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**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
November 4, 2022**

**Supervisors Present:** Felipe Lovato, Jr., Chairman  
David Cain  
Leroy Candelaria  
Robin Dunn  
Larry Gomez  
Jack Lockridge  
Dale Rose

**Absentees:**

**Others Present:** Dierdre Tarr, District Manager  
Roy Gibson  
Kenneth Lujan, NRCS  
Frank Luna  
Jason Martin, NRCS  
Katie Mechenbier, S&W Cons. Spec. NMDA  
Ernest Taylor, Mountainair Ranger District  
Katheryn Taylor, volunteer  
Dan Williams

**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 8:09 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:** Jack Lockridge moved to approve the agenda. Dale Rose seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: Dale Rose, aye; Felipe Lovato, aye; David Cain, aye; Larry Gomez, aye; Leroy Candelaria, aye; Robin Dunn, aye; Jack Lockridge, aye.

**APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**ACTION TAKEN:** Larry Gomez moved to approve both the October 2022 minutes as read. Leroy Candelaria seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote with three abstentions: Felipe Lovato, aye; David Cain, aye; Larry Gomez, aye; Leroy Candelaria, aye.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:**

The board reviewed the treasurer's report for the month of October, 2022 with accounts payable for November, 2022.

**ACTION TAKEN:** Jack Lockridge moved to approve the treasurer's report for October, 2022 and pay the accounts payable for November, 2022. Larry Gomez seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: Dale Rose, aye; Felipe Lovato, aye; David Cain, aye; Larry Gomez, aye; Leroy Candelaria, aye, Robin Dunn, aye; Jack Lockridge, aye.

**OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS:**

The district manager reported that the district auditor has begun the audit. He will make an appointment with the district manager soon.

The district manager will send a corrected DFA Quarterly Report to board members.

**REPORTS:**

**New Mexico Department of Agriculture:**

The NMDA's written report for November was provided to the board members. Katie Mechenbier highlighted the relevant items for the district.

- In November or December, the board should adopt the Open Meetings Act Resolution to cover the coming calendar year.
- December 1<sup>st</sup> is the deadline to submit the Agreed Upon Procedure Report to the NM State Auditor Office.
- The Agricultural Workforce Development Program is still accepting applications for agribusinesses that want to hire interns.
- Claunch-Pinto was awarded \$100,000 from the Soil and Water Conservation Commission to fund a planning document and story map.
- FEMA is accepting Hazard Mitigation Assistance Grant applications until January 27, 2023.
- The attorney general's office will hold an online training on the "Sunshine Laws" on November 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- The NM Vegetation Management Association's annual conference will be held in person on November 16-17, 2022 in Ruidoso.
- NM Edge classes on procurement will be held on line during November.
- The NMDA reminds FY23 Healthy Soil Program FY 23 grantees to submit invoices early and often. Tips are provided for FY 24 grant applicants.
- The RGWF signatories meeting is postponed for an in-person meeting in the spring of 2023. A new RGWF Wildfire Risk Assessment on-line meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 16.
- A virtual Fall Wetlands Roundtable is scheduled for Thursday, December 8, 2022.
- The NM Wildland Urban Fire Summit will be held in Santa Fe from November 16-18.
- The NM 30 X 30 Committee is seeking input to define important conservation terms.

**NRCS Mountainair Field Office Report:**

The NRCS Mountainair Field Office written report for November is included in board member's packets.

Mr. Lujan introduced his supervisor Jason Martin, the area conservationist for the north area. He is visiting boards to get to know the supervisors and to get the area and state offices more present in the soil and water conservation districts.

Mr. Lujan called to mind the November 18 deadline for RCPP, CSP Classic, EQIP Classic (Including Incentive) and ACEP.

He then reported on the breakdowns of the EQIP awards to the member offices of team 5. He described the amounts of funding, the number of acres involved, and the practices that were supported. He included a key for the practices and explained the meanings of some terms. He pointed out the small acreages and the practices and dollar amounts that they were funded for.

Overall, Mr. Lujan said that the amount of funds received and spent by team 5 was notable, but staff are telling him that they don't want any more money because they can't keep up with their current workload since all offices except the Mountainair office are understaffed by half.

Mr. Lujan's understanding is that there will be a big increase in funding for next year, but he questions the ability of the field offices to handle the work involved in getting the money on the ground. He observed that staff were burned out and felt that they were not appreciated for the extensive amount of work that they were doing. He explained that in addition to the amount of EQIP money spent, the team 5 offices also spent more than a quarter of the total CSP funding allocated to New Mexico, which points at the amount of work carried out by the offices. He said that understaffing, heavy workload and perceived underappreciation of accomplishments have resulted in low morale and all need to be addressed. He also mentioned as an issue a disconnect between the districts and the area and state offices and perhaps even a disconnect between the field offices and the districts. He stressed the efforts of the Mountainair field office to serve the community in the Claunch-Pinto district.

Discussion followed on the issues raised by Mr. Lujan and on the issue of better serving the needs of small producers. Mr. Gomez asked whether the state and area offices were aware of issues faced by the field offices and producers and if so, what was being done to address them, especially in view of the prospect of increased funding for next year. Mr. Martin said that staffing was a top concern and described the efforts being made to hire additional staff. He said that one primary challenge was getting people to apply for the jobs. Mr. Taylor said that his agency had the same problem, and the district manager said she did, too. Private entities as well as county commissions report the same problems.

As to low morale, Mr. Martin said that the leadership team has discussed it, but he doesn't think that the state office has been aware of the concern, so it needs to be raised more forcefully. He will seek to find out from the field what can be done to better support staff and make them feel more connected. And this effort needs to apply to producers, too.

Frank Luna said that he was present to represent small operators and to bring their request for help and funding to the Claunch-Pinto board. He said that the small operators need a separate fund pool so that they can compete. He said that small producers can't compete with the large producers. He has brought a petition to the board expressing the needs of small producers and is asking Claunch-Pinto to advance it to higher levels in NRCS and to representatives in Congress. Mr. Lujan agrees that a small acre initiative is needed to better serve small cooperators. However, he said that follow-through on the part of small producers is critical if funding is made available to them. The district manager said that other SWCDs also report that NRCS is not taking care of small landowners, but some offices have funds for cost-share programs that provide funds for the small landowners. However, not all offices have the resources to provide cost-share programs. She described the district's efforts to keep several local people employed on an on-going basis. She also talked about workshops that are needed to educate people on how to apply for NRCS funds and how to compete more successfully. Mr. Lujan discussed challenges of applying the ranking criteria and of meeting resource concerns that must be met.

Further discussion centered on staffing concerns, the inconsistency of and changes to rules, what the definition of a small producer is, and what level should be targeted to have an impact on decisions that affect the local producers.

**District Manager's Report:**

No report.

**CORRESPONDANCE:**

No report.

**UPDATE ON GRANTS:**

**The District Manager's Written Report to CPSWCD Board Plus Comments – Update on Grants, November, 2022:**

*Comments: [The district manager commented on the Estancia Basin Water Trust Board grant. She is concerned about finding contractors to complete work on projects. There are projects in progress of about \$78,000 in the East Torrance area. In the Edgewood district, there are \$170,000 in projects. The State Land Office has a piece of land near Ponderosa on Highway 337. All the wood from 50 acres of that land will be given to the land grants in this area. However, the wood must be hauled to the Chilili baseball fields. The inmate work crew will work on this project including moving the wood after the first of January. Claunch-Pinto has applications for \$790,000 in projects which does not include the highway right of way projects for the Department of Transportation. One project from the north side of Chilili to the T of Highway 337 with Highway 55 is a \$196,000 project by itself. There are two projects underway in the Greater Rio Grande project totaling about \$132,000. Both contractors have dealt with problems thus delaying work on the projects.*

*Regarding the NM State Forestry grants, there are projects that need to be finished by December 31.*

*On the Collaborative Forest Restoration projects, the district manager pointed out that Pablo Romero is working on the highest part of the project where it is extremely muddy, which limits the kind of work that can be done there. He has delivered 37 cords of wood to the Manzano Land Grant, part of the CFRP agreement.*

*The district manager commented on the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) Program (RCP). Work on all the contracts for the 2017 funds is being done as far as she knows. The supplemental agreement has been signed and approved. She commented on changes in the rules “in mid-stream” and the work and spending that now must be proved and documented. The administrative work that is necessitated by the requirements is not compensated by NRCS. The district manager was told that she can re-apply for 2017 funds for \$967,000, so she submitted a proposal, but apparently the funds are no longer available.*

*On the 2018 proposal, the district manager wrote and tried to submit the proposal but couldn't do it by the deadline because the portal was being worked on. She described her frustrations about changes, the amount of time and work needed to prepare and submit this proposal. She now has to reapply next year. She estimates that about 4.5 million dollars in funding were lost during this process.*

*On the FEMA grant proposal, the district manager said that FEMA lost all its mitigation staff and is now working with all new staff. The NEPA has been advertised for public review, which ends on November 28. The district manager has submitted the phase 2 proposal, but the proposal depends on the Torrance County Hazardous Mitigation Plan which expires on December 12, 2022. The district manager worked on convincing the county of the importance of updating their plan for more than two years to no avail. Because the plan hasn't been updated, FEMA proposal may not be funded for more than \$500,000 unless Homeland Security's request is granted that emergency measures be implemented to allow the proposal to be funded.*

*Meetings will be set up with Codi Stropki from SWCA and the board to discuss the Soil and Water Conservation Commission grant and to develop a planning document to guide the district over the next ten years and beyond.]*

## **The District Manager's Written Report to CPSWCD Board November 4– Update on Grants**

### **Watershed Health Grant – Water Trust Board (WTB):**

**2020 EBWHRM WTB Funds** – The District is preparing thinning contracts for signature. Claunch-Pinto and East Torrance have a couple of projects that work is being completed. Claunch-Pinto has 3 projects ready to contract and 11 pending projects. Ken Leiting, East

Torrance SWCD has contacted his landowners who have contracts to find out the progress on their projects. We are working with Edgewood SWCD, NM State Land and NM State Forestry on the Bear Cat 50-acre project. The wood from the Bear Cat project will be delivered to Chilili Land Grant by the NM State Forestry Inmate Work Crew. The Land Grant Counsel will then distribute the wood to the area land grants. Edgewood SWCD has 300-acre project to be contracted as soon as the landowner approves the practice plan. This grant will have to be expended by December 18, 2022.

**2020 GRGWA WTB Funds** – We are working with the landowners of the San Cristobal, Seboyeta-Moquino Creek, and Glorieta projects and the contractors to get these projects completed before December 2022. This grant will have to be expended by December 18, 2022. The district is working on resprout treatments for the previously completed GRGWA projects. The first resprout treatment on the San Cristobal Ranch took place on 09/09/2022.

**2021 WTB Funds:** The EBWHRM and GRGWA grant documents have been signed and the district has been notified the grants have closed, so we can proceed to start projects.

**2023 WTB Proposals:** Proposals were submitted on September 23, 2022, for both the EBWHRM and GRGWA projects. The District Manager gave presentations to the Water Trust Board via ZOOM October 20, 2022. These were 3-minute presentations for each project. The NM Water Trust Board will meet on November 8, 2022 to approve the projects that will move forward to legislative approval.

#### **NM State Forestry Grants:**

**2019 NFL Funding** – The balance on this funding is \$137,861. This funding will need to be expended by 12/31/2022. The second project is the Chilili Land Grant project in the amount of 40 acres. We are looking for another contractor to complete the Chilili Land Grant project. If we can get the two Edgewood SWCD projects started and our three on-going projects completed, we should be able to expend this funding before the deadline. The Edgewood SWCD State land project will not get started until after January 1<sup>st</sup>. The inmate work crew will not be available until after the 1<sup>st</sup> of January pending the agreements being completed between EMNRD-Forestry Division and the prison system.

**2020 NFL Funding** – The District has just signed a work plan in the amount of \$276,000. This funding will need to be expended by 12/31/2023.

**2022 NFL Funding** – The District has been notified their FY2022 NFL proposal has been funded.

#### **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:** We hope to have a report ready to present to the Board on the monitoring that took place this past July at the December meeting. The contractor has started the 2<sup>nd</sup> year fuel removal on this project. He tells me it is very muddy on the project area. The contractor has delivered 37 cords to the Manzano Land Grant which is a part of the CFRP project. The contractor received a receipt from the Land Grant president for the number of cords delivered.

This receipt will be included in our semi-annual CFRP report to the Forest Service. The East Zone which includes the Mountainair Ranger District has a new timber management administrator, Alfred Garcia. He comes from the Santa Fe National Forest and has a great background in timber sale administration. I have been told he will be a great asset to the East Mountain Forestry Program. The district staff is looking forward to working with him.

#### **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP):**

**2017 RCPP Funding** – The District’s technical assistance work has been completed.

**2018 RCPP Funding** – All of the cultural resource survey reports for Mountainair have been approved by SHPO.

**2019 RCPP Funding** – The supplemental agreement has been approved and the District has signed the agreement. We have not received a fully executed agreement from NRCS. This funding is also known as the 2015 RCPP renewal.

**Additional RCPP Funding** – The District has received notice that the fiscal year 22 Regional Conservation Partnership Program Renewal proposal in the amount of \$967,000 has been selected to become a RCPP project. This was a renewal of the 2017 RCPP project. The district has now been notified NRCS doesn’t what happened to the funding. On the RCPP portal the proposal still shows it is ready for negotiation. We prepared a proposal for the 2018 RCPP renewal funding. When we got ready to submit the proposal on the RCPP portal, we had an error message, and the proposal couldn’t be submitted. It took me several days to get in touch with someone to find out what the problem was. By that time I got in touch with someone, I was told they didn’t know what the problem was so we could just apply next year. It is interesting that NRCS was updating the RCPP portal at the same time proposals were to be submitted.

#### **FEMA Grant Proposal:**

**Hazard Mitigation Project - HMGP 5281 Sub Grant Agreement:** The Environmental Assessment for the FEMA projects has been advertised for public review. The review period will end on November 28, 2022. The District Manager will be in the office every day until November 28<sup>th</sup> in case someone comes in to review the assessment. The district has submitted the Phase II proposal for this grant. This proposal is to complete the hazardous fuel reduction projects on both the Aceves and Swenka projects. There is still some question as to whether the proposal will be funded since the Torrance County Hazard Mitigation Plan expires on December 12, 2022.

#### **Soil and Water Conservation Commission Grant:**

The Memorandum of Agreement has been signed by all parties on this funding and we have received a PO from NM State University for the funds. Cody Stropki from SWCA and I will be meeting on Tuesday, November 8<sup>th</sup> to get a plan together for implementation of this grant. There will be meetings with the Board because the grant was funded to develop a planning document to guide the district over the next decade and beyond looking at the changing climate and watershed conservation dynamics in prioritized areas for treatment.

#### **New Mexico State Land Projects:**

The Edgewood SWCD will be using some of the Water Trust Board allocation to complete a 50-acre State Land Project known as the Bear Cat Project. Claunch-Pinto SWCD will match the funding with their State Forest NFL funding. The Claunch-Pinto SWCD is working with the supervisor of the State Forestry In-Mate Work Crew to get a new memorandum of

understanding, so this crew can be used to move the wood on the Bear Cat Project. The district has three additional State Land projects we are working on with the State Land Office.

### **New Mexico Department of Transportation Project:**

The district field technician has been out with Andrew Alderete who is in charge of roadside environment design integrated vegetation management. They are in the process of mapping approximately 95 miles of highway right-of-way projects within the area. Mr. Alderete is wanting all of the pinon/juniper areas on highway right-of-way clear. They have mapped the area from the northern border of the Chilili Land Grant to the Socorro County line south of Mountainair. They also mapped from Estancia to the intersection of State Highway 55 and 337. They still need to map US Highway 60 west of Mountainair and the State Road from Manzano-to-Manzano State Park. The district is working with EMNRD – Forest Division Bernalillo Office on this project.

**The district has at least \$775,406.55 in projects either contracted or ready to contract as we have the funding and contractors are available.**

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

#### **Capital Outlay:**

##### **FY 2022 Capital Outlay Request Funded – Skid Steer:**

The district manager said that she has the memorandum of agreement with NMDA and NM State Forestry for the \$40,000 for the skid steer, so she will talk to the appropriate state representatives about getting additional money needed to purchase the skid steer.

##### **Torrance and Lincoln County Wind Energy, Corona Wind Companies, Western Spirit Transmission Line:**

The district manager said that she expects more windmills will be placed in the Corona area.

##### **Sun Zia Transmission –Draft Environmental Impact Statement:**

The district manager said that she received an email announcing that the SunZia administrative final EIS (V2) review kick-off meeting will be held on November 9<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m. She will attend the zoom meeting. A brief discussion took place on solar installations and the possibility of bringing funds to the school districts versus losing range land.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### **Petition Concerning NRCS Small Landowner Assistance – Frank Luna:**

The district manager will send a copy of the draft petition to board members. A discussion occurred on how to make the greatest impact on getting funding for the small landowners. A suggestion was made to describe an end product to send to state officials on how to provide funds to small landowners. The district manager read the petition which expressed concerns of small landowners and asked for separate funding, a more just process and for changes in the ranking system to help small landowners to be more competitive. It was suggested that a small acre initiative be requested in which owners of small acreages compete with each other rather than asking for changes to the ranking system. Mr. Lockridge recommended that the board move forward with the initiative to prepare a product for board approval.

#### **Resolution No. 08 – 2023 – Open Meetings Act:**

**ACTION TAKEN:** Dale Rose moved to approve Resolution No. 08 – 2023 – Open Meetings Act. Jack Lockridge seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: Dale Rose, aye; Felipe Lovato, aye; David Cain, aye; Larry Gomez, aye; Leroy Candelaria, aye; Robin Dunn, aye; Jack Lockridge, aye.

**Meeting Dates for FY2023:**

The district manager explained the rationale for establishing meeting dates on the second Friday for board meetings in January, April, and July. **ACTION TAKEN:** Mr. Candelaria moved to approve the meeting dates for FY2023. Larry Gomez seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: Dale Rose, aye; Felipe Lovato, aye; David Cain, aye; Larry Gomez, aye; Leroy Candelaria, aye, Robin Dunn, aye; Jack Lockridge, aye.

**REPORTS:****Report on New Water for New Mexico Forum – Roy Gibson:**

Mr. Gibson reported on the New Water for New Mexico Forum put on by the New Mexico Desalinization Association on October 20 at the Sandia Casino. The NM Desalinization Association is a new group which is trying to form a coalition of users, engineers, and planners to discuss what type of resources New Mexico has for unconventional water. John T. Romero from the Water Allocation Resource Program and director of the Water Rights Division from the Interstate Streams Commission talked about the permitting process for brackish water and the water rights law. He pointed out that New Mexico has, by state statute, the responsibility for investigating other water resources. The participants discussed the 50-year-old water plan for the Interstate Stream Commission that could include supplementing New Mexico's fresh water with treatment of brackish water. Mr. Gibson will send the link to the web site where power point presentations and the meeting minutes are posted to the district manager. He will be available for questions. The district manager will send the link to board members.

**New Mexico Coalition of Conservation Districts:**

The district manager reported that she has been working with the Fire Preparedness Group including the public relations people from the different forests on behalf of the NM Coalition of Conservation Districts. The coalition sends out fire preparedness information every month and posts in on its Facebook page. In addition, the information is posted on the district's web page

**South Central Mountain RC&D:**

No report.

**Estancia Basin Water Planning Committee:**

The district manager explained that the committee is made up of representatives from Bernalillo, Santa Fe and Torrance counties. She said neither a chairman nor a secretary has been chosen yet. A meeting will be held in December, so perhaps these positions will be filled then. Someone from Torrance County Planning and Zoning may serve as treasurer.

**New Building on Fair Grounds:**

The district manager said that she added this item to the agenda at the request of the chair of the Torrance County Fair Board. Mr. Candelaria said that Commissioner McCall has been given the task of moving this issue forward.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Taylor announced that he has a new timber management assistant named Alfred Garcia. He should have a new fire management officer by the end of next week as well. However, it has been extremely difficult to hire fire crews this year. They were unable to fill any of the hand crew positions. Therefore, they may have only one engine available. He is planning on beginning to thin the compound soon. Firewood may be available for sale but will probably sell out by the end of the year. He made his first decision on the wind farm in the Gallinas. He approved a minimum use for two companies which can put up their monitoring towers. He reported on the prospects of turbines in the area for the future. He is working on a travel management revision on his district. He will send out a proposal for comment when it is ready. Work on the dead and down fuel wood has been delayed because of the high number of cultural sites that have been found.



**OTHER:**

Mr. Lujan talked about the challenges of caring for his mother and its possible effects on his employment.

**MEETINGS ATTENDED:**

**PLAN for NEXT MEETING:**

**NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED:**

The next regular meeting will be held Friday, December 2, 2022, 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 at 10:21 a.m. Leroy Candelaria seconded the motion.

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FELIPE LOVATO, JR., CHAIRMAN

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DAVID CAIN, SECRETARY