



# Santa Cruz Natural Resource Conservation District

Santa Cruz Regular Meeting      February 24, 2021      Final Minutes

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

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

Agencies & Guests: Alisha Phipps, Brett Myers & Tom Reis (Natural Resource Conservation Service -NRCS), Mary Darling (Darling Geomatics), Sarah Gandaria (Arizona Game & Fish Department - AGFD), Jim Koweek (AZ Revegetation & Monitoring), and Josh Grace (Arizona State Land Department - ASLD).

Called to Order: 1:21 pm

Huachuca Water Umbel Downlisting Petition Plan (Mary Darling – See Attached PDF): Mary is looking for help to survey along waterways in Cochise, Santa Cruz, and Pima Counties. She wants to work with the NRCDs using the ranchers-farmers' eyes-ears to gather data. They would take pictures and record location information. The Umbel looks like green beans with their aquatic roots in the water. The Umbel moves from known locations when its habitat is scoured by floods. Robert Schmalzel's observations are that cows do not eat the Umbel. The San Rafael Valley is the main area of occurrence but the Umbel can be found in the Santa Cruz river, Sonoita Creek, and Cienega Creek. The US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) can plant ½ acre in 3 places to help meet the downlisting criteria. She is still preparing the survey form which can be distributed to the Santa Cruz NRCD cooperators. Then, the data would be given to Mary. Per Mary, USFWS is not getting into the field due to Covid and they also must travel with Border Patrol for security. This effort would require very little cost due to using volunteer efforts of local citizens. Per Stephen, his concern is that formal action by NRCDs would be subject to Open Meeting laws. The alternative is to have NRCD cooperators act in a capacity as private citizens and pass survey data to Mary for her follow up. Mary's primary concern is gathering helpful data. Per Bill Schock, the Umbel is an issue in the Sentinel Landscape due to it being listed as an endangered species. Stephen will serve as a private citizen in further discussions with other private citizens and provide updates to the Board about Umbel data gathering.

Review/Approve December 2 Minutes: The minutes were reviewed. It was moved by Andy Jackson to approve the minutes as amended. Bill Schock seconded it. The motion carried unanimously. 3-0.

Treasurer's Report (See Attached Report): Per the Clerk, the checking account balances have not changed much since the December report. Bill Schock was wondering why the Ed Center insurance seemed high, \$921. The Clerk will forward his question to Dan Bell. Andy Jackson moved to accept and file the Treasurer's reports. Bill Schock seconded it. The motion passed unanimously. 3-0.

Administration Update (See Attached Invoice): The Clerk's invoice for December-January was reviewed. It was moved by Bill Schock to approve the invoice, \$819.04. Andy Jackson seconded it. The motion carried unanimously, 3-0.

Agency Updates:

NRCS (Alisha Phipps and Tom Reis – See Report): There are no new conservation plans pending. In terms of EQIP, 1 application is being processed from the Santa Cruz NRCD (rangeland). \$548,498 in funds are available for the Tucson and Douglas offices. Based on the local workgroup meeting, these funds will focus on water development, irrigation efficiency and brush management. The NRCS reorganization is done and the Team 7 consists of the Sells, Tucson and Douglas offices. Tom Reis is the new supervisor and has been with NRCS for over 20 years. Per Tom Reis, he is currently filling vacancies for engineers and field planners.

Arizona Game and Fish (Sarah Gandaria See Attached Update): Alex Smallwood is now the Wildlife Manager for GMU37A. The Landowner Relations Program currently is planning for next fiscal year's projects, habitat improvements & recreational access. So, any rancher and farmer interested in partnering will need to contact her prior to July 10th to have their projects reviewed on the July 16th ranking deadline. Karen Klima has taken a position in the Phoenix office and there are temporary rotating personnel filling in her old position.

Arizona State Land Department (ASLD - Josh Grace): The ASLD grazing fee is \$2.41/aum and a sublease surcharge of \$.60. The rental bills are being prepared and should be out in 2 weeks. He is working on permits and water projects. Stephen inquired about the status of a draft contract between the NRCDs and the Natural Resources Conservation Workshop for Arizona Youth (NRCWAY). Josh drafted a contract document that he will send to Stephen. Since the Arizona Section of the Society for Range Management (AZSRM) staffs and conducts NRCWAY, the Parties to the contract will be Santa Cruz NRCD and AZSRM. Per the Clerk, Ed Center funding is being received quarterly and recommended that the fund distributions should continue on a quarterly basis versus on an annual basis.

OLD BUSINESS None.

### NEW BUSINESS

Monitoring Update & Invoice (See Attached Report): Alisha Phipps presented the monitoring report. The Koweek invoice was reviewed. It was moved by Bill Schock to approve the invoice for \$6,000. Andy Jackson seconded it. The motion carried unanimously, 3-0. Per Jim Koweek, it's still horribly dry but we are in better shape than the areas south and east of us. It is very crispy, even the Juniper are dying. Per Alisha, the data hadn't changed significantly. We had decent rain during last spring and last year's monsoon. The perennial grasses have not had significant mortality yet, but are on the verge of dying. The perennial grass needs at least 2.5 inches of rain during the winter to keep its root system alive.

Congressional Border Tour & Dinner: Per Bill Schock, he attended the event. Nine US Congressman attended, meeting at the Bell Ranch. They saw the new wall construction. Dan Bell and Jim Chilton provided details about the construction. Also, new patrol roads have been built. During the dinner Dan Bell, Bill Schock, Jim Chilton, Cindy Copping and Ted Noon talked about their individual border experiences.

District Correspondence & Mail Process: Tabled until next meeting.

### Supervisor & Clerk Reports:

- Andy Jackson: Not much to report, it's dry. He is doing less meetings and social interactions.

- Bill Schock: He is looking for Spike, vendors are out. Sheriff Hathaway, the new Sheriff, is doing more outreach and has met with other County Sheriffs to discuss what to do with apprehended illegal aliens. To provide more coverage and a faster response time, a deputy training course is available to citizens that would enable them to assist the County Sheriff Deputies. Ralph Quiros, a local rancher, has sick cows (8 out of 20 have died). They foam at the mouth and run into the corrals. A cow has been taken to UofA for diagnostics. These are cows have been at his ranch for a while.
- Stephen Williams: Bill Brake was named the Range Manager of the Year by the Arizona Section of the Society of Range Management. In February, he attended the AACD Range & Forestry committee phone call. A proposed Game and Fish Department rule to outlaw passive game cameras was discussed. Stephanie Smallhouse (Arizona Farm Bureau President) discussed the BLM Archeological Programmatic Agreement. It's not perfect and they have been working on it for 3 years. Frank Krentz attended the national NACD meeting. He reported a resolution was proposed by the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts to raise the cost share coverage for the NRCS Conservation Easement (CE) program from 50% to 80%. Since the Arizona Association has no resolutions about CEs, he could not take a position on behalf of the State Association. NRCWAY is not having a camp this year. A contract will be required for the NRCDs to give donations and provide scholarships.
- Chris Postel: He attended the border dinner, about 35 people were there. He will work on the Winter newsletter, the website and will research the cost/use of Teleconferencing programs.

Call to the Public: None

Adjourn: The Meeting adjourned at 2:43 pm. Bill Schock moved to adjourn the meeting. Andy Jackson seconded it. The motion carried unanimously, 3-0

Next meeting on April 21, 2021 at 1:15 p.m.

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

Date: April 21, 2021

Approval of Minutes: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_