

New Mexico Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) Meeting
June 15, 2017
10:00 am
3190 S. Espina
Las Cruces, NM
Approved Minutes

1. Call to Order and Roll Call: All commissioners were present (See roll call).
2. Approval of Agenda: Commissioner Norris moved to accept the agenda. Commissioner Sanchez seconded and the motion passed unanimously.
3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (10/25/2016): Commissioner Varela Lòpez moved to approve the meeting minutes. Commissioner Sanchez seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

New Business

4. Upper Gila Watershed District: Chairman Hunt recused himself from this agenda item as he is on the Grant Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) board which oversees the Upper Gila Watershed District. Hamish Thompson (State Auditor's office) presented a letter closing the case as to whether the Upper Gila Watershed District tax revenue collections from the 1984 boundary changes were improper. The state auditor's office doesn't consider the tax revenue collections questionable (see state auditor's letter).

Presentations in support of the Upper Gila Watershed District by David McCauley (Upper Gila Watershed District), Rebecca Benavidez (Grant SWCD), the Dam Safety Bureau, Javier Montoya (Natural Resources Conservation Service) (NRCS), and the Grant County District Attorney's office were provided (see documentation).
5. State Auditor's Office commendation of SWCD audit compliance: The letter of commendation of SWCD audit compliance was presented (see letter).
6. Mora-Wagon Mound request for mil levy referendum: Commissioner Estrada moved to approve

Mora Wagon Mound SWCD mil levy referendum request. Commissioner Sanchez seconded and the motion was passed unanimously.

7. Mil Levy Resolution Approval: Commissioner Norris moved to approve the mil levy rate resolutions submitted. Commissioner Varela Lòpez seconded and the motion passed unanimously.
8. Colfax request for special election: Johnna Bruhn (New Mexico Department of Agriculture) (NMDA) presented the request for Colfax SWCD to hold a special election for supervisors because of missed deadlines in the regular supervisor election timeline. Commissioner Estrada moved to approve the special election. Commissioner Glass seconded and the motion passed unanimously.
9. Central Valley SWCD/Penasco SWCD request for appointed supervisors: Katie Kruthaupt (NMDA) presented the requests from the Central Valley and Penasco SWCDs to approve the supervisors in the elected positions because of untimely submission of paperwork. Commissioner Norris moved to approve the supervisors for both districts. Commissioner Varela Lòpez seconded and the motion passed unanimously (see documentation).
10. Dona Ana SWCD Appointed Supervisor selection request: Members of the public requested the SWCC consider allowing public comment during the action items instead of at the end of the meeting per the agenda. The SWCC declined to allow this to be consistent with a previous denial to speak during SWCC discussion. Chairman Hunt stated the incumbents (Dudley Williams and Steve Wilmeth) are highly qualified with great experience in ranching and with the SWCD and should continue to be on the board. Commissioner Sanchez stated he was glad there was such experience available to the board, but having someone with expertise in water like candidate Dr. Kurt Anderson could be highly beneficial to Dona Ana county and the state as a whole. After further discussion, Commissioner Varela Lòpez moved to select Dudley Williams and Steve Wilmeth to the Dona Ana SWCD. Commissioner Norris seconded. The motion passed with Chairman Hunt, Commissioner Norris, Commissioner Estrada, and Commissioner Varela Lòpez in favor the motion. Commissioner Sanchez was not in favor, and Commissioner Glass abstained for lack of information. Commissioner Sanchez was concerned and thought the SWCC did a disservice to the citizens of Dona Ana SWCD by denying them the opportunity to speak during SWCC discussion.

11. Appointed Supervisor Approval: Commissioner Norris moved to approve the submitted appointed supervisors (see documentation). Commissioner Varela Lòpez seconded and the motion passed unanimously.
12. Boundary legal description consolidation approval: Lacy Levine (NMDA) presented the SWCD boundary legal description consolidation requests submitted (see documentation). Commissioner Varela Lòpez moved to approve the consolidated boundary legal descriptions. Commissioner Glass seconded and the motion passed unanimously (see roll call vote).
13. Otero SWCD/ Penasco SWCD boundary modification request: Lacy Levine and Katie Kruthaupt presented the boundary modification between Otero and Penasco SWCDs. Commissioner Glass moved to approve the boundary modification request. Commissioner Varela Lòpez seconded and the motion passed unanimously (see roll call vote).
14. WQ&C FY2018 committee recommendations for approval: Katie Mechenbier presented the committee recommendations for FY18 WQ&C grant funding. Commissioner Glass moved to approve the funding recommendations. Commissioner Varela Lòpez seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

15. Potential changes to the Point System requirements: Johnna Bruhn (NMDA) presented the Point System SWCD survey results. The most popular point system option is option 2, which allows for more latitude in the types of projects that are eligible to receive points (see documents). Commissioner Norris moved to approve Point System option 2. Commissioner Varela Lòpez seconded and after discussion the motion passed unanimously.
16. Dam Project update: Ms. Levine presented an update to the dam rehab project.

17. Region 3 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Forest Service: Chairman Hunt reported the process had begun and the MOU was sent to the grants and contracts division of the Forest Service six months ago. Commissioner Sanchez will contact the Forest Service to try to finalize the MOU.

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

18. Commissioners: Commissioner Glass reported Coronado SWCD had a good supervisor election and new people will be joining the board. San Juan SWCD will host a joint conference with the New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute (WRRI) on the Animas river spill. Commissioner Glass will contact Lava SWCD regarding audit compliance status. Ciudad SWCD has an in-school watershed education program and received funding for forest thinning. Jeff Goebel (Valencia SWCD) presented the Valencia SWCD status report which included a grant from the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) for a community garden. Valencia is also has resolutions with the New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts (NMACD) regarding soil health work that will be forwarded to NACD to try to get funding.

Commissioner Varela Lòpez: Claunch-Pinto SWCD completed their shop building; the district is also involved with increasing community involvement in the Mountainair Ranger District. East Torrance SWCD is working to install a drip system for trees in the new town park, and is working with the Forest Service in the aftermath of the Doghead fire on weed surveys and treatment. Edgewood SWCD is working on their 2017 cost-share program, and is also involved in the aftermath of the Doghead fire area mitigation. Taos SWCD has a new building and is conducting a study of the dropping water levels in the town of Llano Quemado. Upper Chama SWCD is involved with forest thinning programs. East Rio Arriba is working on a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) project. Santa Fe-Pojoaque has a forest thinning grant and is removing sediment from one of their dams.

Chairman Hunt: Grant SWCD has a Coordinated Forest Restoration Program grant for forest thinning and tree harvesting in conjunction with the Nature Conservancy and the Forest Service. Most region 3 SWCDs are working on the US Forest Service planning revision process.

Commissioner Norris: Region 6 is working on mosquito and bug spraying projects.

Commissioner Estrada: Provided a copy of Doane's Farming for Profit newsletter in which the President of the U.S.A. calls for a review of all national monuments over 100,000 acres that were created since 1996; a notification that the Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) is also under review was discussed.

Commissioner Estrada also emphasized the need for proper forest management for good watershed health.

Commissioner Sanchez: requested to be included on distribution lists of all agencies that work with the SWCDs as he is the Governor's appointee to the SWCC.

19. Governor's Office: None
20. New Mexico Department of Agriculture: Julie Maitland (NMDA) introduced the NMDA staff present and reported that the state budget is reduced by one percent and there could be additional reductions if oil and gas revenues do not increase. This budget reduction will affect all pass-through funding across the board.
21. Natural Resources Conservation Service: Javier Montoya reported that NRCS received the FY17 budget, but NRCS has not received apportioned their amount, so the RCPP agreements cannot be finalized. NRCS is still under a hiring freeze.
22. New Mexico Environment Department: None
23. Water Quality Control Commission: See report
24. New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts: See report
25. New Mexico Coalition of Conservation Districts: See report
26. New Mexico State University (NMSU): College of Agriculture - Steve Loring gave an update on current projects including water research as a signature program for NMSU and natural resources management research programs.
27. New Mexico Conservation District Employees: None
28. Public Comment: None

29. Next Meeting: TBD

30. Adjourn: Commissioner Sanchez moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Estrada seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.