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**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
July 25, 2025**

Supervisors Present: Felipe Lovato, Jr., Chairman
David Cain
Tom Carroll
Gerald Chavez
Larry Gomez

Absentees: Roy Gibson
Aubrey Dunn

Others Present: Dierdre Tarr, District Manager
Joshua Archuleta, Fire Chief, Mountainair Fire and Rescue Department
Lainey Fastnacht, Claunch-Pinto
Joshua Lewis, Fire Administrator, Mountainair
Kenneth Lujan, NRCS
Aurelia Chavez, Claunch-Pinto
Arlene Perea, U.S. Forest Service, Mountainair Ranger Station
Roy Gibson, Associate Supervisor
Katie Mechenbier, NMDA
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 Chairman Felipe Lovato, both in person and via Zoom at 8:04 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. The district manager reported that Mr. Dunn had moved to Wyoming.

OATH OF OFFICE:

The chairman administered the oath of office to Larry Gomez.

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; Gerald Chavez, aye; David Cain, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye.

APPROVAL/ DISAPPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The board reviewed the minutes of June 2, 2025. **ACTION TAKEN:** David Cain moved approval of the minutes of the June 2, 2025 meeting. Tom Carroll seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote. Felipe Lovato, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye; David Cain, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye.

TREASURER’S REPORT:

ACTION TAKEN: Larry Gomez moved to approve the treasurer’s report for June with accounts payable for July. Tom Carroll seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: Felipe Lovato, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye; David Cain, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye.

OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS:

REQUEST FROM MOUNTAINAIR FIRE DEPARTMENT:

Mr. Lewis explained that the fire and rescue department is exploring options to serve the community better. He and Mr. Archuleta have discussed what would happen if a train derailment occurred in Mountainair. At present all the fire resources are in the north part of the town. There is nothing on the south side of the railroad tracks. Therefore, they are looking for a place to locate a fire substation in the south side of the town. He asked the board to consider leasing land from Claunch-Pinto to the fire department that would have a west facing exit onto Highway 55. Various requirements for a building were discussed such as access to water, the size of the building, and fencing. Mr. Lewis suggested a meeting on the following Friday at 9:00 with several board members to determine a possible location and details of an agreement to lease the land. He explained the approval process that he is required to follow. Mr. Lovato expressed his support for locating a fire substation on district property. The district manager explained that the district is allowed to lease land. Mr. Gomez spoke of some of the details that would need to be worked out and expressed his support for leasing land to the fire and rescue department.

REPORTS:

NMDA Report:

The written report is included in board members’ packets. Ms. Mechenbier reviewed some items on her report.

First, she talked about the \$160,000 which districts can apply for from the Soil and Water Conservation Commission. She will work with districts to help them apply for the funding. After two years, the NM Department of Agriculture will distribute to the districts any funding left over. She pointed out the awardees listed in item 2 who received money from the NMDA’s district opportunities grant. Other items covered included projects funded by the NMDA’s Healthy Soil Programs, the agricultural workforce development program and the 2025 SWCD supervisor elections.

NRCS:

The written report is included in board members’ packets. Joshua Archuleta reported that NRCS accepts applications year-round and that applications turned in now are eligible for FY26 funding. For EQIP, staff is working on job sheets, engineering designs, and cultural clearances. He is helping to complete checkouts. Two remaining preapproved applications have been obligated for CSP. Documentation for CSP prescribed grazing and enhancement practice certification is due on September 30. Office updates include:

- A National Civil Rights Compliance Review has been completed for Fort Sumner and Santa Rosa offices.
- Felicia was the acting DC through 7/17 and Mr. Archuleta started as the acting DC on 7/18.
- Prescribed Grazing Training is planned for next year.
- Herman is continuing the detail in Las Vegas. Felicia will continue the detail from 7/28 – 8/17.
- The Team 5 Quality Assurance Review is scheduled for August 2025.

Mr. Archuleta reported on staff positions which are only open to current employees. The hiring freeze is extended through October. He said that they will be shorted handed for a while. Kenneth Lujan will work on planning a meeting for the local work group. The district manager said that all NRCS vehicles have

been removed from the district's property. She said that the planned staffing on Mondays for the NRCS office in Mountainair is not taking place.

District Manager's Report:

The district manager reported on various staff members. She said that next week will probably be Aurelia Chavez's last week. Jayden Zamora, a junior in high school, will work his last day on Monday, and then he will then go back to school. Benny Solis, who will be a high school sophomore, will work his last day on Monday.

The district will be represented at the county fair next week

CORRESPONDENCE:

The district manager distributed a letter from the owner of the local meat processing plant requesting a letter of support from the district for an NMDA meat processing grant. The letter explains that the NMDA has approximately three million dollars in grant funding. The district manager received the board's permission to write a letter of support.

UPDATE ON GRANTS:

Watershed Health Grant – Water Trust Board:

The district manager said that she will expend the funds for the Estancia Basin project the following week. She said that she will have a meeting next Tuesday with the Greater Rio Grande Watershed Alliance and thinks that she has enough projects to get contractors going on the work.

In addition, she has a land owner's agreement with Pattern Energy for the work on its ranch west of Mountainair and will begin planning the project to complete conservation work on removing salt cedar and Russian olive on Pattern's portion of the Abó Arroyo.

New Mexico State Forestry:

The Department of Transportation shut down the Highway 337 project because it received a bill for traffic control for more money than was budgeted. The district manager is concerned because her funding for the project, between six hundred and seven hundred thousand dollars, must be spent by the end of the year. She explained the benefits to the area residents of clearing the trees and shrubs from the sides of the highway, such as allowing drivers to see animals who may run into the road. She talked about the challenges that she and the contractors are dealing with. Discussion followed on what is being done on traffic control, such as the traffic lights. Ms. Perea said that she thought that the results of the project are outstanding, greatly increasing visibility.

The district manager talked about her efforts to reach senators and representatives in the state legislature as well as county commissioners to ask for their help in moving the project forward.

NFL Grants:

The district manager said that Lawrence Crane, U.S. Forestry Service is waiting for her to finish the 2022 NFL grant, and she is expecting to get the work plan for the 2023 grant soon.

Collaborative Forest Restoration Program:

Aurelia Chavez, her team, and Codi Stropki finished their monitoring work on the Bartolo project last week. Codi is working on his report, which he may present at the board's September meeting. The grant closes on August 30 and the district manager will submit her final requests for reimbursement to the forest service. She will return about \$35,000 to the forest service because it wasn't possible to thin as many acres as was originally planned for. This thinning project for fire protection almost fully encircles Manzano.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program Grant (RCPP):

The district manager explained that she contacted the RCPP coordinator to ask for an extension for the funding because the projects from the NRCS were so late in coming to her that it was impossible to complete all the projects and get all the billing done. She is working with the new RCPP coordinator to get the bills amounting to \$199,000 paid. She described the challenges in

finding out how to submit paperwork electronically and said that she is relieved not to be funded for two point one million dollars.

A cultural resource survey is being done for one project supported by 2023 funds. The report will be submitted the following week.

The district manager summarized the challenges related to carrying out projects, difficulties in getting maps and GIS information. She also said that planning seemed to have taken place in the office as opposed to the field. She acknowledged that NRCS is shorthanded and has been overwhelmed by work related to the Hermits Peak fire and fires in Ruidoso.

FEMA Project:

The district manager said that one, perhaps two contractors are working on the thinning project at the Aceves ranch. She is aware that the work needs to be finished by September 6. She applied for an extension, but Homeland Security has not heard from FEMA, which has to give its approval. The project planned for the Swenka ranch will not take place because the land owner does not want to do it, so some funding will be returned.

SWCC Grant (6/30/2025):

The work funded by the grant is finished. The hub site is up and live. The district manager will provide board members with information about how to access the site.

Healthy Soils Grant:

Mr. Neeley's application was funded. A training is scheduled in June on how to make quarterly reports and reimbursements.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

FY2022/2023 Remaining Capital Outlay Funding -- \$18,215.00:

The new stump grinder is in the district's compound. The owner of the Shaffer Hotel unloaded it with his equipment. The representative from Four Rivers will replace the battery in the skid steer shortly. An addendum was signed with NMDA for an additional \$30,000. The district manager will submit an invoice and will be given an extension on spending the funding which also includes the one hundred thousand dollars budgeted for the vehicle. The chairman will sign the memorandum of agreement on spending the one hundred thousand dollars. She expects to receive the purchase voucher within the next month. Apparently, there is some urgency about spending the funds on the truck as soon as possible.

Sun Zia Transmission Line:

The district manager attended a dinner where she learned that the transmission line will probably be in service in 2026. In another year, the district should receive an increase in its mil levy. She also learned that Pattern Energy plans on creating a park for Corona. She reminded representatives to come to a board meeting. She would like representatives to make a report at the annual meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Fourth Quarter DFA Financial Report:

The district manager pointed out items in the district budget for 2025. There was a year-end net gain of somewhat over \$56,000. The board reviewed actuals through June 2025 and the 2025 budget.

Quarterly Report Resolution No. 01 – 2026:

ACTION TAKEN: Mr. Gomez moved to approve Quarterly Report Resolution No. 01 – 2026. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote. Felipe Lovato, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye; David Cain, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye.

Budget Revision Resolution No. 02 – 2026:

The district manager explained what the resolution entailed regarding the line items. She said that the entire budget was not overspent.

ACTION TAKEN: Mr. Gomez moved to approve Budget Revision Resolution No. 02 – 2026. Mr. Cain seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote. Felipe Lovato, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye; David Cain, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye.

Review FY2025 Budget:

The district manager reviewed some changes to the final budget. Less money was received for the point system. She also added the \$160,000 for grants. Costs for insurance were included. The budget committee recommended another raise for the district manager. Lainie Fastnacht's salary is covered by a grant from the New Mexico Foundation.

Budget Resolution No. 03 – 2026:

Larry Gomez moved to approve Budget Resolution 03 – 2026. Mr. Cain seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote. Felipe Lovato, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye; David Cain, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye.

NMDA Grant -- \$160,000.00:

The NMDA recommended to the Soil and Water Conservation District Commission that the funds for the districts be raised by about \$13,000. The districts also received about \$160,000 to be spent over a period of a two-to-three-year period. The NMDA encourages the districts to spend the money within a two-year period. If the money is not spent it will be applied to the point system. The district manager wants to submit a proposal as soon as possible. She explained some of her ideas on what expenses she wants to spend the funds on, some salaries and repairs to the district's property, for example, as well as educational opportunities for employees to support capacity building for the district. She has also received requests for various expenditures from different land owners. Mr. Gomez asked her to submit a proposal to the board.

Fire Danger Rating Sign for Property:

Rebecca Elmore, the acting fire management officer for the Mountainair Ranger District, asked the district manager if a fire danger rating sign could be placed on the district's property, near where the district's signs are. The board gave its approval.

Annual Meeting – Proposed Date – September 25, 2025:

Place: Manzano Mountain Retreat:

The district manager said that the district annual meeting is proposed to take place on September 25 at the Manzano Mountain Retreat. She talked about what the program might consist of, such as the amount of water that junipers use, thinning, and a water catchment system in the barn. She will meet with Codi Stropki and John Formby, at the end of August to plan a walking tour. She described the food to be served. The chairman would like to showcase the positive effects of the district's thinning projects of the juniper trees.

The district manager described the threat to Mountainair of fire danger concerning lack of thinning at various properties.

August Meeting – Cancelled:

The August is cancelled.

REPORTS:

South Central Mountain RC&D:

No report.

EBWPC:

The committee has transducers in wells to monitor them. The reports are supposed to be posted on the committee's Facebook page or its web site page.

NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED:

Regular meeting: Friday, 8:00 a.m. on September 12, 2025 at the Natural Resource Conservation Center, located at 1206 South Highway 5, Mountainair, NM.

OTHER:

The district manager thanked the board for her raise and described what she can now do to keep her property in repair and to improve her quality of living.

Arlene Perea added comments. All restrictions have been lifted on the forest. She thanked the district for allowing the fire rating sign to be placed on district property. All prescribed fires are on hold. She described activities that the employees are engaged in both instate and out of state.

ADJOURN:

ACTION TAKEN: Mr. Gomez moved to adjourn. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. There being no further business to come before the regular meeting of the Claunch-Pinto Board, the meeting was adjourned.

FELIPE LOVATO, CHAIRMAN

GERALD CHAVEZ, SECRETARY