



Draft Combined Minutes of the Board of Pima  
Natural Resource Conservation District and  
Pima Center for Conservation Education, Inc.  
3241 N. Romero Road  
Tucson, AZ 85705



Meeting Date: June 12, 2024 Meeting Location: public teleconference  
Time the meeting was called to order: 1:06 pm

#### I. Attendees:

Jim Chilton, Cindy Coping, Jonathan DuHamel, and Liz Tuck, clerk. A quorum was present. **Mary Miller also attended.**

#### II. Discuss/Approve Minutes

**Motion:** Supervisor DuHamel moved to accept the Minutes of March 31, 2023, January 16, 2024, and April 30, 2024. Supervisor "Coping seconded the motion.

**Motion passed 3 – 0.**

#### III. Invoices

**Motion:** Supervisor Coping moved to approve Liz Tuck's invoice of \$279.27. Supervisor DuHamel seconded the motion. **Motion passed 3 – 0.**

Supervisor Coping's invoice was tabled **because it was not presented to the Board. The NACD invoice** An additional invoice from Lovitt and Touché for the annual \$359 premium on the Board's required dishonesty bond had been submitted but not given to the Board as an oversight, and not mentioned. Since the invoice for this mandatory insurance must be timely paid, it will be presented to the Board for approval, post-payment by sole decision of the treasurer, at the next meeting.

#### IV. Financial Reports

Supervisor Coping reported the financial reports for the period from April 30, 2024 to June 3, 2024. The Pima NRCD State Account has a balance of \$8,102.36. The District Account has a balance of \$122,099.90. The PCCE State Account has a balance of \$212.61. The PCCE District Account has a balance of \$29,083.52.

The **Society for Range Management's 2024 Natural Resource Conservation Workshop for Arizona Youth (NRCWAY)** event was cancelled in early May, because of lack of applicants. **The \$600 contribution towards scholarships for two students, which the Pima NRCD BOS had approved at the previous meeting, will not be sent.**

#### V. Call to the Public

Liz Tuck, **Pima Center for Conservation Education director**, reported that the Winkelman and Reddington NRCs had **co-sponsored two sessions of a natural resource summer camp. She helped facilitate the camp, independently from the PCCE.** One session was for grades 2-3 and the other was for 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup>

grades. Liz acquired a reduced rate lease for the Dudleyville Multigenerational Center and scheduled several personnel from natural resource agencies to lead hands-on learning for the campers. The final day was spent at a ranch, hosted by a Winkelman NRC D supervisor. Liz also promoted the camps, using social media, newspaper advertising, and small flyers sent home in students' backpacks. Liz stated she could do the same for NRCWAY if Pima NRC D would pay for her time – estimated to be 20 hours or less. Chairman Chilton asked if this was something the Board should explore for 2025.

#### **VI. Recruitment of New Board Members**

Mary Miller asked if a blank Cooperator's agreement could be available. (A Cooperator Agreement can be downloaded from the Pima NRC D website here - <https://pimanrcd.org/become-a-cooperator/> ) Ms. Miller stated that she knows knows people who might be interested in serving on the board.

#### **VII. Old Business**

##### **a. Rancho Seco project**

The ranch is owned by Pima County and leased to Juan Lopez. The previously existing pumps, storage tanks, and livestock drinker infrastructure had been removed from five well sites, without written authorization from the county, before Mr. Lopez acquired the grazing permit. Presently about 10,000 acres on the Rancho Seco are without water. Mr. Lopez had submitted to the Board a map of the project area and itemized estimates of the cost to replace all water infrastructure at each well. Chairman Chilton mentioned that the ranch desperately needs the pumps and solar power for existing wells as soon as possible, especially with the onset of summer.

The issue had been tabled at the previous Board meeting. Supervisor Coping will consult in the meantime with AACD Executive Director Deborah Smith to find a way to help finance the projects and at the same time, avoid making illegal gifts to any individual. Deborah Smith suggested the NRC D do the project as a Pima NRC D demonstration of the latest technology, and include wildlife escape ramps, solar pumps, and other modern technology. No checks should be written to the lessee, but should instead be written directly to suppliers to purchase equipment.

Supervisor Coping suggested that studies, perhaps with game cameras before and after the project, could show the impact of the project on wildlife and possibly on range management. She had spoken with Dr. George Ruyle briefly to find out if he might be available for consultation on a range impacts study design, and found he is available for consulting work and interested in learning more about the project. Mary Miller emphasized the need to work together first with Pima County, who is the landowner, before charging ahead inappropriately and independently with a project on County-owned land. Mary suggested that experienced employees on the payroll of the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance (AVCA) could coordinate a meeting between the County, Mr. Lopez and potential financial supporters (Pima NRC D, Arizona Game and Fish Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NRCS, Arizona Water Conservation Fund, etc.). Chairman Chilton re-emphasized the need to get at least one well site up and running without delay. Supervisor Coping suggested that Pima NRC D funding could be made available for one well,

contingent on a deadline for completion. The proposed FY 2025 Plan of Work includes a deadline of July 31. At a future date, the Board can decide on an itemized proposal on one well. It was suggested that Pima NRCD could fund the re-establishment of the full infrastructure for one specific well, estimated to cost \$6,243.30. Mary Miller will call Sarah King to let her know that Pima NRCD is sensitive to the urgency of the matter. Jonathan DuHamel is concerned about water quality in that area and suggested it should be tested before putting the wells back into operation. Mary Miller will ask Sarah King to arrange a meeting with Juan Lopez, Cindy Coping, Mary Miller, Pima County and a representative from the Alliance.

**b. CBD Lawsuit**

Chair Chilton described the lawsuit filed by plaintiffs - Center for Biological Diversity and Maricopa Audubon Society - against the defendants US Forest Service (USFS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), related to the Yellow-billed cuckoo (YBC) and Sonora chub. The plaintiffs appear to take advantage of endangered species with full intent to eliminate cattle grazing on some 150 allotments on the Coronado National Forest. The plaintiffs requested an injunction against grazing in "occupied" YBC habitat, meaning not merely in areas of designated critical habitat, but anywhere the bird can fly. The Sonora chub is a minnow that washes north into the USA during monsoon flooding into just two canyons in Arizona, impacting just two ranches. USFS and USFWS are defending their biological opinion on cattle grazing and fighting the lawsuit. Southern AZ Cattlemen's Protective Assn. (SACPA) has been granted intervenor status in the lawsuit, represented by Norman James. CBD informed all parties they have new evidence. Attorneys agreed to postpone filing of briefs until late August. SACPA is raising money for legal fees. The lawsuit will proceed with the new evidence or CBD will file a new lawsuit. This is an extremely serious situation threatening all grazing permittees on the Coronado National Forest. It could eliminate grazing in So. AZ & SW NM. Since the YBC "occupies" most of the western USA, losing the lawsuit could begin a domino effect to eliminate cow/calf production on all state and federal lands in most of the western USA. The Chair is just reporting this so everyone has a background. The lawsuit could go several ways; from eliminating grazing to more fencing being installed to exclude cattle from near-ubiquitous critical habitat, or the judge rules in favor of defendants. Jim Chilton has a neighbor 3 miles away with YBC nesting in mesquite trees. Forest Service put together a biological assessment of their grazing program – it says grazing in critical habitat is satisfactory if grazing standards of the USFS are met. USFWS wrote a biological opinion that grazing does not adversely affect YBC as long as grazing is within USFS standards. The plaintiffs are suing to try to overturn the two agencies' opinions on grazing.

**c. Annual Plans of Work and Budget Requests.**

The FY 2025 Plans of Work and Budgets for the Pima NRCD and the Pima Center for Conservation Education, as presented to the Board, were passed unanimously 3-0. The Clerk was instructed to file the forms on the AACD website.

## VII. New Business

### a. **NACD dues**

**Motion:** Supervisor Coping moved to pay \$775.00 to NACD. This amount includes payment to a “Western Issues Specialist” to voice the interest of Western producers. Supervisor DuHamel seconded the motion. **Motion passed 3 – 0.**

### b. **Fidelity Resolution**

**Motion:** Supervisor Coping moved to approve the Fidelity resolution. Supervisor DuHamel seconded. **Motion passed 3 – 0.**

c. **Motion:** Supervisor Coping moved, and Supervisor DuHamel seconded a motion to approve reimbursement for Supervisors for lodging/conference expenses for AACD Aug 4-6 upon presentation of receipts to BOS, as well as half the expenses for the Clerk to attend (Winkelman NRCD pays the other half. **Motion passed 3 – 0.**

d. Supervisor King and Chair Chilton have submitted written resignations. The Clerk has to remove the two retiring members before new members can be added to the AACD website.

**Motion:** Supervisor Coping moved to bring Mary Miller onto the Board of Supervisors (BOS). Supervisor DuHamel seconded. **Motion passed 3 – 0.**

e. **Motion:** Supervisor DuHamel moved to nominate Sue “Super Sue” Chilton to the BOS. Supervisor Coping seconded. **Motion passed 3 – 0.**

Officer assignments for FY 25 were tabled to the next meeting, as were the decisions as to which supervisors would fill the vacant 4 and 6 year “elected” positions (in quotes because no candidate ran for election this year.)

f. **Motion:** Supervisor Coping moved to develop a Policy Manual that includes:

- ~ Schedule of deadlines
- ~ Using Google docs to maintain organized work without duplication of effort and to minimize confusion
- ~ Open Meeting Law
- ~ Officers and their duties

Supervisor DuHamel seconded. **Motion passed 3 – 0.**

Any Supervisor or the Clerk can post information to Google docs. After posting, click the **Share** button and then insert the names of the people authorized to see it.

g. **Motion:** Approve the draft Plans of Work for Pima NRCD and PCCE. Supervisor DuHamel so moved; Supervisor Coping seconded. **Motion passed 3 – 0.**

**Motion:** Approve the budgets for the Plans of Work. Supervisor Coping so moved; Supervisor DuHamel seconded. **Motion passed 3 – 0.**

h. The Clerk was asked to reply to an inquiry from a company called Source and to invite their representative to discuss or demonstrate their technology for collecting and purifying water in dry environments .

## IX. Supervisor Reports

Chair Chilton stated he appreciates the opportunity he has had to serve on the Board. He has enjoyed working with Supervisors and staff as well as NRCD. He is excited that Mary Miller and Sue Chilton are coming on the Board.

## X. Next Meeting.

Will be held prior to July 20 so the Annual Report can be approved. Liz Tuck will notify the BOS of available dates for the meeting.

**XI** The meeting adjourned at 2:20 pm.