

COMMISSIONERS  
Steve Glass, Region I  
Ross Garcia, Jr., Region II  
Vacant, Region III  
Boe Lopez, Region IV  
Clint Harden, Region V  
Eddie Vigil, Region VI  
Cyle Sharp, At-Large

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**New Mexico Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) Meeting**  
**Via Zoom**  
**December 5, 2023**  
**9:00 am**  
**Minutes**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call: Commissioners Harden and Garcia were absent (they joined after the meeting began). All other commissioners were present-see roll call.
2. Approval of Agenda: Commissioner Glass moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Lopez seconded and the motion passed by all commissioners present-see roll call vote.
3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (6/29/2023): Commissioner Glass moved to approve the minutes. Chair Vigil seconded and the motion passed by all commissioners present-see roll call vote.

**New Business**

4. Public Comment (*2 minutes per person*): Vincent Cordova (Guadalupe soil and water conservation district-SWCD) is very concerned about problems with projects getting done because of the backlog of NRCS archeological clearance. Several projects have been waiting years. The SWCDs could pay for the studies themselves if they have funding. SWCDs also require engineering funding for archeological studies. Chair Vigil said the SWCC would look into remedies for this issue.

*Commissioner Harden joined at this point.*

5. Appointed Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Supervisor Appointments:
  - Upper Hondo: Beth Keenan (6)
  - Hidalgo: Levi Klump (6)
  - Grant: Johnny Reed (6), Niel McDonald (7)
  - Central Valley: Jason Patton (6), Lance Conklin (7)
  - Roosevelt: Dylan Marks (7)
  - San Juan: Cash Carruth (6)

- Carrizozo: Jim Grider (7)

Commissioner Glass moved to approve the appointed supervisors. Commissioner Sharp seconded and the motion passed by all commissioners present-see roll call vote.

6. Water Quality & Conservation Grant (WQC) Application Changes: Patricia Depner (New Mexico Department of Agriculture-NMDA) reported the WQC application form was updated to reflect that it is a grant application and not a request for proposal.

*Commissioner Garcia joined at this point.*

7. Land of Enchantment (LOE) Legacy Funding Presentation, Discussion and Action: Julie Maitland (NMDA) reported that approximately \$2.8 million will be available in fiscal year 25. These funds will be used for SWCDs, the noxious weeds programs, and the healthy soil program (HSP). NMDA plans to hire a noxious weed coordinator in the spring of 2024. The HSP is a relatively mature program in its 6<sup>th</sup> year. The LOE funding for the SWCD program and noxious weeds will be run as pilot programs in the 1<sup>st</sup> year.

NMDA is planning for the fiscal year 25 to implement the LOE. Four areas in which the SWCDs could apply for LOE funding are: infrastructure capital improvement plans (ICIP) to assist SWCDs in planning for their capital funding needs. This is also available to watershed districts; for conservation planning per SWCD/watershed; up to \$250,000 per landscape scale mitigation project (fire, water etc.). Ideally the LOE funding would be matched with federal funding and be used for projects directly related to the SWCD and Watershed district Acts. NMDA will not fund produced water or brackish water projects at this time. In addition, SWCDs will be able to apply for up to \$15,000 for community outreach and education projects.

The grant application cycle will tentatively open in February/March 2024 and end in early May. No durable goods over \$4,999.00 will be allowed.

Ms. Maitland stated that NMDA would like the SWCC to support the proposed uses of the LOE funding for the SWCDS.

Commissioner Garcia moved to approve the plans for expenditure. Commissioner Glass seconded and the motion passed unanimously-see roll call vote.

8. New SWCD Supervisor Training: Katie Mechenbier (NMDA) informed the SWCC of 2 supervisor training opportunities in January 2024. The first training will be January 10<sup>th</sup>

from 5:30-7:30 pm, and the second training will be January 12<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 am-12:00 pm.

### **Old Business**

9. SWCC Legislative Appropriation Progress Reports for \$3 Million Appropriation: Ms. Depner presented the project status report for the \$3 Million Appropriation-see report summary.
10. Healthy Soil Program Update: Katie Goetz (NMDA) gave a presentation to the SWCC-see PowerPoint. A total of 47 projects were funded in FY24. The FY25 grant application period will open in February 2024 and end in May 2024. Conservation planning must be completed by March 22, 2024. Awarded projects will begin in August 2024. Ms. Goetz indicated NMDA would like the continued participation of the SWCC in providing advice for the HSP's improvement and provided information for ways in which the SWCC can participate in providing feedback and input to NMDA for the HSP.
11. Agriculture Workforce Development (AWD) Program Update: Ms. Mechenbier gave a status update on the AWD program. To date there are 13 interns all over the state and \$14,000 of \$119,000 remain to be allocated.

### **Reports/Verbal Highlights (5 min. each; written reports required 72 hours in advance)**

12. Commissioners: Commissioner Glass expressed concerns about how the ballots were organized from several SWCDs in that they were lumped together instead of by position. Chair Vigil reported the county clerks were given no direction from SOS. Without legislative changes, Chair Vigil indicated there may not be anything that can be done about the election process in the future.

*Commissioners Harden and Sharp left the meeting.*

13. Governor's Office: none
14. New Mexico Department of Agriculture: none
15. Natural Resources Conservation Service: none
16. Forest Service: none
17. Farm Service Agency: none
18. New Mexico Environment Department: none

19. Water Quality Control Commission: Chair Vigil reported there's been no meetings recently
20. National Association of Conservation Districts: Debbie Hughes (New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts-NMACD) reported Josh Smith (on NACD executive board) is in DC right now for a meeting.
21. New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts: Ms. Hughes reported Jan 31<sup>st</sup> is soil and water day at the legislature, and there is table space for SWCDs.
22. New Mexico Coalition of Conservation Districts: none
23. NMSU College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences: none
24. New Mexico Conservation District Employees: none
25. Next Meeting: TBD
26. Adjourn: Commissioner Glass moved to approve the appointed supervisors. Commissioner Garcia seconded and the motion passed by all commissioners present-see roll call vote.