

Pima Natural Resource Conservation District
Pima Center for Conservation Education, Inc.
3241 N. Romero Road
Tucson, AZ 85705
www.pimanrcd.org
www.azranchingfarming.org
Contact: clerk@pimanrcd.org



DRAFT Minutes of Tuesday, January 21, 2025

Combined Meeting of the Boards of Pima NRCD and Pima Center for Conservation Education, Inc (PCCE)

January 21, 2025

Location: USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Center, 3241 N Romero Rd, Tucson

Meeting was called to order at 1:05 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance recited.

Supervisors present

Mary Miller, Supervisor and Secretary
Jonathan DuHamel, Supervisor
Cindy Copping, Supervisor and Treasurer
Sue Chilton, Supervisor, Vice Chair

Supervisor absent: Andrew McGibbon, Supervisor and Chair
A quorum of each board was present.

Guests

Tom Reis, NRCS Resource Conservationist
Mynesha Holliday, NRCS Soil Conservationist
Doug Lowell, Palo Alto Ranch Owner

Agency Reports

Tom Reis, USDA-NRCS, submitted a written report for Arizona Team 7. The report is attached to these minutes.

Supervisor Reports: None presented

Financial Report

Treasurer Copping reported on the financial status of the two organizations. See attached summary.

Unspent Pima NRCD FY '25 budget \$20,752.72

Unspent Pima Center for Conservation Education, Inc. FY '25 budget: \$10,116.04

Motion by Supervisor Copping, to change target investment allocation strategy to match AZ State Treasurer Kimberly Yee's portfolio for the Arizona Endowment Trust Fund, 2nd by Supervisor Chilton, motion carries unanimously.

Update on Workshop Project in Partnership with AVCA

At last meeting, the board approved up to \$7500 of Education Center funds to host 4 educational workshops. AVCA needs to provide a draft Project Agreement to attach to the existing PCCE/AVCA MOU for approval. When signed by both parties, the Ed Center can release those funds. Supervisors asked that AVCA assure that a broad array of funding sources be included in the fundraising opportunities session, and that the invasive species session provide new information. The following information was provided by Elena Dosamantes, AVCA Program Coordinator:

- *The workshops will be part of the 2025 Rangeland Resilience Workshop Series*
- *There will be four separate workshops, each will be on the first Monday of the month:*
 - *Monday, March 3: Invasive Species Prevention and Management*
 - *Monday, April 7: Wildfire Prevention and Preparedness*
 - *Monday, May 5: Keeping Up With Technology*
 - *Monday, June 2: Finding Funding and Resources*
- *AVCA created "planning teams" composed of experts and practitioners in each of the fields of interest. Teams are composed of professors, extension specialists, government agency*
- *First round of planning meetings have been held with most teams. We have decided:*
 - *Important topics that we need to cover*
 - *Workshop dates*
 - *Length of workshops (all will be full day, except for the last one which will be half day)*
 - *Some speakers have been decided on, invited, and confirmed*
 - *Wildfire Prevention and Preparedness speakers have yet to be decided on and confirmed*
- *Second round of planning meetings coming up. We will:*
 - *Confirm location; will probably be University of Arizona Campus Farm classrooms*
 - *Finalize agendas*
- *After second meeting I will:*
 - *Create flyers/invitations*

Progress updates for Rancho Seco Project

Juan Lopez, Rancho Seco project is pending.

Approve Invoices

1. Supervisor Copping motion to approve invoices for NACD for dues \$775.00, 2nd by Supervisor DuHamel, motion carried. The dues will be paid from the District account.
2. Supervisor Copping motion to approve invoices presented by Supervisor Copping for reimbursement for Mint Mobile telephone service, office supplies, and Arizona Corporation Commission filing fee (subtotal \$200.33) and invoice for time 48.3 hours at \$25.00/hour (subtotal \$1208.33) for a combined total of \$1408.66. Second by Supervisor Chilton, motion carries.

Approve minutes of October 24, 2024 meeting. Supervisor Copping motion to approve minutes, 2nd by Supervisor DuHamel, motion carries.

Clerk Recruitment Notice

Supervisor Miller and Supervisor Copping will coordinate to describe tasks. The idea of contracting with Southwest Decision Resources was introduced by Supervisor Miller. Supervisor Miller and Supervisor Copping will continue to work on this task.

Proposals for new projects

Mr. Lowell reported on Palo Alto Ranch erosion mitigation work, which is ongoing in partnership with the non-profit Altar Valley Conservation Alliance (AVCA). In FY '24, the PCCE funded a public workshop for scientists to gain a better understanding the erosion issues on the Palo Alto Ranch in order to better address those issues in the future. Mr. Lowell introduced the concept of initiating a pilot mesquite eradication project on Palo Alto, and using the mesquite to plug arroyos.

Supervisor Copping motion to budget up to \$10,000 for a mesquite eradication project on private land on the Palo Alto Ranch, contingent upon Mr. Lowell producing a signed cooperator agreement and a written proposal (that includes photos, headcut locations/gully dimensions, project costs, and schedule). Second by Supervisor DuHamel, Motion carried 4-0.

Proposed listing of the Monarch Butterfly as a threatened species

Supervisor Copping observes that the proposal states the butterfly's dependence on milkweed but lacks specificity about type of nectar producing plants the species requires. A local researcher, Joe Billings, has studied the monarchs and identified six specific nectar plants that they feed on. Mary Darling, a local biologist, has provided information from Monarch butterfly research Joe Billings published from October 2022 that provides this specific information.

Supervisor Chilton commented that for a comment submission on a proposed regulation to give the submitter legal standing, substantive information must be provided to the regulating agency, in this case, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The board requests that Mary Darling contact Joe Billings as a possible contractor to submit comments on the proposed species listing on behalf of the District and Ed Center. Comments are due March 12, 2025. If Pima NRCDC requests that comments be prepared, the payment could utilize up to \$2,500 of Education Center funding, with other partners to be recruited if necessary. Supervisor Chilton will follow up with Mary Darling. Additionally, Supervisor Chilton and Supervisor Copping will reach out to other organizations to determine their interest in partnering on paying for, and being represented by, the comments.

Password Management

When clerks leave the District, sometimes account login credentials (are lost. e.g., for email, website management, telephone, State Lands Portal, etc.) Supervisor Copping entered all of the District's account login credentials into the free version of Bitwarden™, a password management program. Supervisor Copping motioned that the board approve paying the \$40 annual cost for the "Families" premium version of the password protection account. This version allows up to six users, so that all 5 supervisors and a clerk could access any account as needed. One user (called the "owner") would manage the allowed users and each person's degree of allowed access. The account allows each user login access while maintaining strong passwords and full 2-factor authentication capability. 2nd by Supervisor Chilton, motion carries.

Summary of action items:

- Supervisor Miller~ Request that AVCA draft a Project Agreement to attach to our PCCE/AVCA Memorandum of Understanding,
 - planning \$7,500.00 for the previously approved series of four workshops;
 - and request that AVCA assure that the funding source workshop covers a wide array of funding sources, including State and private funding resources;
 - and that AVCA provide more detail about the invasive species workshop to assure that new information will be provided.
- Supervisor Chilton ~ Reach out Mary Darling to explore feasibility and cost of contracting with Joe Billings to prepare comments on the Monarch butterfly listing
- The Board invited Doug Lowell to submit a signed Pima NRCDC cooperator agreement and a proposal for Palo Alto Ranch mesquite clearing pilot project along the Brawley Wash. The Board may hold a public teleconference before the next in-person meeting to discuss this matter further and possibly release funding for this project.

Call to public

No response

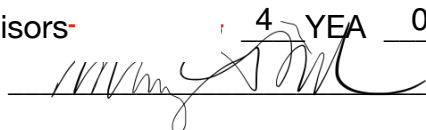
Next in-person meeting date April 22, 2025.

Adjourned at 3:09 pm

Approved by Board of Supervisors-

4 YEA 0 NAY

Mary Miller, Chair

 date 6/27/2025



**Pima NRCD Meeting
NRCS Team 7 Report
January 21, 2025**

FARM BILL PROGRAM UPDATES:

- Federal Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) started October 1, 2024. NRCS customers need to make sure all of their paperwork with Farm Service Agency (FSA) is updated for 2025 (for example, Adjusted Gross Income forms).
- **Application deadlines for FY25 funding have passed. Now processing applications.**
- **Still operating under 2018 Farm Bill.**

NRCS FUNDING PROGRAMS – (FY24 Allocations):

- **CSP – Conservation Stewardship Program (\$3.8 million)**
 - Assists producers that already have a conservation plan they are maintaining. Provides financial assistance to enhance existing systems.
 - <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/csp-conservation-stewardship-program>
- **EQIP – Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) – funds available statewide (\$17.695 million)**
 - Funding through the IRA will provide direct climate mitigation benefits
 - IRA funding limited to specific Climate Smart Mitigation Activities
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/arizona/news/nrcs-in-arizona-accepting-applications-from>
- **EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentives Program funding (Statewide \$11,181,800)**
 - Provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers. Helps with funding of projects on operations to improve the natural resources and management of the land.
 - <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/eqip-environmental-quality-incentives>
- **RCPP – Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape w/ Arizona Land & Water Trust (\$3,557,816)**
 - Promotes coordination between NRCS and its partners to deliver conservation assistance to producers and landowners. NRCS provides assistance to producers through partnership agreements and through program contracts or easement agreements. RCPP assistance is delivered in accordance with the rules of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).
 - <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/nrcs+content+library/nrcs/az/programs/farmbill/rcpp/nrcseprd1299887>
- **Joint Chiefs - Catalina Rincon: Mount Lemmon watershed area (\$157,652)**
 - The Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership enables NRCS and the Forest Service to collaborate with states, agricultural producers, forest landowners, tribes and public land managers to invest in conservation and restoration at a big enough scale to make a positive

difference. Working in partnership, and at this scale, helps reduce wildfire threats to communities, protect water quality and supply, and improve wildlife habitat for at-risk species.

- <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/joint-chiefs-landscape-restoration-partnership>
- **Joint Chiefs - Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Phase 2** (\$385,700)
- **National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI):** Babocomari Watershed (\$1,132,203)
 - National Water Quality Initiative is a partnership among NRCS, state water quality agencies and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to identify and address impaired water bodies through voluntary conservation. NRCS provides targeted funding for financial and technical assistance in small watersheds most in need and where ranchers can use conservation practices to make a difference.
 - <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/national-water-quality-initiative>

Team 7 Staffing Updates:

- Tucson Office – Natural Resources Specialist selected Austin Urcadez (transferring from Sells Field Office), started January 12th, 2025
- Douglas Office – Soil Conservationist, new employee, Tania Hanline, will be starting January 27th, 2025.
- Sells Office – Iris Francisco resigned 11/1/24
- Team Lead – Tom Reis has taken a new position with Arizona NRCS serving as the Resource Conservationist for Ralph Ware, Assistant State Conservationist-Field Operations (ASTC-FO) effective 12/15/24. He will no longer be supervising the Field Offices in Team 7. The Team Lead vacancy position for Team 7 has been flown. No selections have been made yet.

NRCS Tucson Field Office Staff:

Tom Reis, <i>Acting</i> - Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist – Team Lead	tom.reis@usda.gov
Alisha Phipps, Rangeland Management Specialist – Master Planner	alisha.phipps@usda.gov
Heather Spieth, Rangeland Management Specialist	heather.spieth@usda.gov
Mynesha Holliday, Soil Conservationist	mynesha.holliday@usda.gov
Austin Urcadez, Natural Resource Specialist – (started 1/12/2025)	austin.urcadez@usda.gov

Submitted By:

Tom Reis

Acting - Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist – Team Lead for Team 7

Tom.Reis@usda.gov

Office: (520) 310-9316

Arizona NRCS: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/arizona>
