



Santa Cruz Natural Resource Conservation District

Santa Cruz Regular Meeting December 2, 2020 Final Minutes

Location: Teleconference: (515) 604-9099, access code: 645264651

Board Supervisors & Clerk: Stephen Williams, Daniel Bell, Bill Schock, Fox Johnson (Absent), Andy Jackson, and Chris Postel (Clerk).

Agencies & Guests: Alisha Phipps & Brett Myers (Natural Resource Conservation Service -NRCS), and Josh Grace (Arizona State Land Department - ASLD).

Called to Order: 1:19 pm

Review/Approve September 23 Minutes: The minutes were reviewed. Bill Schock suggested to amend vote count from 3-0 to 4-0. It was moved by Dan Bell to approve the minutes as amended. Bill Schock seconded it. The motion carried unanimously. 4-0.

Treasurer's Report (See Attached Report): Per Dan, the checking account balances are: \$12,717.62 (State), \$3,315.26 (Education Center) and \$120,018.97 (Local). Stephen Williams contacted Deborah Smith (AACD) and the dues can be split between conservation education and administration. Bill Schock moved to accept and file the Treasurer's reports. Andy Jackson seconded it. The motion passed unanimously. 4-0.

Administration Update (See Attached Invoice): The Clerk's invoice for October-November was reviewed. It was moved by Dan Bell to approve the invoice, \$894.15. Bill Schock seconded it. The motion carried unanimously, 4-0.

Agency Updates:

Arizona State Land Department (Josh Grace): A Grazing questionnaire was sent to the lessees by email and mail. Stephen Williams asked if the grazing fees have been updated. Josh will find out.

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS – Alisha Phipps- See attached report): Per Alisha, the Team Lead position is now open. The Team Lead position replaces what was known as District Conservationist. A new Team Lead could be hired by February and would be responsible for the Tucson, Sells and Douglas offices. Project funding would be shared across these offices. Per Brett Myers, the reorganization won't be implemented until the team leads are hired. Bill asked for more explanation on the NRCS reorganization. Per Alisha, Ralph Ware has 24 direct reports which will be changed to 8 reports. These 8 team leaders will focus on planning and conservation. Alvaro Campos is still serving with the Army National Guard until 12/31/2020. Per Alisha, the Local Work Group meeting was held on October 26.

OLD BUSINESS

Jim Koweek MOA (Range Monitoring): Bill Schock asked if it would be possible to include utilization with the range monitoring protocol. Per Alisha Phipps, it can be done but it will be hard to measure due to the drought, there has not been any regrowth. Per Andy Jackson, his pastures don't have any

grass; so, he is feeding hay. Brett Myers will assist with providing site specific explanation for judging utilization.

NEW BUSINESS

Review & Approve NRCS MOA: Per Stephen Williams, the MOA was tabled last meeting. Bill Schock moved un-table the MOA. Andy Jackson seconded it. The motion carried unanimously, 4-0. This MOA is the new rules of the road for NRCS per instructions from the headquarters office in Washington, D.C. The Board expressed concern that the MOA references federal guidelines and regulations (civil rights, title 440, etc.) that the Districts will have to comply with and that some of the language is very unclear. The NRCDs are small organizations that would take on a liability to comply with this MOA. Per Alisha, the MOA functions as a plan. NRCS will not be checking to see if Districts are not meeting obligations. The MOA is based on the premise that the parties to the Agreement agree that locally led, voluntary conservation is driven by natural resource conservation needs, rather than by programs. Previous Agreements contained similar language. Per Dan Bell, the District is already doing what is in the MOA. Dan Bell moved to approve the MOA. Stephen Williams seconded it. The motion carried, 3-1. The Supervisors need to sign & email Appendix B to the Clerk. Stephen Williams will sign the MOA documents.

Supervisor & Clerk Reports:

- Dan Bell: No rain is causing tough conditions. The Covid funding expires soon, contact the FSA Willcox office if you are interested. The Forest Service is not monitoring this year due to Covid and office restrictions.
- Bill Schock: He just received a new drought map. Both Dan & Bill's ranch are in extreme-drought but Bill Brake's ranch is not. The Water Protection Fund is not funding grants this year. Juniper-Silt dams are a new NRCS practice on the Upper Verde. Quail Forever inspected the one rock dams that they built on his ranch and more dams are planned to be built. He received an email from Kathy Chavez (ADEQ) regarding soliciting comments on Grazing Best Management Practices. He will forward this email to the board.
- Andy Jackson: If vegetation on his ranch is not irrigated, it is dead. He's selling off some cattle.
- Chris Postel: He is planning to work on a Winter newsletter and the website.
- Stephen Williams: He participated in the NRCS Local Work Group on October 26. The focus was on range and pasture irrigation, same as last year. He attended the Coronado National Forest web meeting on October 27 on grazing and invasive species. The Sentinel Landscape was awarded funding for the Forest Service and NRCS to do landscape scale projects. Ashley Wright (Cooperative Extension) has volunteered to write a drought article that could be used in the Winter newsletter.

Call to the Public: None

Adjourn: The Meeting adjourned at 2:36 pm. Stephen Williams moved to adjourn the meeting. Bill Schock seconded it. The motion carried unanimously, 4-0

Next meeting on February 24, 2021 at 1:15 p.m.

Final Minutes Submitted by: Chris Postel, Santa Cruz NRCD Clerk

Date: February 24, 2021

Approval of Minutes: _____

Date: _____