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MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
April 12, 2024

Supervisors Present: Felipe Lovato, Jr., Chairman
David Cain
Aubrey Dunn
Larry Gomez
Jack Lockridge
Dale Rose
Gerald Chavez

Absentees:

Others Present: Dierdre Tarr, District Manager
Katie Mechenbier, NMDA
Ramona Medina, land owner
Cody Stropki, SWCA
Arlene Perea, Mountainair Ranger District
Katheryn Taylor, volunteer

CALL TO ORDER:

The regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the Claunch-Pinto Soil and Water Conservation District (CPSWCD) was called to order by Felipe Lovato, Jr., Chairman, both in person and via Zoom at 8:00 a.m.

Welcome Attendees:

The chairman welcomed those present and thanked them for joining the meeting. The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a moment of silence.

APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL OF AGENDA:

The board reviewed the agenda. **ACTION TAKEN:** David Cain moved to approve the agenda. Larry Gomez seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: Felipe Lovato, aye; David Cain, aye; Jack Lockridge, aye; Aubrey Dunn; Larry Gomez, aye; Dale Rose, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye.

BARTOLO CFRP – MONITORING PROJECT PRESENTATION:

The presentation was postponed to a future meeting.

APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL OF MINUTES:

ACTION TAKEN: Dale Rose moved to approve the minutes for March 1, 2024. Gerald Chavez seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: Felipe Lovato, aye; David Cain, aye; Jack Lockridge, aye; Aubrey Dunn, aye; Larry Gomez, aye; Dale Rose, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye.

TREASURER’S REPORT and APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL OF VOUCHERS:

The board reviewed the treasurer’s report for the month of March 2024 with accounts payable for April.

ACTION TAKEN: Jack Lockridge moved to approve the treasurer's report for March 2024 with accounts payable for April. Larry Gomez seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: Felipe Lovato, aye; David Cain, aye; Larry Gomez, aye; Jack Lockridge, aye; Aubrey Dunn, aye; Dale Rose, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye.

OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS:

REPORTS:

New Mexico Department of Agriculture:

The NMDA's written report for April was provided to the board members. Katie Mechenbier summarized items of interest to board members.

- In June SWCDs must finish annual work plans and submit them to the Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC).
- The point system worksheet is due to SWCC and the NMDA specialist by July 15. Ms. Mechenbier said that this year there is additional funding for completing requirements for the point system. She pointed out some changes in the point system. One change is that a section with additional points was added for submitting applications for Land of Enchantment funding.
- The Land of Enchantment Fund grant application period opened on March first and continues to May 3.
- Mil levy resolutions and appointed supervisor nominations are due to the SWCC by June first.
- Webinars will be held on March 5 on the Healthy Soil Program grant. Applications are due by April 26.
- NMDA is seeking feedback from each SWCD on who has GIS mapping for noxious weeds.
- A brochure provides information on enrollment in the NM Association of Conservation District Employees.
- The NM Department of Finance and Administration will hold a LGBMS virtual training on Thursday, April 25th from 9:30 – 11:30.
- SWCD Zoning -- A link to relevant sections of the District Act is provided for SWCD districts which are considering zoning their districts.
- A link to trainings for renewing Chief Procurement Officer Certificates is provided.
- The 2024 New Mexico Youth Ranch Camp will be held June 9 – 14. The fee to attend the camp has increased.
- The New Mexico Interstate Streams Commission is holding its open houses. A list is provided of locations of open houses regarding water planning. The Edgewood district's open house is on April 22.

Mr. Lovato asked Ms. Mechenbier to go over SWCD zoning. She explained that districts are zoned geographically. Claunch-Pinto would submit a map divided into zones to the Soil and Water Conservation Commission for approval. A new bill concerning zoning is making its way through the legislature that could affect the SWCDs, but its content is not presently known. If districts choose to zone now, it is possible that they would be grandfathered. The district manager will visit with three county clerks to find out how many voters are in each area. Ms. Mechenbier suggested that the district submit its plan for zoning before January.

NRCS Mountainair Field Office Report:

The NRCS Mountainair Field Office written report was provided to board members.

District Manager's Report:

The district manager reported that she attended a dinner meeting in Corona the previous night to get an update on the SunZia project. A Pattern Energy representative gave a less than five-minute presentation. Company representatives promised that information would be sent to her.

She described the destruction to the land that is taking place and the impending problem with Russian knapweed that will result. She and Cody Stropki will assess the area for the Wildfire Protection Plan. Ms. Rose would like to view the Corona area with them. The district manager will meet on Monday afternoon with Adam Clark on a possible project to remove salt cedar from the Abó arroyo.

CORRESPONDANCE:

The district manager encouraged board members to attend one of the water planning open houses being held across the state “to help establish a roadmap for the future of water planning in New Mexico.” The closest meetings are in Moriarity at the Edgewood district office, Socorro, and Albuquerque. A flyer is included in board members’ packets.

UPDATE ON GRANTS:

Comments:

The district manager reported that she sent her revised written report to board members. She said that Victoria Sedillo will start work on April 16. She described the first project, the Highway 337 defensible space project, that Ms. Sedillo will work on.

Cody Stropki gave an update on the NM Counties Grant – County Wildfire Protection Plan for Claunch-Pinto and Torrance County. The second core team meeting was held. The draft document is almost complete. Feedback is being solicited on where core team members want projects to be carried out to create more resiliency on the landscape. Community risk assessments will be conducted on April 23rd and 24th, and the information will be incorporated into the plan. Recommendations will be made regarding improvements that can minimize the risks from fire; current effective practices will also be highlighted. The draft will then be made available for the core team plus the board to review. The board members will be guided on what parts of this lengthy document they should focus on; for example, what projects should be done. Broadened funding opportunities can arise from this focus. The contract with the county wraps up in June, but some changes can be made to the documents until they are submitted to New Mexico State Forestry. Mr. Stropki congratulated the district manager and the board on the substantial progress that has been made on work identified on the Action Item Table in the plan since it was last updated in 2016. The district manager added that a draft will be provided to the village clerk at Corona.

The district manager highlighted the achievements of the FFA Forestry Team which placed first and fifth in the state. The number one team will travel to Indianapolis, Indiana to participate in the national competition. She drew attention to the successes of several individuals. She also mentioned the wildlife team of seventh graders from the Corona area and the success it attained. She thanked Cody Stropki and John Formby for the time they devoted to the success of the teams. She reminded the board that the district bought jackets for the first-place forestry team when it went to the nationals in 2017 and suggested that the board consider doing so again to recognize the efforts of the young people.

April 12, 2024

The District Manager’s Written Report to CPSWCD Board – Update on Grants

2023 WTB Grants: We have started drawing down funds on these two grants. John Formby has written 10 practice plans for approval and funding for Claunch-Pinto SWCD. We have two practice plans for East Torrance SWCD to be funded and a third project that a practice plan is being prepared. We have one large contract with an Edgewood SWCD landowner. We are preparing practice plans for the Chilili Land Grant and a State land project known as the Bear Cat project.

2024 WTB Grants: The two proposals for the 2024 WTB grant cycle are on the Water Trust Board list for legislative approval. The Water Trust Board meets on April 23rd to decide which projects will be funded.

NM State Forestry Grants:

2020 NFL Funding – The district has started submitting reimbursements for this funding. These funds must be spent by December 31, 2023. There will be a third Bear Cat project this fall.

2022 NFL Funding –The work plan for this funding has been signed by the district. The district has received the signed work plan and been given a notice to proceed on this grant. We will start expending these funds soon.

2023 NFL Funding – The District has been notified their FY2023 NFL proposal has been approved for funding. State Forestry is waiting for the US Forest Service to release the funding for this grant before we have paperwork to sign.

Highway 337 Funding – The district has the funding to start the process of finding a contractor for the HWY 337 defensible space project. With the cost of the project, we will need to advertise a request for proposal for this project. The district is in the process of identifying all of the landowners who have land next to the highway right of way so they can be notified about the project.

State Forestry – Funding for a Liaison – The district was requested by NM State Forestry to be the fiscal agent and contractor to hire a sub-contractor to act as a liaison for the EMNRD, Forestry Division with the Hermit's Peak-Calf Canyon Economic Recovery line of Effort's Timber Task Force. The district contracted with New Mexico Forest Industry Association to act as a liaison for EMNRD, Forestry Division.

BNSF Railroad Project:

The district will continue to monitor the area for any erosion issues.

Collaborative Forest Restoration Projects:

Watershed Restoration and Fuel Reduction in Bartolo Canyon of the Manzano Mountains:

SWCA Environmental Consultants worked with three high school students to conduct the field monitoring on this project. The students will give a presentation of their findings in the April Board meeting. We will not be able to start this project until the bird surveys the first part of June are completed. We are planning for the contractor to work all summer on this project. The plan is to complete this project in late fall, 2024. We will be able to monitor the project in the summer, 2025.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP):

2018 RCPP Funding – The majority of the \$327,985.62 for the 2018 RCPP has been contracted. SWCA will be starting the cultural resource surveys on the project associated with this funding soon.

2019 RCPP Funding – This is the renewal of the 2015 RCPP funding. There was \$1,781,286.43 available for producer contracting within the NCMWRP during the EQIP sign up period that ended late year. The majority of this funding is in the process of being contracted. The district has \$416,404.62 available for cultural resource surveys, workshops and a RCPP brochure.

Additional RCPP Funding – The district was notified that NRCS found the 2017 RCPP renewal funding in the amount of \$969,225. The district has received the agreement with all of the signatures. We have not been notified by NRCS if these funds have been contracted to landowners.

FEMA Grant Proposal:

Hazard Mitigation Project - HMGP 5281 Sub Grant Agreement:

The district received a new sub-grant agreement to sign. The sub-grant agreement has been returned to the district with all of the signatures, so the district can proceed with the projects associated with this funding.

Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) Grant (Building Capacity to Increase Conservation and Build Resilience at SWCDs across New Mexico Project):

Cody Stropki, SWCA, Joe Zebrowski, New Mexico Highlands University, Crystal Medina and Alejandro Collins, New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute, Kim Kostelnik, Sakak Natural Resource Consulting, and the district manager have met once a month for the past 4 months to work on the timeline for the project and start preparing documents related to resources for this project. The goals of the project are: 1) to develop a planning document to guide CPSWCD over the next decade and beyond; 2) Development of an electronic capacity building document that will benefit future managers of CPSWCD. The remaining timeline for this project is as follows:

- January – March 2024 – Partner/Stakeholder engagement meeting
- April - June 2024 – Continued Development of planning document and storymap/hubsite
- July – September 2024 – Begin finalizing planning document.
- October – December 2024 – Begin finalizing storymap/hubsite
- January – June 2024 – Final reporting and submission of planning document and storymap/hubsite.

New Mexico State Land Projects:

The district has three additional State Land projects we are working on with the State Land Office.

New Mexico Department of Transportation Project:

See report under State Forestry Grants.

New Mexico Association of Counties (NMAC):

The district is working with Torrance County on updates for both Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP). SWCA is the contractor for these updates. SWCA has been working on the maps need for the updates. The timeline for this work is:

- 2nd CORE Team Meeting – February/March 2024 – This meeting was held on March 14th
- 3rd CORE Team Meeting – April 2024
- Public Outreach
- In person/virtual public meeting – TBD 2024
- Gather Data – On-going (February 2024)
- Establish community base maps – December 2023
- Complete desktop risk and hazard analysis – January 2024
- Complete on-the ground risk and hazard assessment – March/April 2024 – We plan to go to the field April 23rd and 24th to complete this assessment in the Claunch-Pinto SWCD area.
- Develop recommendation strategies and actions – ongoing (April 2024)
- Develop the draft community wildfire protection plans – May 2024
- Complete the final community wildfire protection plans – June 2024

Funding for Small Acreage Landowners:

The district manager has worked with the Tri-County Committee and NM Foundation to obtain \$50,000 in funding for some small projects for the small acreage landowners. After NRCS had reported they had so much money and didn't know if they would be able to spend it all, I had told the Tri-County Committee that we would probably not need this funding. Now it looks like we may need it. The Tri-County Committee will be meeting before the end of April, so we can discuss the funding at that time.

Project Status	Acres	Project Cost
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Approved	5.3	\$7,775.10
Contracted	2.0	2,001.00
Contracted	10.5	5,239.50
Approved	50.0	58,285.00
Approved	409	600,003.00
Approved	92.6	190,200.40
Contracted	2.5	5,000.00
Approved	36.0	20,220.00
Approved	48.0	70,416.00
Contracted - Completed	1.5	1,330.50
Approved	3.2	1,596.80
Approved	8.0	7,096.00
Completed	5.0	7,510.00
Approved	274.0	294,002.00
Approved	45.0	17,955.00
Completed	38.0	33,706.00
Approved	10.0	15,020.00
Approved	21.0	10,479.00
Approved	13.0	11,537.00
Approved	170.0	182,170.00
Approved	33.5	35,945.50

district has the following projects either contracted or ready to contract as we have funding and contractors available:

Completed	2.0	2,146.00
Approved	19.0	7,986.00
Approved	69.0	45,295.00
Completed	38.45	31,098.15
Contracted	166.0	183,680.00
Approved	136.0	234,872.00
Approved	143.0	246,961.00
TOTAL PROJECTS	1,851.55	\$2,329,765.95

The district has just finished the planning on 10 more projects.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Capital Outlay:

FY2022 Funded (skid steer) and FY 2023 Funded:

The district manager reported that CES has approved the district for the cooperating purchasing agreement. Next week she will participate in some training with Mr. Benoit at CES. Roy Gibson will submit the costs for the equipment. CES will pay the invoices for the equipment, and then the district will reimburse CES. She expects that both the FY2022 and FY2023 funds will be spent by the end of June.

Torrance and Lincoln County Wind Energy:

The district manager covered this item in her district manager's report.

Zoning the District for Supervisor Representation:

This item was included in Ms. Mechenbier's report.

NEW BUSINESS:

Appointed Supervisors for FY2025 – 2026:

ACTION TAKEN: Jack Lockridge moved to appoint Dale Rose and Larry Gomez as the district's appointed supervisors. David Cain seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: Felipe Lovato, aye; David Cain, aye; Larry Gomez, aye; Jack Lockridge, aye; Dale Rose, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye.

Appoint Budget Committee for FY2024 – 2025:

Chairman Lovato appointed David Cain, Aubrey Dunn and Larry Gomez to serve on the board's budget committee.

Change of Use on Irrigation Well:

The district manager reported on a change of use request that Bill King has submitted to the state engineer's office concerning use of water from the Estancia Basin. Mr. King is asking to change two of his wells from irrigation use to commercial wells so that he can sell water to Pattern Energy for dust abatement raised from construction projects. A petition is being circulated protesting the change. The towns of Mountainair and Estancia have submitted letters of protest.

At present, Mr. King has permission to use 625-acre feet from the wells, which would be reduced by half with the change to commercial use. This reduction is being used to support the argument that the change supports conservation of water. The district manager pointed out some parameters and the duration of the change to commercial use if the request is approved. Discussion followed on the trend of farmers selling their water, of exportation of Estancia Basin water in various ways, the basins that Mountainair draws water from, and the amount of money that farmers can make from selling water.

The district manager said that Mr. D'Antonio, a former state engineer, would attend a board meeting to discuss these issues. He now works for Pattern Energy.

During the discussion, Ms. Rose asked whether the amount of water used by Pattern Energy in its projects is being monitored; the district manager said that the Environmental Protection Agency requires that the company abate dust from projects; in addition, the electricity from the projects here is going west. The monitoring of water levels in the Estancia Basin, failure of wells in the district, whether potable water should be used for dust abatement and exportation of water out of the basin were discussed.

Mr. Chavez mentioned that land grants oppose the request for a change in use, and that he, as a board member, opposes the change. Mr. Lockridge suggested that the board write a letter protesting the exportation of water out of the basin. Possible contents of the letter were discussed.

ACTION TAKEN: Mr. Lockridge moved that a letter be composed expressing the board's concerns regarding the change of use request that has been submitted to the state engineer's office. Mr. Cain seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: Felipe Lovato, aye; David Cain, aye; Larry Gomez, aye; Jack Lockridge, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye.

Mr. Gomez and Mr. Lockridge will work on a draft of the letter.

New Mexico Watershed and Dam Owners Coalition – May 1 – May 3, 2024:

The district manager has been asked to make a presentation at the NM Watershed and Dam Owners Coalition meeting. Her presentation will take place at 9:30 on May second in Ruidoso. Cody Stropki will present with the district manager.

Request to Sponsor a Healthy Soils Project:

The district manager reported that Leanora Romero from Manzano has asked the district to sponsor her healthy soils project. Steven Ferguson from NRCS and the district manager will work with her throughout this year to prepare a proposal to submit for next year.

REPORTS:

South Central Mtn. RC&D:

No report.

EBWPC:

The district manager reported on the recent EBWPC meeting. She commented on her interactions with Mr. King and said that the committee took no action on Mr. King’s change of use request for his two wells.

She predicted that more farmers will begin to sell their water and that this trend should be noted and tracked.

ASSOCIATE SUPERVISOR INPUT:

PUBLIC COMMENT:

OTHER:

Codi Stropki said that he has worked with Aurelleia Chavez and Omahne Nieto on their report and it is ready to present to the board at its next meeting.

Arlene Perea reported that Ernest Taylor has retired. She will serve as the acting ranger until a replacement is hired.

MEETINGS ATTENDED and PLAN FOR NEXT MEETING:

NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED:

The next regular meeting will be held Friday, May 3, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. at the Natural Resource Conservation Center, 1206 South Highway 55 in Mountainair, NM.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business to come before the board, the regular meeting of the Claunch-Pinto Board, Larry Gomez moved to adjourn. David Cain seconded the motion.

FELIPE LOVATO, JR., CHAIRMAN

DAVID CAIN, SECRETARY