



Santa Cruz Natural Resource Conservation District

Santa Cruz NRCD Regular Meeting September 25, 2024 Draft Minutes

Location: Wild Horse Restaurant, Patagonia, AZ

Board Supervisors & Clerk: Stephen Williams, Dan Bell, Bill Schock, Christin Peterson and Chris Postel (Clerk).

Agencies & Guests: Alisha Phipps, Mynasha Holliday & Austin Urcadez (Natural Resource Conservation Services – NRCS), Yvonne Marshall (AZ Land & Water), and Rodolpho Martinez (UA Cooperative Extension).

Called to Order: 12:06 pm

Review/Approval of 5/22/24 & 7/17/24 Minutes: No questions were asked. Dan Bell moved to approve the minutes. Chris Peterson seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 4-0.

Treasurer's Report (See Attached Report): Dan presented the Treasurer's Report. The State Account balance is \$23,209.48. The Ed Center Account balance is \$12,542.02. The SCNRCD Local Account balance is \$151,363.70. Bill Schock made a motion to file and accept the Treasurer's Report. Chris Peterson seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 4-0.

Clerk Invoice & Administration Update: Mailed 62 newsletters in September. The next meeting date will be December 11. The next newsletter will in January, 2025.

- Clerk's Invoice (June-Sep, 2024): The Clerk reviewed the invoice. Dan Bell moved to pay the invoice, \$2,277.69. Bill Schock seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 4-0.

AGENCY UPDATES

NRCS (Alisha Phipps): She reviewed the NRCS Team 7 report, 9/22/2024. See below:

NRCS FUNDING PROGRAMS - Summary of 2024 Allocations:

- **CSP – Conservation Stewardship Program**
 - Available funding for AZ: \$3,800,000
- **EQIP – Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) – funds available statewide (\$17.695 million)**
 - EQIP-IRA Small Farm and Ranch = \$1,195,000
 - EQIP-IRA Crop and Pasture = \$6 million
 - EQIP-IRA Range = \$6 million
 - EQIP-IRA Forest = \$2.5 million
 - EQIP-IRA ACT NOW Targeted Practices = \$2 million
 - High Tunnels, Cover Crops, Brush Management - chemical
- **EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentives Program funding (Statewide \$11,181,800)**
 - Originally funding for Tucson Field Office was \$621,231. Received additional funding later in the year.
- **RCPP – Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape w/ Arizona Land & Water Trust**
 - \$3,557,816
- **Joint Chiefs - Catalina Rincon:** Mount Lemmon watershed area: \$157,652

- **Joint Chiefs - Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Phase 2:** \$385,700
- **National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI):** Babacomari Watershed: \$1,132,203

FARM BILL PROGRAM UPDATES:

- Finished funding for 2024
- **Application deadline for next fiscal year (FY25) funding cycle are tentatively set:**
 - **November 1st, 2024: Application cutoff deadline for IRA (EQIP, CSP, RCPP)**
 - **January 10th, 2025: Application cutoff deadline for Regular EQIP, CSP & RCPP**
- Still operating under 2018 Farm Bill. Continuing resolution of 2018 Farm Bill through September 2024. As of September 6, 2024, Congress had not reached an agreement on a new farm bill, and the prospects for one this year are uncertain.

Team 7 2024 Contracts Funded:

	Contracts	%	\$	%	Acres	%
Team 7	68	30%	\$ 7,413,296.99	31%	277338.4	30%
AZ	230	100%	\$ 24,078,456.48	100%	918138.7	100%

Team 7 Staffing Updates:

- Tucson Office – Natural Resources Specialist position vacant
- Douglas Office – Soil Conservationist position vacant

NRCS Tucson Field Office Staff:

Tom Reis, Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist – Team Lead
 Alisha Phipps, Rangeland Management Specialist – Master Planner
 Heather Spieth, Rangeland Management Specialist
 Mynasha Holliday, Soil Conservationist

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Arizona Land & Water Trust (Yvonne Marshall): They are working on their Annual Report. They will have a virtual Happy Hour on native plants this coming Friday. Dan Bell asked about the status of the Sopori Ranch conservation easement. Per Yvonne, they are in final stages and plan to sell the ranch conservation land with restrictions.

Mesquite Research (Rodolfo Martinez Morales, Cooperative Extension-Santa Cruz County): He is developing a proposal on how to use mesquite in Agriculture and currently doing a NEPA.

OLD BUSINESS

Signs: Per Stephen Williams, he will contact the Hereford NRCD about who made their signs. Bill Schock suggested that we contact Paul Brinkmeyer, Custom Plus Signs, in Sahuarita.

Conservation Action Plan: Per Stephen Williams, the CAP was started 2 years ago. Lamar Smith wrote chapters 1-3 and Kyle Thompson will complete the other chapters and plan. The plan is on-hold until more funding from AACD is available.

Center for Biological Diversity (CBD)/USFS Lawsuit Update: Per Dan Bell, the CDB modified their complaint. Now, they will have until Oct 29 for the submissions. They changed judges to Judge Martinez. Norman James went to work for a large law firm that has a practice in natural resources. With all of the changes, he is expecting a ruling by summer, 2025. The Permittees are still donating

funds and need to get photos of riparian areas after the rains. Per Bill Schock, the benefits of grazing need to be highlighted. The lawsuit only highlights the negative.

Board Vacancy: Peggy Tegowski inquired about the board vacancy. Stephen Williams will contact her.

NEW BUSINESS

Rangeland Monitoring: 2024 Funding & Future Strategy: Per Stephen Williams, we need to fund for monitoring 20 transects at \$250/transect. Bill Schock moved to fund up to \$5,000 for the monitoring. Christin Peterson seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 4-0. Per Stephen Williams, the CBD lawsuit is focused on riparian areas, should we be monitoring riparian areas? A riparian monitoring guideline were discussed. Riparian areas are denser, have more species and are subject to draught and flooding. Per Dan Bell, the US Forest Service uses a different monitoring approach that requires more time and effort. He will invite Jim Koweek the next time US Forest Service monitors a riparian area for him to learn about their approach.

Sonoita Creek Watershed Group Update (Chris Peterson): Chris discussed their summary report. 40 people attended the Aug 6 meeting.

Mesquite Research (Rodolfo Martinez Morales, Cooperative Extension-Santa Cruz County): Rodolfo presentation subject: "Regenerating AG as an Alternative to Ecological Restoration." Essentially, mesquite trees can be used to put nitrogen back into the soil. After clearing out the areas around the mesquite trees, vegetable gardens can be planted around the trees. He is looking for farmers that have about 8 acres with mesquite that could be used as demonstration gardens. Other native species could be planted instead of vegetable gardens.

Supervisor & Clerk Reports

- Christin Peterson: Working on solar wells with AZ Game & Fish. She is working on "border structure impact on the range."
- Dan Bell: The west side of county had decent summer precipitation. The National Grazing Lands Association is having a 3-day conference in Tucson, December 4-6.
- Bill Schock: Skip Eastman has mesquite removal equipment and he will talk to Oscar De La Ossa about it. He put up hay of yellow blue stem and the cows are eating it. Home Owners insurance is up 45% in 5 months and auto insurance is up 22%. Insurance carriers were discussed.
- Stephen Williams: He attended the Lehman Love grass workshop about 40 people attended, with 10 Agency people. He will select articles from the workshop handouts and provide them to the Board.

Adjourn: Dan Bell moved to adjourn the meeting. Chris Peterson seconded it. The motion carried unanimously. 4-0. The Meeting adjourned at 2:26 pm.

Planned next meeting date: December 11, 2024

Draft Minutes Submitted by: Chris Postel

Date: September 28, 2024

Approval of Minutes: _____

Date: _____