



Santa Cruz Natural Resource Conservation District and Santa Cruz NRC D Education Center

SC NRC D District & Ed Center Combined Meeting Feb 25, 2026 Draft Minutes

Location: Wild Horse Restaurant, Patagonia, AZ

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

Agencies & Guests: Ashley Wright (UA Cooperative Extension), Yvonne Marshall (Az Land Water Trust), Nick Schobinger (AZ Game & Fish), Ariel Leger, Nick Beauregard, & Steven Prager (Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch -Audubon Southwest). John Sullivan (Cooperator)

Called to Order: 12:05 pm

Review/Approval of 11/02/2025 Minutes: Chris Peterson moved to approve the final minutes. Dan Bell seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 5-0.

Treasurer's Report: Dan presented the Treasurer's Report. The State Account balance is \$4,123.95. The Ed Center Account balance is \$13,952.02. The SCNRCD Local Account balance is \$151,888.42. Bill Schock made a motion to file and accept the Treasurer's Report. Christin Peterson seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 5-0.

Clerk Invoice & Administration Update: The next meeting date will be August 27, 2026. The next newsletter will be in March, 2026. Working on 2026 Elections & NRC Board related tasks.

- **Clerk's Invoice (Mar-May, 2025):** The Clerk reviewed the invoice. Chris Peterson moved to pay the invoice, \$1,257.35. Bill Schock seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 5-0.

AGENCY UPDATES

NRCS (See attached report – no representative present)

AZ Land Water Trust (Yvonne Marshall) Zach MacDonald has left; so, the planning for a joint workshop has not progressed. They just closed a conservation easement on the Rain Valley ranch.

University of Az Cooperative Extension (Ashley Wright) They are still trying to hire a livestock specialist, based in Cottonwood, and should know within a week. They have a \$1,000,000 grant for rural school programs, with funding available in May. The budgets are still frozen and no funds were dispensed last year. New World Screwworm (NWS) was detected in Nuevo Leon, the closest known case 70 miles south of the US border. That case is no longer active and the maggots found were dead since the animal had been through the treatment process in Veracruz before being transported north. Active cases are located 300-350 miles south of the Texas border. There are currently no known established adult fly populations in Nuevo Leon. Better testing is being developed and they are working with the US Department of Agriculture and Cattle Growers associations.

AZ Game & Fish Department (Nick Schobinger): Funding for the Landowner Relations program and Habitat Partnership Committee will be available this summer. The new wildlife manager for Units 35 A&B is in training for the new few weeks. Jeremiah Fountain is the Sector 8 wildlife manager

supervisor. They have been working on a \$24 million RCPP grant with AACD and Quail Forever and have received over 100 applications. Questions were asked about how the NRCDs will be notified about this grant. It was suggested to sign-up for emails from the Sentinel Landscape program. The Coordinator Resource Management meeting went well and AZ State Land Department will host next year's meeting.

Steven Prager, Ariel Leger & Nick Beauregard (Appleton-Whittle Research Ranch – Audubon Southwest): Per Steven, doing normal research studies. Ariel & Nick are new and are focused on working land programs: Audubon Conservation Ranching & Landowner Habitat Guides. Link below: <https://southwest.audubon.org/our-work/working-lands> Landowners meeting habitat management, environmental sustainability, and animal welfare, can earn the Audubon Bird-Friendly Land certification. More than 100 ranches and nearly 3 million acres have earned this certification lets consumers know that the beef or bison products come from lands managed for birds & biodiversity. Program link: <https://www.audubon.org/our-work/prairies-and-forests/ranching>

OLD BUSINESS

Signs: Per Dan Bell, he has developed a frame and he needs to have the sign frames welded. He will get a cost estimate.

NRC Board Status: Per Stephen Williams, he discussed Deborah Smith's Dec 18 email covering: District Emails & Password, Google Drive, District Funding, Policies and Elections. In summary, the systems and processes are being defined and setup to support the Districts administration statewide.

Monitoring Update: Per Stephen Williams, Jim Koweek completed the monitoring in September and needs to be paid. Per Dan Bell the funds would be paid out of the local account. Chris Peterson moved to pay \$5,000 to Jim Koweek. Bill Brake seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 5-0. Heather Spieth is preparing a 5 year monitoring report and Stephen will contact her regarding the status of the report.

2026 SCNRCD Election Update: Bill Brake is running for the elected supervisor position (term 2026 to 2030). Bill Schock is running for the elected supervisor position (term 2026 to 2032). The nomination forms were signed by the attendees.

Sonoran Desert Tortoise Lawsuit Update: Stephen and the Clerk participated in a Winkelman NRCD teleconference on January 17. Attorney Norm James suggested that the Winkelman NRCD was in the best position to intervene. Winkelman NRCD voted to intervene and pay \$2,500 toward legal fees. The lawsuit is still pending.

Richard Colling's Article Update: Richard Collins's article on the Equal Access to Justice issue was not published in either the Arizona Daily Star or Arizona Republic. Richard said it was permissible to publish it in the SCNRCD newsletter and other farmer-rancher focused publications. Dan suggested contacting SACPA about publishing this article, also.

Emerging Leaders Lunch Reconsideration: Per Stephen Williams, they will do a conservation project, working on Sonoita Creek and doing water sampling. Chris Peterson moved to fund \$500 for the luncheon. Bill Brake seconded. The motion passed unanimously. 5-0.

Local Watershed Planning Workshop Per Christin Peterson, no contact from ASU about the next Rural Groundwater Restoration workshop.

Workshop Co-sponsored with ALWT Per Yvonne Marshall, since Zach MacDonald has left, no progress has been made on the workshop. So, a date and potential topics need to be defined.

Review Cooperator List The Board reviewed and updated the cooperator list. Bill Schock will send out the updated list.

NEW BUSINESS

Santa Fe Ranch Days Per Dan Bell, May 8 is the planned day.

Project WET No date yet.

Local Work Group (LWG) Meeting Per Stephen Williams, Amber Morin (AACD) is responsible for coordinating the LWGs. Pima & Santa Cruz will have a joint meeting in the afternoon at the NRCS Tucson office. A doodle poll is circulating to determine a date.

Friends of the San Rafael Valley April 11 Event (San Rafael Ranch) It was decided to have the pop-up booth there (no cost) on April 11.

Supervisor & Clerk Reports

- Christin Peterson: Nick Schobinger helped with laying pipe. The Forest Service will bring in 6 new tanks. The project is getting done.
- Dan Bell: He is now on the Farm Service Agency Board. The US Forest Service will have a meeting on March 27 at his ranch regarding virtual fencing and water monitoring for permittees.
- Bill Schock: He went to a Biological planning meeting, saw a prairie dog area. He has removed another 150 mesquite trees for his EQIP program.
- Stephen Williams: He is now on the state Livestock Loss Board. They are looking at funding a range rider in Springerville.
- Bill Brake: Glad to be on the Board.

Adjourn: Chris Peterson moved to adjourn the meeting. Dan Bell seconded it. The motion carried unanimously. 5-0. The Meeting adjourned at 2:25 pm.

Next planned meeting date: May 27, 2026

Draft Minutes Submitted by: Chris Postel

Date: Feb 27, 2026

Approval of Minutes: _____

Date: _____