

**RIO GRANDE WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS ANNUAL MEETING
April 16, 2024, at 10:00 A.M.
Rio Grande Water Conservation District Conference Room
And By Zoom Teleconference**

Present: Greg Higel, President; Armando Valdez, Vice-President; Zeke Ward, Secretary/ Treasurer; Cory Off, Director; Peggy Godfrey, Director; Mark Deacon, Director; Mike Kruse, Director; Elliott Salazar, Director; and, Doug Gunnels, Director.

Staff and Consultants: David Robbins, Hill & Robbins, P.C.; Amber Pacheco, Deputy General Manager; Chris Ivers, Program Manager; Taylor Chick, Program Manager; Angelo Bellah, Program Manager; Wylie Keller, Water Resource Specialist; Clinton Phillips, Davis Engineering; Rose Vanderpool, Program Assistant; Linda Ramirez, Program Assistant; Crystal Benavidez, HCP Coordinator/Program Assistant; Kylie Gregg, Office Manager; April Mondragon, Administrative Assistant; and, Michael Carson, Database Administrator.

Guests: Christine Arbogast, Ryan Unterreiner, Heather Dutton, Nate Reynolds, Erin Minks, Morgan Dingfelder, George Whitten, Daniel Boyce, Chris Lopez, Sally Wier, Craig Cotten, Vern Heersink, Garin Vorthmann, Azarel Madrigal, Larry Brown, Lawrence Crowther, Virginia Christensen, Mattea Freel, Rob Phillips, Warren Crowther, Hannah Thill, Madeline Wilson, Patrick Brownell, Gigi Dennis, Cathy Garcia, Andrea Compton, Erika Bellah, Adam Moore, Megan Fosterman, Stephen Lauer, Randy McClure.

CALL TO ORDER

President Greg Higel called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. There was a quorum present for the meeting. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

INTRODUCTION OF STAFF AND GUESTS

President Higel welcomed all those present and asked for introductions.

APPROVE AGENDA

President Higel announced Craig Cotten would report after 2:00 p.m. Amber Pacheco asked to add two (2) funding requests to the agenda. President Higel asked for any other changes or a motion to approve the agenda. A motion was made by Doug Gunnels to approve the agenda as amended. The motion was seconded by Elliott Salazar and unanimously approved.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

President Higel asked for election of officers. David Robbins asked for nominations for President of the Board of Directors. The seat was currently held by Greg Higel. A motion was made by Cory Off to retain Greg Higel as President of the Board of Directors. The motion was seconded by Elliott Salazar. There were no other nominations. The motion was voted on and passed unanimously. Greg Higel was elected President.

President Higel asked for nominations for Vice-President. The seat was currently held by Armando Valdez. A motion was made by Cory Off to retain Armando Valdez as Vice-President. The motion was seconded by Mark Deacon and unanimously approved. Armando Valdez was elected Vice-President.

President Higel asked for nominations for Secretary/Treasurer. The seat was currently held by Zeke Ward. A motion was made by Cory Off to nominate Zeke Ward as Secretary/Treasurer. The motion was seconded by Doug Gunnels and unanimously approved. Zeke Ward was elected Secretary/Treasurer.

APPOINTMENTS TO SUBDISTRICT BOARD OF MANAGERS-EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

President Higel asked for appointments to Subdistrict Board of Managers-Ex-Officio members. Amber Pacheco reminded the Board of the current Ex-Officio members. A motion was made by Cory Off to retain the current slate of Ex-Officio members. The motion was seconded by Mark Deacon and unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

President Higel asked for approval of the consent agenda items:

- January 4, 2024-Budget Hearing Minutes
- January 16, 2024-Quarterly Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Cory Off to approve the consent agenda items as presented. The motion was seconded by Peggy Godfrey and was unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

President Higel asked for public comment. There was none.

FINANCIAL REPORT

President Higel asked for the financial report. Amber Pacheco presented the financial report. She went over the Profit and Loss Budget vs. Actual statement. Ms. Pacheco reported on a withdraw made from the money market account to cover cash flow, the SB22-028 purchases/closings and highlighted the revenues and expenditures. Ms. Pacheco explained how the District tracks long term leases. She presented the Balance Sheet and reported some of the SB22-028 funds were included in the checking account. Ms. Pacheco explained how the District would be audited in connection with the SB22-028 federal funds. She went over the March bank balances and operating CD's and asked the Board to consider approval of a banking resolution in order for staff to explore competitive interest rates.

A motion was made by Cory Off to approve the financial report as presented. The motion was seconded by Mark Deacon and unanimously approved

MANAGER'S REPORT

President Higel asked for the Manager's report. Amber Pacheco thanked the District staff for their hard work. She highlighted the presentations/classes/conferences she had been involved with. Ms. Pacheco reported she is continuing to assist Program Managers and Assistants to seek solutions for sustainability and replacements. She highlighted she is working with Kylie Gregg on policy updates and with Wylie Keller on the SB22-028 programs. Ms. Pacheco updated the Board on her trip to Washington D.C. and the meetings she attended. She reported working with legal counsel on a number of cases, continuing to work with the Steering Committee of the Rio Grande Cooperative Project and reported finishing up on a grant for Subdistrict No. 6 for an Alamosa River ATM. Ms. Pacheco also gave an update on work she is doing with a group interested in conservation programs and she provided an update on the PRT meeting. Lastly, she updated the Board on the Town of Center's request to forgo the incremental increase in taxes and reported signing an agreement for zero commitment.

- Extension of SB22-028

Amber Pacheco reported on the official end date for accepting SB22-028 program applications. She provided the Board with an update on funding, applicants, acre-feet of retirement, the number of payments made, and the amount of funds remaining. Ms. Pacheco asked the Board to consider reopening the program with an application deadline of May 31st in order to get the remaining funds committed.

A motion was made by Elliott Salazar to reopen the application deadline and extend round two (2) of the SB22-028 program to May 31st. The motion was seconded by Mark Deacon and unanimously approved.

- Banking Resolution

Amber Pacheco described the updated banking resolution and why it was necessary. She reported the bank suggested the resolution be a part of the annual meeting each year.

A motion was made by Cory Off to approve the new banking resolution. The motion was seconded by Peggy Godfrey and unanimously approved.

- Rio Grande Headwater's Restoration Project Request for Funding

Amber Pacheco went over the details of the funding request and explained the increase in the request from last year.

A motion was made by Cory Off to approve the Rio Grande Headwater's Restoration funding request for \$16,000. The motion was seconded by Peggy Godfrey and unanimously approved.

- Headwaters Alliance Funding Request

Amber Pacheco described how the District has provided funding to the Headwaters Alliance in the past and how the request falls in line with what the District has been funding for many years.

A motion was made by Mark Deacon to approve the Headwaters Alliance annual funding request. The motion was seconded by Peggy Godfrey and unanimously approved.

- Soil Conservation District Funding Request

Amber Pacheco reported on a funding request from the Soil Conservation District in partnership with Adams State University and CSU SLV Research Center to conduct a drought resiliency crop trial. Mattea Freel explained how the funds would help with the cost of water and explained what will be taking place in the study.

A motion was made by Elliott Salazar to approve the \$2,850 funding request for the SLV Drought Resilience crop trial. The motion was seconded by Peggy Godfrey. Doug Gunnels opposed; the motion passed.

PROGRAM MANAGER'S REPORTS

President Higel asked for Program Manager's reports.

- Subdistrict No. 1-Taylor Chick

Taylor Chick recognized Sheldon Rockey for his time on the Board of Managers and asked for the reappointment of Clay Mitchell and Tony Holcomb and the new appointment of Patrick Brownell to the Subdistrict No. 1 Board of Managers.

A motion was made by Mike Kruse to approve the reappointments of Clay Mitchell and Tony Holcomb and the appointment of Patrick Brownell to the Subdistrict No. 1 Board of Managers. The motion was seconded by Cory Off and unanimously approved.

Taylor Chick updated the Board on current business including the submission of the Annual Report (AR). Mr. Chick gave an overview of the AR and reported on the well inclusion contracts which had been finalized. He also reported on the number of applications for the one-year ranked Fallow Program and the SB22-028 program. Mr. Chick highlighted the 2023 ARP depletion replacement operations and gave an update on the Subdistrict No. 1 properties. Peggy Godfrey thanked Subdistrict No. 1 for their efforts. Discussion was held on the amount of rim inflow and the amount of returns to the ground. Mr. Chick described the technology that will be involved in the recharge pit projects.

- Subdistrict No's 2, 3, and 6-Angelo Bellah

Angelo Bellah updated the Board on activities and current business within the Subdistricts he manages. He highlighted aquifer sustainability talks ongoing in Subdistrict No.'s 3 and 6. Mr. Bellah provided an update on the Twin Pines Ranch water rights and the Alpha Hay Farms property maintenance.

- Approve Board of Manager Appointments for Subdistrict No. 2

Mr. Bellah reported on the election results for the Board of Managers of Subdistrict No. 2 and asked for approval of Harold Stoeber for Voting District 2 and Eric Hinton for the At-Large seat. A motion was made by Mike Kruse to approve the appointments of Harold Stoeber and Eric Hinton to the Board of Managers of Subdistrict No. 2. The motion was seconded by Cory Off and unanimously approved.

- Approve Change to Subdistrict No. 2 Board Bylaws to Change Date of Annual Meeting

Angelo Bellah reported on a request to change the date of the Subdistrict No. 2 Annual Meeting to the second Wednesday in February. He highlighted where the change would occur in the Rules and Regulations and in the Bylaws.

A motion was made by Cory Off to approve the change of the Subdistrict No. 2 Annual Meeting date to the second Wednesday in February. The motion was seconded by Peggy Godfrey and unanimously approved.

- Approve Subdistrict No. 2 Purchase of Lariat Ditch Shares

Angelo Bellah highlighted the details of an agreement for Subdistrict No. 2 to purchase Lariat Ditch shares. He provided the purchase price, number of shares, the diversion history and the amount the Subdistrict would have paid in forbearance.

A motion was made by Mark Deacon to approve Subdistrict No. 2's purchase of 3.5 shares of Lariat Ditch for \$15,875. The motion was seconded by Peggy Godfrey and unanimously approved.

○ Approve Board of Manager Appointments for Subdistrict No. 3

Angelo Bellah reported on the Subdistrict No. 3 Board of Manager seats set to expire in 2024. He stated a letter of interest had been received from Leroy Salazar for District 1, Sam Vance for District 3, Warren Crowther and Scott Johnson for District 2. Mr. Bellah explained the straw poll process and reported on the results for District 2.

A motion was made by Elliott Salazar to approve the reappointments of Leroy Salazar, Sam Vance and Warren Crowther to the Subdistrict No. 3 Board of Managers. The motion was seconded Peggy Godfrey and unanimously approved.

○ Approve Offers for Subdistrict No. 3 to Sell portions of the Alpha Hay Farms Property

Angelo Bellah presented the map of the Alpha Hay Farms property. He pointed out the tracts the Subdistrict received offers on.

A motion was made by Elliott Salazar to approve the offers for tracts two (2) and three (3) of the Alpha Hay Farms property. The motion was seconded by Mark Deacon and unanimously approved.

Angelo Bellah provided a property maintenance update including the status of the Xcel Transmission Line Improvement and the work being done by Robbins Construction. He reported on the measures being taken by the Board of Managers to achieve aquifer sustainability. Elliott Salazar provided an update on the San Antonio River project being worked on with the Conejos Water Conservancy District.

○ Approve Board of Manager Appointments for Subdistrict No. 6

Angelo Bellah reported on the Board of Manager seats set to expire in 2024. He explained the nomination process and reported on the letters requesting nominations for appointments.

A motion was made by Cory Off to approve the reappointments of Tyler Faucette, Robert Middlemist, Gerald Faucette, and the appointment of Virginia Christensen to the Subdistrict No. 6 Board of Managers. The motion was seconded by Mark Deacon and unanimously approved.

Angelo Bellah reported on the resolutions passed by the Board of Managers to incentivize the SB22-028 program and the Pumping Reduction Program.

● Subdistrict No. 's 4 and 5-Chris Ivers

Chris Ivers provided an update on the revegetation of the Bowman (a.k.a. Peachwood) property. He reported on the issues with elk and the damage being caused. Mr. Ivers highlighted the request from the Board of Managers to remove fencing from the property.

A motion was made by Peggy Godfrey to approve the removal of fencing from the Peachwood property. The motion was seconded by Cory Off and unanimously approved.

Mr. Ivers provided an update on the lease of quarters on the Bowman property. Discussion was held on wildlife problems, hunting permits and how to manage elk. Staff was directed to research the matter further. Taylor Chick described the ongoing issues with elk on the Medano property in Subdistrict No. 1. David Robbins suggested the Program Managers organize a meeting with the Division of Wildlife to get direction.

Mr. Ivers reported on negotiations between Subdistrict No. 5 Board of Managers and the owner of North Star Farm to purchase water rights. He provided an update on the augmentation well. Discussion was held on the Werner Arroya return flows.

The meeting recessed for lunch at 12:30 p.m. and resumed at 1:30 p.m.

DISTRICT ENGINEER'S REPORT-CLINTON PHILLIPS

President Higel asked for the District Engineer's report. Clinton Phillips presented a map of the unconfined aquifer study area. He gave the change for April 2024, the change between April 2023 and 2024, the current aquifer level, the current five (5) year average and the acre-feet needed to get to the -400,000 level. Mr. Phillips presented a snapshot of the current study period and a graph of the overall

study period. He also provided an update on the confined aquifer by model layer. Elliott Salazar asked what contributed to the increase in the confined aquifer. Mr. Phillips reported the increase could be a result of less pumping in the Subdistricts and an ok snowpack/runoff last year.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S REPORT-DAVID ROBBINS

President Higel asked for the District Attorney's report. David Robbins reported on appearances and presentations for the District. He provided an update on the Texas vs. New Mexico/Colorado case as well as the other meetings he attended in Washington D.C. Mr. Robbins reported on work Pete Ampe and Matt Montgomery have been involved with in assisting the Subdistricts. He highlighted the history of dredge and fill and reported he and Amber Pacheco would be attending the Compact meeting in Texas. Mr. Robbins reported on the approval of the Subdistricts Annual Replacement Plans and gave an update on the Rio Grande Natural Area.

SENATOR BENNET'S OFFICE-ERIN MINKS

President Higel asked for Senator Bennet's office report. Erin Minks reported being on a panel with David Robbins at the Salazar Center's Rio Grande Basin Symposium. She explained how she represents the voices of the District and provided an update on the conversations surrounding the Rio Grande Natural Area efforts. Ms. Minks reported on the request for a national park on the Rio Grande River and also provided an update on the Farm Bill.

COLORADO STATE FOREST SERVICE-ADAM MOORE

President Higel asked for Colorado State Forest Service report. Adam Moore provided the Board with a handout. He reported on the health of Colorado's forests and explained the mission of the Colorado State Forest Service. Mr. Moore reported how last year's moisture helped the trees and presented a chart showing the number of acres affected by forest pests. He explained how they manage and treat forest pests and emphasized the importance of forest health. Mr. Moore described how state funding was used to establish a monitoring program. He presented photos and gave a summary on current projects and reported starting the process to create a wildfire council. Mr. Moore also highlighted projects pending funding.

KOGOVSEK & ASSOCIATES-CHRISTINE ARBOGAST

President Higel asked for the Kogovsek & Associates report. Christine Arbogast reported on the stalled Farm Bill and explained where the conflicts are. She highlighted a bill for emergency funding for forest service restoration post-fire and other bills being introduced.

COLORADO LEGISLATIVE STRATEGIES-GARIN VORTHMANN

President Higel asked for Colorado Legislative Strategies report. Garin Vorthmann was not available to report. She asked Amber Pacheco to highlight the passing of the Dredge and Fill Bill and apologized for not being able to attend the meeting.

U.S.B.R. REPORT-NATE REYNOLDS

President Higel asked for U.S.B.R. report. Nate Reynolds introduced himself as the new Hydrologist for the Closed Basin Project. He gave the operations update. (Copy of report attached.)

U.S.F. & W.S REPORT-MEGAN FOSTERMAN

President Higel asked for the U.S.F. & W.S. report. Megan Fosterman updated the Board on the wells, water levels and habitat on the Baca Refuge.

SAN LUIS VALLEY WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT-HEATHER DUTTON

President Higel asked for San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District report. Heather Dutton provided an update on augmentation operations. She reported on the exchange of water into Continental for storage. Ms. Dutton reported on possibly having water for lease if there is good runoff. She described the work being done to restore Shaw Reservoir and thanked the Board for the contribution to the SNOTEL program.

RIO GRANDE HEADWATERS RESOTRATION PROGRAM-DANIEL BOYES

President Higel asked for Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Program report. Daniel Boyes gave an update on the Conejos River Partnership projects. He highlighted the phases, presented before and after photos, and thanked the District for their funding.

HEADWATERS ALLIANCE-RANDY MCCLURE

President Higel asked for the Headwaters Alliance report. Randy McClure thanked the District for their support. He reported they are contracting with Heather Greenwolf and announced the names of the new Board Members. Mr. McClure provided an update on the water quality database study and the three (3) main focus points of the study.

DIVISION ENGINEER’S REPORT-CRAIG COTTEN

President Higel asked for the Division Engineer’s report. Craig Cotten provided an update on the dry start to the irrigation season. He reported on the snowpack and gave an update on the compact debt. Mr. Cotten updated the Board on the oral arguments at the Supreme Court and what happens if they come into agreement with the three (3) states. He reported the Rio Grande Compact meeting would be held in El Paso, Texas and the Costilla Creek Compact meeting would be held in San Luis. Mr. Cotten reported Jason Ullmann had been selected as the new State Engineer.

EDUCATION REPORT-HANNAH THILL

President Higel asked for the education report. Hannah Thill updated the Board on the K-12 programs. She highlighted the water trailer events and the Envirothon with high school students. Ms. Thill reported working on the Youth Conservation Camp and the necessity to hold two (2) camps due to the large number of campers and age differences.

COLORADO OPEN LANDS-SALLY WIER

President Higel asked for the Colorado Open Lands report. Sally Wier provided an update on conservation work. She highlighted the acres conserved under traditional easements and provided an update on the Congreso de Acequia festival. Ms. Wier reported on the funding for revegetation projects that reduce groundwater withdrawals. She explained the idea to expand the groundwater conservation easement program through a pilot program in order to not be tied to USDA regulations.

RIO GRANDE NATIONAL FOREST-AMBER LIDELL

President Higel asked for the Rio Grande National Forest report. Amber Lidell presented the new Watershed Restoration Action Plans. She highlighted a map of the focal watershed areas and provided an update on the completed projects. Ms. Lidell also reported on the stream crossing work to be done in Saguache County, over-snow management complications, threatened species, the upcoming Silverspot butterfly tour and prescribed burns.

SAN LUIS VALLEY AREA EXTENSION-CSU

President Higel asked for San Luis Valley Area Extension report. Larry Brown gave an overview on the rebuilding of the extension in the San Luis Valley. He highlighted the projects and described his history with the SLV Area Extension. Madeline Wilson reported on two (2) projects she inherited, the location of her office and the goal for the projects. She explained the work to be done and the goal of the wool pellet study. Discussion was held on using wool as insulation. Dr. Stephen Lauer was introduced. He described his area of expertise and provided an update on the projects he had been involved with. Dr. Lauer reported on a soil health project centered around land being dried up. He also explained how and why the Coffee Project was developed.

OTHER REPORTS OR COMMENTS

President Higel asked for other reports or comments. Crystal Benavidez reminded the Board of the date and time of the next HCP meeting. She highlighted the need for steering committee members.

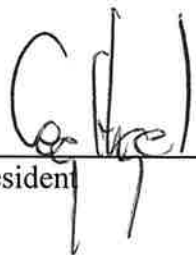
DIRECTOR’S REPORTS

President Higel asked for other Director’s Reports. There was none.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

The next quarterly meeting is scheduled for July 16, 2024.



President

Secretary/Treasurer

Bureau of Reclamation Report to the RGWCD

April 16, 2024

OPERATIONS

Water salvage operations continued as recommended by the Project Operating Committee to meet Rio Grande Compact and mitigation obligations.

For the YTD (1/1/2024 to 3/31/2024)

A total of 628 AF was delivered to the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge through CHO1 & 2.

A total of 226 AF was delivered to the Blanca Wildlife Habitat Area through CHO3 & 4.

Delivery to the Rio Grande has been 1,944 AF.

San Luis Lake is nearly dry at an Elevation of 7509.1 ft.

San Luis Lake (3/31/2024)

San Luis Lake	San Luis Lake Elevation	7509.1 ft. MSL
	Storage	9 acre-feet
	TDS	N/A ppm TDS

Project Deliveries: (1/1/2024 to 3/31/2024)

Deliveries to:	Rio Grande—total	1,944 acre-feet
	Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge—total	628 acre-feet
	Blanca Wildlife Habitat Area—total	226 acre-feet
	San Luis Lake—total	0.0 acre-feet
	Head Lake (West)	0.0 acre-feet
	Total Deliveries as of March 31, 2024	<u>2,798 acre-feet</u>

MAINTENANCE BRANCH

Well rehabilitation operations were completed for 4 salvage wells to date in 2024. Weed management continued at canal check structures. Blade work continued on lateral roads and canal berms. Preventative maintenance on project features is ongoing. Staff prepared for spring water deliveries.

WATER LABORATORY

A total of 271 samples were collected from the Closed Basin Project during the period of January 1, 2024, through March 31, 2024.

Total Dissolved Solids at the Outlet was an average of 288 mg/L for the period.