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**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
March 7, 2025**

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

Absentees: Dale Rose
Aubrey Dunn

Others Present: Dierdre Tarr, District Manager
Lainey Fastnacht, Administrative Assistant
Roy Gibson, Associate Supervisor
Jason Martin, NRCS
Katie Mechenbier, NMDA
Rachel Mixon, USGS
Michael Whiting, USGS

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 8:03 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:** David Cain moved to approve the agenda. Larry Gomez seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: Felipe Lovato, aye; David Cain, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye.

APPROVAL/ DISAPPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The board reviewed the minutes of February 07, 2025. **ACTION TAKEN:** David Cain moved approval of the minutes of the February, 2025 meeting. Tom Carroll seconded the motion. Felipe Lovato, aye; David Cain, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye.

TREASURER'S REPORT AND APPROVAL/ DISAPPROVAL OF VOUCHERS:

Board members reviewed the Treasurer's Report for February, 2025, and approval of vouchers with accounts payable for March, 2025.

ACTION TAKEN: David Cain moved to approve the treasurer's report. Larry Gomez seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: Felipe Lovato, aye; David Cain, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye.

OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS:

REPORTS:

NMDA Report:

The written report for March is in the board members' packets. Ms. Mechenbier highlighted some of the items in the report:

- The Healthy Soil Program Grant application period is from January 15 to March 19.
- The District Opportunities Grant application is from February 3 – to March 14.
- The Noxious Weeds Program Grant application period is from March 3 to April 11.
- The annual mil levy rate resolution is due to the SWCC for approval in April.
- The Water Quality and Conservation Grant application is due on April 4.
- District managers are encouraged to meet with county clerks regarding supervisor elections to find out what is needed from the district and when it is needed.
- NMDA Livestock Scale Inspection Requests due to NMDA March 31.

FO Report:

Mr. Martin reported that two employees have resigned: Jody Cornwall and Steven Ferguson. He described how their workload will be handled. Mr. Gomez asked how the personnel firings in the Department of Agriculture are being dealt with. He spoke of the importance of NRCS employees to cooperators. Mr. Martin said that those employees were being reinstated temporarily, but there is no information on what will be done in the future. He said that it would be very challenging for the employees to meet the needs of local ranchers. Mr. Chavez asked how many of the employees who were leaving were retiring. Mr. Martin said that it was difficult to know. Mr. Whiting, GSPS, spoke of the ground and surface water monitoring activities of his agency. He asked whether Claunch-Pinto had any need for his services. Rachel Mixon spoke of the monitoring activities that GSPS does.

District Manager's Report:

The district manager reported that the town of Edgewood has incorporated a large area of Campbell Ranch for which 40,000 homes are planned. She understands that water usage was not taken into consideration. The water will come out of the Estancia Basin which can drastically affect availability of water in the Claunch-Pinto district. She described the current poor quality of water in Mountainair. She wrote a letter on behalf of the district and the Estancia Basin Water Planning Committee saying that the committee should be recognized as a water planning entity on its own. The committee is the only regional water planning group that has continuously met for 30 years and has done water monitoring. She described monitoring activities. She said that the district will be in three or four regions, the middle Rio Grande, the Pecos, Tularosa, and the Estancia Basin. She will attend meetings to represent the district. She also described monitoring activities that the district is involved with. Mr. Gomez asked about the extent to which the state engineer's office is involved in monitoring. The district manager's opinion is that growth in the state is a goal and that water usage is not being considered.

She also spoke of forest service employees who left the service but two of them were returning to work. The local fire management employee, Adrian Padilla will not return to work.

CORRESPONDENCE:

No report.

UPDATE ON GRANTS:

Watershed Health Grant – Water Trust Board:

The district manager described work being done ongoing Water Trust Board projects. The projects should be finished in December. Work will soon begin on additional work funded by the Water Trust Board. Seven practice plans have been approved by State Forestry. She will submit ten more.

New Mexico State Forestry:

NFL Grants -- HWY 337 Grant, the HWY 55 Grant and the 2023 NFL Grant:

The district manager reported on the 2022 funding. She disseminated an RFP for the Chilili project and the Bear Cat Project and has received contractor proposals, which were higher than she expected, but Lawrence Crane from NM State Forestry said that there was no concern about it since the total number of acres in the projects exceeded what was expected. She expects the Chilili project to move forward now, and Chilili will get the wood from the Bear Cat project. The slash will be masticated instead of chipped. This will be the third and final project in the Bear Cat area. The Land Grant Council determines how the wood will be distributed.

Regarding the HWY 337 project, traffic control has been approved by districts three and five. Work will begin when the funding is allocated. The areas alongside the highway will be clear cut for safety reasons. The deadline for completion is at the end of December, 2025.

Work plans have been signed for the HWY 55 project. Fourteen miles on both sides of the road will be clearcut. The State Land Office has to sign off on the project before the planning process can begin. The State Land Office will be paid for the wood which will be resold by the district.

The subcontractor will receive approximately \$60,000.

The Greater Rio Grande Watershed Alliance (Upper Rio Grande Salt Cedar Project):

A meeting will be held at the end of March. Projects are planned for Taos, the Pueblo of Acoma and privately held properties. The district manager said that she is working with Pattern Energy to remove salt cedar. She reported on the successes so far on removing salt cedar and Russian olive and the amount of money garnered by the district. Representatives from Pattern Energy will give a presentation at the next board meeting.

CFRP – Watershed Restoration and Fuel Reduction in Bartolo Canyon of the Manzano Mountains:

Pablo Ramirez has finished with all the cutting. He will finish removing the wood in a month. She hopes to extend monitoring for another year.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program Grant (RCPP):

This funding is federal money, but the district manager thinks that the funding has not been affected. She will work with Codi Stropki (SWCA) to submit required reports. She will also submit a request for reimbursements. The district was not approved for 2023 funding.

FEMA Project:

The district manager said this funding dates from 2019. She will work with two contractors but that she has to work with a mitigation specialist but none are available. This will be the fifth mitigation specialist that she has worked with. She will submit information the following week.

SWCC Grant (6/30/2025):

Draft Land Use Plan – Kim Kostelnik:

The district manager has the final draft of the land use plan for board members to review. She reported on the status on the hub site for which she needs to submit some written material. There will be a presentation at the next board meeting on the hub site.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Capital Outlay – FY2022/2023 Remaining Capital Outlay Funding -- \$49,475.60:

Mr. Gibson said that he is waiting for two bids for a stump grinder, an attachment for the skid steer. The district manager said that she doesn't know what the Senate Finance Committee will do regarding the remaining capital outlay funding.

Personnel:

Ms. Rose will resign from the board as she is moving out of state.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mil Levy Resolution No. 8 – 2025:

ACTION TAKEN: Mr. Cain moved to approve the resolution. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: Felipe Lovato, aye; David Cain, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye.

Request to Sponsor a Healthy Soils Project – John Neely:

The district manager explained that the district is the fiscal agent for the project. The district will be paid for this service. She explained the process involved and some of the goals of Mr. Neely's project. The role of the district as the fiscal agent was discussed. Mr. Neely will be invited to a board meeting.

ACTION TAKEN: Mr. Chavez moved and seconded by Mr. Gomez to sponsor a project by Mr. Neely pending approval by the district manager. The motion carried by voice vote: Felipe Lovato, aye; David Cain, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye.

REPORTS:

South Central Mountain RC&D:

No report.

EBWPC:

The district manager reported on problems that the Central Tri-County District is having regarding its name change. She also reported on a conversation with Senator McQueen regarding who can vote in the supervisor election.

NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED:

Regular meeting: Friday, 8:00 a.m. on April 4, 2025 at the Natural Resource Conservation Center, located at 1206 South Highway 5, Mountainair, NM.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business to come before the regular meeting of the Claunch-Pinto Board was adjourned.

FELIPE LOVATO, CHAIRMAN

GERALD CHAVEZ, SECRETARY