



**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
May 2, 2025**

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

Absentees: David Cain

Others Present: Dierdre Tarr, District Manager
Alejandro Collins, New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute
Rebecca Elmore, US Forest Service, Fuels Assistant Fire Management Officer
Lainey Fastnacht, Claunch-Pinto
Roy Gibson, Associate Supervisor
Kenneth Lujan, NRCS
Shawn Martin, US Forest Service, District Ranger
Crystal Medina, New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute
Cody Stropki, SWCA
Katheryn Taylor, Claunch-Pinto volunteer
Victoria Sedillo, Claunch-Pinto

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.

APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL OF AGENDA:

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

APPROVAL/ DISAPPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The board reviewed the minutes of April 3, 2025. **ACTION TAKEN:** Tom Carroll moved approval of the minutes of the April 3, 2025 meeting. Gerald Chavez seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote with one abstention. Felipe Lovato, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye; Aubrey Dunn, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye.

PRESENTATION: REBECCA ELMORE, Fuels Assistant Fire Management Officer:

Ms. Elmore explained that her focus at the Mountainair Ranger District Office is fire management and hazardous fuels reduction. Using a series of maps, Ms. Elmore gave an overview of some fire interactions the forest service has had. She started with the northern portion of the Manzano Mountains. In the central Manzanos, she showed areas of prescribed burns and fuels treatments over time. She said that the forest service is trying to knit together protections for communities. She said that in addition, improving forest health is a goal.

She then switched to maps of the Gallinas showing fire history. She described actions that were taken to improve forest health. She then talked about future plans for the Manzanos including prescribed fires to decrease accumulated fuels on the ground and to ensure that fires stay on the ground. She explained how these fires improve forest health. She described the trees that make up the dense forest in these areas. She told about other options besides fire such as strategic thinning and said that the work must be done in stages in certain areas.

She talked about the Isleta Project which is an area in a large burn scar that will be treated with prescribed fire. The forest service is working with New Mexico State and Game and Fish on the Isleta Project to improve forest health for wildlife habitat. Next, she talked about the Capilla Box Unit prescribed fire and the positive result. She acknowledged the draft Wildfire Community Protection Plan for its emphasis on sustainable fire protection communities. They are currently working on the Bartolo Canyon area situated between private lands which hasn't seen fire recently but has undergone recent timber treatments. There are some piles which need to be addressed near the Red Canyon Campground. The project is for public safety due to the dead and dying fir trees, post Tussock Moth infestation.

In the south in the Claunch-Pinto district, there is the Thunderbird prescribed fire, a maintenance burn to be implemented in the fall. The Espinosa prescribed fire is ready to go whenever the conditions are good, especially the timing of moisture events. Public events such as the Balloon Fiesta are also taken into consideration. She explained the goals for the project is wildlife habitat improvement and Wildland Urban Interface community protection. The district manager asked about piles of wood at the Red Canyon Campground. Ms. Elmore explained where the piles were and explained that permits were issued to members of the Manzano Land Grant to harvest some wood for fuel. Mr. Martin described what hot shot crews were able to cut down trees killed by a moth infestation and what was done with the wood. He said that they were trying their best to make wood available to the local communities. He described the work being done on the Apache Canyon and Tezano projects and fuel wood that would be provided from them. The district manager described work that the district had done in the area in cooperation with NM State Forestry and NM Forest Industry Association.

Ms. Elmore moved on to the Gallinas where not many prescribed burns are planned because of so much heritage which limits what can be done there. Range restoration will be a goal there. There aren't any NEPA cleared areas yet. There are green wood sales in the Corona area. Selling fuel wood is a goal. Creating slash in the area the hope is that fire will continue better in the area so grass is regenerated.

The Pueblo Colorado project is a juniper eradication project where the junipers are being pushed into piles so that when there is adequate precipitation, the piles will be burned.

Ms. Elmore showed where there are documents giving approval to do fuels treatments within the areas in the Manzanos. She pointed out the Apache Canyon project, which is a large area that is going through the approval process, which will receive a variety of treatments with a variety of benefits.

The district manager asked whether there is a plan to thin the ranger district compound. Mr. Martin said that he wrote a prescription, but there is no plan for implementation in the near future. The district manager said that if there is ever a fire to the south or southwest of Mountainair, the town would be destroyed. Mr. Martin said that implementation should be made a priority after the Apache Canyon project is finished. The district manager said that a lot of work had been done in Loma Parda and Deer Canyon and some work in other areas. Work has been proposed in the Corona area. Ms. Elmore said that she is aware of the urgent need for work around Corona. The district manager has asked PNM to make a presentation to the Claunch-Pinto board concerning fire danger. The district manager described past efforts to get work done in the area. She offered to show Ms. Elmore the benefits resulting from the Ox Canyon project, increased water for example.

Ms. Elmore stressed the importance of working together. Mr. Lovato expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Forest Service in providing fuel wood to local communities.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

ACTION TAKEN: Aubrey Dunn moved to approve the treasurer's report for April with accounts payable for May. Larry Gomez seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: Felipe Lovato, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye; Aubrey Dunn, aye.

OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS:

FY2025—2026 Budget Meeting:

The district manager said that it will be necessary to hold a board meeting to approve an interim budget. A final budget will be approved in July. She will meet with the budget committee before that board meeting.

REPORTS:

NMDA Report:

The written report is included in board members' packets.

FO Report:

The written report is included in board members' packets. Mr. Lujan said that the Mountainair office currently has no staff. All active applications and contracts have been moved to the Estancia office. He or someone from the Estancia office will come to the Mountainair office on Mondays. A hiring freeze is in place until July. He thinks that no hiring will take place until after October 1. Staffing levels are about the same as in 2019.

Mr. Lujan described financing for NRCS. During the Biden administration there was a lot of money for NRCS. The money is now on freeze. Active contracts are being honored.

He reported on personnel, saying that he lost the staff in Mountainair and a person in Fort Sumner. Except for Mr. Lujan and one other person, current staff have less than five years of experience with NRCS. The agency has been asked to send its priorities to Washington D.C. NRCS funding depends on how much money is put on the ground. Right now, he is lacking employees with job approval authority.

New Mexico has been chosen for a national civil rights review scheduled for June. Santa Rosa and Fort Sumner have been selected. Team five has been selected for quality assurance review which occurs every five years. It will take place in August. Some employees from other federal agencies may be assigned to the Mountainair office because their offices have been closed.

District Manager's Report:

The district said that the Department of Finance and Administration will hold several capacity building workshops over the next couple of months across the State. She has registered Lainey and Victoria for the one in Roswell.

She reported on the workshops held at the district the previous week, one on bark beetles and the other on pollinators. She thanked Lainey Fastnacht and Victoria Sedillo for doing all the work on the workshops. Ms. Sedillo described what some participants did to help plant the flower seeds for the pollinators at the district building and how much she enjoyed the day.

The district manager ordered new locks for the shop building. Some gutters need to be repaired. The hoop house was destroyed by wind. She hopes to replace it. One chipper needs to be repaired. A discussion was held on the need for an air compressor and/or leaf blower to clean the chippers. She would like to buy a power washer to clean the chippers.

The district manager said that the FFA banquet would be held the following Monday at the high school at 6:00 o'clock. The Pasture and Range Team has been in Oklahoma all week at the national contest since they placed third in the state. Claunch-Pinto will pay for dinner at a good restaurant in Oklahoma as a reward for the Pasture and Range Team. The same will be done for the Forestry Team., which also placed third when they go to the National convention in October.

The district manager said that the annual meeting will be held in September, and she hopes that the state representative and senator can attend.

CORRESPONDENCE:

No report.

UPDATE ON GRANTS:**Watershed Health Grant – Water Trust Board:**

A project is ongoing in Loma Parda. Two projects in Deer Canyon have been completed with more planned. Ten or fifteen practice plans are done.

New Mexico State Forestry:

The district manager signed a contract with Everything Chainsaws, LLC to thin a 48 acre area around the water tank for the Chilili Land Grant. Work has started on this project. The Highway 337 project will start on Monday May 12 on the north side of Chilili at mile marker 14. The work permit hasn't been approved by District 5 at this time for the remainder of the project. She described the work that will be done. The wood will go to Chilili Land Grant. A practice plan for the Highway 55 project has been approved, and work should start on it by the end of the year.

Collaborative Forest Restoration Program:

The district manager said that Pablo Romero has finished all the cutting and stacking. He should have all the material removed by the end of May. Mr. Chavez went with the district manager to look at the work. The work hasn't been signed off on the project yet. She met with Mr. Romero and the Forest Service explain the work that he needed to complete before the project would be inspected. He completed the work within 24 hours after the discussion.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program Grant (RCPP):

The district manager is closing out three of the RCPPs. She has a letter with the dollar amounts that can be used as match on the Water Trust Board projects. All the cultural resource surveys have been completed for the 2018 funding except for one. Cody Stropki and the district manager will work on getting the last survey completed for the 2018 funding. Work on cultural resource surveys is just starting on the 2023 funds.

FEMA Project:

The district manager is working to get two contracts approved so that the contractor can do the thinning work. She will ask for an extension on the project.

SWCC Grant (6/30/2025):

Crystal Medina, Codyi Stropki and Alejandro Collins reported on the updated hub site. Dr. Stropki presented a project overview. He explained that the goal of the site is to capture the knowledge that the board and the district manager have and to share it with future board members and staff. It is also meant to be a resource for other soil and water conservation districts. He mentioned some of the work that has been accomplished by the district. It is a testament to the board and the district manager that relationships have been built both with private landowners and public entities. Public entities that provide grants to Claunuch-Pinto for fuel treatments know that the work will get done. There is also funding to do some educational outreach and on-the-ground demonstration projects for landowners.

The hub site is a one stop place to store planning documents such as the Land Use Plan. The site includes ways to contact the district and board members. Dr. Stropki encouraged board members to thoroughly review the web site. He also asked for feedback. He said that what the board and district manager have accomplished is unique. The district's work creating resiliency in the land is more important than ever because of the drought. Ms. Medina said that her team has focused on gathering all the knowledge that the board and district manager have accumulated and covers such things as funding, assets, and how to deal with disasters. The information has been categorized and is presented in bullet points. Other districts and communities will be able to access this information. She asked for the board's assistance in making sure that all applicable information is included. A link on the district's web site will take users to the hub site. She demonstrated how the link on operating procedures goes to the Supervisors Handbook. The goal is to make certain documents, such as the Land Use plan, easy to find. Dr. Stropki acknowledged the help of a graduate student at NM Highlands University in building the site. The district manager sent a link to the hub site and asked board members for feedback. Mr. Carroll said that he had looked at the site and saw that one page on lessons learned was quite long and detailed and suggested that it be reviewed for readability. The district manager emphasized the importance of keeping the web site updated.

Mr. Lujan said that the board chairman in the Santa Rosa district is building a map of the projects in district done by the district, NRCS or their partners.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**Capital Outlay – FY2022/2023 Remaining Capital Outlay Funding -- \$18,215.80:**

The district manager said that there is a balance of \$18,215.80 of the 2022—2023 capital outlay funding that has been reauthorized. The district manager said that the district is included in the capital outlay bill for \$100,000 to buy at least one vehicle. The contracts for the agreements won't be made until after the first of July. The stump grinder has been ordered but won't come in for three or four weeks.

Torrance and Lincoln County Wind Energy, SunZia transmission line:

The district manager has information on how to invoice Pattern Energy for the \$75,000 they are giving the District as match for a riparian restoration project on their ranch.

NEW BUSINESS:**Resolution No.09 –2025:**

The district manager said that board positions three and four, Mr. Cain's and Mr. Chavez's positions, are up for election. A resolution with election details has to be passed and submitted to the county.

ACTION TAKEN:

Aubrey Dunn moved to approve Resolution No. 09 – 2025 Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. Motion carried by voice vote: Felipe Lovato, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye; Aubrey Dunn, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye.

Infrastructure Capital Improvement Projects:

The district manager distributed the list of previous board priorities for infrastructure capital improvement projects. A public meeting will have to be held at the June meeting and a resolution passed at that meeting. She asked board members to think about what they want to submit as priorities.

REPORTS:

South Central Mountain RC&D:

No report.

EBWPC:

The district manager reported that the committee approved the purchase of more well monitoring equipment. New equipment is in the wells, but it isn't in operation on the EBWPC's website yet. She talked about the contribution that SWCA has made to this work. A landowner in the Central Tri-County district wants two of his wells to be monitored. Another landowner is willing for his well to be monitored. The district manager said that Estancia is having problems with availability of its water. As discussion has been ongoing regarding whether the problem is being caused by the water used by Pattern Energy for construction projects or by the Estancia wells.

Mr. Lovato mentioned a possible problem with his well. He hopes that the problem is with his pump, not with the well itself.

OTHER:

Mr. Lujan said that the state engineer said that NRCS has been paying incorrectly. He explained how the amount is determined and described his discussions with him. He hopes that a common-sense approach will be taken. He then talked about a thinning project in the Claunch-Pinto district that NRCS is involved with. He hopes that this project will be a showcase.

The district manager said that she can plan a tour of the Bartolo project for the board.

NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED:

Regular meeting: Friday, 8:00 a.m. on June 6, 2025 at the Natural Resource Conservation Center, located at 1206 South Highway 5, Mountainair, NM.

ADJOURN:

ACTION TAKEN: Mr. Chavez moved to adjourn. Mr. Gomez seconded the motion. There being no further business to come before the regular meeting of the Claunch-Pinto Board, the meeting was adjourned.

FELIPE LOVATO, CHAIRMAN

GERALD CHAVEZ, SECRETARY