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

Soil and Water Conservation Commission
MSC APR
P. O. Box 30005
Las Cruces NM 88003-8005
Telephone (575) 646-2642
SWCC@nmda.nmsu.edu

New Mexico Soil and Water Conservation SWCC (SWCC) Meeting

September 15, 2026
10:00 am
Dona Ana Community College Espina Campus
3400 S. Espina St, Room 77
Las Cruces, NM 88003
Teleconference Option
Minutes

All Items for Discussion and Possible Action

1. Call to Order and Roll Call: Commissioner Lucero was absent. All other Commissioners were present-see roll call.

2. Approval of Agenda: Commissioner Glass moved to modify the agenda, removing item 11 regarding Ciudad SWCD's supervisor appointment of Gabriella Coughlin, as Ciudad SWCD received a letter of resignation from Ms. Coughlin. Commissioner Glass moved to approve the agenda as modified. Commissioner Sharp seconded and the motion passed by all Commissioners present.

3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (06/23/2026): Commissioner Glass moved to modify the previous meeting minutes, stating the roll call votes should be included with the minutes, agenda item 5 vote for Commissioner Glass is noted as abstained when he might have voted in favor, and agenda item 11 should have Gabriella Coughlin's name removed from the list of appointed supervisors as her application was deferred. Commissioner Glass moved to approve the previous meeting minutes as modified. Commissioner Garcia seconded and the motion passed by all Commissioners present.

New Business

Public Comment (***2 minutes per person***): Teresa Smith de Cherif (Valencia SWCD Chair, attending via teleconference) stated the SWCC had touched on the issue of legal services in the past, where the Department of Justice's (NMDOJ), District Attorney offices were supposed to provide these services to Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) but cannot do so due to a lack of budget and civil divisions. A legislator that recognizes this issue has been contacted and is willing to help address it. Ms. Smith de Cherif asked why districts that undergo independent public audits and pass them without findings could not be the recipients of their own capital outlay funding, citing the burdensome process of receiving reimbursement through the fiscal agent, New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) and New Mexico State University (NMSU). Ms. Smith de Cherif also stated grant reviewers should be reviewed due to the variance in the grant application evaluation ratings received from NMDA and the SWCC. Two out of three reviews are detailed and informative, while the third review consists of a few words. Chair Vigil asked Max Henkels (NMDA) on the status of the letter to the NMDOJ, requesting guidance on how SWCDs could obtain legal assistance as outlined in the SWCD Act and the current liaison appointed to the SWCC. Mr. Henkels confirmed no response has yet been received. Chair Vigil remarked the Audit Act is state law and not much action can be taken regarding the districts' audit complaints. The SWCC acknowledges the districts' comments and are trying to address them.

4. Roles of SWCC Commissioners: Max Henkels (NMDA) asked the SWCC how they prefer to address this agenda item, opening it for broader discussion or reviewing the updated SWCC Basics training presentation prepared by Mr. Henkels. Commissioner Sharp welcomed the information in the presentation to help clarify the roles and responsibilities of the SWCC, as it has been several years since this training was last presented. Commissioner Lopez added this information would be beneficial, mentioning districts have approached him to intervene in inter-district conflicts, but he refrained from doing so as he was unsure if this was in the scope of his SWCC role. Mr. Henkels

agreed, commenting the training will bring good discussion and provided clarification that intervening in inter-district conflicts is not in the SWCD Act but would be at the discretion of the Commissioner to determine what would be appropriate.

The SWCC Basics PowerPoint presentation outlined the roles and responsibilities of the SWCC-see attached.

- Members of the SWCC are entitled to reimbursement according to the provisions of the Per Diem and Mileage Act [10-8-1 to 10-8-8 NMSA 1978] and NMDA recently sent the SWCC a memo regarding reimbursement for attending SWCC meetings. Commissioner Sharp questioned point number 6 regarding the powers and duties of the department, budget limitations when rendering assistance to districit activities and encouraging new districts in areas where it is desirable. Mr. Henkels clarified the budget is from the department, NMDA, which receives funding for SWCD projects and Commissioner reimbursements.
- The SWCC oversees the annual reporting of districts which consists of the districts' annual report of activities for the past fiscal year, annual report of operations for the upcoming fiscal year, and quarterly reporting. Commissioner Sharp asked who receives the reports and if the Commissioners will have access to review any missed reports, as the At-Large Commissioner is sometimes copied on these emailed submissions and how this ties back to Point System compliance. Mr. Henkels responded the SWCC administration (NMDA staff) monitors the SWCC email address where the districts are supposed to submit these reports and manage the records of the submitted reports. Districts are supposed to copy the relevant regional Commissioner. Chair Vigil agreed with Commissioner Sharp, the NMDA specialists should send the SWCC a list of districts in each region to see which are or are not in compliance. As Region 3 has not had SWCC representation for about five years, Chair Vigil suggested the Commissioner At-Large could help fill this reporting role for the districts in that region. Commissioner Sharp commented all Commissioners should be informed, receive these regionally sorted reports, and live up to their fiduciary responsibility. Chair

Vigil also commented the Commissioners could get in trouble due to not being informed and not following the law.

- Commissioner Sharp appreciates the staff support that NMDA provides, but would assume NMDA has a report for the documents received from the district and their compliance status. If the SWCC has oversight on this, they would like to be included and receive a copy of this report. Mr. Henkels agreed and responded this would be based on the preference of the SWCC, but this could be accomodated. When the Point System agenda item is discussed Mr. Henkels will present the SWCC with a report already in place to track submissions/compliance and could include this compliance report depending on the SWCC's preference, in the Commissioner's packet for each meeting or emailed at the beginning of each month.
- Mr. Henkels clarified the statutory responsibilities of the SWCDs which includes furnishing a report of the district's annual proceedings, activities, and budget which must be submitted for approval to the SWCC and the New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration (DFA). While NMDA and DFA receive a copy of a district's annual budget, DFA is ultimately responsible for tracking annual budgets and fiscal reporting required by audit tier. Reviewing previous meeting minutes prior to 2017 when the new audit rule took effect, districts with a Tier 1 (revenue of less than $10,000) or Tier 2 (revenue of $10,000 to less than $50,000) certification did not have to report to DFA in the same manner as those districts classified in an audit category. There are very few districts in the Tier 2 certification and almost all districts should be submitting audits to DFA. Commissioner Sharp commented if a district has an annual budget over $50,000, they are required to provide an annual audit to DFA, which could have changed due to the capacity-building funding received. There should be hardly any districts that do not report to DFA and provide an annual budget. If a district did not submit a report to DFA, they surely did not submit it to the SWCC either.

- Commissioner Sharp stated a program policy guidance (PPG) may be required, reviewing previous SWCC minutes for policy decisions and changes to better understand the current reporting situation. Mr. Henkels responded he will research the minutes from previous years for this information and clarified prior to 2024, the one year SWCC appropriation pushed a lot of districts into the Tier 3 category and in the past two years there are probably no districts with a current Tier 2 certification.
- Mr. Henkels presented the advisory role of the SWCC and how the SWCC, not NMDA, awards funding to SWCDs for operations through the Point System and Water Quality and Conservation (WQ&C) grants. NMDA receives two line-items in its annual budget reserved to support SWCDs, with the SWCC having discretion over how this funding is awarded and allocated. The SWCC approves any changes to the Point System worksheet as well as providing direction to NMDA on the implementation of this program, which is approximately $819,000 per year. Originally, the operational funding was distributed equally then a point system was later implemented to incentivize activity and compliance. This early point system was very rigid in its distribution, with several specific categories which were combined into the current categories observed today, with a few changes. Commissioner Sharp mentioned the Point System worksheet includes administrative compliance, and asked if districts are verified to be in compliance for a mill levy before being approved by the SWCC. As there are statutory requirements associated with being able to implement a mill levy, the SWCC would need an indefensible position if they were to be challenged on it. Additional research will be required on this issue with the possiblility of contacting the NMSU Board of Regents attorney for guidance.
- NMDA's role under the SWCD Act includes SWCD specialists acting as representatives of NMDA and liasons assigned to SWCDs. There are currently four NMDA specialists for the 47 SWCDs. Commissioner Lopez suggested a rotational meeting schedule for the NMDA specialists to attend monthly district

meetings and were available to follow up after each monthly meeting to address any questions or concerns a district might have before the next meeting. Mr. Henkels thanked Commissioner Lopez for his suggestion and agreed that good communication should exist between the specialists and SWCDs, clarifying the specialists' top priority is to attend as many district monthly meetings in-person but conflicts do occur as many districts schedule their meetings at about the same time and may need to alternate districts each month.

- Rebecca Dow (State Legislator for District 38) asked if NMDA has a log of the time served for each of the assigned staff and the designated contact for the SWCC. Mr. Henkels responded Gaby Hernandez was the point of contact last year and, as part of their cross-training, Lourdes Saenz is the point of contact for this year. The NMDA team has access to the SWCC email, have redundancies in place to avoid overlooking anything, and of course people can contact Mr. Henkels for any issues they wish to bring to his attention. NMDA serves the SWCC in providing administrative support, coordinate meetings with direction from the Chair, budget for SWCC operational costs, delegated responsibilities such as Point System funding for SWCD operations and WQ&C Grants, maintaining records, and providing other administrative or clerical assistance upon request of the SWCC.
- Commissioner Garcia noted the SWCC approves the proposed appointed supervisors which may or may not submit supporting qualification documents for the proposed candidate, districts should submit input on why they support that candidate as an appointed supervisor.
- In addition, mill levies are approved without any real input. Commissioner Garcia proposed to request a statement from the district for the SWCC to review before making a decision to approve or deny it in case they are not in compliance and not just "rubber stamp" an approval. Chair Vigil clarified these mill levies need to go out for referendum and are voted upon by the local taxpayers of that district. If it is not passed by the local voters, the SWCC does not have any input

on the mill levy at that point. Commissioner Sharp agreed but shared a concern on mill levies being "rubber stamped" for approval, remaining unsure that districts are in compliance in order to have a mill levy on the ballot and whether it is the responsiblility of the SWCC or DFA. An important question that needs to be answered is if there is an audit component in order to implement a mill levy. The SWCC should have that information before voting on mill levies, setting aside a district that is not in compliance. Commissioner Glass agreed, the Point System is the tool to ensure districts requesting a mill levy approval are in compliance with at least the basic requirements. More in-depth information is needed in case an approval is challenged, the SWCC confirmed the district was compliant with their requirements under the Statute.

- Commissioner Sharp acknowledged Mr. Henkels' training presentation is a great start for a concise PPG, which can be referenced by the SWCC and the public. More in-depth information is needed in case an approval is challenged, the SWCC confirmed the district was compliant with their requirements under the Statute. Commissioner Glass referenced the NMDA specialists' duties include promote collaboration between districts and asked whose responsibility is it to advise or resolve inter or intra-district conflicts. The Statute does not give Commissioners much ability to intervene in these matters, and it may fall to NMDA specialists to facilitate communication between districts. Commissioner Sharp agreed, stating a representative from the NMDOJ would be valuable in these matters to be able to state whether the SWCC would be able to intervene in specific matters. A subject that appeared in the training was removing a district supervisor from their position for malfeasance. Commissioner Sharp asked how a supervisor's malfeasance is brought to the attention of the SWCC. Commissioner Garcia responded supervisor malfeasance, such as missing three or more monthly meetings, should be determined and resolved at the district level. If the issue is brought to the SWCC, it would be for an escalated issue, signifying the district has failed and needs additional help. Commissioner Sharp could see how this

hypothetical issue would be brought before the SWCC and legal advice would be useful, citing a distinct need for support from the NMDOJ for this type of issue. Commissioner Lopez stated there was no information in the training that covers statutory requirements or obligations, asking if the SWCC would be the responsible party in the case of an audit or to ensure districts are compliant with the law. Commissioner Sharp agreed the Point System would be a good document to verify district compliance, asking if the SWCC is unduly requesting NMDA to take on additional roles and provide verification for district compliance. At 11:38 am, Commissioner Garcia stated he will step away and will return after lunch.

- Mr. Henkels stated he can provide more in depth information on the mill levy issue for the next SWCC meeting in October and begin drafting a procedure guidelines document. Commissioner Sharp requested the document be sent a few weeks in advance in order to review it and provide comments. Chair Vigil thanked everyone for their input, noting further discussion on this item at the next October meeting.

5. SWCC Budget: Mr. Henkels stated that the operating budget for the SWCC was addressed in the presentation and covers the cost of hosting in-person meetings and commissioner travel reimbursement per the Per Diem and Mileage Act and NMSU business procedures. For FY27, $5,000 is allocated in NMDA budget for SWCC business. The budget can be increased in FY28, if needed for additional SWCC travel or business, after a review of this fiscal year's expenses. Chair Vigil stated $5,000 will not cover all costs as a recent reimbursement for attending a two-week WQCC hearing was $2,000. In previous years, this budgeted amount was sufficient as only Chair Vigil had requested travel reimbursement for attending WQCC meetings. Chair Vigil also stated he has not received double reimbursement for attending WQCC meetings from Otero SWCD or NMDA. Mr. Henkels assured the SWCC if they wish to attend more meetings on SWCC business this year, NMDA has funding available for reimbursement, but there has not been a need for a separate travel budget. Commissioner Sharp replied he would

like to see increased budget of about $500,000, which is average based on other unnamed boards and commissions across the state. If the SWCC is allowed to build a budget within their purview, a possibility would be to hire one person per region to assist with district compliance as the SWCDs do not have the capacity. It would be a heavy task if this was solely placed on the job duties of the NMDA Specialists. If personnel were hired to help fill the gap in the capacity-building funding, they would provide support and assistance to the district employees through online support and in-person assistance to reach audit compliance and grant reporting. Not all districts would need this additional assistance, but some districts would take advantage of this opportunity. Commissioner Sharp added a need to know the associated cost of this possible budget item for specialized regional employees, district impact, and lobby the state legislature for this increased budget in this upcoming legislative session or across several legislative sessions. Chair Vigil replied the SWCC has gone to the legislature in previous years and received additional funding, it may not be in the SWCC's purview to hire additional administrative assistance. Mr. Henkels stated NMDA does not currently have this type of dedicated assistance on hand, and if the SWCC would like to move forward with this, they may need to go to legislation for this type of appropriation. Commissioner Lopez agreed with Chair Vigil and added the districts are trying to stay in compliance and use money effectively. Brenda Smythe (Central Tri-County SWCD District Manager and New Mexico Conservation District Employees Treasurer) spoke on the issue, stating NMCDE is already looking into this proposed idea as they previously provided a regional employee mentorship program for employee training and support. NMCDE is available to help districts and ready to assist. Commissioner Sharp thanked Ms. Smythe and clarified there is a need for specialized additional administrative assistance, the SWCC is the right entity to provide this opportunity. NMDA Specialists are not expected to provide accounting or other specialized services; this requires a plan of action to provide a higher level of assistance to the constituents. Commissioner Glass noted the time is noon. Commissioner Sharp stepped away to attend another meeting. Chair Vigil announced a twenty-minute break. Commissioner Garcia returned and the meeting was

reconvened at 12:27 pm. Chair Vigil announced the SWCC still has a quorum with the absence of Commissioner Sharp.

6. 2028 Point System Worksheet Review/Potential Changes: Katie Kruthaupt (NMDA) presented the FY27 Point System Worksheet, which is identical to the previous FY26 worksheet as the SWCC did not have any changes. NMDA utilizes a check sheet to maintain records of district submissions for the first five worksheet items: Open Meetings Act Resolution, number of board meetings within the fiscal year with a quorum present, completed Point System worksheet, annual budget, and annual report of activities. The SWCDs must submit the requested documents listed on the first six items by July 15th to the SWCC email address. A district that does not submit the completed worksheet with supporting documentation by July 30th will result in the district receiving a reduced total of $500 in operations funding. Chair Vigil asked if a district is missing any of the six items, which are required by law, will they still receive any base funding. Ms. Kruthaupt stated they will lose the base funding but may still be eligible to receive funding for the activities portion of the worksheet (items 7-11). Commissioner Sharp rejoined the meeting at 12:35 pm. Mr. Henkels clarified that the top five items are currently worth $2,500 in base funding and works to incentivize districts to comply with the law. In the previous June meeting, NMDA recommended increasing the base funding to at least $5,000 to place more weight for legal compliance rather than the activities portion. If the SWCC would prefer only selecting the top five required items to receive any funding, it would affect how strictly the worksheets would be graded. In this scenario, a district without a mill levy that slightly misses one of the required items might lose all the base funding or it would depend on what the SWCC decides would be the best policy. Chair Vigil commented there should be penalties for legal non-compliance. If the base funding amount is increased, non-compliant districts should be able to claim the points for the other base funding items of which they are compliant. Commissioner Glass revisited earlier discussions suggesting that the SWCC predicates mill levy approval based on the Point System worksheet, which is different than the

current discussion of base funding. The worksheet should be broadly applied for district funding to force them to at least comply with their statutory obligations. If they do not complete the first five items, they should not receive any base funding or mill levy approval. The Point System worksheet is a powerful tool for the SWCC to force districts into compliance and fulfill their obligations to constituents. Commissioner Sharp agreed with Commissioner Glass, on the condition that the SWCC provides the resources to reach compliance. If districts don't use offered resources, punitive action can be taken. Ms. Smythe asked the SWCC if they agree to this, will this include all the base funding for the first five items. In previous years, an issue arose in which districts were doing more paperwork in submitting reports to DFA as well as the SWCC. If all funding is placed with the base funding, there is concern that districts will dismiss the other funding and not complete any critical outreach activities. Commissioner Sharp commented that the SWCC should try to reach a balance in compliance and activities. While duplicate reporting is not ideal, there should be a way to work with DFA to obtain the reporting information. Commissioner Glass also agreed with Commissioner Sharp in providing support to the districts, elected or appointed district officials are still required by statute to ensure district is in compliance. Joshua Smith (Dona Ana SWCD Chair, National Association of Conservation Districts Southwest Region Executive Board Member, and New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts President) shared concerns that funding has been awarded to entities that are not in compliance with the law and going forward the first five items should be a requisite for any funding. Commissioner Glass agreed, reiterating the worksheet is a tool to tie the point system to the districts' statutory responsibilities and those not in compliance should not receive taxpayer funds. Debbie Hughes (NMACD) stated districts not in compliance will still receive funds through the mill levy approved by the SWCC. Commissioner Glass commented that the SWCC has the responsibility of certifying and providing the approved mill levy rates to DFA and asked about this process. Ms. Depner clarified that the SWCC approves the mill levy resolutions on the annual June agenda, and a memo is sent to DFA on behalf of the SWCC listing the approved district mill levy rates. Dean Bruce (NMDA) explained the

second half of the point system worksheet, where the district details the activities that took place throughout the year to promote to the district mission of conservation. A maximum amount of 100 points can be earned for these remaining five items. The district scores themselves based on these activities, and the NMDA Specialists also score the district's worksheet. Commissioner Sharp thanked Mr. Bruce and asked if all specialists are involved in the grading process. Mr. Bruce clarified that the district submits supporting documentation on their activities and the specialists ensure they are consistent with grading across the board. Mr. Henkels added that each specialist grades their assigned districts, and NMDA Agricultural Programs and Resources (APR) Division meets to grade any worksheets that the specialists are unsure of how to grade an item. Commissioner Sharp agreed that this process is reasonable and proposed the SWCC consider modeling the review process after the WQC Grant and have a Commissioner as part of the final review process for any worksheets the specialists are unsure of without overreaching in the relationship between specialists and districts. Mr. Henkels asked if the SWCC agrees with the FY27 worksheet for now and continue with the check sheet to see how the submitted materials are tracked. Commissioner Lopez expressed a pass/fail process for the first five items.

Commissioner Sharp noted the Commissioners have expressed their opinion on placing weight on the base funding items and encourages NMDA to create a Standard Operations of Guidance (SOG) for future intent and transparency on the Point System. Commissioner Glass requested NMDA include a small rework of the FY27 worksheet description for the first five items, to place emphasis on the weight of these prerequisite items that are required to receive any funding, and the SWCC will need to approve the FY27 worksheet at the upcoming October meeting. Commissioner Sharp requested the Commissioners provide comments at the next meeting to avoid a breach of the Open Meetings Act. Ms. Depner requested any comments from individuals be submitted to the SWCC email address, SWCC@nmda.nmsu.edu, without including all Commissioners to avoid a rolling quorum. Commissioner Sharp noted this item will need to be on next month's agenda. Commissioner Glass commented that the proposed worksheet change is

minor and likes the flexibility of the activity items as opposed to prior years. A statement should be added to the form, if compliance is not demonstrated with first five items then points will not be ranked on any of the activity items. Districts with any comments on the FY27 Point System worksheet can do so at the next meeting in October. Chair Vigil stated that the check sheet can be reviewed at the next meeting.

7. SWCD training/requirements: Jennifer Hopper (NMACD) reported NMACD and NMDA have partnered to develop and provide training for the districts. A copy of the report was submitted to the SWCC-see attached. Commissioner Garcia commended Ms. Hopper and NMACD for all their training and materials, recommending all supervisors to take this training. Chair Vigil also acknowledged and appreciated the training provided.

8. Proposed SWCC January Meeting in Santa Fe: Mr. Henkels requested the SWCC determine the timing of the in-person January meeting to begin planning ahead of the legislative session and booking meeting facilities. The previously discussed meeting schedule includes the October meeting during the NMACD conference, followed by a January meeting, another in March, then the June meeting. Chair Vigil asked Ms. Hughes if a date had been selected yet for SWCD Day at the Legislature. Ms. Hughes stated she has applied for the potential meeting dates February 15-17, which includes Ag Fest Day, but the actual date will be selected by the Legislature. A recommended meeting location is the Hotel Santa Fe, as they offer government rates and meeting rooms. Once Ms. Hughes receives confirmation of the selected meeting date for the January/February meeting, Mr. Henkels will contact the Commissioners to confirm their attendance for a quorum and start planning for a location. Chair Vigil requested the January/February meeting take place in the morning on the day of Ag Fest.

Old Business

9. Response to Discussion of Salado SWCD and Quemado SWCD Land Use Plan contracts

with Catena Environmental: Gabriella Coughlin (owner of Catena Environmental LLC) introduced herself, addressing the allegations of non-delivery of a land use plan from Salado and Quemado SWCDs as well similar contract issues with Valencia SWCD. Ms. Coughlin described contract and management differences between Ciudad SWCD as opposed to other districts that had employed her company. Resigning from the Ciudad SWCD board allowed for an opportunity to better serve well-managed districts as a contractor under Catena Environmental LLC in accordance with federal, state, and local standards. Ms. Coughlin stated she looks forward to attending future SWCC meetings to better understand the SWCC's roles and how they advance SWCDs in the state and requested mandatory training courses be completed by SWCDs before serving their communities.

Commissioner Sharp thanked Ms. Coughlin on her presentation, clarifying that the SWCC encouraged districts to contact judicial authorities such as the NMDOJ. Relating to the SWCC's fiduciary or statutory authority to be able to intervene in this type of situation, Commissioner Sharp cautioned the SWCC to proceed cautiously on this issue. Agreeing that mandatory training is necessary, Commissioner Sharp declined to intervene on this issue. Chair Vigil agreed, as this issue was originally brought to SWCC as a public comment item at the last meeting by Salado and Quemado SWCDs. Unless the districts or Ms. Coughlin decide to pursue this issue, the SWCC will not pursue this issue. Ms. Coughlin stated she has had to dismiss several unpaid invoices for completed deliverables and has chosen to move past this matter. Commissioner Glass expressed a feeling of loss for Ms. Coughlin's remarkable experience from the Ciudad SWCD board, agreeing that all districts require a lot of training, especially on procurement, and thanked her for her service to Ciudad SWCD as well as other districts throughout the state.

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

10. Commissioners: Commissioner Glass (Region 1) reported Ciudad and Coronado SWCDs are deeply involved in regional water planning effort from Interstate Stream SWCC

(ISC) and are working through the Mid-Region Council of Governments Water Resources Board. Coronado SWCD is also working on water mitigation plan for the Las Huertas Canyon while Cuba SWCD is working on a cost share program for noxious weeds, hazardous fuels, and healthy soils. San Juan SWCD has two Requests for Proposal (RFPs) in effect for the Combs Fire Restoration and aerial roadside application. Ciudad SWCD unveiled a new logo on their website, received a New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute (WRRI) grant for the East Mountains, and are planning for the 2027 Land and Water Summit. Valencia SWCD are continuing work on the Whitfield administration building and Abajo conservation area, with a keyline plowing and seeding workshop scheduled for the end of September.

Commissioner Garcia reported Region 2 had a successful meeting in July with representatives from Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), NMDA, and NMACD present. Good feedback was received from a working group meeting that was held recently for some of the region 2 districts. At the Region 2 meeting, Marcos Valdez (East Rio Arriba SWCD District Manager), presented a resolution to discuss the potential high cost of high tunnels started by the County Assessor of Santa Fe County.

Commissioner Lopez (Region 4) reported Colfax SWCD held a local working group meeting. Positive points from this meeting included WRRI grants where staff support the grant process and larger grant amounts up to $300,000. Negative points included the sole option of reimbursement which does not work for smaller districts, resulting in some districts taking out loans to pay contracts, shorter project execution timeframes, various bills requiring payment all at one time instead of throughout the fiscal year, and Net 30 reimbursements. Commissioner Lopez described the differences between WRRI and NMDA grants, making the SWCC aware of the various difficulties and concerns encountered by Colfax SWCD.

Chair Vigil (Region 6) reported only consistently hearing from Upper Hondo SWCD and the flooding issues in their area, resolving to improve communication with the other districts in the region.

Commissioner Sharp asked Mr. Henkels if a district can receive grant funding

immediately after signing a contract or Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with NMDA. Mr. Henkels stated the standard procedure of cost reimbursement follows NMSU policy as fiscal agent for NMDA. A district cannot receive reimbursement before paying contractors. Commissioner Sharp stated NMDA and NMSU should update their policies to those of other state agencies, such as DFA, where districts receive reimbursement first to pay contractors and provide proof of payment later.

11. Governor's Office: none
12. New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA): Max Henkels reported SWCD Specialist, Miles Mitchell, left NMDA last month. Specialist and Healthy Soil Program (HSP) co-lead, Dean Bruce, will be assisting with the districts in Eastern New Mexico as interim specialist for this area. For FY27, Lourdes Saenz will be the point of contact for the SWCC. The FY27 Point System funds were just dispersed for the FY26 activities, districts with full points earned a total of approximately $29,000. The Capacity Building Funding Opportunity has been fully obligated; all 47 districts have a contract in place for either the full or near full amount of $160,000. Any districts experiencing hardships with invoices or require a budget modification should contact NMDA. Katie Crayton (NMDA) displayed the QR code to register for the upcoming Healthy Soil Conference in Albuquerque on October 14-15, 2026. The registration link and tentative agenda are also available on the HSP webpage. This conference will be a hybrid event, offering in-person attendance for a registration fee of $25 with provided 3 meals or online attendance with free registration. The first day of the conference will be an all-day event, featuring an in-depth discussion of the five soil health principles with farmers and ranchers as speakers. The second day will take place at Gutiérrez-Hubbell House, offering lessons on how to measure their soil with different methods, concluding at noon. NRCS will have representation at this conference with Jim Armendariz and Jason Mondragon-Martin. Ms. Crayton thanked the SWCC for their work as reviewers for the Healthy Soil Program, and will continue to invite their participation, advice, and support. Mr. Henkels also reported the Noxious Weed List for the State is being updated for the

first time since 2020. An online survey has been sent to the districts and other noxious weed partners on September 9, 2026. Responses from the survey will help NMDA update the list and also includes additional questions to help program strategic planning in the future.

13. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): Xavier Montoya reported NRCS is down to 112 employees in the state. These employees continue to work despite being overextended and are thankful for supporting partnerships with NMACD and NMDA. Thirty-eight critical vacancies, most of which will be at a field level, will possibly open in early October to help increase their workforce. NRCS was selected to take part in a pilot program called Impact 2.0 to help improve the management of programs, administration, and contacts. The entire state of New Mexico will be a pilot participant for this program, changing grant funding from the current numerical rankings to prioritizing issues at a local level, focusing on statutes and regulations. NRCS will begin their state training towards the end of October or the start of November to prepare employees as they continue to move forward. With the loss of employees in the past year, some teams will be realigned at the beginning of October to decide who will be the district conservationist.

14. Forest Service: none
15. Farm Service Agency: none
16. New Mexico Environment Department (NMED): none
17. Water Quality Control SWCC (WQCC): Chair Vigil reported the WQCC had just finished a long two-week training session, and the Triennial Review will be in October.
18. New Mexico Mining SWCC: none
19. National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD): Joshua Smith announced the executive director/CEO, Jeremy Peters, resigned and will continue his duties until the end of September. Laura Wood, former Government Affairs Director for NACD will be the interim CEO while searching for a replacement through a nationwide CEO hiring

process. The NACD annual meeting will be on February 6-10, 2027, in Las Vegas, Nevada.

20. New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts (NMACD): Debbie Hughes suggested including the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on future agendas as they did with the Forest Services. Ms. Hughes introduced Supervisory Rangeland Management Specialist, Juan Gamon, from the Las Cruces BLM District Office. Mr. Gamon and several other BLM employees will be present on the last day of the NMACD annual meeting, offering an opportunity for districts to meet with BLM and discuss potential projects or sponsorships. Ms. Hughes provided a staffing update for the TSP Program which currently has 32 employees and is looking to hire additional staff after December. Some of the funding NMACD received is used for archaeological work, contracting with 11 different firms that assist with issues such as a large archaeological survey. With assistance from DFA through the New Mexico Trust Foundation, NMACD will not have to go out for RFP to offer 5 different technical trainings. A request for an additional $10 million in recurring legislative funding will be discussed at the next board meeting. If they could receive $9 million in recurring funds in addition to what is already included in the NMDA budget, this would place each district at $200,000 in recurring funds, with $1 million that could be used for additional district training, legal assistance, or the proposed specialized employees mentioned earlier in this meeting. Commissioner Glass asked if $200,000 in base funding will push the districts into a higher tier such as Tier 3 or 4. Going from Tier 2 to Tier 3 sees a jump from $7,000 to $15,000 in audit expenses. Ms. Hughes replied districts would need to include this audit expense as part of their budget. Ms. Hughes attended committee meetings with Mr. Henkels, other state agencies and non-profits to discuss how to do more pre-fire work as well as improvements to watersheds and rivers. One of the things learned is DFA's process of paying when they receive the invoice or contract rather than paying when it is completed and have found a way to circumvent the contracting process through the Community Trust Foundation. Ms. Hughes asked why other state agencies cannot adopt DFA's

policy. Commissioner Sharp agreed.

21. New Mexico Coalition of Conservation Districts (NMCCD): none, Ms. Dow stated this organization has been dissolved.
22. NMSU College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES): none
23. New Mexico Conservation District Employees (NMCDE): Gerald Romero, president, acknowledged a hard copy of the report was submitted to the SWCC and did not present this report due to time constraints. See attached.
24. Chair Vigil thanked the attendees and announced the next meeting will be on October 19, 2026, during the NMACD Annual Conference.
25. Meeting adjourned at 2:31 pm.