



Santa Cruz Natural Resource Conservation District and Santa Cruz NRCD Education Center

SC NRCD District & Ed Center Combined Meeting May 28, 2025 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: Mynesha Holliday & Emilio Carrillo (Natural Resource Conservation Services – NRCS), Nick Schobinger (AZ Game & Fish), & Steven Prager (Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch - Audubon Southwest)

Called to Order: 12:00 pm

Review/Approval of 2/26/2025 & 4/02/2024 Minutes: Dan Bell moved to approve the final minutes. Chris Peterson seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 4-0.

Treasurer's Report: Dan presented the Treasurer's Report. The State Account balance is \$9,308.54. The Ed Center Account balance is \$15,792. The SCNRCD Local Account balance is \$151,660.72. Bill Schock made a motion to file and accept the Treasurer's Report. Christin Peterson seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 4-0.

Clerk Invoice & Administration Update: The next meeting date will be August 27, 2025. The next newsletter will be in September, 2025. The last meeting will be Nov 19-20 or Dec 10-11.

- **Clerk's Invoice (Mar-May, 2025):** The Clerk reviewed the invoice. Dan Bell moved to pay the invoice, \$1,472.84. Bill Schock seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 4-0.

AGENCY UPDATES

AZ Game & Fish Department (Nick Schobinger): The budget will be reloaded on July 1. For the Landowner Relations Fund, water project applications are due July 1. Funding for Habitat Protection Committee is unknown, since this is the last year for auction tag funding. Dave Daniels is the new Region 5 Supervisor. The wildlife manager position for Units 35A&B is still vacant. Jeremiah Fountain is the wildlife manager for 34A&B. Brian Aragon is the new Sector 8 wildlife manager supervisor. Brian can relay a question or message to the appropriate wildlife manager, if there is uncertainty about who the proper contact is.

NRCS (Emilio Carrillo NRCS report is attached): No new IRA contracts. **Team 7 Staffing Updates:**

- NRCS Arizona has lost ~ 35 employees. Traditional staffing level ~115. Many staff are pulling double duty to cover work.

Tucson Office

- Full staff level – 5. Down to 3. Alisha Phipps, Mynesha Holiday & Emilio Carrillo.
- Austin Urcadez Natural Resources Specialist accepted Deferred Resignation, April 30, 2025.
- Heather Spieth Rangeland Management Specialist accepted Deferred Resignation, April 30, 2025.
- Douglas Office – Soil Conservationist accepted Deferred Resignation, April 30, 2025.

- Team Lead – Tom Reis has taken a new position with Arizona NRCS serving as the Resource Conservationist.
- Acting Team Lead – Emilio Carrillo (State Rangeland Management Specialist) is covering the Team Lead position. Started April 30, 2025.
- Assistant State Conservationist-Field Operations Ralph Ware accepted Deferred Resignation, April 30, 2025.
- Acting Assistant State Conservationist-Field Operations – Rebecca De La Torre. Started April 30, 2025.

Steven Prager (Appleton-Whittle Research Ranch – Audubon Southwest): He is attending the meeting to learn about what the SC NRCD does.

OLD BUSINESS

Signs: Per Stephen Williams, he has 3 signs that need to be installed. So, we need a materials list, and also, we need to contact the Landowners regarding installing the signs. Stephen, Christin & Dan will be on the sub-committee to install the signs. Stephen will provide a sign to Dan so a proper frame and support structure can be devised.

Board Vacancy: Per Stephen Williams, Bill Brake is interested in being on the Board. Stephen talked to Deb Smith (NRC Board) about the process to get Bill appointed.

NRC Board Status: Per Stephen Williams, the first meeting was held on May 12. Frank Krentz is the acting Chairman, Daric Knight is the acting Vice-Chairman, and Deborrah Smith is the acting Executive Director. Stephen, Christin, Bill & Chris Postel attended via on-line.

Conservation Action Plan (CAP) Update: Per Stephen Williams' discussion with Deborrah Smith, chapters 1-3 are not formatted as chapters, but as a collection of maps, tables and graphics that can be assembled into chapters. The Clerk will send copies of Winkelman's CAP to Stephen & Bill Schock. Emilio thinks that Rebecca De La Torre is now in charge of the CAP.

2024 Monitoring: Heather Spieth is available as a contractor to write reports summarizing monitoring data for 2023 and 2024. Stephen will contact her to see what she would charge per hour to do the work. Stephen & Bill Schock will put together a list of requirements and format.

2025 AACD Dues: Dan Bell made a motion to approve \$1,500 (District Support). Christin Peterson seconded. The motion passed.3-1.

Local Work Group (LWG) Update: Stephen Williams, Bill Schock, and Christin Peterson attended the LWG training session. Jonah Cude took the minutes for the NRCS report and ranking questions. Each District will have to do an individual report. The 3 priority areas need to be identified on a map in the Resource Portal as to resource concern and conservation practices.

Babacomari Watershed Water Sampling Project Per Bill Schock, the SC NRCD donated \$2,000 towards the water sampling project; so, the study could be completed. Jonathan Hasenstab (UA graduate student) is conducting the study and has submitted his water samples for testing. We are waiting to get back the water test results.

Fund Student Scholarship (Los Charros Foundation) Per Stephen Williams, Dean Fish submitted Nicholas Young as the scholarship candidate. He is a third generation rancher-farmer in the Sonoita

area and will attend the UoA in the August. Christin Peterson moved to sponsor Nicholas Young thru Los Charros for \$1,000. Dan Bell seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 4-0.

Nogales Water Festival & Santa Fe Ranch Days Update

- Nogales Water Festival: Per Stephen Williams, 357 students, 15 teachers and 46 student teachers participated. The setup was complete when he got there and it was well organized.
- Santa Fe Ranch Days was cancelled per Dan Bell. His wife injured her knee, could not walk, due to a meniscus tear.

NEW BUSINESS

Review/Approve Plans of Work and Request for Funds

- SC NRCD District & Education Center Plans of Work: Bill Schock made a motion to approve the POWs with changes. Christin Peterson seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 4-0.
- SC NRCD District & Education Center Request for Funds: Dan Bell made a motion to approve the Funds Requests. Christin Peterson seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 4-0

One Rock Dams (NRCS) Bill Schock has been working with NRCS to get funding for building One Rock Dams since 2010. The current NRCS practice is not appropriate for his ground & erosion conditions. He is unsure if funding was available or being used for erosion control. He needs to meet with NRCS to determine if a practice is available that will meet his needs.

Santa Cruz County Fair Per Stephen Williams, the SC Fair is September 12-14. He needs vendor notification from the Fair to register and secure the booth space. Per Dan Bell, the watershed trailer needs to have the jacks repaired. Bill Schock made a motion to approve up to \$500 for repairs. Christin Peterson seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 4-0.

NRCWAY Camp Cancelled Per Stephen Williams, they only had 9 applicants.

AACD Summer Meeting (Aug 11-13) Stephen Williams is registered for the meeting. Deborah Smith, NRC Board Executive Director, wants to have the Clerks & Education Center directors attend.

Supervisor & Clerk Reports

- Christin Peterson: Her water project is almost finished, had problems with the panels. We need ways to educate people about the NRCDs. Per Dan Bell, need to have workshops about: food, brush control, one rock dams, water rights, drought planning, etc. We should contact Elise Gornish about the Workshops.
- Dan Bell: The Santa Rita Ranch is testing the use of seed balls. It is very dry. Santa Cruz County is declared to be in Extreme Drought. FSA has a drought program. He is using RanchBot to monitor water levels. The Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) has asked for a postponement and the Agency agreed. It is OK with the interveners. His Virtual Fence project has 4 towers and 2/3s of his cattle are now collared, about \$60/year/cow.
- Bill Schock: His cut mesquite still looks dead but it hasn't rained. He put Spike on 2 acres of sandpaper brush. The paddock he created with electric fence is not working. The cows are staying in the mountains where the feed is better. He placed a rag soaked with ammonia in a badger hole to expel the badger from the hole.

Adjourn: Chris Peterson moved to adjourn the meeting. Dan Bell seconded it. The motion carried unanimously. 4-0. The Meeting adjourned at 2:25 pm.

Planned next meeting date: August 27, 2025

Draft Minutes Submitted by: Chris Postel

Date: June 1, 2025

Approval of Minutes: _____

Date: _____