



Santa Cruz Natural Resource Conservation District and Education Center

Santa Cruz Regular Meeting February 22, 2023 Final Minutes

Location: Wild Horse Restaurant, Patagonia, AZ

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

Agencies & Guests: Heather Knight & Tom Reis (Natural Resource Conservation Services – NRCS) and Jim Koweek (AZ Revegetation & Monitoring Services).

Called to Order: 12:07 pm

Review/Approval of Minutes, 11/3/2022: The minutes were reviewed. Bill Schock moved to approve the minutes as written. Dan Bell seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 3-0.

Treasurer's Report (See Attached Report): Bill Schock moved to accept and file the report. Stephen Williams seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 3-0.

Administration Update (See Attached Invoice): The Clerk's Invoice (November-January) was \$1,479.79. Dan Bell moved to pay the invoice. Bill Schock seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 3-0.

- Inventory & Maintenance on Watershed Trailer: Per Dan Bell, we have plenty of give-a-way items and one box of rain gauges. Also, a lot of old paper files are in the container and need to be reviewed to determine their disposition. The Clerk said that files should be kept for 7 years but will check with Jackie Thomas (AZ State Land Department). Stephen Williams has contacted Jackie regarding if the Babocomari Ranch is in the Santa Cruz District. The container box will be inventoried on May 16, 2023.

AGENCY UPDATES

NRCS (Tom Reis See Attached Report): Tom reviewed the report:

FARM BILL PROGRAMS:

Funding received for Fiscal Year 2023:

-Team 7 (Tucson, Douglas and Sells NRCS Field Offices) received \$1,717,940 million for general EQIP. -

Additional funding was received for national initiatives:

-The National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) for the Babocomari Creek Watershed received \$950,000.

This focus area is located within the SCNRCD. See map at end of report.

- Statewide NRCS has \$8.4 million for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

EQIP-General (Environmental Quality Incentive Program) & **CSP** (Conservation Stewardship Program)

- Taking applications year-round. The application deadline for this year's funding was December 16th, 2022
- The Tucson Field Office received 55 applications and will be working over the next couple months to process them. (108 Total applications for Team 7: Sells – 13, Douglas – 40)

- The next deadline is March 31st, 2023 for Eligibility. All producer' that have applied for EQIP need to make sure their paperwork is up-to-date with FSA and work with their NRCS conservation planner on any other paperwork that might be necessary.

Tucson Field Office Workload – Active contracts

- EQIP = 28 contracts
 - Totaling \$1.9 million in funding allocations
 - 15 contracts WNRCD, 8 contracts PNRCD, 4 contracts SCNRCD
 - 1 contract within Eloy NRCD (managing for Casa Grande NRCS office)
- CSP = 7 contracts
 - Totaling \$1.1 million in funding allocations
 - 3 contracts WNRCD, 1 contract PNRCD, 3 contracts SCNRCD

Total Workload for Team 7 (Douglas, Tucson & Sells Field Offices)

- 2022: EQIP 37 contracts, \$2,787,494, CSP 10 contracts \$1,586,992
- Current workload (all years): 127 active contracts across all programs (109 EQIP, 15 CSP, 3 RCPP)

Local Work Group Meetings (LWG) – Feedback needs to be collected by May 15th. NRCDs may choose if they want to hold LWG meetings this year. If resource concerns have not changed, then meetings do not need to be scheduled. Per Stephen Williams, resource concerns have not changed. Per Bill Schock, ranch road erosion is a problem and an expert should be identified to fix the roads. He wanted to get funding to remove mesquite but he didn't have enough density. He has been cutting & treating mesquite in January. Also, he found 2 dead hawks who can he contact. The Clerk will contact Gerry Berthlete (Arizona Game & Fish).

Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) – Funding for the IRA was announced. “These funds will provide direct climate mitigation benefits and will expand access to financial and technical assistance for producers to advance conservation on their farm, ranch or forest land through practices like cover cropping, conservation tillage, wetland restoration, prescribed grazing, nutrient management, tree planting and more.” NRCS offices are taking applications until March 31st.

TEAM 7 STAFF: Doug Saunders – Soil Con Technician in Sells Field Office retired 2/10/2023. On April 4, Dave Wolmack will transfer to the state resource team and Heather Knight will take over.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- ACGA Winter Meeting
 - February 22nd & 23rd, AZ Dept. of Ag, Phoenix
- Soil Health Workshops (U of A Coop. Extension & SARE)
 - March 8th Phoenix, March 9th Flagstaff, March 10th Tucson, March 13th Safford
- Livestock Nutrition Workshop (U of A Cooperative Extension)
 - March 31st, Cochise College Campus, Benson
- AZFB Summer Leadership Conference (formerly known as the Women in Ag Conf.)
 - July 13th & 14th, Star Pass Resort, Tucson
- ACGA Summer Convention
 - July 19th – 22nd, Loews Ventana Canyon Resort, Tucson
- NRCWAY Camp for students (grades 8-12)

- Natural Resources Conservation Workshop for AZ Youth
- TBD, Summer 2023, Menges Mtn 4H Camp, Prescott
- AZ Society for Range Management Summer Meeting <https://azrangelands.org/>
 - August 9th-11th, Ten-X Campground, Tusayan (Grand Canyon)
- AACD Summer Meeting
 - AACD & NRCS, August 30th-31st
 - AACD meeting, September 1st & 2nd

Focus area for NWQI Babocomari Creek: Funding earmarked for this area to improve water quality.



OLD BUSINESS

SC NRCD Scholarship: Dean Fish is reviewing Los Charros student applications to identify students for District scholarships. Los Charros funds community college and tech school students for all academic areas besides Natural Resources. Over the last 4 years, 74 students have been funded.

Open SCNRCD Board Position Update: Per Stephen, no change. Dan Bell will call Shane Lyman.

Signage Update: Per Dan Bell, he has an old boundary sign in his barn but has rust on it. He dropped off design layout with a printer but needs to get cost estimates from him.

2022 Monitoring Update (Heather Knight – See attached report): Heather is still entering data but ground cover has increased. Per Jim Koweek, we have had 2 wet summers and native species are increasing. Dan Bell moved to pay Jim Koweek's \$5,000 invoice. Bill Schock seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 3-0. Per Bill Schock, monitoring was done on his ranch. Per Dan Bell, the District monitoring tablet needs to be found and updated.

NEW BUSINESS

National Bank of Sonoita (Signature Page & Reinvesting): Per Stephen Williams, the CDs were automatically rolled over. He and Dan Bill will be signing the signature cards later today.

Spring Field Day (Santa Fe Ranch): Per Dean Fish, the event will be held on May 19 with 5-6 stations. Bill Schock moved to fund \$750 for food and other expense. Stephen Williams seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 3-0.

Fairground Notice for Exhibitors Fall, 2023 and Approve Fee Funding: Per Stephen Williams, the booth fee last year was \$175. The Fair will be the 3rd week in September Bill Schock moved to fund \$175 for the booth. Dan Bell seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 3-0.

AACD 2023 Dues Request: Dan just received a NACD dues request. The item will be added to April 26 meeting agenda. Dan Bell moved to pay \$1,500 for AACD dues. Bill Schock seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 3-0.

NRCD AZ Legislative Bill (HB2444): Per Stephen Williams, AACD hired a lobbyist to secure more funding for the Districts. Based on the Water Protection Fund's structure, the proposal is to create a fund and a commission to review grant applications. The Commission will accept applications for projects. The Bill is awaiting a vote in the House; then, it will go to the Senate. This will be a long process.

Call to the Public: Per Jim Koweek, a non-political, fundraising event (on March 11, no admission fee) will be held at the Santa Cruz County fairgrounds to raise money for Ukraine.

Supervisor & Clerk Reports

- Clerk: Need to contact Deb Smith (AACD) regarding the Resource Assessment program. A newsletter is being scheduled for May.
- Bill Schock: Last year, he cut and sprayed mesquite in January and all died. He wrote up a climate change article for the next newsletter. Stephen will review it.
- Dan Bell: The weather has been good. Estimates for fencing were about \$40,000/mile, which the US Forest Service will contract out. The Center for Biodiversity filed their Notice of Intent to Sue.
- Stephen Williams: He was on two Zoom calls on HB2444 legislation.

Adjourn: Dan Bell moved to adjourn the meeting. Bill Schock seconded it. The motion carried unanimously. 3-0. The Meeting adjourned at 1:48 pm.

Planned next meeting date: April 26, 2023

Final Minutes Submitted by: Chris Postel

Date: April 26, 2023

Approval of Minutes: _____

Date: _____