



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



Meeting Date: April 30, 2024 Meeting Location: Micha's Restaurant, Tucson, AZ
The meeting was called to order at 1:05 pm.

Supervisors/Clerk: Jim Chilton, Cindy Coping, Pat King, Andrew McGibbon,
Jonathan DuHamel, Liz Tuck (Clerk)

Other Attendees: Alisha Phipps, Heather Spieth, (NRCS); Sue Chilton; John King;
Sarah King, Julia Guglielmo and Mary Miller (Altar Valley Conservation Alliance);
and Marty Suter (by phone, Arizona Dept of Agriculture

Review/Approve Minutes:

Motion: Supervisor Coping moved to accept the minutes of January 26, 2024.
Supervisor McGibbon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

Review/Approve Invoices (Supervisors & Clerk

- Supervisor Coping, (\$30.32 for website domain name renewals).
- Liz Tuck, Clerk (\$731.91 - itemized invoice for labor and expenses for meeting preparation, newsletter, 1099-MISC tax filings and election)
- **Motion:** Supervisor King moved to pay the invoices as presented. Supervisor DuHamel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

PNRCD & PCCE Financial Report (See Attached Reports):

The PCCE District Account has a current balance of \$2,787.50. The PCCE Savings account has a current balance of \$29,080.89.

The Pima NRCD State Account has a current balance of \$8,914.59.

The Pima NRCD District account has a balance of \$119,507.05.

The treasurer's strategy moving forward is to invest the District Account in a target portfolio allocation of 40% cash and fixed income investments; 42% in domestic equities; 12% in developed international market equities and 6% in emerging international markets equities; and to make trades to reallocate the portfolio back to the target whenever one of the allocations deviates from the target allocation by 3 percent.

Motion:

Supervisor King moved to authorize the Treasurer to open a brokerage account to better manage the PCCE's District Account funds. Supervisor DuHamel seconded the motion. The motion carried 5-0.

Supervisor King volunteered to be an additional authorized signer on the brokerage Account.

Motion:

Supervisor McGibbon moved to have the treasurer's report filed. Supervisor King seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 5-0

Motion:

Supervisor McGibbon moved to pay \$75.00 to the AZ Corp Commission for required filing fees and penalties to bring PCCE into good standing. The motion passed unanimously 5-0

Agency Reports:

NRCS – Alisha Phipps

Ms. Phipps distributed and explained a detailed written NRCS Team 7 report, which is attached to these minutes. The Tucson Field Office has \$621,000 available in EQIP funds. It was suggested and Ms. Phipps agreed that NRCS distribute cooperator agreements to its clients within the District and request they update their cooperator information and send to Pima NRCD.

Call to the Public: No one responded.

Old Business

- **Election Update.** Chairman Chilton informed the Board in writing that he will not be seeking reelection to the Pima NRCD Board. At this point in the election cycle, no new candidates are able to gather 25 signatures to run for this seat. Chairman Chilton asked the Clerk to call Deborah Smith to know what to do in this situation. The scheduled meeting for the election was cancelled.

Mary Miller stated that she or her husband Charley Miller might consider accepting an appointment for the board. She asked several questions about terms and expectations. She and her husband are cooperators, so they are eligible. The Board has the capability for board members to attend by telephone when necessary, if requested prior to the meeting so that necessary equipment is available.

Discuss/Action: AACD Annual Dues. Board members agreed to pay the current dues.

Discuss AZ House Bill 2865. No one had any new information.

- **Update on Center for Biological Diversity and Maricopa Audubon Society lawsuit against Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service seeking injunction against the grazing permits on the Coronado National Forest (CNF).**

Yellow billed cuckoos (YBC) have been spotted living near washes and rivers in

the Southwest. The plaintiffs allege cattle grazing disturbs the birds' habitat and that the Biological Opinion on grazing agreed to by the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service failed to properly consider the impact of "climate change" on the YBC and the Sonora chub, a minnow. Whereas most lawsuits of this type focus on areas designated as Critical Habitat under the Endangered Species Act, the plaintiffs' Prayer for Relief is for all grazing to be suspended in "occupied" habitat on the CNF until a new Biological Opinion on grazing is drafted and Section 7 consultation is completed (a process that would take years to complete). The livelihoods of approximately 150 ranchers having permits on the 177 targeted federal allotments would be threatened if the plaintiffs prevail. Should the plaintiffs win, they are expected to file similar lawsuits against all on cattle grazing on State and federal lands across the numerous Western States where the YBC has been found.

- Due to the plaintiffs' request to introduce new information into the administrative record for the lawsuit, the Court has granted a stay of 150 days during which the plaintiffs may file a new lawsuit based on "new information." The lawsuit plaintiffs now allege they have "new information" that cattle grazing harms the little saplings necessary to sustain YBC habitat. The trial probably won't convene until 2025; that gives intervenors the opportunity to add new information to the administrative record on the YBC.

Chairman Chilton requested a July agenda discussion focused on a suggestion that the Pima Center for Conservation Education might contribute funding to a currently planned DNA study to determine whether or not the "Western" Yellow billed cuckoo is genetically different from the highly abundant "Eastern" YBC. **A second discussion for the July agenda** is whether the Pima NRCDC could help fund an inventory of little trees and/or saplings on the CNF.

- **Cooperator List.** Supervisor Copping updated the list and the Clerk to use the updated list to send out the Spring newsletter.

New Business

Local Work Group Meeting. This part of the meeting was led by Alisha Phipps of NRCS. She stated that the purpose of the LWG meeting is to rank various environmental needs in order of priority for the District. After discussion, the Supervisors decided that they wanted to keep the same rankings as last year. The top three concerns are 1) **Animals** – Inadequate Livestock Water Quantity, Quality, and Distribution; 2) **Plant Productivity** and Health; 3) **Soil** – Sheet and Rill Erosion.

- a) **Discussion.** Pima County owns the grazing leases on the Rancho Seco Ranch and recently purchased the headquarters as well. A new rancher has taken over the leases for grazing permits on the ranch but found that the former owner removed most or all of the water infrastructure from the ranch including pumps, storage tanks and water troughs. This means there is little if

any water on a ranch that formerly supported livestock and wildlife. The new lessee seeks funding for new infrastructure. He submitted a detailed analysis to the Pima NRCD of what is needed and an itemized estimate of how much it will cost to implement. He has been working with NRCS to get partial funding. Chairman Chilton suggested the Pima NRCD provide emergency funding for a specific well pump, storage tank and livestock drinker so the ranch is not without water when the hot summer weather commences. The Pima NRCD Board discussed whether they legally could help an individual. Not being certain, Supervisor Copping volunteered to speak to AACD Executive Director Deborah Smith to ask if the District can legally commit funds to the proposed project.

- **Discussion:** The Altar Valley Conservation Alliance has a US FWS Partners program grant to repair wells and address major erosion issues on the Palo Alto Ranch has a grant of \$24,000 to. Pima PCCE agreed to fund two workshops for this project so scientists can assess how best to proceed with the erosion project and producers could learn about the methods used and the results achieved. Pima PCCE committed to funding Altar Valley Conservation Alliance \$2,000 from FY 2024 funds for the first workshop. The balance of \$750.00 will remain in the PCCE State account to cover administrative costs. Supervisor McGibbon moved, and Supervisor King seconded, to approve these payments. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.
- **Report: Livestock Operator Fire and Flood Assistance Grant Program**
Marty Suter stated that the purpose of LOFFAP is to provide a source of funding for landowners and lessees of a livestock operation who require reconstruction assistance as a result of infrastructure damage caused by a wildfire and that wildfire's associated flooding. The operator must own at least 40 head of cattle. The grant can be used to complement NRCS' or other entities' grants in order to meet the requirement of 50% matching funds. The application deadline is June 28, 2024.
- **Motion:** Supervisor Copping moved to donate \$500.00 to Envirothon and \$600.00 to NRCWay. Supervisor King seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.

Supervisor Reports

None reported.

Meeting adjourned at 2:35. Supervisor DuHamel moved to adjourn the meeting. Supervisor McGibbon seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

Next Meeting Date: May 13, 2024

Minutes: Submitted by Liz Tuck, Pima NRCD Clerk on May 5, 2024

Signed:


Jim Chilton, Chairman, Pima NRCD/PCCE

5-5-24