



NORTHWEST
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION

NWRDC



NEWSLINE

Your news & updates

109 S Minnesota Street, Warren MN, 56762 | (218) 745-6733 | www.nwrdc.org

[Visit our Website](http://www.nwrdc.org)



Executive Director - Darla Waldner

**Dear NWRDC Board and
Commission Members,**

As we begin a new year, we want to take a moment to recognize the incredible work accomplished across Northwest Minnesota in 2025. Thanks to the leadership, collaboration, and commitment of our Commission members, partners, and staff, the Northwest Regional Development Commission continued to advance initiatives that strengthen our communities, support local governments, and improve quality of life throughout the region.

Throughout 2025, we worked together to address critical regional priorities—supporting workforce development, infrastructure planning, housing, economic development, and services that help communities remain vibrant and resilient. These accomplishments reflect the power of regional collaboration and a shared commitment to serving Northwest Minnesota.

One of the highlights of 2025 was the continued progress made through Age-Friendly Communities and Minnesota Aging Pathways. Communities across the region engaged in planning, collaboration, and implementation efforts that support residents of all ages—ensuring Northwest Minnesota remains a place where people can age safely, independently, and with dignity. These initiatives strengthened local capacity, improved coordination of services, and elevated community-driven solutions that benefit both older adults and families alike.

In addition, we want to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of the Aging and Minnesota Aging Pathways teams during the 2025 Medicare Open Enrollment period. This year marked the highest volume of calls and individuals served to date. Despite increased demand, the team responded with professionalism, compassion, and dedication—providing critical guidance and support to residents navigating complex healthcare decisions. Their work had a direct and meaningful impact on the lives of thousands of individuals and families across the region.

We are also pleased to announce the launch of our new NWRDC website. We have made many exciting updates to improve accessibility, navigation, and the way we share resources, news, and regional initiatives. We invite you to explore the new site at www.nwrdc.org and check back often as we continue to add content and enhancements.

Looking ahead to 2026, we are excited about new opportunities to build on this momentum. As challenges evolve, so do our strategies—focused on innovation, partnerships, and long-term resilience. Together, we will continue working toward a stronger, more connected Northwest Minnesota.

Thank you for your continued leadership and dedication. We look forward to another year of meaningful progress and regional impact in 2026.

Warm regards,

Darla Waldner

Executive Director

Northwest Regional Development Commission

Front Office - Amanda Russell

Introducing Our New Staff:

**Welcome Emily Erickson -
DSAAA Resource Coordinator**

Emily was born and raised in Alaska, but her roots are in Minnesota. She has two kiddos who keep her busy! "In my free time I enjoys hiking, bike rides, traveling, and spending time with friends and family. I'm very excited to be part of NWRDC and the MAP team!"



**Welcome Samantha Brackins -
MSW Intern**

Samantha is pursuing her Master's Degree at NDSU. "A fun fact about me: I love traveling—last year alone I've taken five trips, and I can't wait to continue exploring the world!"

Aging - Heather Pender



Due to many factors, this has been a historic year for Open Enrollment numbers. Minnesota Aging Pathways staff across the state have helped approximately 51,484 callers. This is almost double the amount as last year. This number is the highest on record. By assisting callers with plan comparisons, Minnesota Aging Pathways staff were able to help Minnesotans save over \$6,737,117 on their medication costs for the next year (2026)!

Upcoming Classes:

SAVING CLAIRE
The story of Denying Gravity

Dancing Sky AAA is excited to share this special, private, screening of the groundbreaking documentary, "Saving Claire". It is a documentary using storytelling and grass-roots outreach to engage, empower and improve health & wellness outcomes by preventing falls.

We will have a discussion that will include individuals with the expertise in:

- Occupational Therapies
- Pharmacy & Medications
- Fire Department Responses

Join us as we watch this groundbreaking documentary!

Tuesday- February 10th at 11am
This is an online event, to register: [Eventbrite Registration](#)

For questions or special accommodations contact:
Stephanie Aarssen,
Development Team
Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging
stephanie@nswdc.org or 320-766-1856

"Saving Claire" is a documentary using storytelling and grass-roots outreach to engage, empower and improve health & wellness outcomes by preventing falls.

Online Event

SENIOR NUTRITION PROGRAM WEBINAR
THURSDAY
MARCH 5TH 11AM

This webinar will offer an overview of the Senior Nutrition Program in the Dancing Sky region which is delivered by Nutrition Services Inc.

NSI Nutrition Services, Inc.

Topics include:

- What is the Senior Nutrition Program?
- How do I, or someone I care for, get started with meals?
- What is the program's impact?

Registration Link: [Eventbrite](#)

If you require accommodations contact:
Amy Dallmann
218-745-9177
amy@nswdc.org

Senior Nutrition Program Webinar. This webinar will offer an overview of the Senior Nutrition Program in the Dancing Sky Region which is delivered by Nutrition Services Inc.

Online Event

Cass and Clay Counties
SUICIDE PREVENTION COALITION

3RD ANNUAL SUICIDE PREVENTION SUMMIT

SAVE THE DATE
TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 2026
FARGO, ND

Please plan to join members of the Cass and Clay community for a FREE, all-day Summit to connect with suicide prevention efforts and opportunities

Together, we can prevent suicide

3rd Annual Suicide Prevention Summit. Please join members of the Cass and Clay Communities for a FREE, all-day Summit to connect with Suicide Prevention efforts and opportunities.

Fargo, ND

Saving Claire

Senior Nutrition

Suicide Summit

Economic Development - Sean Ranum



PROMISE Act grants!
up to \$50,000 for small businesses and nonprofits

To be eligible, an applicant must:

-  Be a for-profit business or a nonprofit organization that earns revenue in ways similar to a business
-  Have a primary business location located in the NMF service region (see graphic at right)
 - Home-based businesses must submit proof of home office expense deduction from 2024 tax return.
-  Have a gross annual revenue in tax year 2024 of at least \$10,000 but no more than \$750,000
-  Be operating at the time the grant application is submitted



Eligible applicants will be businesses and nonprofits with primary operation located in Northwest Minnesota.

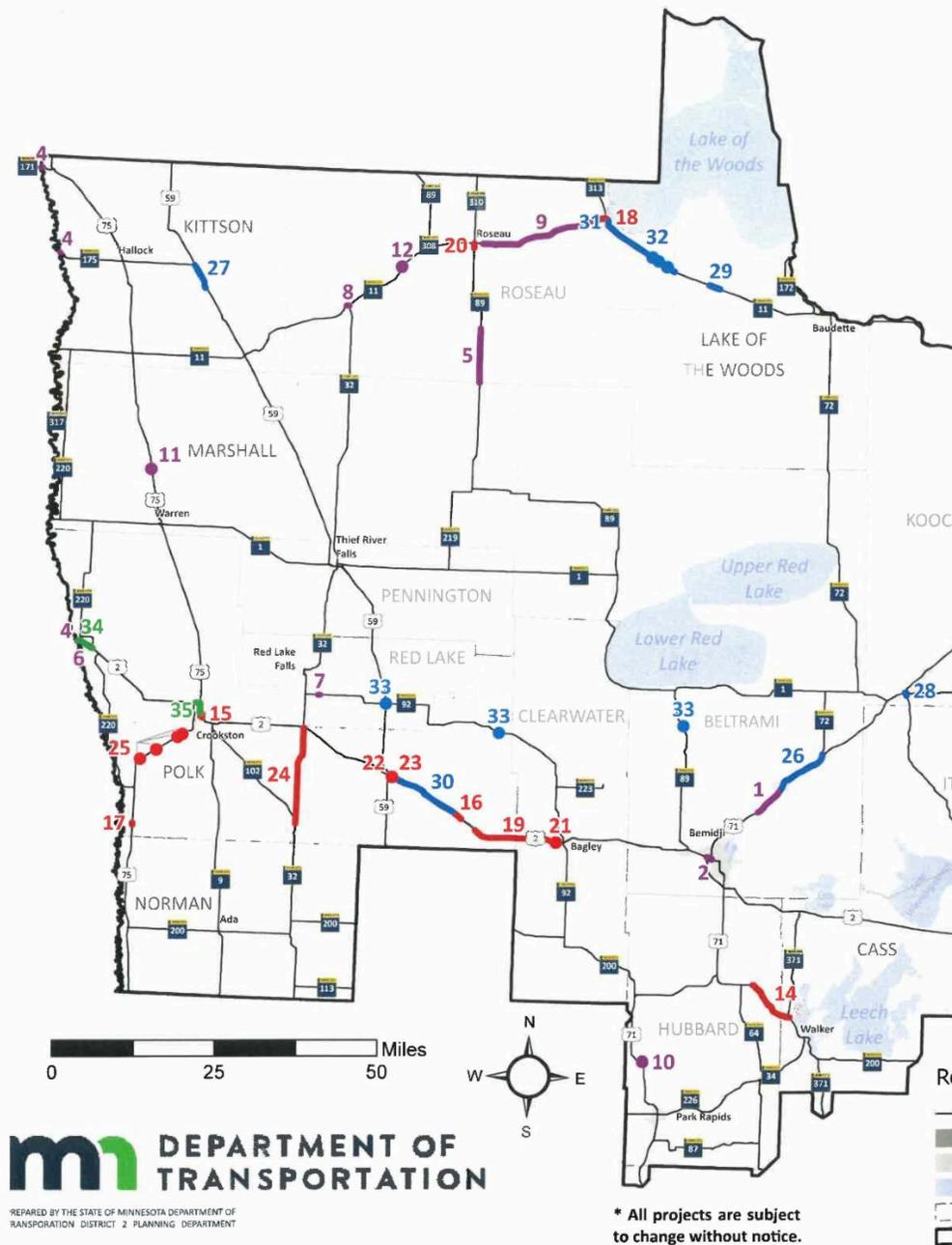
DETAILS: <https://nwmf.org/grants-scholarships/grants/>

Northwest MN Foundation PROMISE Act Grant

More Information

***We approved and closed a loan with a manufacturing business in Marshall County for \$250,000.00**

Transportation - Tim Finseth



MnDOT Projects

As we enter a new year it's time to start thinking about spring road projects. This is a map of the proposed MnDOT projects for the years 2026 – 2029. It is important to keep these projects in mind as we work and travel in the area. These are subject to change due to weather or other factors.

[More Information](#)

Help shape the future of I-94! The public comment period for Rethinking I-94 is open. Share your thoughts online, by mail or at a public meeting.

Now Open!

Public Comment Period

January 6 - March 9, 2026

Public Meetings

January 29, 2026 (in-person)

February 4, 2026 (virtual)

Rethinking I-94



Public Comment Period January 6 - March 9

**Help shape the future of I-94!
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by mail or at a public meeting.**

**Public Meetings:
January 29, 2026 (In-Person)
February 4, 2026 (Virtual)**

[More Information](#)

Finance - Ann Joppru



**Milage Reimbursement
– The new 2026 Federal
IRS rate of 72.5 cents
per mile for travel has
been updated on
the expense sheets.**

Community Development - James Retka



**Thrive in Thief River Age
Friendly Minnesota...**



**Planning for expansion
in Newfalden, MN**

NWRDC and Advance Thief River are hosting the third of four meetings to discuss housing opportunities for age 55+ active adults in the Thief River Falls area. Three separate plans will be presented based on community feedback received during two prior meetings and 4 distinct focus groups. Individual housing types along with a Master Planned neighborhood will be discussed with design input from three local developers and architects from EAPC. Nile Inc. from Fargo, ND will present a multi-family concept which has been specifically designed for this property and age demographic. The final community rollout event for this AFMN effort will be held in early April.

Newfolden, MN was recently awarded a Greater Minnesota Small Cities (Tier II) Grant from Minnesota Housing. NWRDC Community Development along with NorthStar Neighbors Community Land Trust and Greater Minnesota Housing Fund are working to develop a strategic plan for a new subdivision of single-family homes on land recently acquired by the City. Financing for utilities/infrastructure will include the grant funding along with local bonding dollars to build out the development in several phases. A "Request for Developer Interest" (RDI) will be published to assist the city in determining the best model to move towards the construction phase of the project.



DOLI PIPELINE Program

NWRDC Community Development has been a core member of the Thief River Falls Childcare Task group for the past three years. In August 2025, a new childcare center was dedicated at the site of the former Valley Home in Thief River. The task group recently met with Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) to learn about their recently expanded Dual-Training PIPELINE Program which now supports early childhood director and educator as eligible career pathways. Supporting these new internship opportunities in our community childcare provider network will be a strategic focus during 2026.

Past Events

**Annual Meeting - 12/6/2025
East Grand Forks American Legion**



NWRDC Commission



NWRDC Staff

Congratulations to our employees that celebrated work anniversaries between July and December 2025. Together they have served the NWRDC for 86 years!



Upcoming Events



March Commission Meeting 3/3/2026

Register

Meet The Board



Gary Kiesow: Marshall County. "I have been on both the Marshall County Commission Board and the NWRDC Board for 19 years. In my spare time I enjoy attending antique tractor and farm machinery shows, along with pheasant and deer hunting with family and friends. I also enjoy reading fiction novels and walking my dog twice a day (morning and night)." Gary is the NWRDC Commission Chairman.

Anthony "Chuck" Flage: Red Lake County. Length of time on the Board: 8 years. Hobbies include: "Hunting, fishing and I love to travel".

Bruce Lawrence: Pennington County. Length of time on the Board: 9 years. "I enjoy hunting, fishing, 4 wheeling, camping, watching my Grandkids play hockey, watching the Vikings, (They make me drink too much), and attending NWRDC Meetings."

Loren Youngren: Kittson County. County board 7 years, NWRDC Board 1 year
Hobbies: curling, pickleball, golf, yard work
Fun Facts: "I played goalie in Hallock for 49 years (forced to retire to early so now play Senior sports). Halloween is my favorite!! I over-decorate my yard and have a haunted trail with live monsters. Halloween screams are the BEST!!"

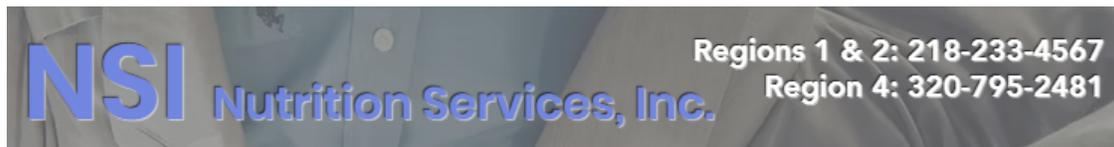
Warren Standell: Polk County. NWRDC board member for about 29 years, not sure could be one more or one less.

"After a 30-year career in newspaper journalism (at the Warren Sheaf; Daily Herald in Austin, Minn; The Evening Tribune in Albert Lea, Minn.; the Grand Forks Herald; and as owner, publisher and editor of The Exponent in East Grand Forks), I was elected a Polk County commissioner in November 1994. From those years of reporting the news, I knew what I was getting into with local government. That "new" responsibility started 31 years ago. It has been a good run."

Jesse Lee: Norman County. NWRDC board member for 4 years. "In my spare time I enjoy working on my farm."

Daryl Wicklund: Roseau County. NWRDC board for 7 years. "Some of my hobbies include ice fishing, deer hunting, playing cards, and spending time with family, especially our grandchildren."

Service Spotlight: NSI - Nutrition Services, Inc.



One of the roles of an Area Agency on Aging is to administer Older Americans Act Federal funding. These funds flow to each state from the federal level and then at the state level in MN they are divided up and distributed to the state's seven Area Agencies on Aging by the MN Board on Aging, based on a formula which accounts for demographic data like population, rural areas, etc. Dancing Sky then uses the majority of the funding to support area service providers who apply for the funding through a competitive grant process to provide services to older adults age 60 and over in the Dancing Sky region.

The Nutrition Program is one service area funded by the Older Americans Act. Nutrition services include home-delivered meals, meals served at a congregate site, and in some areas a Diner's Club model that provides meals through a local restaurant setting. For the Dancing Sky region, we contract with Nutrition Services Incorporated (NSI) to provide meals under the Older Americans Act funding throughout our twenty-one-county service area.

[NSI Website](#)

Commission Membership
***Board Member **Chairperson**

Kittson County

David Treumer - Hallock - Municipalities
Kimberley Johnson - Kennedy - Townships
Loren Younggren* - Hallock - Counties

Marshall County

Gary Kiesow** - Goodridge - Counties
Loren Lusignan - Grygla - Townships
Loyal Lefrooth - Grygla - Municipalities

Norman County

Darin Johnson - Halstad - Municipalities
Jesse Lee* - Ada - Counties

Pennington County

Bruce Lawrence* - Thief River Falls - Counties
Jason Bitzer - Thief River Falls - Townships
John Syvertson - Thief River Falls - School Board
Judy Jones - Goodridge - Municipalities

Polk County

Gerald Amiot - Crookston - Public Interest
Johny Barbosa - Public Interest
Kathleen Twite - East Grand Forks - Public Interest
Keith Sistad - Fosston - Townships
Norma Campos - East Grand Forks - Public Interest
Sarah Finseth - Warren - Public Interest
Toby Strom - McIntosh - Municipalities
Warren Strandell* - East Grand Forks - Counties

Red Lake County

Anthony "Chuck" Flage* - Red Lake Falls - Counties
James DuChamp - Plummer - Municipalities
Kevin Reich - Red Lake Falls - Townships
Ronald Weiss - Red Lake Falls - Public Interest

Roseau County

Dan Fabian - Roseau - Municipalities
Daryl Wicklund* - Badger - Counties
Debra Wiskow - Greenbush - Townships
Gus Booth - Warroad - School Board

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