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MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING September 6, 2024

Supervisors Present: Felipe Lovato, Jr., Chairman
David Cain
Aubrey Dunn
Larry Gomez
Dale Rose

Absentees: Gerald Chavez
Jack Lockridge

Others Present: Dierdre Tarr, District Manager
Roy Gibson, Associate Supervisor
Kim Kostelnik, SAKAK Natural Resource Consulting
Kenneth Lujan, NRCS
Crystal Medina, NM Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute
Cody 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 Chairman Felipe Lovato, both in person and via Zoom at 8:10 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. Mr. Lovato thanked David Cain for conducting the previous meeting.

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: David Cain, aye; Felipe Lovato, aye; Larry Gomez, aye; Dale Rose, aye.

APPROVAL/ DISAPPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The board reviewed the minutes of August 16. **ACTION TAKEN:** David Cain moved approval of the minutes of the August 16 meeting. Larry Gomez seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: David Cain, aye; Felipe Lovato, aye; Larry Gomez, aye; Dale Rose, aye.

TREASURER'S REPORT and APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL OF VOUCHERS:

The board reviewed the treasurer's report for the month of August 2024 with accounts payable for September.

ACTION TAKEN: Dale Rose moved to approve the treasurer's report for August with accounts payable for September. Larry Gomez seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: David Cain, aye; Felipe Lovato, aye; Larry Gomez, aye; Dale Rose, aye.

REPORTS:

NMDA Report:

The NMDA written report was included in board members' packets.

The district manager pointed out that September 1 is the deadline to submit the annual report of activities and the annual plan for the past fiscal year. She will include the report and plan in the packets of those who attend the district's annual meeting on September 18.

NRCS Report:

Mr. Lujan reported that the local work group met on September 5. It was lightly attended, but everything went well. He mentioned funding for Mountainair at two million five hundred thousand, Fort Sumner at about two million one hundred thousand, and Santa Rosa at three million seven hundred thousand. He also reported on percentages of workload in the state accomplished by Team 5. He described the conversation on removing brush management from the ranking of projects for EQIP team allocations. After reviewing pros and cons of doing so, Mr. Lujan decided to continue to include brush management in the rankings.

District Manager's Report:

The district manager reported that she answered questions on the capital outlay funding emailed to her from an NMDA staff member. She will also submit a report with pictures to the Soil and Water Conservation Commission on the planning grant.

The district manager said that she gave a presentation to the local emergency planning committee on August 28. She was asked to explain why the soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) should participate on the committee. She said that an attendee told the emergency manager that her presentation was a lie. She described the circumstances behind the comment. However, based on her presentation, the chair of the committee said that he could understand why the SWCDs should participate in the committee.

The district manager said that she attended a meeting sponsored by UNM on the areas that were prone to flooding.

CORRESPONDENCE:

The district manager shared a card from Macklee Cain thanking the district for its support with "add-ons" for her pig during the sale at the Torrance County fair.

UPDATE ON GRANTS:

The district manager reported on the condition of the chippers. Both chippers are being repaired. She called the Vermeer company to task regarding the amount of money the district has spent on chippers, which are not working. She did receive a \$300 discount. A discussion followed on the lack of service from companies and the difficulty of finding parts.

She described the impact of not having chippers on several projects:

- The Ramah crew is bringing slash to the district property to chip with a leased chipper.
- Cutting is finished on a project on Ernie Vigil's property. Chipping is needed on this project as well.
- The district's crew finished cutting a project on Deer Canyon which also needs to be chipped.

The district manager may contract with a company to do some chipping until the district's chippers are back in service.

Watershed Health Grant:

The district manager is preparing reimbursements for the Watershed Trust Board (WTB). She sent a Notice of Intent to the WTB, but she may not submit a proposal, depending on the funds that she has available.

New Mexico State Forestry Grant:

The district manager will review the work plan for the Highway 55 project and the 2023 NFL grant.

Greater Rio Grande Watershed Alliance:

The district manager is receiving applications for the Greater Rio Grande Alliance, including one from the Taos SWCD. The district manager is working with Pattern Energy on a landowner agreement for the ranch west of Mountainair to complete conservation work on salt cedar and Russian olive on its portion of Abó Arroyo.

Collaborative Forest Restoration Program:

The projects in the Collaborative Forest Restoration Program are going well.

CFRP:

John Formby attended a meeting with the forest service and Pablo Romero concerning the Bartolo project. She described some issues concerning the length of time the forest service took to conduct bird surveys and to mark the trees to be removed that impacted Mr. Romero's ability to get work done. He will clean up the area, but he can't start work on removing trees until November.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program Grant:

2018 RCPP Funding:

An extension is needed on this funding. The district manager is required to submit a proposal, due by the end of the month. She and Cody Stropki will have a conference call with Kris Graham Chavez about the problems in getting clear maps with the correct practices on the maps. Codi Stropki added that, despite the problems, all the cultural resource surveys are complete except for one.

The district manager said that there is funding to conduct workshops. At the local workgroup meeting, she met a woman from the cooperative extension office in Santa Rosa who can arrange workshops for women in agriculture. They will coordinate on setting up some workshops.

NM Counties Grant – CWPP Update (6/30/2024):

Presentation by Cody Stropki:

Mr. Stropki reviewed the history of the community wildlife protection plans and the wildfires that have occurred. The district and the county began to update their wildfire protection plans in November 2023. The plans were last updated in 2016. They were created in 2008. The area survived unscathed through several nearby fires. The 20-member core team working on the plans is a dynamic group, represents many different agencies and has gotten the public engaged. The plans are not enforceable but serve as suggestions for communities.

Mr. Stropki reviewed some of the district's accomplishments. As a part of the update process, actions taken in the last eight years were reviewed to make the landscape more resilient, to make firefighters' response safer and to make communities fire adapted. The Claunch-Pinto district has accomplished a lot. The district manager has done a lot of year-round educational

outreach at such events as the county fair and the Sunflower Festival with mobile displays and brochures to hand out. The district's programs have included such things as its efforts to create defensible space.

Some numbers of acres treated since 2016 by the district and its partners include, for example, 20,000 acres in the wild land urban interface and on adjacent landscapes. Maps are included which show the location of the treatment areas.

The district has obtained funding to install over 20,000 gallons of rainwater harvesting tanks for first responders to use, 10,000 gallons at the district office and 10,000 gallons at the Mountainair fire department.

Mr. Stopki says that the district is known as an innovator in the region and in the whole state.

The risk assessment showing the areas of greatest danger of fire damage and the table of actions have been updated. Factors such as damage to structures and infrastructure are considered.

The successes in getting community responses to the surveys regarding the plan were cited. Mr. Stropki thanked the district manager for widely distributing the survey.

There is a table of actions at the end of the document. Actions concerning community resilience to fires is one of the biggest areas addressed. Supporting land grant communities with wildfire suppression and in building capacity is emphasized.

An important purpose of the plan is to make the district and its partners eligible for different funding sources which would not otherwise be accessible. These sources of funding are listed in the plan, which is not only the district's plan but also the community's plan. Mr. Stropki stated that seeking funding is not only the responsibility of the district but is the responsibility of the members of the community.

Mr. Stropki thanked the district manager and the district for its cooperation and collaborative support of the process as he and his partners developed the plan.

The 200-page draft is currently on-line for review and will be replaced by the final document. Three hard copies will be available in the district office.

Board Approval of the Claunch-Pinto SWCD CWPP update:

The district manager said that the board needs to grant the chairman permission to sign the CWPP.

ACTION TAKEN: Mr. Dunn moved to authorize the chairman to sign the CWPP. Mr. Gomez seconded the motion. Motion carried by voice vote: David Cain, aye; Larry Gomez, aye; Dale Rose, aye; Aubrey Dunn, aye; Felipe Lovato, aye.

SWCC Grant (6/30/2025), Kim Kostelnik:

Ms. Kostelnik went over various contents of the land use plan. She first explained that hard copies of the plan would be mailed to board members to review. She began with maps that illustrate certain portions of the plan. One of the maps shows the underground water basins that the district is in: the Estancia Basin, the Tularosa Basin and the middle Rio Grande Basin. She will clarify whether part of the district is in the Pecos Basin as well. She pointed out that the work the district does benefits the conservation of water throughout the district.

Definitions of terms used in the document are included. Examples of terms which have been added are “climate,” “climate cycles,” “climate change,” and “species of greatest conservation need.” Ms. Kostelnik asked the board whether she should cover the term “view sheds” used by the BLM with as much detail as she did in the past. She went over what she has added or updated in various sections and the sources of her research. Discussion followed on what information comes from other states and whether it is applicable to New Mexico.

Pictures and mention of various endangered animals, birds and insects found in the district that impact the work of the district are included.

Ms. Kostelnik asked for board input on how extensive the discussion should be in the section on invasive noxious plant management. She also asked board members to pay attention to the text on the district’s involvement with and its requirements of companies engaged in developing renewable energies such as windfarms with respect to various aspects of conservation of the environment. Discussion followed on the agencies and regulations that companies are supposed to be accountable to and the companies’ failure to follow rules and the resulting damages to the environment. Suggestions were made on how strong the language should be in the plan and on what actions the board should take to call attention to issues such as poor air quality from heavy dust and water flow that will impact downstream neighbors. Ms. Kostelnik suggested that a starting point is to ask the county to supply information about the permits that have been issued to the companies. Although the district has no power of enforcement over the companies, the district should request that agencies that can enforce regulations do so and require compliance. Discussion followed on the excuses from county officials and their failure to take responsibility for problems that are taking place. Mr. Gibson asked that construction water plans and storm water prevention plans required by the New Mexico Environment Department for any ground disturbance over one acre be included in the discussion. Ms. Kostelnik will reinforce language already in the document.

The document addresses special land use designations such as those managed by BLM and Department of Interior among others Ms. Kostelnik inquired whether this section should be retained, and she was asked to retain the section. She also drew attention to the mines and minerals area, which she will update.

Other areas included in the document include travel management because of the possibility of future issues with roadways. Also included are air quality, culture and customs, and natural resources like grass.

Ms. Kostelnik explained what other maps in the document show like the land status map, eco-regions map.

Final copies of the plan will be distributed to the county to put on file; a copy will go to the secretary of state as well as to all the agencies that the district deals with.

The district manager reviewed what will occur at the October 11th meeting: the regular meeting to begin at 8:00, and following the regular meeting, Ms. Kostelnik will work with the board to review the plan in detail.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Capital Outlay:

FY2022/2023 Capital Outlay Funded – Skid Steer, Remaining Amount -- \$49,475.60:

Mr. Gibson said that after the district received the skid steer, it was decided to buy a dump trailer with tall sides and a bumper pull. It would have the power to lift and dump. The skid steer

or other equipment could be moved in the trailer. A quote from Four Rivers was requested through the Cooperative Education Services purchasing. The quote received was for \$19,843.02. After discussion, Mr. Gibson was asked to seek other quotes. He agreed to contact Wagner Equipment and NTC Supply.

Torrance and Lincoln County Wind Energy:

The district manager reported that she would ask Pattern Energy to send representatives to make a report to the attendees at the annual meeting. She will send questions that she receives to them to address. Ms. Rose and the district manager reported on the lack of substance and brevity of previous reports made by representatives from the company. Mr. Gibson said that the company is required by the New Mexico Environment Department to provide a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan. He will send a question to the district manager that addresses what the company submitted and what it is doing. He would like to receive a copy of the plan and the Notice of Intent that is supposed to be posted on the construction site.

Annual Meeting:

The district manager reported that she mailed annual meeting flyers. So far about 55 people have indicated that they will attend. Two board members from the Roosevelt SWCD will attend. Thirteen FFA members will help set up the tables and chairs. They will also assist attendees to sign in, get a name tag. They will also provide people with water and do other tasks as assigned.

The district manager mentioned some of the activities that are planned. She will provide a tank filled with water so that shade balls can be demonstrated. Mr. Lujan said that a presenter will set up the rainfall simulator and make a demonstration. Various businesses are providing door prizes. Holy Smoke Barbecue will provide the meal, and SWCA will pay for the meal. The town of Mountainair has been asked to lend its tent.

NEW BUSINESS:

CPSWCD – Lincoln County Hazard Mitigation Plan Annex, Resolution No. 04 -- 2025:

Mr. Stropki, SWCA, reminded the board that he began to discuss the annex in August 2023. The annex is finished now and has been approved by FEMA. Everything is in place for the district to be a participating entity in the Lincoln County Hazard Mitigation Plan. Being a participating entity is important to Claunch-Pinto because it allows the district to apply for FEMA funds to help mitigate hazards around Lincoln County. The plan includes eight possible actions which the district may or may not take. These actions are recommendations which could be taken to help recovery be more efficient. Implementation could begin immediately. Ms. Kostelnik said that the annex would be incorporated in the land use plan. The approved resolution adopting the Lincoln County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan will be incorporated into the annex. Mr. Stropki thanked the board for allowing SWCA to prepare the annex on its behalf. **ACTION TAKEN:** Mr. Dunn moved to approve Resolution No. 04 – 2025 Adopting the Lincoln County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan 2023. Mr. Gomez seconded the motion. The motion was approved by voice vote: David Cain, aye; Larry Gomez, aye; Aubrey Dunn, aye; Dale Rose, aye; Felipe Lovato, aye.

REPORTS:

The district manager reported that at the LAPC meeting the previous day Christian Larson gave a presentation for the Mountainair Ranger District. He reported on the dates when he expected prescribed burns to take place. She will forward the information to board members and to Mr. Gibson.

South Central Mountain RC&D:

No report.

EBWPC:

No report.

ASSOCIATE SUPERVISOR INPUT:

PUBLIC COMMENT:

OTHER:

Mr. Dunn asked whether the district has a policy regarding the skid steer on such things as training, who can operate it, or whether it can be leased. The district manager said that there isn't such a policy yet. Mr. Dunn said that the machine could be dangerous and could be damaged and expensive to repair. He suggested that a policy should be developed that includes such things as training required, use limited to district employees, a prohibition against public use for any reason. The district manager will work on a policy and will find out whether such a policy exists that could be used as a model. The issue of identifying an operator who can be certified was discussed. Suggestions were made regarding training that already exists.

NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED:

Regular meeting: Friday, 8:00 a.m. on October 11, 2024 at the Natural Resource Conservation Center, located at 1206 South Highway 5, Mountainair, NM.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business to come before the board, the regular meeting of the Claunch-Pinto Board, Ms. Rose moved to adjourn. Mr. Gomez seconded the motion.

DAVID CAIN, VICE CHAIRMAN

GERALD CHAVEZ, SECRETARY