



# Santa Cruz Natural Resource Conservation District

Santa Cruz Regular Meeting      September 21, 2021      Final Minutes

Location: Wild Horse Restaurant, Patagonia, AZ

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

Agencies & Guests: Brooke Gladden (Arizona Association of Conservation Districts (AACD)), Tom Reis and Yissel Martinez (NRCS).

Called to Order: 12:05 pm

Review/Approve July 14, 2021 Minutes: The minutes were reviewed. It was moved by Andy Jackson to approve the minutes. Dan Bell seconded it. The motion carried unanimously. 3-0.

Treasurer's Report (See Attached Report): Per Dan, the checking account balances are: \$19,214.31 (State), \$3,715.76 (Education Center) and \$120,161.97 (Local). Andy Jackson moved to accept and file the Treasurer's reports. Stephen Williams seconded it. The motion passed unanimously. 3-0.

Administration Update (See Attached Invoice): The Clerk's total time is estimated to be 54.5 hours (July to September). It was moved by Andy Jackson to approve the invoice for up to \$1,394.42 for July, August, and September work. Dan Bell seconded it. The motion carried unanimously, 3-0.

Ed Center Update (Dean Fish): Per Dean, the garden area at the Santa Fe Ranch was cleared of weeds. The Nogales Water Festival was virtual due to COVID. Santa Fe Ranch visits could begin in the fall, but are definitely planned for the spring time. Dean is on the board of the Los Charros Foundation. The Foundation provides scholarships for rural students from Cochise, Santa Cruz, and Pima counties. They have refined the application requirements and the process. The SC NRCD could use their format and provide an annual amount for scholarships. An agenda item for SC NRCD Scholarships will be added for the next meeting. A sign "SC NRCD Ed Center" was suggested for placement at the Santa Ranch.

## AGENCY UPDATES

NRCS (See Attached Report): Tom Reis is the Team Leader for Team 7 and has been with NRCS for 24 years. Team 7 consists of the Tucson, Douglas and Sells offices. They are planning to re-model the Plant & Materials Center for additional work space. Working with AACD & ASLD, Cultural Resources is still an issue and they are planning to hire a contractor.

### EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentive Program)

- Arizona NRCS Contracts approved for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021:  
134 Contracts, Totaling \$13,330,104 in funding allocations
- Team 7 Contracts approved for FY 2021:  
35 Contracts, Comprising 26% of the State's workload, \$2,770,870 in funding allocations
- Tucson Field Office Workload – Active contracts:  
28 Contracts (27 EQIP, 1 CSP), Totaling \$2,073,402 in funding allocations

## Personnel

- Yissel Martinez is the new Soil Conservationist in Tucson. Yissel was born and raised in the small agricultural town of Porterville, California. She worked and interned on crop and livestock farms around the area. She was raised in a family of farmers where she learned of the challenges and decisions they must make when managing their operation. She hopes that this understanding will allow her to effectively support farmers while moving forward with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) goals. Yissel earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems from the University of California, Davis (UC Davis). During her time at UC Davis, Yissel gained several professional experiences including being a Viticulture Technician for a private vineyard in Napa, an E.A.R.T.H University intern in Costa Rica, and a short-term research assistant in the Forrestral Lab on a project focused on improving developing drought-tolerant crops.
- Alvaro Campos resigned, effective 9/25/21. He will now be employed at the Elkhorn Ranch.

AACD Update (Brooke Gladden): The AACD Summer Conference had about 200 people attend but no one from NRCS. The Auction was a success and each District Ed Center will receive \$500. The Winter Conference will be held in Phoenix on January, 25-26. Sonoran Desert Tortoise Workshops were held in Amado and Kearny. District meeting agendas can be posted to the AACD website, where each District has its own page. Its new agendas/minutes must also be posted at a physical location. Santa Cruz's agendas are posted at the Sonoita post office. AACD wants to know what projects the Districts are working on for publication in its newsletter and magazine. The new Soil Health Committee Chair is Steve Turcotte. AACD is publishing a monthly newsletter and updates.

## OLD BUSINESS

NRCWAY Memoranda of Agreement (See Attached MOA): Per Stephen Williams, due to the "State gift clause", the District needs to have a MOA to donate State funds to the Natural Resource Conservation Workshop for Arizona Youth. Emilio Carrillo, AZSRM President, has signed and returned the MOA. Per Dan, the MOA looks fine. It was moved by Dan Bell to approve the MOA. Andy Jackson seconded it. The motion carried unanimously. 3-0.

Paula & Cabot Sedgewick Family Foundation Memoranda of Agreement (See Attached MOA): Per Stephen, District's Education Center is housed at the Santa Fe Ranch, which is owned by the Paula and Cabot Sedgewick Family Foundation. The Foundation's agreement to partner with the Ed Center and make use of Ed Center funds for educational and training activities at the Ranch will be formalized through the MOA. Per Dean Fish, Ed Center Director, funds are not spent until they are approved by the SC NRCD board. It was moved by Andy Jackson to approve the MOA. Dan Bell seconded it. The motion carried unanimously. 3-0.

## NEW BUSINESS

2021 Monitoring Schedule: Per Stephen Williams, 25 transects were selected by Jim Koweek, Brett Myers and Alisha Phipps. The cost is \$250/transect for a total cost of \$6,250. The monitoring will be done by Jim Koweek (AZ Revegetation & Monitoring). Per Dan Bell, we need to verify if the ranchers on the list have conservation plans. It was moved by Andy Jackson to allocate the requested \$6,250. Dan Bell seconded it. The motion carried unanimously. 3-0.

Local Work Group (LWG) Meeting Report (Tom Reis): The report was done in the last week in July based on responses from the questionnaires from Winkelman, Pima and Santa Cruz. This is an annual process to identify resource concerns. Not much has changed since last year, livestock waters

are the primary concern. NRCS is dealing with the wildfires aftermath and wants to minimize future fires with fuels reduction programs. At the AACD summer meeting, the Districts' LWG responsibilities were discussed by Keisha Tatum NRCS State Conservationist, who emphasized that Local Work Groups belong to the Districts who need to identify local partners and conservation needs. Tom will send us the NRCS LWG Responsibilities document.

#### AACD Summer Meeting (Stephen Williams):

- District postings on website: AACD can now post the District's agendas/minutes to its website on the Districts's dedicated page.
- Soil Health Committee: The Arizona Legislature has passed enabling legislation to implement a Soil Health Committee. A soil health committee was formed with Steve Turcotte as the chairman. Stephen will be the liaison with Arizona State Land Department. AACD will hire a lobbyist to get State funding to implement the program.
- Resolutions: Brooke will send the current versions to the Clerk for distribution to the Board.
  - 30x30: Pima NRCD's resolution was adopted. It supported the points made in a letter (April 21, 2021) 15 Governors sent to President Biden expressing concerns about enlargement of the federal estate.
  - Off Highway Vehicles: Coconino NRCD's resolution was adopted. It requested an AACD Task Force be formed to work with State and federal land management agencies and OHV groups to develop legislation or policy to reduce environmental damage.
  - Conservation Easements: Willcox-San Simon NRCD's resolution was adopted. It supported the right of landowners to transfer a portion of their property rights in the form of easements; supports elimination of inheritance taxes on ag land; opposes establishment of perpetual conservation easements, supports Land Trust payment of taxes on their interest in property; and, amending the laws governing such contracts as necessary.
- District Action Plans: Per Stephen, a focus of the AACD Summer Meeting was the preparation of Conservation Action Plans. Each District is to prepare a Plan that includes Resource Needs and a Plan to achieve identified conservation objectives. These Plans will assist the NRCS in prioritizing programs, funding and personnel needs. These Plans are the responsibility of the Board under the leadership of the Chairman. AACD is developing a ConserveAZ portal to facilitate data collection. Contractors will be hired to assist the Districts in Plan preparation. Big Sandy NRCD did the pilot program. They hired a contractor to interview ranchers/farmers and to develop the plan for conservation projects. The goals are to reinvigorate planning based on science and to build a workforce with the appropriate skills and knowledge.

Call to the Public: None

#### Supervisor & Clerk Reports

- Andy Jackson: Grateful for the rain.
- Dan Bell: Monitoring with Forest Service has been suspended due to rival cartel violence. He was on a call with Arizona Land & Water Trust to determine uses for land that they have acquired at the Sopori Ranch. It would take funding to develop the land. They are looking for a conservation buyer.
- Stephen Williams: He received an email from the Robert Proctor (Friends of Sonoita Creek) and they want to be on the next meeting's agenda to discuss Sonoita Creek Watershed Programs. He has reviewed the new MOA between SCNRCD, NRCS and the State Natural Resource Conservation Commissioner and it will be discussed at the next meeting. He reminded the Board that 2022 is an election year. Andy is up for re-election. For the June, 2022 election of District officers, the Board should keep in mind that the preparation of the Conservation Action Plan will

require a Chairman who is a strong, engaging leader, and can do the outreach necessary to bring partners into the planning process.

Adjourn: The Meeting adjourned at 1:55 pm. Andy Jackson moved to adjourn the meeting. Dan Bell seconded it. The motion carried unanimously, 3-0

Next meeting on December 1 or 8 at 12 pm at The Wild Horse Restaurant

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

Date: December 15, 2021

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

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