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Bob Nichols, Chairman Eddie Vigil, Member

Rick Baish, Vice Chairman James Evrage, Member

Jeff Rabon, Secretary/Treasurer Colt Howland, Member

Clifton Varbel, Member

**OTERO SWCD MINUTES**

# JANUARY 8, 2025

**MEMBERS PRESENT MEMBERS ABSENT GUESTS**

Bob Nichols Katie Kruthaupt, NMDA

Rick Baish Sid Gordon, OCCEA

Jeff Rabon Laura Doth, SCM RC&D

Eddie Vigil **STAFF** Nick Smokovich, NMSF

James Evrage Vicky Milne Trystan Harpold, NMSF

Clifton Varbel Cody Howard, BLM

Colt Howland **NRCS STAFF** Amalia Montoya, NRCS

Kristi Wright

**CALLED TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 am.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The agenda was reviewed. James Evrage motioned to approve the agenda, Colt Howland seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**REORGANIZATION OF OFFICERS**

James Evrage motioned to keep the current slate of officers, Jeff Rabon seconded, motion passed unanimously. Vicky will forward the information to the SWCC and to NMACD for the directory.

**REVIEW OF MINUTES**

The minutes from the December regular meeting and special meeting were reviewed, Jeff Rabon motioned to approve the minutes, Colt Howland seconded, motion passed unanimously.

## FINANCIAL REPORTS

The monthly and quarterly financial reports were presented, James Evrage motioned to approve the reports as presented, and pay the bills listed, Colt Howland seconded, motion passed unanimously. Resolution 5-2425 was presented. This budget adjustment resolution covers the additional funding provided by the legislature and grants. James Evrage motioned to approve the budget adjustment and signing the resolution, Colt Howland seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**CORRESPONDEN****CE**

The Office of the State Auditor has released the audit report. The report was reviewed. James Evrage motioned to accept the report, Colt Howland seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Opportunity to Comment Consultation with State, Local, and Tribal Governments in Regulatory Policymaking; Request for Comments; Public Listening Sessions Jan. 8 and 15 with comments due Jan. 17th.

Range Monitoring Webinar 1/14/25

LGBMS will be hosting trainings in January

Secretary of State Election Training will be held on 1/24/25

Landowner Assistance for Thinning – Trystan Harpold discussed the problems we are facing with completing the thinning projects.

**REPORTS**

NM Department of Agriculture – The NMDA report provided information on upcoming deadlines, meetings, and grant opportunities.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – Kristi read the report. The EQIP application deadline was November 8th. The ranking deadline is February 28th. EQIP IRA has an application deadline of February 7, 2025. CSP classic and CSP IRA application deadline is February 7th with a ranking deadline of February 28th. Vanessa Hernandez has accepted the lead planner position in Alamogordo effective January 13th.

Otero County Cooperative Extension – Sid provided a report. The pesticide applicator CEU workshop will be held on March 11th. Otero County emergency management will be meeting to review/update their emergency plan.

South Central Mountain RC&D – Laura provided a report. The Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update is ready to be contracted. The Otero County WUI has been completed. Timberon Phase VI is beginning implementation. The EWP in Ruidoso has 12 million dollars spent of the 53 million obligated to the project.

NM State Forestry – Nick updated us on the new staff in Capitan. There will be a PODS - Potential Operational Delineations training on January 21st. PODs process is a framework for cross-boundary, collaborative, and integrative fire planning that can support place-based implementation of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy. PODs are based on best available science about fire operations and risks to communities, ecosystems, and responders.

Bureau of Land Management – Cody Howard is looking to continue the Pinon Jay study. There is some funding left in the range agreement that could be used. Cody will check.

SWCD – The website has been updated with the dam rehabilitation planning information. A request for information was submitted to Caballo SWCD regarding additional insurance for watershed dams. According to Susie Downs they were told by the General Services Department that as long as maintenance is being done the dams are covered for general liability through the state. Jeff Rabon asked if we could possibly get a more definitive answer from the Otero County attorney. Bob will invite RB Nichols to the next meeting. The commercial applicator for the musk thistle project has indicated he is not interested in doing the spray this year. He had some difficult landowners and non-payment issues. There was discussion on changing the rate per hour and including a late sign-up fee. Vicky will contact the applicator. The winter newsletter needs articles.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Drone mapping – Colt is going to speak with Holloman again.

Capital Outlay – USFS staff has been unable to schedule a meeting to discuss work that can be done without NEPA. Vicky will try again. Jeff mentioned the possibility of putting rip rap on the spillway structure to extend its useful life. We would need approval from the Dam Safety Bureau to do this work.

Watershed Dam Rehabilitation Planning – There will be a public scoping meeting on January 28th at the Mayhill Community Center to discuss the project with the public.

## NEW BUSINESS

The small conservation project for Sally Walker Ranch has been completed. James Evrage motioned to approve reimbursement up to the maximum of $7,500, Jeff Rabon seconded, motion passed unanimously.

The Cloudcroft NFL project needs a new fiscal agent. NM State Forestry will approve Otero SWCD being the fiscal agent if we agree. James Evrage motioned to approve becoming the fiscal agent, Colt Howland seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Nick Smokovich discussed the possibility of utilizing bio char on private lands through the healthy soil program. There was discussion on the ability to produce enough char and a location. More information is needed.

With no further business to discuss, James Evrage motioned to adjourn, Jeff Rabon seconded, motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 12:17 pm.

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Bob Nichols, Chairman Jeff Rabon, Secretary/ Treasurer