

**MINUTES OF THE
2,201st REGULAR MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
MIDDLE RIO GRANDE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT**

JULY 10, 2023 - 3:00 PM

Directors having been duly notified; Madam Chair Russo Baca called the regular meeting to order at 3:01 pm. The following Directors and Staff were present:

DIRECTORS

Stephanie Russo Baca, Madam Chair	Present
Karen Dunning, Vice Chair	Present
Barbara Baca, Director	Absent
John Kelly, Director	Absent
Joaquin Baca, Director	Absent
Glen Duggins, Director	Present
Michael T. Sandoval, Director	Present

STAFF

Jason Casuga	Chief Engineer/CEO
Lorna Wiggins	General Counsel
Dr. Charles DuMars	Chief Water Counsel
Pamela Fanelli	Secretary-Treasurer/CFO
Eric Zamora	Chief Operating Officer
Anne Marken	Water Distribution Division Mgr.
Matt Martinez	Water Operations Division Mgr.

The following names of individuals were interested viewers, callers and/or participants

Ernie Marquez, AES	Eli Lovato, AES	Jennifer Faler, USBR
Reyna Banteah, SVAA	Santiago Maestas, SVAA	Matthew Piccarello, The Nature Conservancy
Anna Gallegos	Georgina Serna-Pacheco	Christine Nardi, MRGCD
Eddie Baca	Nate Francis, SVAA	Judith McSweeney, MRGCD
Mark Murphy, SWCA	James Sanchez	Ashley Veihl, MRGCD
Angelina Lopez-Brody, AFSC	Annalise Porter	Haley Ormsbee, MRGCD
Martin Haynes	Tarah Jaramillo, MRGCD	Josh Hind, MRGCD

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1 – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Annalise Porter led the Pledge of Allegiance at today's meeting.

Madam Chair Russo Baca declared a quorum, and the meeting was publicly noticed. This meeting was a hybrid meeting. Rollcall votes will no longer be necessary for regular motions.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2 – APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Mr. Casuga asked to swap Item 5 and 6. Vice Chair Dunning also asked to move 11(e) to 11(a).

Vice Chair Dunning made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE MEETING AGENDA with the above changes**. Seconded by Madam Chair Russo Baca. The MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3 - CONSENT AGENDA

- a. **Consideration/Approval of Payment Ratification - July 10, 2023**
- b. **Consideration/Approval of June 2023 Invoice for Wiggins, Williams & Wiggins**
- c. **Consideration/Approval of June 2023 Invoice for Law and Resource Planning Assoc.**
- d. **Consideration/Approval of the Minutes for the Regular Meeting Board Meeting - June 12, 2023**

- e. **Memo on MRGCD Approved Licenses for June 2023 (For Informational Purposes Only)**
- f. **Consideration/Approval for Albuquerque Division Gate through NM State Pricing Agreement**
- g. **Consideration/Approval for General Office Fencing through NM State Pricing Agreement to Protect MRGCD Property from Theft, including Catalytic Converters**

Vice Chair Dunning asked how many catalytic converters had been stolen, to which Mr. Zamora said it was about a dozen in the last six months.

Vice Chair Dunning made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA**. Seconded by Director Michael T. Sandoval. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 - Consideration/Approval of 2023 MRGCD Election Items

- a. **Report from Election Committee Meeting, July 6, 2023 (Directors Joaquin Baca, Sandoval, and Vice Chair Dunning)**

Vice Chair Dunning discussed the Election Committee Meeting. She stated the main goal was to approve polling locations before knowing who the candidates would be. She said they decided to recommend going with the status quo, with the exception of Los Ranchos, which they did ask to change because the government offices were not available.

Chair Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE REPORT FROM THE ELECTION COMMITTEE**. Seconded by Director Joaquin Baca. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

- b. **Discussion/Approval of Polling Locations - Eli Lovato, Election Director**

Mr. Lovato stated there were two polling locations in question. He thanked Director Sandoval that they received approval to use the Sandia Pueblo Senior Mill Site. The other was the Agri-Nature Center in Los Ranchos, which they're still waiting for a response. He said they did receive an email from Chief Leo Perez accommodating the fire headquarters on 2nd Street, which is one mile from the boy scout building.

The Chair questioned whether to table the item as the sites weren't finalized but Ms. Wiggins stated the board can take action knowing that there may be an alternative site. She said if you approve the first and second choices, then it would be a matter of reporting at the next meeting the final group of polling places.

Chair Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE POLLING LOCATIONS WITH UNDERSTANDING THAT THE FIRST AND SECOND CHOICES ARE ALSO APPROVED FOR THE BOARD**. Seconded by Vice Chair Dunning. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

- c. **Discussion/Approval for Resolution BD-07-10-23-55, Regarding Election Signage**

Vice Chair Dunning stated earlier that it's too hard to police the little signs and they would prohibit large signs. She recommended the District needed to have a temporary signage policy put in place at some point. The reason behind the resolutions is the MRGCD has many rules about getting a license but nothing about a temporary signage policy. She wanted to explain

that when there's a sign placed on MRGCD property it doesn't mean that MRGCD is promoting a candidacy.

Director Joaquin Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION BD-07-10-23-55**. Seconded by Director Sandoval. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 - REPORT FROM MRGCD GENERAL COUNSEL - Lorna M. Wiggins

Ms. Wiggins explained the MRGCD was forced to seek a temporary restraining order from Judge Erin O'Connell as a result of Adriana Villar's effort to alter, modify, and damage the portions of the Rogers Lateral on the western boundaries of her property. The court granted full relief sought by the MRGCD and were granted access to all portions of Ms. Villar's property. Ms. Wiggins stated MRGCD was required to rebuild and recreate the damaged part of the Rogers Lateral but was met with impediments, interference and troubling behavior by Ms. Villar when trying to do so. She stated they then had to go back to court for assistance. Ms. Wiggins thanked and acknowledged the personnel who were on site under difficult circumstances. They had to have Bernalillo County Sheriff's deputies on site for the first several times, for the full number of hours the crew was present and periodically to conduct well checks as needed.

Vice Chair Dunning thanked everyone for their bravery and asked if people on the Rogers Lateral had received water yet. Ms. Wiggins stated they had not but were able to staff crews with resources to maybe salvage some of the irrigation season for them.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6 - ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR (Comments are limited to six (6) minutes)

Martin Haynes

Mr. Haynes thanked the Board for allowing him to attend the tour of MRGCD and EBID (Elephant Butte Irrigation District). He said the biggest takeaway he took from the trip was that MRGCD needed to work with EBID and El Paso Irrigation District in getting water past a gauge the New Mexico-Texas line. He stated he did not feel like it had been dealt with appropriately. He stated they had let water be taken from water right holders and spill into habitat. Mr. Haynes felt that all that needed to be done was to get the Low Flow Conveyance Channel back into the condition it was in and get water delivered to the next gauge down from the San Marcial Gauge.

Anna Gallegos

Ms. Gallegos, a water user for about 50 years, thanked all the people that had been going out and working on the Rogers Lateral. She stated she had fruit trees that were hard to water with city water, which ran her bill high.

Georgina Serna-Pacheco

Ms. Serna-Pacheco stated she lived next door to Ms. Villar, who caused damage, time, money, and headaches to the people who were trying to fix the ditch. She said she was concerned if irrigation would open up and if they would get flooded. She thanked everyone that helped with the effort and hoped things would get resolved and calmed down.

Mark Garcia

Mr. Garcia thanked Martin Haynes for coming out. He asked who decides when a habitat becomes a habitat and why. He said it was very concerning. Mr. Casuga stated they would answer that question in writing.

Eddie Baca

Mr. Baca thanked everyone who helped with the Rogers Lateral. He also thanked Ms. Lorna Wiggins for her help.

Santiago Maestas

Mr. Maestas thanked everyone at the MRGCD for the work they did to restore the acequia. He said the commission filed criminal charges against Ms. Villar for interfering with the acequia and denying the commission's access to the easement. He said Bernalillo County Sheriff's Department was conducting an investigation to be able to testify in the case against her.

Reyna Banteah

Ms. Banteah, an irrigator and farmer along the Rogers Lateral, showed appreciation to MRGCD for all the work they had been doing.

Angelina Lopez-Brody

Ms. Lopez-Brody, a neighbor of the damaged property off the Rogers Lateral, thanked the Conservancy District for stepping up and helping. She highlighted a ditch rider, Anderson (Tolth). She said he was an excellent resource. She also mentioned they may see her in the future as a collaborator, as she worked for American Friends Service Committee.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7 - REPORT(S) FROM THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT -
Christine L. Nardi, MBA

a. Introduction of MRGCD New Hires

Ms. Nardi applauded all the employees and staff for stepping up and helping with the Rogers Lateral. She continued to report the General Office hired two ISOs for the Belen service area. She stated there was a promotion from field maintenance tech to light equipment operation in the Albuquerque Division. She said there was also a promotion in Belen Division from medium equipment operator to heavy equipment operator. Ms. Nardi updated the vacancy rate to 9.2%.



Memorandum

To: MRGCD Chair Russo Baca and Board of Directors
 Through: Jason M. Casuga, Chief Engineer/CEO
 From: Human Resources
 Date: July 10, 2023
 Re: Introduction of New Hires and Job/Title Changes

General Office

ANDREW	ORTEGA	IRRIGATION SYSTEMS OPERATOR	06/26/2023
AUSTIN	SAUCEDA	IRRIGATION SYSTEMS OPERATOR	06/26/2023

Albuquerque Division

STEVEN	OTERO	LIGHT EQUIPMENT OPERATOR	06/26/2023 PROMOTION
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Belen Division

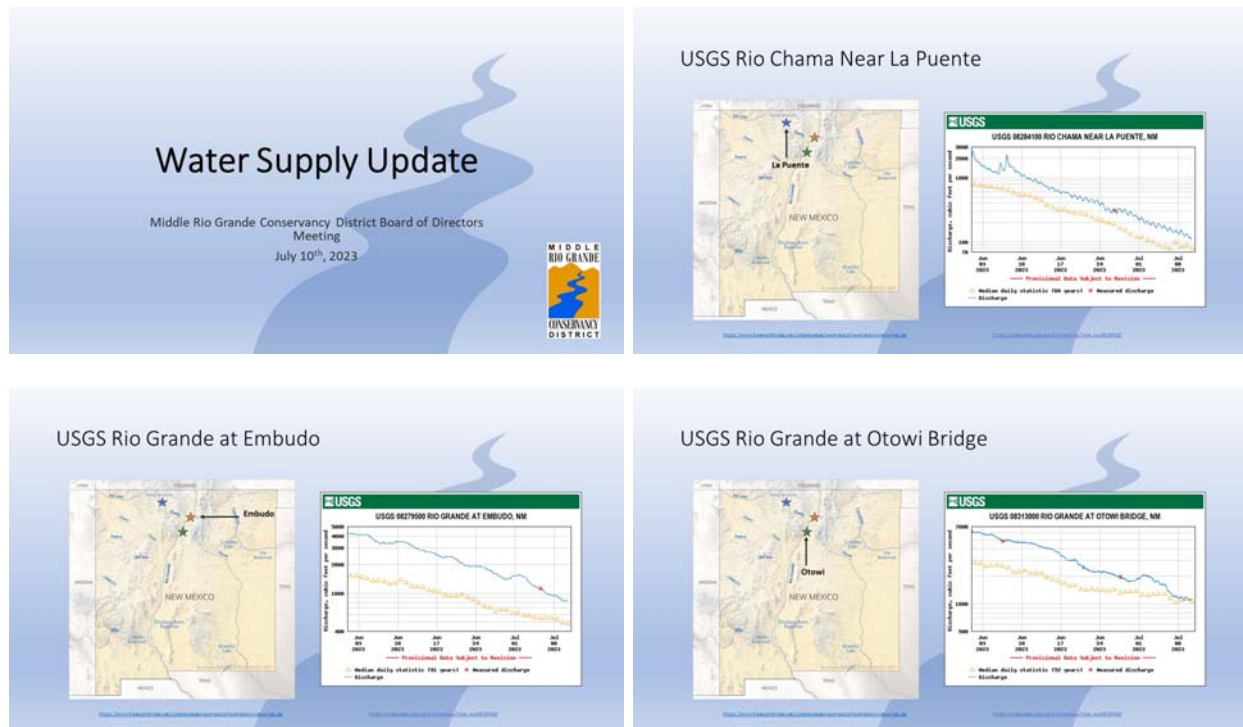
MACY	BAYLESS	HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATOR	07/10/2023 PROMOTION
CODY	RUSSELL	MEDIUM EQUIPMENT OPERATOR	07/24/2023

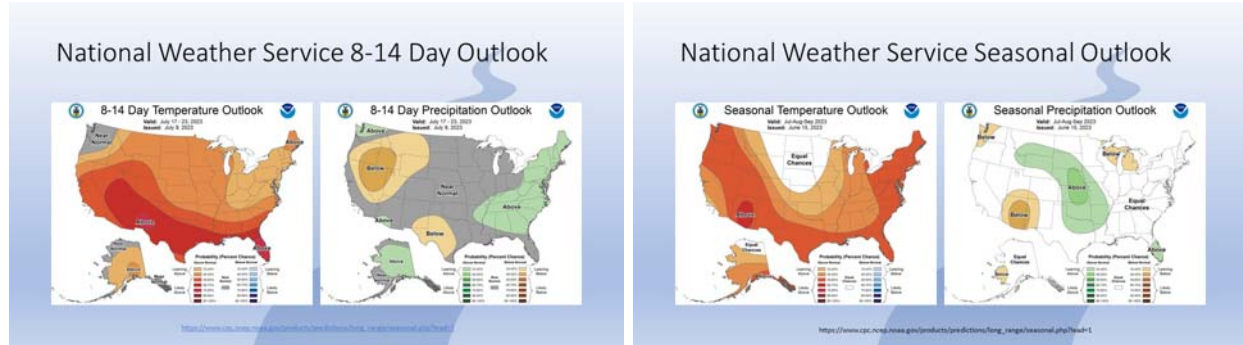
AGENDA ITEM NO. 8 - UPDATE ON THE 2023 IRRIGATION SEASON

a. Report on the Water Supply Conditions - Anne Marken, Water Ops Division Manager

Ms. Marken stated they had experienced above average river flows due to the above average snowpack, with inflows to the Middle Valley peaking at 500 cubic feet per second in June, even after Army Corps of Engineers stored water in their upstream reservoirs to prevent flooding of downstream communities. She stated La Puente Gauge was measuring 120 cubic feet per second (CFS) today, which was down from 1000 CFS a month ago. She said Embudo Gauge was 850 CFS, down from 3500 CFS a month ago, and Otowi Bridge Gauge was 1100 CFS, down from 4600 CFS a month ago. Ms. Marken said the river was still continuous to Elephant Butte and the middle valley had not seen any river channel drying as of yet. She reminded that the only storage water available to MRGCD was San Juan Chama water this year, with expected full allocation by July 15th. Ms. Marken said there was 14,500 acre feet of water stored for prior and paramount lands for the year. She said New Mexico was carrying 93,000 acre feet of Compact debt at the end of 2022. She stated the two-week outlook showed above average temperatures and near normal chances for precipitation, and much of the same for the outlook through September.

Chair Russo Baca clarified that even though there was storage in Abiquiu, it would not be released during irrigation season.





b. Status Report on Water Distribution - Matt Martinez, Water Distribution Division Manager

Mr. Martinez stated they had been able to continue meeting irrigation demand. He stated they've seen intermittent shortages in Cochiti Division. It was important that water users communicated their needs to their ISOs in advance and take delivery day and night. He said they were able to offset periods of high use by increasing the Angostura Diversion in Albuquerque Division, and ISOs were closely coordinating to keep the system in balance. Mr. Martinez stated Corrales was maintaining a steady rate of pumping but would need to keep an eye on the river stage there. He said they had strict flow limits on the Belen High Line Canal in the southwestern part of Belen and reiterated to farmers they would be working on short term and long term solutions to establish stability there. He added they started diverting to San Acacia Diversion Dam in Socorro to ensure they were getting enough supply to meet demand as the Unit 7 Drain flows dropped. Mr. Martinez informed the Board that the latest zone assignments would be updated on the website later in the week. He said operations would get tighter in the second half of the irrigation season, as water would not be as readily available as it was in the spring runoff. He reminded that they must be cautious in sensitive areas when rain was forecasted due to the risk of stormwater inflows and their impact on their facilities and operations.

Vice Chair Dunning asked if water would now be rotational or still get water when the crop needed it. Mr. Martinez stated their intent was to give water when the crop needed it and did not plan to go into rotations, but there might be longer wait times.

Mr. Casuga encouraged irrigators and farmers to contact often and get their name on the book, and if they had a hard time doing that, to call the irrigation systems supervisors, Matt (Martinez) or himself.

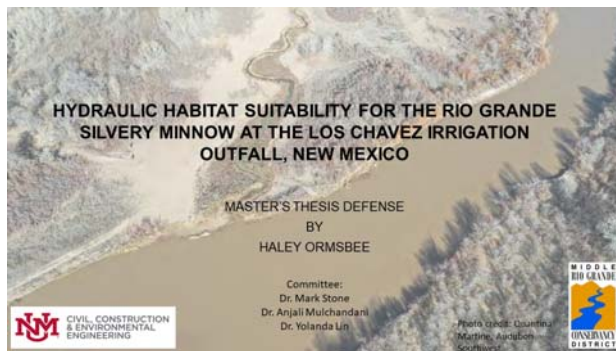
Vice Chair Dunning also asked how things were looking for Corrales. Mr. Martinez stated it was business per usual now. He reported that they are pumping at a healthy rate and was to be determined.

Dr. DuMars asked if there was any anticipation of drying of the river. Mr. Casuga stated that they did expect the river to dry south of San Acacia within the next two weeks, and they would start over-diverting to control that drying and assist with salvage operations. He said they probably would have some drying of Isleta also, but not the whole reach.

Dr. DuMars also stated he and Jason (Casuga) had a good discussion about the Belen High Line and discussed a number of options. He said the Belen High Line was untenable when they had flooding and overtopped the canal, so they needed to figure out how to fix that in maybe some public/private partnerships.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9 - PRESENTATION OF THESIS: HABITAT SUITABILITY AT THE LOS CHAVEZ OUTFALL - Haley Ormsbee, Engineering Intern

Ms. Ormsbee discussed her thesis for UNM that was on hydraulic habitat suitability for the silvery minnow at the Los Chavez outfall. She stated she wanted to answer how different Rio Grande and outfall discharges affected habitat availability for the minnow at Los Chavez, with the overall goal of helping water managers at the District close the knowledge gap concerning the effects of irrigation outfalls on minnow habitat availability. She stated typically 3 to 5 CFS was released from the outfall when the Rio Grande dropped below 100 CFS. She said the methods she used were building a hydraulic model, forming a conceptual hydraulic model, and combining the results of those models into maps and eco-value curves. She said the most useful outputs of the research were the eco-value curves for larval and adult habitat, with results showing that for both larval and adult minnows, the more water was released from the outfall, the weighted usable areas increased, but there was a diminishing return in available habitat as more water was released from the outfall because minnows prefer shallow depths in near zero velocities. She stated overall adult minnows had more usable area than larval minnows. Ms. Ormsbee concluded that available area was not impacted until the Rio Grande started to inundate the sandbar at 1000 CFS, and the area-discharged relationships could help the District figure out which flows to target for both larval and adult minnows. She stated the results from the maps showed little suitability for larval minnows, with adult minnows having suitable conditions for each simulated flow, but the portion that flowed through the bosque became less suitable as more flows were released.



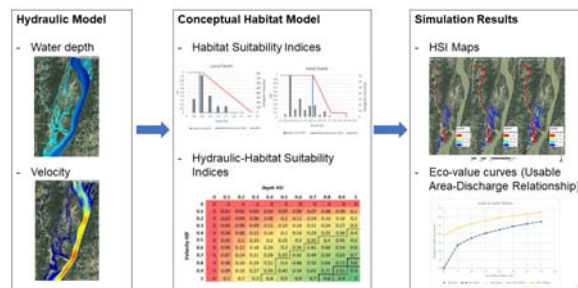
Goals of this Research

- How do different Rio Grande and outfall discharges affect habitat availability for the RGSM at the Los Chavez site?
- The MRGCD is interested in quantifying the habitat that will be available for RGSM when releasing various flows through the outfall.
- The goal of this research is to help water managers at the MRGCD close the knowledge gap concerning the effects of irrigation outfalls on Silvery Minnow habitat availability.

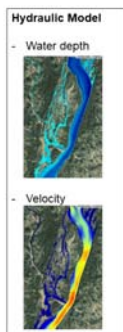
Site Location



Methods

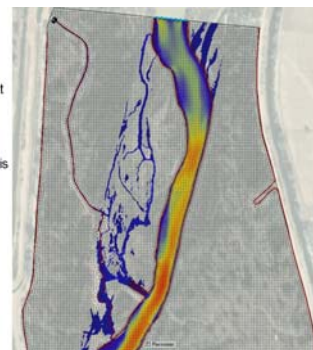


Methods

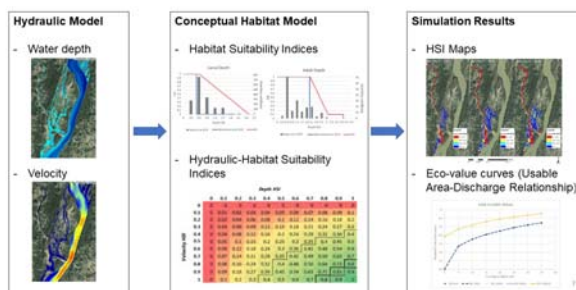


Hydraulic Modeling

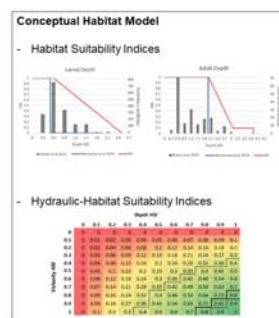
- Hydraulic modeling: used to describe a physical system by transforming a given input (i.e., geometry, boundary conditions) into an output (i.e., water depth, velocity)
- Two-dimensional model in the Army Corps' Hydrologic Engineering Center- River Analysis System (HEC-RAS)
- Model inputs:
 - Geometry
 - Hydrology
 - Manning's roughness
 - Boundary conditions
- Model outputs:
 - Water depth
 - Water velocity



Methods

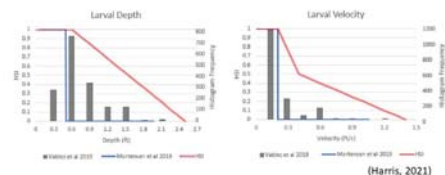


Methods



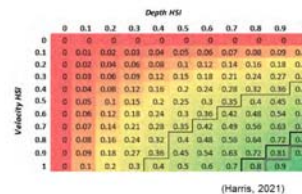
Habitat Suitability Indices (HSIs)

- Ratio of current habitat conditions (i.e., depth or velocity) to a most ideal standard of comparison
- "1" being the most ideal and "0" being inhospitable or species are not found in such conditions



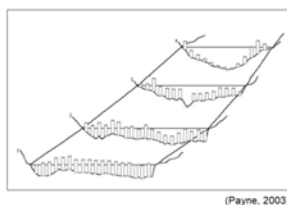
Hydraulic-Habitat Suitability Indices (H-HSIs)

- Velocity and depth HSI's are multiplied together to create a composite Hydraulic-Habitat Suitability Index (H-HSI)
- Assumes that a suitable hydraulic habitat has both an ideal depth and velocity, as both are required for RGSM habitat quality.
- "Bins" are used to separate H-HSIs into four breaks for visualization

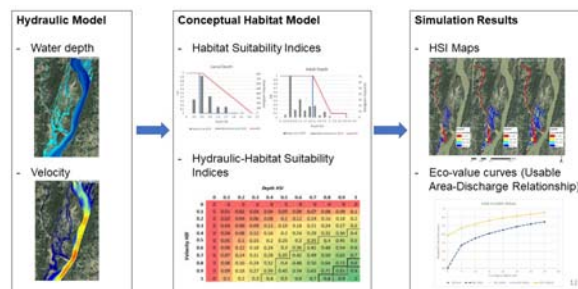


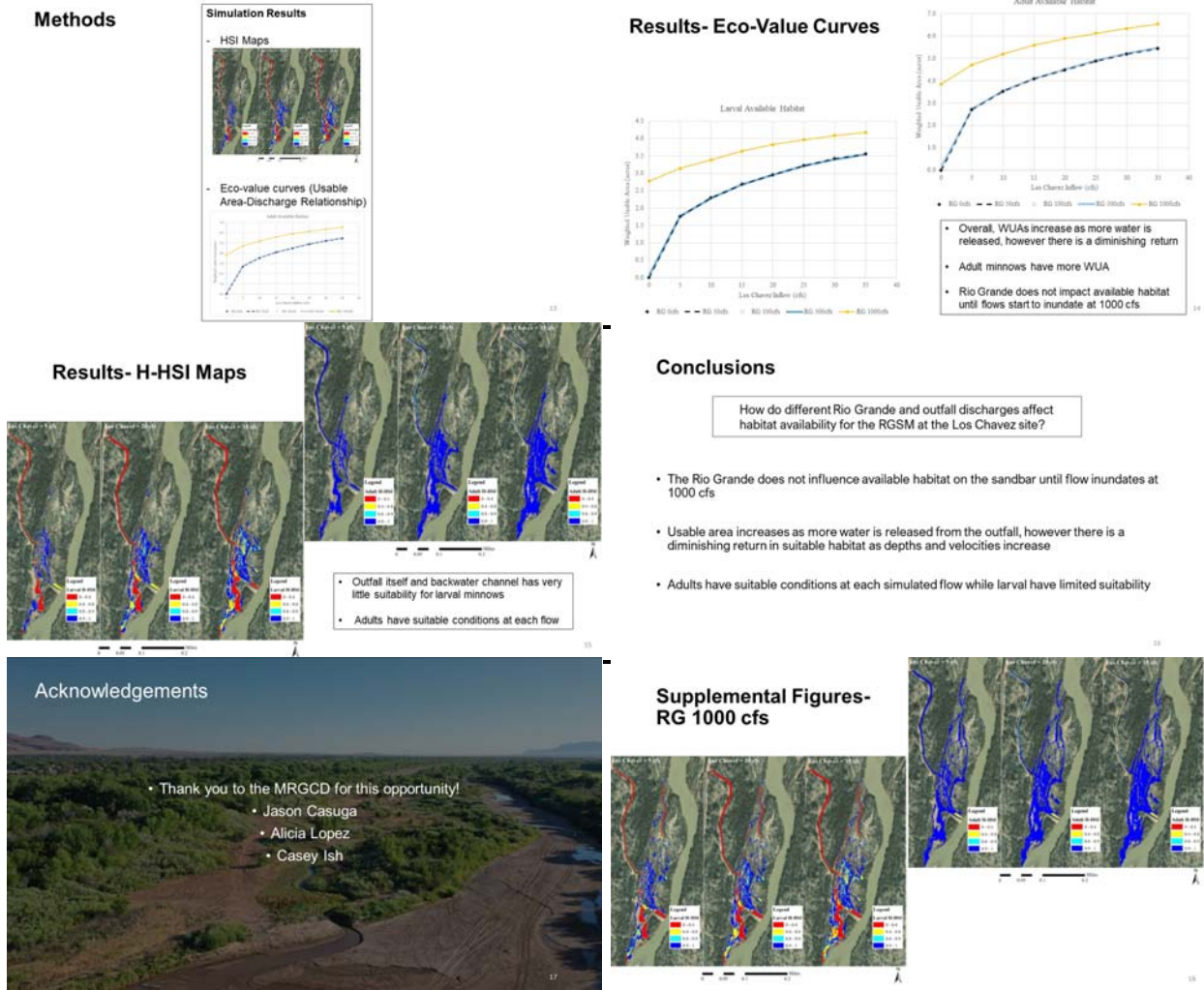
Weighted Usable Area (WUA)

- The WUA provides the amount of suitable habitat
 - How much of an area fish can use based on hydraulic conditions
- Weighted Usable Area (WUA) = Inundated Area * H-HSI
- General indicator of habitat quality and quantity



Methods





AGENDA ITEM NO. 10 - REPORT(S) FROM THE OF THE INTERIOR -

a. Bureau of Reclamation - Jennifer Faler, Area Manager

Ms. Faler stated the Corps of Engineers got caught with a bunch of water in Abiquiu and Cochiti they could not move down per Compact restrictions. She said she thought they could all come together to find solutions for moving that water as efficiently as possible. She said BOR was learning about how the river was behaving and could put that to good use. She stated they would find a way to move the floodwaters most efficiently and hopefully had P&P water to move as well. Ms. Faler stated their infrastructure was being put to the test in both San Juan Chama Project and El Vado. She said the high volumes water were causing debris to clog up the intakes at the San Juan Chama Project, and the reservoir level was low in El Vado because of the ongoing construction, causing tumbleweeds and sediment to clog up the intake structure. She said they had a team trying to figure out what to do, with one option being filling up the reservoir and doing a burp, which opens up the gates to try to shoot air up to break up the debris. Ms. Faler said it was time to clarify ownership at El Vado and had conversations with the state engineer about it, suggesting joining MRGCD and figure out how to get it done.

Mr. Casuga stated it would be a good idea to draft a memo of why that would be a good idea to consider whose action it would become to store water, and that if they owned permit 1690 it

would become their action to be presented to the Board. He stated it was creating challenges that did not need to be there.

Ms. Faler stated BOR did not consider middle Rio Grande their project water, explaining that they stored the water, but once it's released, it became the ownership of whoever they released it for. She said they were having internal discussions on kicking off phase two of the title transfer. She spoke about a project they tried to do almost 30 years ago that went all the way through the EIS process and was not implementable due to not enough money and support from the state and the District at the time, but now was the time to get projects done with the good relationships they have now with the District and the State.

Director Duggins asked if they had a percentage to compare trees that the natural habitat in the bosque used compared to the Ag community. Ms. Faler said they received comments on the EIS to do a Lower San Acacia Reach water update because it was out of date, and it said 38% was consumed by natural vegetation of the bosque and 30% of the water Ag.

Director Duggins also asked if the second round of title transfer would include the Low Flow. Mr. Casuga answered he did not think it would have it because they would not be operating and maintaining it long enough. Ms. Faler responded they were not allowed to transfer reserved works, which is when they did the maintenance under the first phase.

Ms. Faler acknowledged the District for having the vision to realize filling the gap between the middle Rio Grande project and the Rio Grande project was probably a wise thing to do and was enough notice to bring out leadership from D.C.

b. Bureau of Indian Affairs - Roland Becenti, Acting Designated Engineer

Mr. Becenti was not present at today's meeting.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 11 - REPORT(S) FROM THE SECRETARY-TREASURER/CFO - Pam Fanelli, CMA, CGFM

a. Review of End of Fiscal Year 2023 and Fourth Quarter Financials

Ms. Fanelli stated the District presented the fourth quarter budget for FY23. She said they would present the final year in financial statements once the auditors had a chance to review the numbers. She said the District budgeted a deficit of 2.1 million in FY23. She stated that did change the budgetary method and added encumbrances that were normally recorded as expenses of 1.8 million, which changed the budget deficit to 4 million for FY23. Ms. Fanelli informed the Board they were at 3.5 million dollars deficit with almost 3 million in encumbrances that would roll to next period and included in the deficit. She said actual revenues excluding other financing sources totaled \$28,110,000, but confident ad valorem would meet or exceed the budgeted total of 21.6 million. She noted that the revenue year to date through May totaled \$636,000 compared to \$41,000 in FY22, and an unrealized gain on investments totaling \$246,000. She stated expenditures excluding transfers total 29 million, compared to 24.7 million in FY22, mainly due to increased salaries and benefits, increased vehicles and equipment operations, maintenance, constructions, and rehab, and project expenditures, with an increase in capital equipment expenditures of almost 1.2 million. Ms. Fanelli said cash balances excluding what's held for Socorro Water Trust Board, totaled 26.5 million.

b. Report on the Finance Committee Meeting, July 7, 2023 - Directors Kelly, Dunning, and Barbara Baca

Vice Chair Dunning stated they were required by DFA (Department of Finance and Administration) to pass a year end resolution and they do it every quarter. She said revenues were up and deficit was pretty scary, stating water pushing up against the levees required \$700,000 in repairs. She stated the real takeaway from the meeting was that they needed to increase the mill levy and the committee recommended approval of the numbers.

Chair Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**. Seconded by Director Sandoval. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

c. Approval of Resolution BA-07-10-23-91 for the Fiscal Year 2023 Fourth Quarter Unaudited Financial Report and Unaudited Cash Balance Review as of July 1, 2023

Chair Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**. Seconded by Vice Chair Dunning. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

d. Discussion/Approval for Resolution M-07-10-23-199 for Authorizing Acceptance of Water Trust Board Project No. WPF-5970 Funding Offer; Water Storage, Conveyance and Delivery Project; Corrales Siphon Replacement from the NM Finance Authority

Ms. Fanelli stated the resolution was asking for approval to accept the Water Trust Board grant/loan funding offer for the Corrales Siphon Replacement, which consisted of a grant of \$6,372,000, loan amount of \$708,000, and District match requirement of 1.4 million, which has been budgeted in fiscal year 2024.

Chair Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION M-07-10-23-199**. Seconded by Vice Chair Dunning. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

e. Discussion/Approval for Resolution M-07-10-23-200 for the Adoption of the 2024-2028 Infrastructure Capital Improvements Plan (ICIP)

Ms. Fanelli stated this resolution was the ICIP plan due to the state of New Mexico on July 14th. She said the Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP) was developed by taking the prior year's ICIP and merging it with the District's long term infrastructure plan, and then presented with the mill rate request increase and FY24 budget.

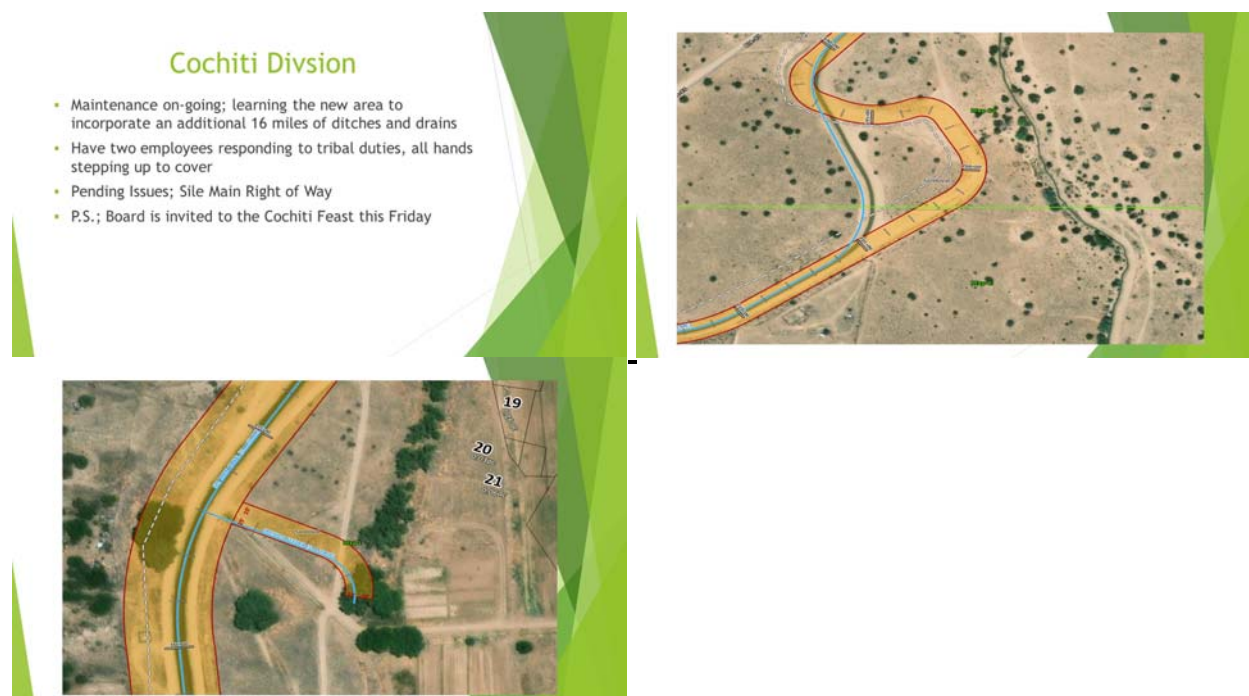
Chair Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION M-07-10-23-200**. Seconded by Vice Chair Dunning. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 12 - REPORT(S) FROM THE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER - Eric Zamora, PE

a. Report on the MRGCD Division Offices - Eric Zamora, COO

Mr. Zamora said they had been doing levee operations and repairs for the last two months. He stated Cochiti maintenance was ongoing and people stepped up to do what needed to be done. He said the Sile Main right of way was the most significant issue Cochiti was facing. He mentioned Cochiti Feast was coming up Friday and invited everyone to attend. He said Albuquerque maintenance was ongoing and Albuquerque Division had been helping out with some levee repairs in Valencia County. He said the first round of mowing was almost complete. He stated the runoff had been great but high amounts of sediment were requiring a full-time effort for two big pieces of equipment, which is the High Line Canal and the Peralta Main. He also spoke about the Rogers Lateral and showed pictures. Mr. Zamora said maintenance was ongoing in Belen Division and was getting back to routine. He said they had a new division manager who was bringing a metrics based approach to management and would be a learning curve for the way they did business. He said the four division manager in place now were very communicative and receptive to feedback, criticism, and input. He said spraying and mowing were top priorities in Belen. He said all supervisor positions were filled and had interviews scheduled for field maintenance technician. Mr. Zamora gave an update on NMDOT Highway 6 repairs. He said they were happy they are looking at reinforced concrete pipes in a larger size, which is more costly but the right solution. He said the Socorro Division was moving right along with a good routine, experience, knowledgeable management and staff. He stated maintenance was ongoing and mowing was on the second round. He said key issues going in the monsoon season were the arroyos that intersect their facilities, in which all intersection points had been prepped, culverts cleaned, and grading done to accommodate arroyo flows.

Mr. Zamora then spoke about ER&T (Equipment Repair & Transportation) and the new budget. He said they were looking to get requisitions for the new equipment. He said they currently had 61 pending license requests in the Lands and Licensing Department. He said the requests were assigned to the three different staff members and they split them up and start doing reviews, analysis, and what impacts those licenses would have on District operations. He stated that 17 were in final stages of review. He also announced they had a candidate in the vacant right of way manager posting.



Albuquerque Division

- Maintenance on-going; first round of mowing throughout the district almost complete
- Runoff has been great, but: high amounts of sediment requiring full time effort
- Hiring Construction/Maintenance supervisor
- Pending Issues; Rogers Lateral reconstruction



Belen Division

- Maintenance on-going; New Division Manager rethinking our business approach - metrics based, best practices
- Spraying and mowing are top priority, working with ISO's to better coordinate scheduling
- All supervisor positions are currently filled with Field Maint. Tech. interviews scheduled
- Pending Issues; getting back to levee repairs and NMDOT has a plan for repairs at Hwy 6



Socorro Division

- Maintenance on-going; Spraying and mowing are on second round
- Arroyos intersecting MRGCD facilities are prepped and ready for monsoon season
- Have two summer youth working thru City of Socorro summer youth program
- Assisting Socorro County with dredging Escondida Lake
- Pending Issues; gearing up for maintenance on Low Flow Conveyance Channel

- ERT; Gearing up to acquire FY 24 Equipment
- Lands and Licensing; 61 pending licensing requests pending with an additional 17 in review, reaching out to a candidate for the R/W Manager Posting

AGENDA ITEM NO. 13 - REPORT(S) FROM THE CHIEF ENGINEER - Jason M. Casuga, PE

a. Consideration/Approval of the Renewal of the MOA Between MRGCD and the Rio Grande Water Fund, March 14, 2023 - Steven Bassett and Matthew Piccarello, The Nature Conservancy and Casey Ish, Conservation Program Supervisor

Mr. Piccarello stated their watersheds deserved the same kind of investment, emphasis, and focus on treatment. He said they had some deferred maintenance on infrastructure in the watershed and that was what the Rio Grande Water Fund was working on. He said the Los Conchas Wildfire in 2011 was the catalyst for the water fund and a big wakeup call of what

could happen if they had a catastrophic fire in the Rio Grande Watershed. Mr. Piccarello stated the Water Fund was investing in restoration of forested lands upstream so they could secure pure fresh water, and the goal was to generate sustainable funding over the next 20 years to increase the pace and scale of the forest restoration. He said the San Juan Chama Project Source Watersheds were a big emphasis for them. He stated they were trying to avoid what happened to Cochiti Reservoir. Mr. Piccarello emphasized it was not impossible to treat in wilderness areas, but not in a short timeframe. He pointed out that the Navajo River Basin was predominantly private land and basically one landowner, so it was one of the easier places to work. He talked about funding for forest restoration and wildfire risk reduction and how partnerships came in handy when it came to that.

Mr. Casuga added that the District had a great relationship with the Nature Conservancy and Rio Grande Water Fund and were proposing to increase the amount and that investment in this work was needed. He presented a MOA asking for the Board's approval.

Director Duggins asked what was causing the fires. Mr. Piccarello said it was a number of factors, including climate change, human caused fires, power lines, fireworks, etc.

Vice Chair Dunning made the **MOTION TO APPROVE MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT**. Seconded by Director Sandoval. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

b. Report on the Joint Rio Grande Tour - MRGCD/Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID), June 27-29, 2023 - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO and Chair Russo Baca

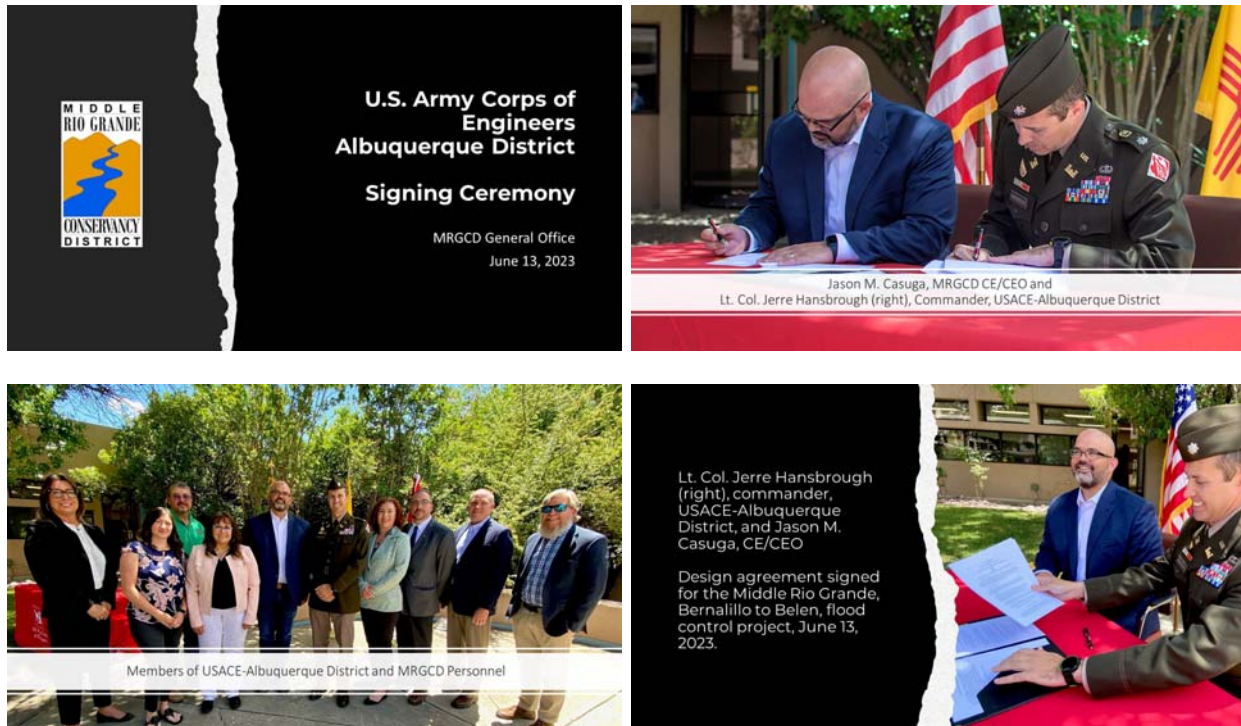
Mr. Casuga said they had representation from every agency including senior staffers from federal delegations on different sections of the tour. He stated one of the biggest impacts they could make is in the bureaucracy of the federal government, and they've invested in doing that. He said MRGCD had every interest to do this well and they've done a good job because they had reason to and had a need. He emphasized that they needed to comply with the biological opinion to do the job of benefitting water. Mr. Casuga said MRGCD and EBID needed to work together.

c. Report on the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblo Coalition Meeting, July 7, 2023 - Anne Marken, Water Operations Division Manager

Mr. Casuga said they gave a water update about changing conditions, and there were questions about water operations that Ms. Marken was there to answer. He said there were also maintenance questions, and Mr. Zamora would be working to get answers to the coalition on that. He said Ms. Faler provided a report to them, and the Six Middle Rio Grande Coalition Pueblo would like the idea that the permit was in federal government's hands, but water would be there for the benefit of the middle valley, including the new reclaimed lands.

d. Report on the Signing Ceremony with US Army Corps of Engineers for the Design Agreement for the Bernalillo to Belen Flood Control Project, June 13, 2023 - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO and Chair Russo Baca

Mr. Casuga stated the signing ceremony was to get the design agreement for the Bernalillo to Belen Flood Control Project in. He said there was a lot of energy with Valencia County on seeking some state funding. He said the biggest issue they had was getting it to line up with the Corps, so they don't have money sit.



e. Upcoming Events

1. NM State University's Agricultural Science Center - Los Lunas Annual Field Day - August 8, 2023

The Los Lunas Agricultural Science Center
& USDA Plant Materials Center
invite you to

SAVE THE DATE

August 8th, 7:30 am - noon

Annual Field Day

Come take a tour and learn about tomato and chile management,
forage grasses, grape research, and much more!



NM STATE BE BOLD. Shape the Future.
College of Agricultural, Consumer
and Environmental Sciences
Agricultural Experiment Station
Agricultural Science Center at Los Lunas

USDA

New Mexico State University is an equal opportunity / affirmative action employer and
educator. NMDSU and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

2. Coalition of Rio Grande Water Users Meeting - October 3-5, 2023

Mr. Casuga explained the Coalition of Rio Grande Water Users meeting would be to create a conversation similar to the Colorado River where Rio Grande water users get together and have an annual conversation. He said it would create an environment where they could talk about things and seek solutions as opposed to talking through their lawyers.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 14 - REPORT(S) FROM THE MRGCD CHIEF WATER COUNSEL- Dr. Charles DuMars

Dr. DuMars discussed the Texas v. New Mexico case, talking about Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas all filing a supplemental memo, saying that the burden for the Lower Rio Grande was born by the Lower Rio Grande and not middle Rio Grande. He said they had to propose a decree and the special master evaluated the settlement and the U.S. opposed it. The special master thought the real parties and interests were the states and if they believed it was a good settlement and decree that solved a problem he didn't care what the US thought. He said one interesting part of the decree was what if EBID took too much water and have to turn it over. Dr. DuMars stated he thought the Interior was declining in its power, but Ms. Faler was the opposite of that principle.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 15 - REPORT(S) FROM THE BOARD

- a. **Report on the Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) Executive Board Meeting, June 2, 2023 - Director Barbara Baca**

Director Baca was not present at today's meeting; nor did she submit a written report.

- b. **Report on the Water & Natural Resources Committee Meeting, June 13, 2023 - Chair Russo Baca**

See attached written report submitted by the Chair.

- c. **Report on the Conservation Advisory Committee Meeting, June 15, 2023 - Chair Russo Baca**

See attached written report submitted by the Chair.

Vice Chair Dunning made the **MOTION TO APPROVE ALL REPORTS FROM THE BOARD**. Seconded by Director Glen Duggins. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

Chair Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION** at 5:53 p.m. Seconded by Vice Chair Dunning. Rollcall vote was administered with all members voting yes. The **MOTION CARRIED**.

Director Sandoval	Yes	Vice Chair Dunning	Yes
Chair Russo Baca	Yes	Director Duggins	Yes

AGENDA ITEM NO. 16 - EXECUTIVE SESSION

- a. NMSA 1978 Open Meetings Act, Section 10-15-1(H)2
1. Limited Personnel Matters
- b. NMSA 1978 Open Meetings Act, Section 10-15-1(H)7
1. Threatened or Pending Litigation

Chair Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO GO BACK INTO REGULAR SESSION** at 6:07 p.m. Seconded by Director Sandoval. Rollcall vote was administered with all members voting yes. The **MOTION CARRIED**.

Director Sandoval	Yes	Vice Chair Dunning	Yes
Chair Russo Baca	Yes	Director Duggins	Yes

With no further comments, questions, or concerns, Madam Chair Russo Baca adjourned the meeting at 6:08 p.m.

Approved to be the correct Minutes of the Board of Directors of July 10, 2023

ATTESTED:

Pamela Fanelli, CMA, CGFM
Secretary/Treasurer

Stephanie Russo Baca, Madam Chair
MRGCD Board of Directors