



**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING**  
**September 12, 2025**

**Supervisors Present:** Felipe Lovato, Jr., Chairman  
Tom Carroll  
Gerald Chavez  
Aubrey Dunn  
Roy Gibson  
Larry Gomez

**Absentees:** David Cain

**Others Present:** Dierdre Tarr, District Manager  
Lainey Fastnacht, Claunch-Pinto  
Kenneth Lujan, NRCS  
Katie Mechenbier, NMDA

**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.

**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.

**Oath of Office:**

The chairman administered the oath of office to new board member Roy Gibson.

**APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

The board reviewed the agenda. **ACTION TAKEN:** Larry Gomez moved to approve the agenda. Tom Carroll seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote with one abstention: Felipe Lovato, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye; Aubrey Dunn, aye.

(It was determined that if all board members are physically present at the board meeting, no voice vote needs to be taken.)

**APPROVAL/ DISAPPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The board reviewed the minutes of July 25, 2025. **ACTION TAKEN:** Larry Gomez moved approval of the minutes of the July 25, 2025 meeting. Tom Carroll seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:**

**ACTION TAKEN:** Aubrey Dunn moved to approve the treasurer's reports for July and August. Mr. Gibson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS:**

**Review and Re-Approve FY2026 Budget:**

The district manager reported that the Department of Finance has approved the budget and that the board has to re-approve the budget. She said that one of the district's loans has been paid off and that four more payments remain on the other loan. She reported on email correspondence with a Vermeer accountant regarding allowable limits of credit.

**ACTION TAKEN:** Aubrey Dunn moved to re-approve the FY2026 budget. Larry Gomez seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**REPORTS:****NMDA Report:**

The written report for September is included in the board members' packets. Ms. Mechenbier reviewed two items on her report.

- Worksheet funding for FY26-28. She explained what the money can be spent on.
- The NMDA Agricultural Workforce Development Program grant application period opens June 16, 2025.

**NRCS:**

The written reports for August and September are included in the board members' packets. Mr. Lujan said that the CSP documentation needs to be turned in early in September to give planners time to review and certify it by 9/30. He reported on available funding for Team 5 that includes Estancia, Fort Sumner, Santa Rosa and Mountainair. He described his efforts to get funding spent. He reviewed deadlines mentioned in the report. He said that work for Mountainair is being accomplished in the Estancia office.

Next, he reported on the Local Work Group Meeting for FY26 funding was held on September 11, 2025. He felt that the meeting went well and participants asked good questions. Regarding staffing, he said that he has not heard of any intentions to close any offices, but he is concerned about adequate staffing, especially in Mountainair. Discussion followed on whether there are plans to keep offices open and re-staffed. He did say that the same amount of work is being done as was done when the offices were fully staffed. Discussion occurred on whether a letter should be sent to the state conservationist supporting staffing for NRCS.

He said that the Team 5 Quality Assurance Review went well, and nothing major was found to need correction.

He reviewed items that were missing from contracts. Contracts that are in place will be honored. IRA contracts will be honored for the exact amounts of the contracts. No additional amounts will be allowed. His biggest concern is wells because the depth can't be predicted, so owners may have to pay for going to the depth of the water if the funding isn't adequate. He said that work is being accomplished and described how staffing the office versus doing field work is done. He mentioned that archaeologists' reports are reaching him very slowly.

Mr. Lujan said that the Inflation Reduction Act funding which was removed has been reinstated in the Farm Bill. Work is now being done on the 2018 funds. Millions of dollars have been put back into the Farm Bill, so NRCS can use those for CSP and EQIP projects. There may be forty-five to fifty million dollars for New Mexico.

**ACTION ITEM:** Mr. Dunn moved that a letter from the board be sent to the state conservationist supporting staffing for NRCS. Mr. Gibson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**District Manager's Report:**

The district manager reported that the Department of Transportation got approval for traffic control at the south end of HW 337. Funding for finishing the north end is still pending.

She reported on plans for the annual meeting. Both the state representative and state senator have said that they plan to attend the annual meeting. She will try to meet with both and try to get some funding. She also has \$400,000 in funding for HWY 55. She said that the district has been working on these two projects for three and a half years.

Mr. Dunn said that he still maintains a residence in the district and thus can continue as a member of the board.

#### **CORRESPONDENCE:**

The district manager said that she received correspondence from Chavez SWCD through which Claunch-Pinto pays for health insurance that the amount due will increase by another \$100 to \$150 a month. She will email information to board members.

#### **UPDATE ON GRANTS:**

##### **Watershed Health Grant – Water Trust Board:**

The district manager said that yesterday she got information on the grant that expires on December 29<sup>th</sup> of 2025. There is more than enough for a match for both the Greater Rio Grande Watershed Alliance and the Estancia Basin grant. She thinks that there is a match for grants that expire in 2026. The state forestry funds will also serve as a match. She explained what won't serve as a match.

She said that a project needs to be designed for the removal of salt cedar and Russian olive on the Pattern ranch West of Mountainair.

##### **New Mexico State Forestry:**

The district manager has projects completing work for the 2022 grant. That funding should close out by December.

The Department of Transportation now has funding to carry out traffic control for the lower portion of the Highway 337 project which starts at the rodeo grounds and extends to Highway 55. Project work may begin at the beginning of October.

She explained what work PNM was supposed to do. She has been working on the Highway 337 project for three years.

She doesn't know what will happen because of the issues with the Department of Transportation. She will write a "white paper" as a basis for discussions with the district's state senator and representative at the district's annual meeting.

She talked about the benefits to residents and drivers on the highways of clearing the trees and shrubs from the sides of the highway. She has a work plan and funding. Her funding for Highway 337 ends in December. She can get an extension for the funding for Highway 55. She explained the work that will be done on Highway 55. She has a signed work plan and has \$400,000 for that project.

##### **NFL Grants:**

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

##### **Collaborative Forest Restoration Program:**

Aurelleia Chavez, her team, and Cody Stropki finished their monitoring work on the Bartolo project which ended on September 31<sup>st</sup>. The district manager will return about \$35,000 to the forest service because it wasn't possible to thin as many acres as was originally planned for. The thinning projects the district has completed through the US Forest Service collaborative forest restoration program 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

RCPD 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 she has to contact FEMA because the project planned for the Swenka ranch will not take place because the landowner does not want to do it, so some funding will be returned. Two contractors are working at the Aceves ranch. She has gotten an extension on the funding to September 30th of 2026. She will try to move money to a project where the NEPA has already been done.

#### **Healthy Soils Grant:**

A report will be made on this grant next month, and the district will receive its first reimbursement.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

##### **NMDA Grant: \$160,000:**

The district manager will meet with Ms. Mechenbier and finalize the request for the money. She summarized some possibilities of what the money could be used for:

- Two years of salary for Victoria Sedillo;
- Computers;
- Salary for a mechanic;
- Educational workshops;
- Salary for a sawyer.

##### **Annual Meeting:**

The meeting will be held at the Manzano Retreat. A walkthrough will be held of the areas where the Trigo Fire burned trees. Visitors will see how the thinning the district had completed on the property saved buildings. She will also talk about the EWP. The Remah crew will be there to demonstrate what they do. Everything will be within walking distance, but transportation will be available for those who need it. A taco bar will provide the luncheon.

##### **Report on the Meeting with the Mountainair Fire Department on its Substation:**

The chairman reported on the meeting with representatives from the Mountainair Fire Department. They want to lease one acre for a substation, but Mr. Lovato suggested that two acres would suit their needs better. The lease would begin as soon as possible since funding is supposed to be available now. A survey will have to be carried out and the amount of the lease established.

##### **FY2022/2023 Remaining Capital Outlay Funding -- \$18,215.80. FY2026 Capital Outlay funding -- \$100,000:**

The district manager said that the two amounts of capital outlay funding are intended to be spent on buying a truck. She is waiting to receive an agreement with NMDA, and then she will proceed with the purchase of a truck.

**Sun Zia Transmission Line:**

The district manager said that she expects a representative to attend the annual meeting to give an update on the transmission line. The transmission of electricity on the line is supposed to begin in 2026. A small increase in the mil levy for the district should result.

On September 23, she will also meet with a representative from a new wind energy company which is supposed to have 68,000 acres ready for wind mills in Cedarvale. The company wants to meet with the district manager to discuss her possible concerns before its representatives attend a meeting of the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (PRC) next month.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Quarterly Report Resolution No. 04 – 2026 Authorizing and Approving Submission of a Completed Application for Financial Assistance and Project Approval to the New Mexico Water Trust Board:**

**ACTION TAKEN:** Mr. Dunn moved to approve Resolution No. 04 – 2026. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. The motion carried.  
The district manager will submit a proposal today.

**REPORTS:**

**South Central Mountain RC&D:**  
No report.

**EBWPC:**

The district manager has been told that there is technology online that can be used to see the actual level of water in the wells being monitored. The committee has been monitoring wells for about ten years.  
The effect on water levels in the wells can be monitored when farming starts up again in an area.

**ASSOCIATED SUPERVISOR INPUT:**

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED:**

Regular meeting: Friday, 8:00 a.m. on October 3, 2025 at the Natural Resource Conservation Center, located at 1206 South Highway 5, Mountainair, NM.

**ADJOURN:**

**ACTION TAKEN:** Mr. Chavez 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.

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FELIPE LOVATO, CHAIRMAN

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GERALD CHAVEZ, SECRETARY