests of the district and taxpayers."

Having had some time to digest the most recent developments, Lane said he has no regrets about resigning from the JRWDD board.

He does, however, have mixed feelings about the organization and his time serving it.

"It was a really good experience. I learned a lot," Lane said. "There were some unfortunate aspects, though."

He said he doesn't necessarily oppose dissolving the JRWDD as Novstrup proposes. But he will need more details about what would come after the dissolution before he makes up his mind about supporting it.

The experience with the board has spurred Lane to ask questions about the very basis of the JRWDD.

"When the JRWDD was originally established, abundant funding was

available from a variety of sources," he wrote in a letter to Novstrup last week announcing his resignation. "At that time, it was important to have a structure in place that provided local matching funds enabling projects throughout the district to access these resources. That environment no longer exists and is unlikely to return in the foreseeable future."

"A broad interpretation of [the] mission statement has allowed funding of anything from a biomass study to municipal infrastructure with no connection to the river," the letter continues. "Simply removing the current manager will not address this."

Despite being involved in good things like a district-wide water quality project and removing debris to prevent bridge damage in Yankton County, Lane said that if the JRWDD were to go away, Yankton County residents would not likely notice it.

"It's not a huge tax burden," he stated. "And a flooding year wouldn't get any better or worse. You can't do anything to prevent the kind of flooding we've seen in recent years."

From 2003 to the present, Yankton County taxpayers have been levied \$767,000 by the JRWDD.

"It's tough for this water district to be a really effective use of (Yankton County) taxpayer dollars, because we are on the very bottom end (of the James River)," Lane said. "We get the full force of all the flow, but we really can't address too many things within the county. We

have to be content with funding projects upstream."

An area where he could see the JRWDD getting involved with in the future includes building dams along tributaries into the James River.

"They're a tiny drop in the bucket, but cumulatively, if you have enough of them, they could make a difference (with flooding)," Lane stated.

They are also good for water quality, wildlife and livestock, he added.

"I've always thought the potential for partnering with conservation organizations to address water quality issues and to help with recreational aspects hasn't been fully explored," Lane continued.

With Lane's resignation, the JRWDD will advertise the vacancy and accept applications for the board seat.

Lane said he hopes there is local interest in the seat. He is willing to answer questions for anyone who is thinking about applying.

"It's important that if Yankton County is going to contribute funds to this that we have representation," Lane stated.

Depending on what happens in the Legislature, he said the board will have a lot of work to do in the coming months.

"Right now, it's kind of a 'nowhere to go but up' situation," Lane said. "If things don't improve, Yankton County does always have the ability to opt out. I'd encourage our county commissioners to keep track of what is going on and see if they are receiving a good value."

Meeting

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"We'll stay longer to talk with people, but we wanted to finish the meeting within an hour so people could come on their lunch hour."

Other area meetings will be held today at W.H. Over Museum, 1110 Ratingen Street, Vermillion, and Friday at WFLA Hall, Spruce and Park Avenues, Niobrara, Neb. Those meetings will be held from 5:30-8 p.m. and will begin with an open house.

Meetings were held earlier this week in Sioux Falls and Wagner. The Wagner meeting, added to the original schedule, was requested by Yankton Sioux tribal members and used the one-hour lunchtime format, Mietz said.

The federal agencies have contacted the federally-recognized tribes affected by the land-protection plan. He anticipates hearing more tribal concerns at Friday's meeting.

"At Niobrara, we will be asking the Santee (Sioux) and Ponca tribes, along with other area residents, for their input," he said. "Hopefully, we will continue the dialogue with them on what they desire for future development."

The NPS and USFWS may approach landowners about easements, but the plan won't use condemnation procedures or eminent domain, Mietz said.

NPS staff members have met with all 10 counties affected by this scoping study, Mietz said. He visited with the Yankton, Clay, Cedar, Knox and Dixon county commissions. Other staff members met with Charles Mix, Bon Homme, Boyd, Dakota and Union counties.

Comments may be submitted through March 16 for consideration by the NPS and USFWS during development of the Land Protection Plan. There will be another opportunity to comment on the draft Land Protection Plan in the fall of 2012.

For more information or to submit comments, visit the project website <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/niob-ponca>.

To receive additional information or to ask questions concerning the land-protection plan, contact Mietz at (605) 665-0209 or Nick Kaczor, the USFWS planning team leader, at (303) 236-4387.

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2012 Yankton Gazelles Gymnastics




Photo courtesy of Yankton School District

Front: Kolbi Kennedy, Elle Hiltunen
1st Row: Kaitlin Guthmiller, Rose Ruffinott, Elizabeth Rust, Cheyenne Crisman, Kady Tronvold, Haleigh Diede
2nd Row: Sophie Bisgard, Payton Pierce, Meagan Eilers, Miranda Hallberg, Kendall Lillie, Mataya Johns
3rd Row: Lindsay Larson, Elsie Kotalik, Alisa Ruzicka, Charlotte Taggart, Chelsey Hisek, Ashtyn Haak
Not Pictured: Kim Cap and Alexis Petersen

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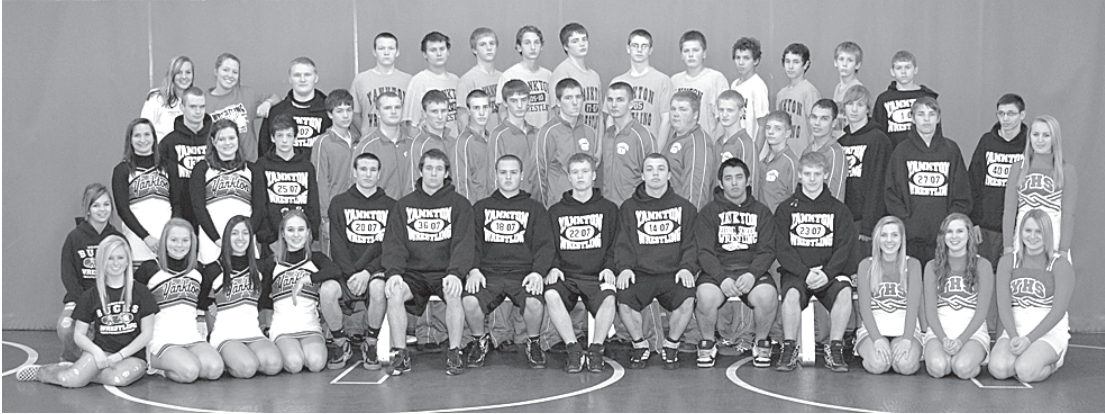


Photo courtesy of Yankton School District

Front Row: Rylee Smith, Sarah Pearson, Savannah Chambers, Holly Bouza, Morgan Jones, Cody Hanzlik, Jordan Lightner, Dustin Nieman, Zach Sealey, Juan Gutierrez, Alex Slagle, Marissa Stucky, Kendyll Albrecht, Tori Sage. Second Row: Tristin Rueb, Logan Ramey, Cole Dather, Paige Medeck, Noah Vetter, Michael Montoya, Thomas Kruse, Logan Smith, Casey Skillingstad, Mason Strahl, CJ Warren, James Hisek, Royce Reisner, Levi Davis, Spencer Huber, Matt Huber, Ethan Lucht, Dylan Borgstrom, Kam Kendall, Callie Pospishi. Third Row: Taylor Rueb, Katie Greenaway, Robbie Borgstrom, Collin Muth, Zach Hanzlik, Sheldon Gant, Jordan Lucht, Kenneth Ohrazda, Robbie Darcy, Brock Folkers, Skylar Elle, Hunter Ryan, Alex Honeywell, Cody Vornhagen

State Meet is Feb. 24-25 in Aberdeen

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