

HEREFORD NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT (HNRC D) REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 16, 2019

Sierra Vista County Complex—Large Conference Room—9:30 a.m.

Board Present: John Ladd, Jim Lindsey, Lucinda Earven, David Greenberg, Mike Hayhurst

Others Present: Jack Ladd—Advisor, Steve Boice—Advisor, Hans Huth—ADEQ, Donald Decker—NRCS, Margie Guzman—BLM, Brian Seasholes—Southwestern Communities Coalition, Cameron Becker—AZ Land and Water Trust (ALWT), Nancy Neumann—Cooperator, Tricia Gerrodette—citizen, Kathy Morris—Board Clerk

A. Call to Order

John Ladd called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m.

B. Introductions

Introductions were made around the room.

C. Call to the Public: Cameron Becker—AZ Land and Water Trust (ALWT) said they are interested in extending their 2016 Regional Conservation Partnership Award program.

Brian Seasholes introduced himself as the Executive Director of the newly founded Southwestern Communities Coalition, which is 501 3c, a non-profit organization. They had their kick-off event in Benson, AZ September 18, 2019. Their mission statement includes: “Thriving community, strong economy, single use, conservation of natural resources, and protection of property rights.” John Ladd is on their Board. Their web address is: <https://southwesterncommunitiescoalition.org>

Nancy Neumann has been in touch with Erin Thomas—NRCS, Holbrook, AZ. Erin would like to have a workshop at the SMR winter meeting in Wickenburg, AZ in January to educate people about the huge amounts of acronyms used in the conservation industry and how the various agencies are co-mingled and work together.

D. Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

1. Regular Meeting, September 18, 2019

Motion: David Greenberg moved to approve the regular meeting minutes of September 18, 2019.

Second: Lucinda Earven seconded the motion.

Vote: Carried unanimously.

E. Agency and Committee Reports

1. **USPP:** Lucinda Earven reported the next meeting is scheduled for October 23, 2019, 9:30 a.m. at the City Council Office, which is next to the police department.

2. **NRCS:** Don Decker reported at this time no deadlines have been set for EQIP or other cost share programs. When the fiscal year 2020 timelines are announced he will know the due dates for applicants and when different stages of the application process will need to be completed.

There was a lengthy discussion of NRCS engineers and specs for projects.

Don reported from his meeting last month at the NRCS 2019 Arizona Operational Workshop there is going to be reorganization within the NRCS. The goal of the reorganization is to have less managers with more people under them. The District Conservationists will be more “people and meetings” type managers; they won’t be producing contracts or conservation plans—they will be confined to “managing.”

The Douglas office will be getting another Range Conservationist. Don said they need a Soil Conservationist as well because they have the farm workload for such a position.

3. USFS: No one present to report.

4. BLM: Margie Guzman reported she has been in Tucson two years. She is the Assistant Field Manager to the Renewable Resources staff.

The Record of Decision for the RMP for SPRNCA has been signed. BLM is now in the mode of implementing the RMP. They are at the beginning of writing a landscape scale environmental assessment (EA) to do vegetation treatment on SPRNCA. The current plan is to have an outreach scope of up to five miles outside the SPRNCA border. BLM will be reaching out to land owners through letters and newspaper announcements.

The question was asked if BLM will address the over expansion of cottonwood trees on the San Pedro River. Cottonwood trees will not be addressed, but other invasive species, such as mesquite, acacia, and Johnson grass will be considered. The question was asked if there are any beavers left on the river. Margie's understanding is that there still are beavers. However, the AZGFD would address any further beaver implementation, not the BLM.

On the Las Cienegas the BLM is close to finalizing an EA that would be similar to what they want to initiate for the SPRNCA.

The question was asked if there have been any law suits regarding the SPRNCA RMP. Margie said none at this time.

5. AZGFD: No one present to report.

6. CCRN: There was a meeting October 15th but John Ladd was unable to attend. There was supposed to be some monitoring information that had been compiled on Horseshoe Draw but John had not heard anything about it. The final design for Bella Vista is getting close but they are still needing funding to build.

7. SLRP: Steve Boice reported: 1) The next meeting will be October 30th at Fort Huachuca, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. and the final meeting for 2019 will be December 4th, 1-4 p.m. at the Sierra Vista Public Library. Anyone interested is welcome to attend the final meeting. 2) Next year the Chair will be shared by Ryan Fitzpatrick and Shane Hall who both work for Fort Huachuca. 3) SLRP is currently working on a 5-year implementation plan for conservation and restoration activities centering around a) wildfire, b) threatened, endangered and at-risk species, c) grassland, and d) water and riparian areas. 4) Requests have been made for EQIP funding renewal, as well as a Joint Chiefs proposal will be submitted requesting funds for hazardous fuels treatments, brush management, water development on ranches, and enhancement of aquatic habitats for federally-listed species. Alanna Riggs—Partnership Coordinator for SLRP is willing to attend a future HNRCD meeting to share more information about SLRP.

Don Decker reported that at the last Malpais Borderlands Group meeting Alanna Riggs was there and SLRP is considering expanding the Fort Huachuca *mitten* boundaries, specifically along the southern part of the Chiricahuas to the New Mexico line and the Mexico line. This would be a rectangular addition on the east side of the existing *mitten*.

The question was asked if there is a tax advantage to non-producing land owners for conservation easements. Cameron Becker—ALWT answered that ALWT works with ranchers who already have the agriculture tax exemption, so if a land owner is not ag exempt there is no other tax advantage concerning conservation easements. However, the benefit is open spaces and no development.

8. Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ): Hans Huth is a hydrologist with ADEQ. He is interested in working with ranchers to identify projects and strategies to help mitigate the water impairments on the San Pedro River. He wants to get strategies documented and evaluated. He's working with a rancher on the Babocomari River where there are extensive head cuts. The idea so far is to fence the river banks where the head cuts exist to keep the cattle off those areas in exchange for some drinkers further away from the river. Hans showed visuals of the head cuts.

ADEQ has drone capabilities so they flew the area in review. They flew 420 acres, at a 200 foot elevation in three days. Hans was impressed with how much more they could accomplish using a drone. However, he came to learn a fixed wing drone could do even more and at a faster rate than the one

ADEQ now has available. Hans presented a slide show exhibiting some of the data obtained from the drone.

The question was asked, what ADEQ's ideas are to fix head cuts. Hans described how the cattle come right to the edge of the bank where the head cuts are, obviously making them worse. His suggestion was to keep the cattle off the fragile banks by putting drinkers further out and higher up in the watershed and fencing the riparian areas.

Hans reiterated that he wanted feedback. Feedback was given: for those kinds of severe head cuts a basin (similar to Horseshoe Draw) is what's needed to alleviate the problem. No matter what is done upstream (or keeping cattle off by fencing) the water is still going to reach the head cuts and they're going to get worse and worse. If a basin is put in, there will be a recharge effect, trapping the sedimentation, hence E. coli, then have a discharge of water. There was general agreement that's the way to fix a head cut because of the kind of Arizona soil being dealt with as well as all animals using the access to water (not just cattle). Hans reminded the group that ADEQ is concerned with water quality—E. coli impairment. The fact was repeated to install a basin, trapping the sediment, thus the E. coli.

The fact was brought up of areas of the Babocomari and the San Pedro where there have been no cattle for years and years yet the head cuts are huge.

The question was asked if data had been gathered from monitoring Horseshoe Draw. Answer: an ultrasonic sensor has been installed at the site but something must be hanging underneath it because the data has been "crazy." But because the focus has been on the Babocomari no ADEQ personnel have gone to Horseshoe Draw to discover what's wrong.

HNRCD applied for a grant from ADEQ to do "Phase 2" of Horseshoe Draw the year after the original project was completed in 2017. The grant was denied because ADEQ understandably wanted data back from the original project before doing another similar project.

Hans stressed that ADEQ needs quality, scientific data from completed projects. The frustration and disappointment of the meeting attendees was that the agency is not collecting data from Horseshoe Draw because now they are focused elsewhere and there seems to be a problem with the equipment yet no one is examining or fixing the equipment.

F. District Financial Reports

Motion: David Greenberg moved to authorize payment of items 1-5 on the Payment Schedule.
Second: Lucinda Earven seconded the motion.
Vote: Carried unanimously.

Jim Lindsey explained why the HNRCD needs a checking account (separate from State funds) and briefly explained what monies may be spent on what items. He noted on the financial reports that it appeared HNRCD cooperators dues had gone into State funds and that is incorrect. He will check with Debra Smith on that.

The approved financial reports will be submitted for audit.

G. Old Business

1. Society for Range Management Winter Meeting, January 22-24, 2020:

Motion: David Greenberg moved to donate \$200 to the Society for Range Management for their winter meeting.
Second: Jim Lindsey seconded the motion.
Vote: Carried unanimously.

Because of a typographical error on the October Agenda Notice there was confusion over the dates of the meeting. The dates are correct here: January 22-24, 2020.

2. Soils Workshop, October 5, 2019: The Soils Workshop was a success. Slightly over 30 people attended, with a healthy cross-section of the community involved. HNRCD is very grateful for the Tombstone FFA participation and help.

H. New Business

No new business.

I. Education Programs

1. Tombstone High School Ag Program: HNRCD appreciates the involvement and help with the Soils Workshop October, 5, 2019 held at the high school. Their facilities for workshops are great.

J. Correspondence

- 1. Thank You from Tombstone School District Superintendent
- 2. Thank You from American Stewards of Liberty

K. Future Meetings / Agenda Items

HNRCD Regular Meeting

November 20, 2019

Cochise County Complex

Wednesday

Large conference room

9:30 a.m.

Sierra Vista, AZ

M. Adjournment

John Ladd adjourned the meeting at 11:26 a.m.

Approved by the Board _____
(Date)

Signed _____
(John Ladd, Chairman)

ACCRONYMS

- AACD Arizona Association of Conservation Districts
- ADEQ Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
- ALWT Arizona Land and Water Trust
- ASLD Arizona State Land Department
- AZGFD Arizona Game and Fish Department
- BLM Bureau of Land Management
- CCRN Cochise Conservation and Recharge Network
- EA Environmental Assessment
- EIS Environmental Impact Statement
- EQIP Environmental Quality Incentives Program

FFA	Future Farmers of America
FLPMA	Federal Land Planning and Management Act
HPC	Habitat Partnership Committees
HNRC	Hereford Natural Resource Conservation District
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NRCWAY	Natural Resource Conservation Workshop for Arizona Youth
RMP	Resource Management Plan
SARC	Small Acreage Resource Concerns
SHPO	State Historical Preservation Office
SLRP	Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Restoration Partnership
SPRNCA	San Pedro River National Conservation Area
SRM	Society for Range Management
THS	Tombstone High School
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFS	United States Forest Service
USPP	Upper San Pedro Partnership
USPO	United States Post Office
WOTUS	Waters of the United States
WPF	Water Protection Fund

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