



**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
December 2, 2022**

**Supervisors Present:** Felipe Lovato, Jr., Chairman  
Robin Dunn  
Jack Lockridge  
Dale Rose

**Absentees:** David Cain  
Leroy Candelaria  
Larry Gomez

**Others Present:** Dierdre Tarr, District Manager  
Aurelleia Chavez, CPSWCD  
Roy Gibson  
Kenneth Lujan, NRCS  
Frank Luna  
Katie Mechenbier, S&W Cons. Spec. NMDA  
Cody Stropki, SWCA  
Ernest Taylor, Mountainair Ranger District  
Katheryn Taylor, volunteer  
Joe Zebrowski, Highlands University

**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 8:05 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.

**PRESENTATION BY THE BARTOLO CANYON CFRP MONITORING CREW:**

Cody Stropki, a watershed scientist from SWCA with Aurelleia Chavez, Mountainair high school student, made a presentation on the Bartolo Canyon Collaborative Forest Restoration Program (CFRP) Monitoring Project. The project was supported by a grant from the U.S. Forest Service. The project goals were described as well as the background, methods, results, and conclusions for the project. Both an untreated and a treated area were studied and compared. Thinning in the treated area reduced competition among the trees, decreased risk of fire, and opened the canopy, allowing more moisture and sunlight to reach the forest floor thus increasing vegetative cover. Quotes from the student monitoring team were included. Team members were Aurelleia Chavez, Jake Zamora, and Jacob Everett.

**APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

The board reviewed the agenda. **ACTION TAKEN:** Dale Rose moved to approve the agenda. Robin Dunn seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: Dale Rose, aye; Felipe Lovato, aye; Robin Dunn, aye; Jack Lockridge, aye.

**APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**ACTION TAKEN:** Dale Rose moved to approve the November 2022 minutes as read. Jack Lockridge seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote Dale Rose, aye; Felipe Lovato, aye; Robin Dunn, aye; Jack Lockridge, aye.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:**

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

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

**OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS:****Auditor:**

The auditor has been working in the district office and will finish his work soon. He will then hold an exit conference with Mr. Lovato and Mr. Lockridge.

**DFA Quarterly Report:**

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 December 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.
- In December and January several reports and budget reviews are due, and policies should be reviewed and in place.
- Reminders concerning the Open Meetings Act Resolution are reported.
- The Agricultural Workforce Development Program is still accepting applications for agribusinesses that want to hire interns.
- Information for the NMDA's Healthy Soil Program is included to assist entities to prepare for the FY24 grant-application period.
- The annual 2023 Hay Conference will be held at the Ruidoso Convention Center from January 25 – 27.
- A hearing will be held for the rulemaking process for the Prescribed Burn Manager Certification Program, and a link to information is provided.
- The National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting will be held virtually from February 11—15, 2023.
- Producers can now participate in a nationwide survey to help the US Department of Agriculture improve and increase access to its programs and services for America's farmers, ranchers, and forest managers.
- Two Distinct Population Segments (DPS) of the lesser prairie-chicken are being listed as endangered and the Northern DPS is being listed as threatened.
- The 2022 Joint Stockmen's Convention will be held December 14 – 17, 2022 at the Hotel Albuquerque Old Town.

**NRCS Mountainair Field Office Report:**

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The NRCS Mountainair Field Office written report for December is included in board member's packets. Mr. Lujan pointed out that the Team 5 staff is working on newly funded contracts in both EQOP and CSP 2023 - 1 renewals. He also said that the Mountainair field office received two EQIP 2023 applications by the deadline date.

**District Manager's Report:**

The district manager reported that the district has a new volunteer, Hannah Marie Mitchell. She holds an environmental degree and works full time in the bookstore at the Salinas Pueblo Missions Headquarters Visitor Center in Mountainair.

The district manager said that employee Augustin Montoya has returned to work, and the employee who was hurt in a chain saw accident will have a second surgery. When he returns to work, he will be on light duty.

**CORRESPONDANCE:**

The district manager received a note from David Cain's two daughters with a picture of them with their goats. The notes thanked the district for helping them at the fair.

**UPDATE ON GRANTS:**

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

*Comments: [The district manager commented on the Estancia Basin Water Trust Board grant. The 2023 proposal is ranked number one. The Greater Rio Grande proposal is ranked at number four. Both of those proposals have gone to the legislature for authorization for funding.*

*Regarding the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Project, the Environmental Assessment has been completed, and we have the signed the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for this project and delivered the document to NM Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.]*

**The District Manager's Written Report to CPSWCD Board December 2 – 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 a 300-acre project to be contracted as soon as the landowner approves the practice plan. We are working with Edgewood SWCD on a 239-acre project for one of their landowners. A contract has been sent to the contractor for their signature. We plan to complete 103 acres of this project before the end of the year. 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. The contractors for the San Cristobal and Seboyeta-Moquino Creek projects are back on the projects and work is moving along. This grant will have to be expended by December 18, 2022. The district is working on re-sprout treatments for the previously completed GRGWA projects. The first re-sprout treatment on the San Cristobal Ranch took place on 11/29/2022. The contractor completed

approximately 60 % of the re-sprout treatments and plans to complete the project by 12/2/2022. Re-sprout treatments in the Abo Arroyo will start on 12/6/2022. The contractor plans to complete this treatment by 12/12/2022. The district completed the re-sprout treatment on the Lagunitas Guicu Creek Project in November. When we completed the project in April, we sprayed vinegar on the treated area hoping this would keep the re-sprouts down. This did not work. We will continue to work with the Acequia and the Homeowners Association on this project to keep the re-sprouts down to a minimum.

**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 met 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 \$75,575.06. 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. Since we have gotten the Edgewood SWCD project ready to start and our three on-going projects completed, we should be able to expend this funding before the deadline. 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 and the Claunch-Pinto SWCD.

**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 are having a report to the Board on the monitoring that took place this past July at this 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 district received an inspection report on this project on November 17 2020. The Timber Management Assistant for Mountainair and Tijeras explained they did not know the district's contractor has resumed work on the project. In addition, he had requested a meeting with the district's contractor to discuss the project and concerns about resource damage. I immediately called the CFRP coordinator for this project to discuss the problems with the resource damage. We decided we needed to set up an in-the-field meeting with everyone involved in the project so we could all be on the same page moving forward. The district received a second inspection report on November 28, 2022. I had requested the district field technician attend this inspection, but the timing did not work into the district's schedule. On November 23, 2022, the district's field technician received a call from the Timber Management Assistant explaining they were on the project for an inspection and would our field technician be able to join them. With the short notice our field technician could not join them because we had our EBWHRM field inspector conducting inspections on projects. I called the Timber Management Assistant and we decided we would plan to meet on November 29<sup>th</sup> on the project to discuss all the areas of concern with the district's contractor. The afternoon of November 23, 2022, I received a call from the Mountainair District Ranger. He explained he would have called right after the first inspection, but he had been out sick. He wanted the district to know there were very serious resource problems and forest violations on this project. He also wanted the district to know if this had been a timber sale project, the forest service law enforcement would have already been called in. After my conversation with District Ranger, I immediately called Felipe Lovato to let him know what had been

discussed. On Friday, November 25<sup>th</sup>, I contacted Pablo Romero, the district's contractor and asked him to meet with our Field Technician and myself. We met on Monday November 28<sup>th</sup> to discuss the problems and resource concerns on the project area. I talked to the CFRP coordinator, and we set an in-the-field meeting for all those concerned on the project for December 7, 2022. The district field technician and contractor met on the project with the Timber Management Assistant on November 29<sup>th</sup>. The discussions went very well. We also made sure that the Timber Management Assistant had a copy of the project prescriptions as provided by the forest service before the district started work in the first year. I am attaching copies of emails and the inspection reports for your review.

#### **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. The District Ranger (Mountainair Ranger District) met with me after the last Board meeting to see if the district would be willing to take some of the RCPP technical assistance funding to hire an employee to work in the District Forest Service office to assist in cultural resource work. I explained that we cannot use the funding for this purpose.

**Additional RCPP Funding** – This will be taken off the report in January. 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 an RCPP project. This was a renewal of the 2017 RCPP project. The district has now been notified that NRCS doesn't know what happened to the funding. On the RCPP portal, the proposal still shows that 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 the time I got in touch with someone, I was told that 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 public review period for the environmental assessment has ended. We have the signed FONSI for this project and delivered the document to NM Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management on November 30, 2022. We do not have any word if the funding Phase II (the on-the-ground) will be approved. 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. We are also waiting for a budget modification approval for Phase 1. The work on the Environmental Assessment cost \$20,000 more than what we budgeted for.

#### **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 met 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 Joint Powers Agreement 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.

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**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 the pinon/juniper areas on highway right-of-way cleared. 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 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. She will try to arrange a meeting with Representative Lord at the district office so that she can see the work that the district is doing.

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

The district manager said that she was told that work on wind farms in the Corona area has been delayed until 2024.

**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 was held on November 9<sup>th</sup>. She and Ms. Rose have been reading the final EIS and think that the only item of interest concerns fire danger. The district's comments have been incorporated, and the district manager doesn't plan to submit any further comments. The district manager thanks that she will have to work one on one with Pattern Energy to have an influence over fire safety along the power lines. She hopes to work with PNM on fire danger as well. Discussion followed on negative impacts on the environment caused by the construction of the lines.

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

The district manager explained that the petitioners want Claunch-Pinto to move the petition forward to its congressional delegation and the state conservationist with a letter from the district supporting their concerns regarding the failure of NRCS to meet small landowners' needs. The landowners have raised their concerns at three Work Group meetings and feel that no progress is being made. Mr. Lujan pointed out that if anything is to be done, applications from the land owners must be submitted. Further discussion of the issue will be postponed until the next meeting when Mr. Luna can attend. Mr. Lockridge reiterated his comment from the previous board meeting that management at the state level must be made aware of the concern since they are responsible for acting.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

None.

**REPORTS:**

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**New Mexico Coalition of Conservation Districts:**

The district manager said that she is still working on disseminating information on fire preparedness.

**South Central Mountain RC&D:**

No report.

**Estancia Basin Water Planning Committee:**

No meeting was held in November. A meeting will be held in December. The chair and secretary positions need to be filled. Ms. Rose asked whether there is an update on taking water from the basin, but Codi Stropki has not seen any red flags.

**New Building on Fair Grounds:**

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Taylor said that no prescribed burns are taking place because it is too wet. He also explained new rules managing these burns. He asked for feedback on the practices. He also talked about the difficulty in hiring personnel and the restrictions on resources that the lack of staff causes.

The district manager mentioned that one project will commence in the Corona area that has been sought for many years.

**OTHER:**

**MEETINGS ATTENDED:**

**PLAN for NEXT MEETING:**

**NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED:**

The next regular meeting will be held Friday, January 13, 2023, 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, Jack Lockridge moved to adjourn at 9:20 a.m. Dale Rose seconded the motion.

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FELIPE LOVATO, JR., CHAIRMAN

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DAVID CAIN, SECRETARY