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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**

# NOVEMBER 13, 2024

**MEMBERS PRESENT MEMBERS ABSENT GUESTS**

Bob Nichols Katie Kruthaupt, NMDA

Rick Baish Laura Doth, SCM RC&D

Jeff Rabon Sid Gordon, OCCEA

Eddie Vigil **STAFF** Dean Bruce, NMDA

James Evrage Vicky Milne Lisa Phillips, BLM

Clifton Varbel Trystan Harpold, NMSF

Colt Howland **NRCS STAFF** Rebecca Dow, NMACD

 Kristi Wright Merceidez Fabok, NRCS

 Amy Barela, Otero County

**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.

**REVIEW OF MINUTES**

The minutes from the October regular meeting were reviewed, James Evrage motioned to approve the minutes, Colt Howland seconded, motion passed unanimously.

## FINANCIAL REPORTS

The financial report was reviewed, James Evrage motioned to approve the monthly report as presented, and pay the bills listed, Colt Howland seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**CORRESPONDEN****CE**

NACD provided a program update and the dues notice. Eddie Vigil motioned to pay the dues at the $775/gold level, James Evrage seconded, motion passed unanimously.

NM Watershed and Dam Owners Coalition provided a program update and dues notice. James Evrage motioned to pay the dues at the SWCD rate of $100, Colt Howland seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**REPORTS**

NMACD - Rebecca Dow provided a report on the legislation that NMACD will be working on in the next session.

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 Team 9 Local Work Group proposal was submitted to the State Office. Team 9 EQIP finalized obligations. They have over 4 million dollars contracted, of that over $848,000 has gone to the Otero Watershed Project. November 8th was the application deadline for EQIP. EQIP IRA has an application deadline of February 7, 2025. The lead planner position in Alamogordo has been re-advertised.

Otero County Cooperative Extension – Sid provided a report. They have a 4-H agent, Hannah Wood. The Society for Range Management will host a fall tour in Carrizozo.

South Central Mountain RC&D – Laura provided a report. The Otero Working Group will be meeting this afternoon. The development of an updated Otero County Community Wildfire Protection Plan was funded. The Timberon Phase five is almost done. The Cloudcroft NFL is moving forward. The Emergency Watershed Program in Ruidoso has 530 applications. The estimate for the acequia work alone is 10 million dollars.

NM State Forestry – Trystan Harpold provided an update on the progress of the hazardous fuels projects. Trystan has drafted the Landscape Scale Restoration Project in Perk Canyon. This project needs a sponsor. Eddie Vigil motioned to sponsor the project, Colt Howland seconded, motion passed unanimously.

US Forest Service – David Baker stopped by yesterday to let us know that the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the South Sacramento Restoration Project will be sent out in December.

Bureau of Land Management – Lisa Phillips provided an update. The new noxious weed agreement funding has been added. There may be new funds available later this month. It would need a quick project to attach it to. Lisa will keep us informed. Laura Doth offered to look through our master agreement to see if a potential project in Timber may qualify. Vicky will send it to her.

SWCD – The fall African rue project has been completed. The noxious weed calendars are ready for delivery. The fall newsletter has been completed.

**OLD BUSINESS**

The contractor for the Dam Rehabilitation Plans has started work. Bob Nichols went out to the site with them. Merceidez Fabok provided a presentation about the program and then spoke about a few of the details. The estimated contract completion is March of 2026.

A coordination meeting was held on October 3rd with the USFS to discuss the work done on the dams and to plan for next spring. Once a work plan has been drafted the USFS will be able to give us the go ahead to contract the work.

We were unable to coordinate the drone mapping with Holloman AFB last month. The individual in charge was on leave. He is back now, and Colt will be contacting him for approval to fly.

## NEW BUSINESS

Healthy Soil Program – Dean Bruce spoke about the program and the types of projects that may be beneficial in Otero County. NMDA will consider on-the-ground projects in New Mexico that implement one or more of the five soil health principles: 1. Keeping soil covered, 2. Minimizing disturbance on cropland and minimizing external inputs, 3. Maximizing biodiversity, 4. Maintaining a living root, 5. Integrating animals into land management, including grazing animals, birds, beneficial insects or keystone species, such as earthworms. There was discussion on the use of bell grazing. Contracts are capped at $100,000 and there is no match requirement.

Our memorandum of agreement with the NM State Land Office has expired. Mark Meyers has provided a new MOA for signature. Rick Baish motioned to approve Bob Nichols signing the agreement, Colt Howland seconded, motion passed unanimously. A proposal to treat acres in Timberon is being drafted for approval next month.

The Open Meeting Act requires approval on an annual basis. Resolution #4-2425 was included in the meeting packet. Colt Howland motioned to approve Bob Nichols signing the resolution, Rick Baish seconded, motion passed unanimously. Vicky will submit the resolution to the Alamogordo News for printing in their legal notice section.

With no further business to discuss, James Evrage motioned to adjourn, Eddie Vigil seconded, motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 12:02 pm.

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Bob Nichols, Chairman Jeff Rabon, Secretary/ Treasurer