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**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING**  
**July 12, 2024**

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

**Absentees:**

**Others Present:** Dierdre Tarr, District Manager  
Jody Cornwall, NRCS  
Kim Kostelnik, SAKAK Natural Resource Consulting  
Christian Larson, U.S. Forest Service  
Katie Mechenbier, NMDA  
Crystal Medina, NM Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute  
Codi Stropki, SWCA  
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. Jack Lockridge 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.

**APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**ACTION TAKEN:** Aubrey Dunn moved to approve the minutes for June, 2024. David Cain 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 June 2024.

**ACTION TAKEN:** Aubrey Dunn moved to approve the treasurer's reports for June with accounts payable for July. Jack Lockridge 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:**

The Fourth Quarter DFA Report and FY2025 Budgets will be approved at the special meeting on July 26, 2024.

**REPORTS:**

**New Mexico Department of Agriculture:**

The NMDA's written report for July was provided to board members. Katie Mechenbier highlighted items of interest to board members.

- Due dates include: July 15 when the Point System Worksheet is due to SWCC and the NMDA specialist; July 30 when the fourth quarter budget report is due to DFA—LGD; and September 1 when the annual report of activities and annual plan for the past fiscal year is due to SWCC, SWCC region commissioner, and NMDA specialist.
- Discussion took place on NMDA's Healthy Soil Program. The district manager said that the program allows for individuals to apply for funding, but they must be sponsored by an SWCA, and the districts must serve as the fiscal agent. She explained what is involved in this responsibility and the difficulties in monitoring the accuracy of reporting from applicants as well as establishing whether the work was actually done. Also, a practice plan from NRCS must be written. She commented that information regarding requirements for the plan have not been forthcoming. Also, the district must receive a draft proposal and a copy of the budget from applicants. The district receives no funding for the duties required by this program. It is an unfunded mandate. Ms. Mechenbier suggested that she, Katie Goetz, a soil and water conservation specialist and the district manager should discuss these issues. The district manager said that Brenda Smythe should also be involved.
- NMDA's Noxious Weed Management Grant, with awards of between 10 and 60 thousand dollars, is open for application and closes on July 30.
- Chavez SWCD coordinated a demonstration in June on how large commercial drones can be used to apply herbicide and pesticide to small plots of land.
- NMDA Agricultural Workforce Development Program grant application period is open and will continue until funds are fully allocated or by March 31, 2025. This program offers incentives to the agricultural businesses to hire interns. Interested applicants can be referred to Ms. Mechenbier.
- Border SWCD is hosting an event on July 22 that includes soil compaction demonstrations and speakers on the noxious weed program.
- A list of NMDA's Land of Enchantment Fund awardees is included.
- NMSU and NMDA will host the NM Soil Health and Soil Carbon Conference in Albuquerque from July 31 – August 1.
- The NM Environment Department is seeking comments on a draft plan for managing nonpoint sources of pollution in surface waters in non-tribal portions of New Mexico. Comments will be accepted until July 22.
- Public meetings will be held on the state Wildlife Action Plan for New Mexico on July 29 in Albuquerque and on July 30 in Las Cruces.

**NRCS Mountainair Field Office Report:**

NRCS' written report is included in board members' packets.

Jody Cornwall pointed out that the Mountainair field office by itself has obligated 12 contracts for EQIP totaling approximately \$1,739,004. When two remaining applications are obligated, there will be an additional \$2,149,049. Four applications are preapproved.

For CSP, there are two renewals. Two fully obligated contracts total \$330,000,000. Ms. Cornwall said that the Mountainair office continues to be shorthanded.

**Unfunded Cooperative Agreement:**

A draft of the Unfunded Cooperative Agreement from Kenneth Lujan was delivered to board members. The district manager explained that the agreement is not tied to the lease and is intended to outline how the district and NRCS are supposed to work together. She highlighted some parts of the draft that indicate what the district is agreeing to. She mentioned an example of a report required in the 2020 agreement that hasn't been completed annually. She pointed out a funding consequence of failure to comply with some provisions that isn't consistent with the agreement because the agreement is not funded. She encouraged board members to review the draft, paying particular attention to the lists of actions that the district "shall do" on pages three and four. She asked board members to delay action on the agreement until Kenneth Lujan could be present to answer questions.

A discussion then took place on the changes in the cooperation between the district and NRCS. This district manager gave some examples of the apparent lack of interest that NRCS has in working with the district.

Some observations were made. NRCS has distanced itself over time from the district, but this change is not limited to the Claunch-Pinto district. Communication issues were raised as well as other issues: requirements imposed by NRCS are not being followed by NRCS participants, which could cause blame to be placed on the district. It was mentioned that NRCS and the SWCDs used to be partners but not anymore; only lip service is being paid to input from local work groups; instructions are given to NRCS staff not to seek or accept services from the district. Historical perspectives were offered: NRCS once needed SWCDs to access private land and make it possible for money from the federal government to be distributed to land owners who didn't want to deal with the federal government, but now NRCS can go directly to land owners to distribute federal funds; politically, NRCS needed SWCDs to protect itself from being eliminated, but now that motivation to keep SWCDs doesn't exist. Now SWCDs have to make themselves relevant outside of NRCS.

Changes to the agreement were proposed to indicate what the district is willing to sign. The district manager asked board member to send suggestions to her for changes to lists of responsibilities and wording.

**District Manager's Report:**

The district manager reported that it took her six weeks to get the town's new trash company to begin picking up trash. She described the time and effort that this issue took to resolve. In addition, the district has not had reliable telephone service or internet access through CenturyLink for six weeks.

She also said that she is negotiating with the Ramah Navajo Nation about selling wood to them. She described the work that the Ramah crew will do on the next project to remove the wood from the field and transport it to their land. The crew will also take some chips to use at the pueblo fair.

Negotiations are also underway with Pattern Energy to eradicate salt cedar and Russian olive from the Dripping Springs Ranch and Spa using grant funds. They also want the district to monitor the resprouts for the next ten years and will pay for the project up front. The area includes the big horn sheep birthing area. Removing these trees would allow the mothers to be able to better see predators and thus better protect their babies. She described an area that

contractors have sprayed resprouts where willows have been planted and where grass is coming back.

Discussion also occurred on road closures that Pattern Energy will impose.

The district manager pointed out the approved NMDA point system report on the district's achievements in completing requirements.

She announced that there is a new Cibola Forest supervisor whose name is Heide McRoberts. She comes from Montana where she was the deputy forest supervisor.

She also announced that the draft Community Wildfire Protection Plans are posted on the district's web site and will remain until the end of the month. The district plan is the basis on which the district applies for funding.

**CORRESPONDANCE:**

No report

**UPDATE ON GRANTS:**

The district manager commented on grants under her district manager's report.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**Capital Outlay Funded:**

**FY2022/2023 Capital Outlay Funded – Skid Steer:**

The district manager reported that \$49,475.60 remains of the Capital Outlay Funding. She said that the district saved approximately 25% by working with CES. She also said that the process was extremely smooth. She expressed her appreciation to Roy Gibson for suggesting that the board work with CES. The spending deadline for spending the remaining funds is June of 2025. The legislature would have to reauthorize the funds to be used toward buying a new vehicle.

**Torrance and Lincoln County Wind Energy:**

**HWY 42 Road Closures:**

This item was previously discussed under the district manager's report.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Appoint a Personnel Committee:**

Mr. Lockridge, Mr. Chavez and Mr. Lovato will serve as the members of the Personnel Committee.

**Annual Meeting:**

Mr. Lovato spoke strongly in support of holding an annual meeting. The district manager reported that she, Stephen Ferguson, and Victoria Sedillo had met, and they propose that the meeting be held at the district office during the week of September 16th through the 20th. Suggested workshops could focus on water and could include the rain water simulator from NRCS, water catchment, shade balls used to cut down on evaporation from water tanks, bark beetles and causes of other infestations of trees. Lunch would be followed by a short meeting during which NRCS and the district would give an annual report, and awards would be presented. The district manager can apply RCCP funding of \$1000 toward the meeting because workshops are required by RCCP.

**Kim Kostelnik – CPSWCD Land Use Plan:**

Ms. Kostelnik introduced her background and experience. She has been working with districts to develop their own local land use plans to determine what their major resource issues were. Most of the districts have decided that their primary issue was water and of course soils. She listed other issues

that have been identified such as wildlife and customs and culture. She mentioned other agencies such as the Forest Service that have a responsibility and obligation to take into consideration local voices when making their regulations.

Ms. Kostelnik will help the Claunch-Pinto District update its issues from the last time the Land Use Plan was written and to make it a usable document for the board. Therefore, she asks board members to engage in the revision of the plan to create it as a guide to fulfill its responsibilities as a member of local government and as a conservation group. Her goal for today's meeting is to ask the board members to focus on determining current resource issues. Perhaps some written into the previous report are now irrelevant.

Ms. Kostelnik laid out the process for updating the plan. She will update the plan regarding changed policies and statutes and delete irrelevant material. Then she will meet with the board to establish what needs to be done. New maps will help the district on different issues. She pointed out one challenge that faces Claunch-Pinto is that it involves four counties. Discussion took place on which issues still need to be included in the plan: customs and culture, water, soils, range and grasslands, wildlife and livestock, species of concern, predator control, invasive species. Other issues include fire, storm water control, watershed and forest health, energy and utilities, special land designations such as BLM, visual resources, riparian management, mineral, mining and extraction of natural resource management, air quality. The problems of impeding the erosion of the Abó Arroyo were discussed.

Ms. Kostelnik will meet with the board again in September. A discussion occurred on having a working meeting devoted to the land use plan on October 11 at 8:00 a.m. with the working meeting to start at 9:00 a.m.

#### **REPORTS:**

##### **South Central Mountain RC&D:**

The district manager reported that the focus has been on fire and flood in Ruidoso.

##### **EBWPC:**

A meeting was held at the Edgewood office of the SWCD. The district manager said that the committee accepted Mr. Bill Kings assertion that the water wouldn't leave the basin. The next meeting will be in August.

The district manager took several people on a tour of the southern part of the district so that Cody Stropki and Crystal Medina could explain to the board at the August meeting what the planning grant is about -- creating a focus on where the board thinks the district should go for the next five to 10 years.

#### **ASSOCIATE SUPERVISOR INPUT:**

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

##### **OTHER:**

The district manager reported that she has received several requests for cost sharing projects.

#### **NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED:**

Special meeting: Friday, 8:00 a.m. on July 26, 2024 at the Natural Resource Conservation Center, located at 1206 South Highway 5, Mountainair, NM.

The next regular meeting will be held Friday, August 2, 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.

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FELIPE LOVATO, JR., CHAIRMAN

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DAVID CAIN, SECRETARY