

**MINUTES OF THE  
2,209th REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE  
MIDDLE RIO GRANDE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT**

**MARCH 11, 2024 - 3:00 PM**

Directors having been duly notified; Madam Chair Russo Baca called the regular meeting to order at 3:06 pm. The following Directors and Staff were present:

**DIRECTORS**

Stephanie Russo Baca, Madam Chair	Present
Karen Dunning, Vice Chair	Present
Brian Jiron, Director	Present
John P. Kelly, Director	Present
Glen Duggins, Director	Present
Micheal T. Sandoval, Director	Present
Colin T. Baugh, 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

Christine Nardi, MRGCD	Santiago Maestas	Judith McSweeney, MRGCD
Amanda Molina, MRGCD	Casey Ish, MRGCD	Josh Hind, MRGCD
Jerry Montano	Yasmeen Najmi, MRGCD	Page Pegram, NMISC
Michael Padilla, MRGCD	Brittany Erdmann, MRGCD	Christina Bruff, LRPA
Dr. Sarah Delevan, BIA	John Fleck, UNM	Jeanette Walther, BHI, Inc
John Thompson, MRGCD	Doug Strech, MRGCD	Hannah Riseley-White, NMISC
Richard DeLoia, MRGCD	Dan Orris	Sara Specht, CR&I
Norm Guam	Bill Perkins	Rebecca Thompson, MRGCD
Calijah Kaye, MRGCD	Rhett Sanders-Spencer, MRGCD	Raquel Dawson, MRGCD
Tarah Jaramillo, MRGCD	Brittany Erdmann, MRGCD	

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 1 – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Josh Hind led the Pledge of Allegiance at today's meeting.

Chair Russo Baca declared a quorum, and the meeting was publicly noticed. This meeting was a hybrid meeting with Director Sandoval attending virtually.

**AGENDA ITEM NO.2 - APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Madam Chair Russo Baca requested moving Item 4 to right before Item 10 to give the NM Interstate Stream Commission more time to arrive.

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

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 3 - CONSENT AGENDA**

- a. **Consideration/Approval of Payment Ratification - March 11, 2024**
- b. **Consideration/Approval of February 2024 Invoice for Wiggins, Williams & Wiggins**
- c. **Consideration/Approval of February 2024 Invoice for Law and Resource Planning Assoc.**

- d. **Consideration/Approval of the Minutes for the Regular Board Meeting - February 12, 2024**
- e. **Memo on MRGCD Approved Licenses for February 2024 (For informational Purposes Only)**

Director Kelly made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA**. Seconded by Madam Chair Russo Baca. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 - CONSIDERATION/APPROVAL OF COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE NM INTERSTATE STREAM COMMISSION AND THE MRGCD** - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO, Casey Ish, Conservation Program Manager and Hannah Riseley-White, NMISC Director and Report on the NM Interstate Stream Commission Meeting, March 5, 2024 - Chair Russo Baca

Hannah-Riseley-White, New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) Director, presented a cooperative agreement between the Interstate Stream Commission and MRGCD, to cooperate in finding solutions around river channel issues. She stated the Compact at the end of last year was estimated to be around 122,000 acre-feet of debt, an increase of almost 30,000 acre-feet in the last year, which is concerning. She explained this agreement showed a commitment between the state and MRGCD to work together on channel issues to protect the interests of the state and the District to preserve as much water for use in the District as possible and convey water to Elephant Butte as efficiently as possible. She said in terms of implementation of specific projects they may require additional agreements and work with relevant stakeholders to move the funding to ensure they are getting the right people at the table.

Mr. Casuga added that crafting an agreement that covers all types of funding, because funds potentially coming into ISC could be different, and the funding vehicle they enter into a funding agreement will be identified with the appropriate language and measures from the state to spend that kind of money. He noted that there is a need to partner with ISC because there are things that each of them do better at times and a lot they agree on. He explained it also allows them to form a formal relationship and tackle some things in a partnering way they have not done before.

Ms. Riseley-White added they were going to continue working closely with Reclamation, but more is needed. She said they have a number of different pots of money from last year's legislative session, and they are interested in identifying together with MRGCD the best application for those funds with this agreement.

Director Kelly voiced he wished it did not focus or identify the Isleta Reach so much as compared to the just as important San Marcial Reach but noted it did say other reaches of the river and hoped it would serve like their on-call engineering contracts where they do a short and simple task order for a project.

Mr. Casuga added it was a very specific section of the river that does not get much attention and there was commitment from BOR to focus on the San Acacia South, but that did not mean they were not going to be doing other things in the region.

Madam Chair Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE NEW MEXICO INTERSTATE STREAM COMMISSION AND MRGCD AS WRITTEN**. Seconded by Director Duggins. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 - REPORT ON THE NEW MEXICO LEGISLATURE - John Thompson, MRGCD Lobbyist**

John Thompson, MRGCD Lobbyist, briefed the board on the 2024 Legislative Session that ended February 15th. He stated the 2024 legislative session was a session with minimal action, with 658 bills with around 30% never moved and a three out of 72 passage rate. He explained the main purpose of the 30-day session was to pass a balanced budget, and they did that in the closing days. He noted the FY25 budget came in at just over \$10 billion, a 7% increase from 2024. He discussed some of the substantial line items, including \$75 million to the Department of Finance and Administration for House Bill 177, \$300,000,000 to the Conservation Legacy Trust Fund, \$50 million for the Water Trust Fund, \$20 million for Indian Water Rights settlement and adjudication, \$100,000 for various projects for the district. There were also some indirect awards for the District, such as \$1,000,000 for Elephant Butte delta and river channel maintenance, \$9,000,000 for Rio Grande habitat restoration and flood control, \$1,000,000 for strategic water reserve acquisition, and \$1.5 million for surface and groundwater measurements. Mr. Thompson discussed House Bill 211, which allows the Water Trust Board to authorize water projects for wastewater conveyance and treatment with a provision to propose to remove the requirement legislative approval on an annual basis. He talked about House Bill 41, clean fuel standards, that was signed by the governor to reduce carbon intensity of fuels, and Senate Bill 160, to appropriate \$20 million to Albuquerque to rehab and restore Rio Grande Valley State Park, but it did not advance or pass. He noted that between the House and the Senate there were 17 members not seeking re-election or moving chambers. He stated they would be having ongoing recurring monthly meetings with the Secretary of State's Office concerning the election.

Mr. Casuga added it was important to make sure the Election Committee is identified.

Director Kelly commented they were eager to revisit the recreational use statute and asked for his guidance on bringing that in front of the right committees.

Vice Chair Dunning asked if campaign finance laws were part of the Local Elections Act and their next election. Lorna Wiggins answered not right now.

Director Duggins asked where the clerks were on the Local Elections Act. Mr. Thompson stated the last time they met with the clerks they were concerned with their ability to administer the election based on the uniqueness of the District, so he looked forward to meeting again in May to see if the clerks are looped back in.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 6 - DISCUSSION/APPROVAL ON THE LENGTH OF PUBLIC COMMENT**

Director Duggins stated six minutes for public comment was unnecessary and suggested going back to the three minutes as in the past. He said it did not limit in any way the person with the issue, but they cannot go back and forth. He explained that if an issue needed more than six minutes, they should be put on the agenda so they can go back, and forth which may result in a conclusion.

Lorna Wiggins, MRGCD General Counsel, believed the limit to be 3 minutes in over 10 years of her service assisting the board. She also mentioned that nothing in state law requires an opportunity for public comment and felt that MRGCD allowing public comment was noteworthy.

Director Kelly voiced their agenda is fluid until noon on Thursday, so there would be plenty of opportunities to get something on the agenda.

Madam Chair Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE PUBLIC COMMENT TIME GO BACK TO THREE MINUTES AND ANYTHING OVER THAT AMOUNT OF TIME TO STATE YOUR ISSUE COULD BE PUT ON THE AGENDA, SUBMIT A WRITTEN AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA COMMENT TO BE ADDED TO THE MINUTES.** Seconded by Director Kelly. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 7 - DISCUSSION AND ASSIGNMENT OF NEW MEMBER(S) TO SUB-COMMITTEES**

Madam Chair Russo Baca explained she discussed with Director Baugh that he would be willing to replace former Director Joaquin Baca's place on the Water Protection Committee, Urban Issues Committee, and Legislative Committee.

Director Kelly mentioned that the Election Committee was traditionally staffed by people who are not coming up for re-election and Vice Chair Dunning has a much longer history on that issue than he does, so he suggested her participation instead of his.

Vice Chair Dunning agreed she was willing to do that.

Director Duggins brought up that they may end up still running the elections themselves, so it may be better to follow old rules.

Mr. Casuga explained that right now, based on the law, it would be up to the Secretary of State's Office and county clerks to administer the next election.

Madam Chair Russo Baca expressed it was something they could change if they needed to, and the committee does not meet very often until the elections start occurring. She stated that if Director Kelly did not want to sit on that committee anymore and Vice Chair Dunning was willing to, she will reassign Vice Chair Dunning to the Election Committee with the caveat that if something drastically changes they could make amendments.

<b>Finance Committee:</b> Director John Kelly Vice Chair Karen Dunning Chair Stephanie Russo Baca	<b>Water Protection Committee</b> Chair Stephanie Russo Baca Director Colin Baugh Director Michael T. Sandoval
<b>Urban Issues Committee</b> Director Colin Baugh Director John Kelly Director Karen Dunning	<b>Irrigation Committee</b> Director Glen Duggins Director Michael T. Sandoval Director Brian Jiron
<b>Legislative Committee</b> Chair Stephanie Russo Baca Vice Chair Karen Dunning Director Colin Baugh	<b>BIA Contract Committee</b> Chair Stephanie Russo Baca Director Michael T. Sandoval Director Brian Jiron
<b>Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) Representation</b> Vice Chair Karen Dunning - Exec Committee Chair Stephanie Russo Baca – Alternate Jason Casuga, CEO/Chief Engineer – TPTG	<b>Personnel Committee</b> Director John Kelly Vice Chair Karen Dunning Chair Stephanie Russo Baca
<b>Election Committee</b> Chair Stephanie Russo Baca Vice Chair Karen Dunning Director Brian Jiron	

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 8 - UPDATE FROM LAW & RESOURCE PLANNING ASSOCIATES** - Dr. Charles DuMars

Dr. DuMars gave a brief history of his career practicing law for 53 years. He announced his retirement.

Mr. Casuga stated he and Christina Bruff, the managing partner from LRPA, would schedule a meeting with the appropriate committee to outline a transition plan for Dr. DuMars retiring and hopefully have something to report at the April meeting.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 9 - VILLAGE OF LOS RANCHOS OPEN SPACE PROJECT UPDATES** - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO, and Eric Zamora and Report on the Field Report - Vice Chair Dunning and Director Kelly

Director Kelly stated this was a great opportunity to bring a highway department flood control pond back into productive service with the water rights and system there. He explained it was a project they were going to have to be involved in and they have an opportunity to put the ditch in a pipe for better efficiency and an obligation to consider their history in the North Valley. He suggested an MOU with the village to scope out what each party will do with regard the public involvement process.

Mr. Bill Perkins discussed the Village of Los Ranchos Open Space Project updates. He explained they did a study to explore how the open space virtues could be strengthened by extending the old Chamisal Acequia a short distance through terrain that does not lend itself easily to a new channel, but they could achieve an extension down sort of into the basin of DOT land managed by Los Ranchos, which would give them the opportunity to use the irrigation from that acequia and save some new agricultural functions. He suggested putting in writing what each party would do and let Mr. Casuga and his staff negotiate that with the village staff something that would coincide with the new budget year.

Director Duggins asked what the end goal was and what they meant by open space, and asked if it was level land.

Mr. Perkins stated there were a few different alternatives and the majority of them were a pond at one time, so it was not really level, but a good opportunity for greenway to be connected to Rio Grande Boulevard and further on.

Director Duggins suggested needing a farmer to help lay it out.

Vice Chair Dunning noted the Village of Los Ranchos has an agronomist and farm manager that were involved.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 10 ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR (Comments are limited to six (6) minutes)**

**Santiago Maestas**

Santiago Maestas, with the South Valley Regional Association of Acequias, stated he was also there on behalf of the Center for Social Sustainable Systems (CESOSS). He said the legislature did appropriate \$60,000 to the MRGCD through the ISC for improvement on the Peralta Acequia and hoped MRGCD would employ an engineer to help in the planning and design of the improvements. He stated he hoped it would bring enough funds to put a long

crested weir on the ancient acequia. He also explained the CESOSS had been collaborating with the District and thanked them for the funding they provided to CESOSS. He talked about an acequia protesting the transfer of water from a surface to groundwater outside of the acequia’s jurisdiction, and the question has come up as to what effect the transfer of that would have on the District’s ability to divert water from the Angostura weir or diversion, and the commissioners were to meet next Friday to make a determination on whether to approve or deny the transfer. He asked the District if it would affect the diversions from the Rio Grande that the District does and wanted an answer before they met.



Date: TBD	Primera Agua Series: Ceremony
Tentative April 7th, 2024	
April 22, 2024	Primera Agua Series: Film Screening
April 23, 2024	Primera Agua Series: Fun Run
April 22, 2024	Landmarks (Part 1): Earth Day Symposium at Africa Heritage Gardens
May 2, 2024	Garden Workshop 5
May 9, 2024	Garden Workshop 6
May 11, 2024	Landmarks: Presentation at Hubbell House of Four Posters
May 18, 2024	Acequia Walk & Talk: Pajarito
June 15, 2024	Acequia Walk & Talk: Arroyo
June 20, 2024	La Voz Published
July 20, 2024	Acequia Walk & Talk: Arroyo
August 17, 2024	Acequia Walk & Talk: Arroyo
August-October, 2024	Acequia Documentation Project with Story Riders
September 21, 2024	Acequia Walk & Talk: Los Padillas
September 22, 2024	La Voz is Published
December 21, 2024	La Voz is Published

**Jerry Montano**

Jerry Montano stated in the last two years they have had problems with their ditch rider and asked if they hired a new one yet for the Belen Highline and the Garcia Extension. He explained that if a new one was hired, he wanted to meet with them to explain how they irrigate. He also requested giving the water operation report before public comment so they can ask questions about it. He also asked about the water that was supposed to be available two weeks ago that was not there yet and if the suit with Mechenbier had been settled.

**Norm Guam**

Norm Guam introduced himself as a New Mexico water resource professional. He congratulated the board on the election and the Centennial celebration and stated he comes from a farmer and ranchers family. He said he was committed to trying to do what he can to make and help the transition to survive climate change and water scarcity and felt that they need a wet water solution.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 11 - REPORT(S) FROM THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT - Christine L. Nardi, MBA**

**a. Introduction of MRGCD New Hires**

Christine Nardi introduced the new hires and changes to staff, including a promotion to junior accountant and new ISO hire in the General Office, field maintenance technician in Belen Division, and division clerk II and field maintenance technician in Albuquerque Division, with a vacancy rate at 8%.

**General Office**

REBECCA	THOMPSON	JUNIOR ACCOUNTANT	02/19/2024 PROMOTION
FABIAN	SILVA	IRRIGATION SYSTEMS OPERATOR	03/04/2024

**Belen Division**

ERIC	BAKER	FIELD MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN	03/04/2024
------	-------	------------------------------	------------

**Albuquerque Division**

DANIELLE	YONNIE	DIVISION CLERK II	02/19/2024
ELADIO	BERNAL	FIELD MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN	03/18/2024

**b. Employee Recognition**

Ms. Nardi was honored to be able to recognize District employees on behalf of the executive team today. She gave some background at the board meeting in February, recalling Brittany Erdman from our Water Ops Division presented an overview of the new MRGCD gauging website, which is the end product of a project that entailed the implementation of a new polling software. The software is called Contrail, which will help MRGCD improve customer satisfaction by providing access to critical water management data in a format that is easier to navigate. Through this contra website, the public will better understand the location of management and measurement structures. Additionally, the software may help monitor ditches and canals, for example, ISOs would be able to receive alerts about conditions on the facilities under their care. It alerts them when something needs to be addressed. The software will also allow our hydrology technicians to remotely diagnose problems using these stages, which could help reduce travel and maintenance expense and costs.

Ms. Nardi provided Brittany Erdmann with the MRGCD All Star Award for her work on the Contrail software project and to Josh Hind, the District’s Systems Administrator, the MRGCD Key Contributor Award for his technical support on the Contrail software project.



L to R front: Pamela Fanelli, Brian Jiron, Karen Dunning, Josh Hind, Brittany Erdmann, Anne Marken, Stephanie Russo Baca  
L to R back: Glen Duggins, Colin T. Baugh, Jason M. Casuga, John P. Kelly

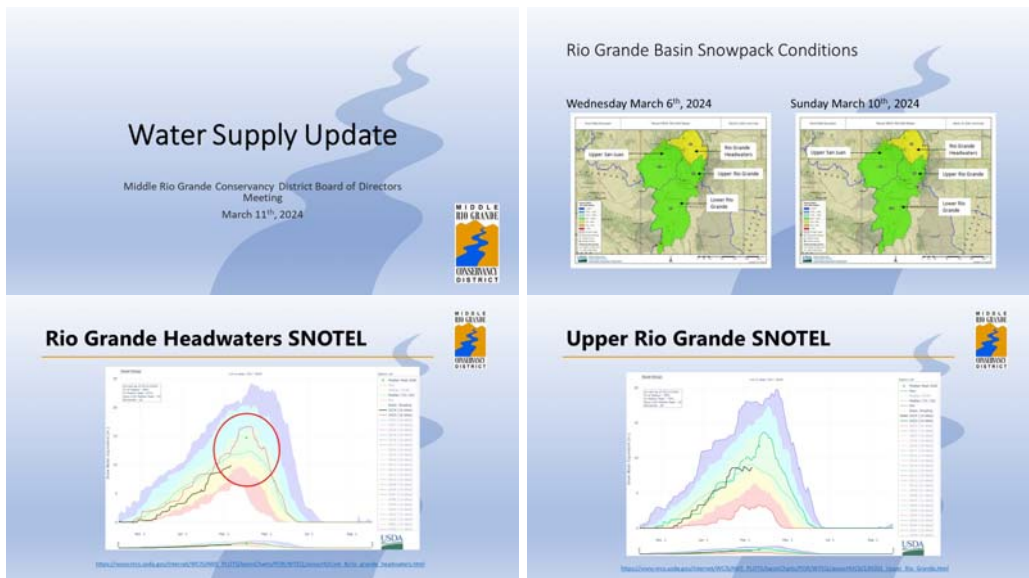
**AGENDA ITEM NO. 12 - REPORT(S) FROM THE WATER OPERATIONS AND DISTRIBUTION DIVISIONS**

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

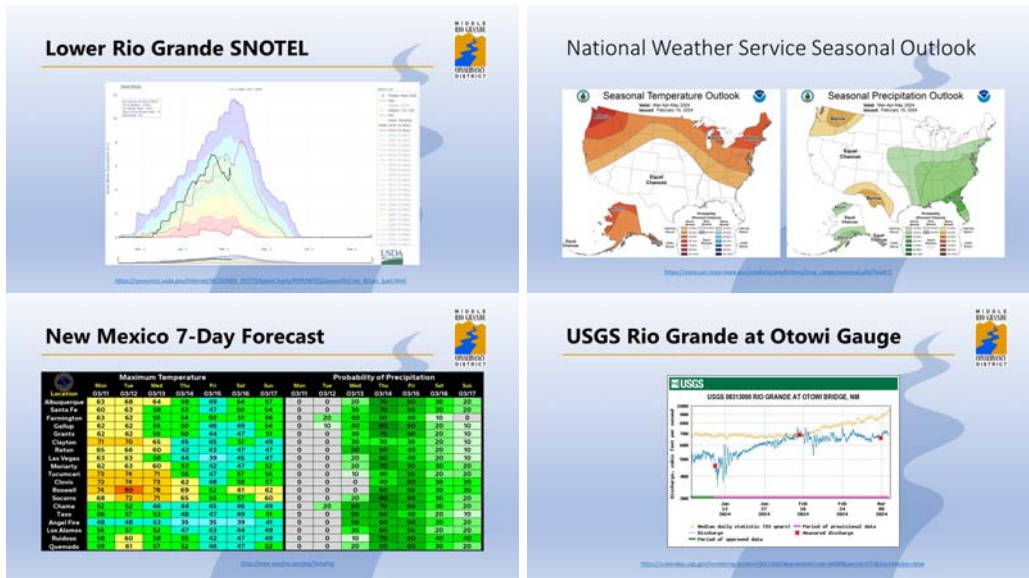
Ms. Marken reported on the water supply conditions. She discussed the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) March 1st stream flow forecast, including El Vado at 70% of median, Otowi Gauge at 60% of median, and Jimez River at 118%. She talked about the snowpack conditions, SNOTEL graphs that showed below median. She stated if conditions did not change the Middle Rio Grande can expect below average run off in 2024, with the inability to store any native Rio Grande water in the spring due to El Vado construction and Compact restrictions. Ms. Marken talked about the National Weather Service seasonal outlook, which show equal chances for above or below average precipitation and temperatures through May and expect El Nino conditions to turn into La Nina conditions this spring. She noted the 7-day forecast was looking good with many chances for some accumulation and rain. She said New Mexico is expected to have ended 2023 with a Rio Grande Compact debt of 122,000 acre-feet of debt. She stated she was working on putting together the white paper that lays out challenges and opportunities that might be within reauthorizing Jimez Dam and Cochiti Dam. She added the Low Flow Conveyance Channel is currently not discharging any water to the river, which is part of the adaptive management plan laid out with the BOR.

Mr. Casuga added the adaptive management approach was agreed upon as part of installing the outfall and believe some of the flow ranges at the time they looked were probably not accurate and not producing the level of accuracy due to being backed up. He stated one of the goals of the adaptive management plan was to find out how much water the critical habitat to the west of the low flow need to thrive.

Director Kelly asked if they would have to dry out the top section to many any assessment. Mr. Casuga answered yes, he thought so.







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

Mr. Martinez discussed ISO vacancies and new hires and will be conducting interviews this week with hopes of filling those soon. He stated they began charging the irrigation systems two weeks ago, and it was normal for the first month of the season to be spent charging, flushing, and even repairing canals and this season is no different. He said they faced high winds, plugs, overflows, a water control gate failure, and a canal break in the first two weeks, but still expect most canals to be running and delivering to those that need water by the end of the week. He explained they started earlier than normal in Cochiti Division to ensure prior & paramount (P&P) was met and got feedback that they started too early. He noted that Belen Division was by far the most difficult to charge due to the number and length of canals. He stated repairs to the water gate were complete and diversion to the Highline resumed, and the Chical Lateral broke and repairs will be made by Thursday. ISOs have been given the green light to accept orders, schedule, and deliver.

Mr. Casuga added it's a challenge to bring the system up and get irrigation started knowing they're not going to be able to satisfy everybody's desires, but he does think there is a benefit to when they are starting. He said their end goal was to get the system up and running as efficiently as possible with the least amount of breaks. Mr. Casuga noted that if there is a change to personnel, the phone numbers do not change and stays with the zone.

Vice Chair Dunning asked about the overflow of water on the Chamisal and Ortega Road when they charged the system. Mr. Martinez answered he would have to investigate the reason for that.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 13 - REPORT(S) FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**a. Bureau of Reclamation - Jennifer Faler, Area Manager**

Ms. Faler was not available for today's meeting.

**b. Bureau of Indian Affairs - Dr. Sarah Delavan, Designated Engineer**

Dr. Delavan discussed the first prediction for how much they would need to store for prior and paramount which came in at about 29,000 acre-feet, and they have stored about 6,000 acre-feet so far. She stated that she met last week with the Coalition of the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos, and they had very few questions for Mr. Casuga and Mr. Zamora, which shows the startup is going well so far. She noted that the Bureau of Indian Affairs received a letter from the Sandia Pueblo's governor that they were pleased with the communication on the startup. She also attended the Compact Commission Engineer Advisors Meeting, where they talked about prior and paramount and she talked about the BIA's mission, which she will be bringing to the MRGCD as well. Dr. Delavan announced she planned a Compact Commission General Meeting in April. She discussed the fiscal year 26 budget request and will be working with Ms. Fanelli and Mr. Zamora on that and has funds in place to pay the rest of the 2024 irrigation O&M bill and part of 2025.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 14 - REPORT(S) FROM THE SECRETARY-TREASURER/CFO - Pamela Fanelli, CMA, CGFM**

**a. Report on the Fiscal Year 2023 Report**

Ms. Fanelli stated that the District's fiscal year 2023 financial report was released by the state auditor's office. She then introduced Sara Specht, the senior manager from Carr, Riggs & Ingram, who would present her report.

Sara Specht, who attended online, gave a review of the audit report. She stated that overall MRGCD had an excellent audit report this year, with an unmodified opinion and no audit areas where an opinion could not be rendered. She said that they also issued the uniform guidance report with an unmodified opinion and no audit findings. She explained that management was responsible for the oversight of establishing and maintaining the internal controls and the design and implementation of programs and controls. She discussed some new GASB (Governmental Accounting Standards Board) standards implemented during fiscal year 23 and some upcoming in 2024 that affect the district. She also asked the board to keep them in mind for their information technology audits.

Director Kelly inquired about a \$98,000 donation in accounting. Ms. Fanelli explained that was the land exchange the District did in Belen.



## Timeline of the Audit

Signed Engagement Letter	July 24, 2023
Planning	August 2023
Fieldwork	September to October 2023
Delivered Financial Statement Findings	November 29, 2023
Exit Conference Presentation	November 30, 2023
Independent Auditors' Report	December 7, 2023
Released from State Auditors' Office	February 28, 2024

CARR, BIGGS & INGRAM, LLC

## Auditors' Reports

Independent Auditors' Report	Other Auditors' Report
<p>Opinion on the Financial Statements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unmodified – Best opinion available                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial statements are presented fairly in accordance with U.S. GAAP.</li> <li>No audit areas where an opinion could not be rendered.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>GAGAS Report on Internal Control Over Financial Reporting and on Compliance and Other Matters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negative Assurance                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No findings noted</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Uniform Guidance Report on Major Program and an Internal Control over Compliance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unmodified Opinion                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ALNR 15.571, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Grant</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

CARR, BIGGS & INGRAM, LLC

## Auditor Responsibility

- Our responsibility under U.S. & Government Auditing Standards
    - Form and express opinion if financial statements prepared by management are fairly presented in conformity with U.S. GAAP.
    - Obtain reasonable, rather than absolute, assurance if financial statements are free from material misstatement.
    - Consideration of internal controls for purpose of determining and designing audit procedures.
    - Communicate significant matters related to financial statement audit.
- CARR, BIGGS & INGRAM, LLC

## Management's Responsibility

- Management, with oversight from those charged with governance, is responsible for:
    - Establishing and maintaining internal controls, including monitoring ongoing activities
    - The selection and application of accounting principles
    - The fair presentation in the financial statements of financial position and results of operations in conformity with the applicable framework
  - Management is responsible for the design and implementation of programs and controls to prevent and detect fraud
  - The governing board participated in the entrance and exit conferences, and were sent the communications required by audit standards
- CARR, BIGGS & INGRAM, LLC

## New Standard Implementation

- The implementation of GASB Statement No. 96 had a significant impact on the District. The implementation of GASB Statement Nos. 91, 94 and 99 did not affect the department in a material manner.
    - GASB Statement No. 91, Conduit Debt Obligations
    - GASB Statement No. 94, Public-Private and Public-Public Partnerships and Availability Payment Arrangements
    - GASB Statement No. 96, Subscription Based Information Technology Arrangements
    - GASB Statement No. 99, Omnibus 2022
- CARR, BIGGS & INGRAM, LLC

## Upcoming Standards

- GASB Statement No. 100, is effective for fiscal years starting after June 15, 2023 and will apply to the District's 2024 fiscal year.
    - The requirements will enhance accounting and financial reporting requirements for accounting changes and error corrections to provide more understandable, reliable, relevant, consistent, and comparable information for making decisions or assessing accountability.
- CARR, BIGGS & INGRAM, LLC

## Upcoming Standards

- GASB Statement No. 101, is effective for fiscal years starting after December 31, 2023 and will apply to the District's 2025 fiscal year.
    - The requirement is to better meet the information needs of financial statement users by updating the recognition and measurement guidance for compensated absences.
- CARR, BIGGS & INGRAM, LLC

## Upcoming Standards

- GASB Statement No. 102, *Certain Risk Disclosures*, is effective for fiscal years starting after June 15, 2024 and will apply to the District's 2025 fiscal year.
    - The requirement is to improve financial reporting by providing users of financial statements with essential information that currently is not often provided.
- CARR, BIGGS & INGRAM, LLC

### Value-Added Suggestions

- Treat CRI as a year round resource
- Information Technology
  - The IT landscape is continually changing and at a rapid pace. The District should continue to assess and test the IT Environment and Cybersecurity to help the District adapt (whether internally or with through outside consultation).

CARR, RIGGS & INGRAM, LLC

11

### Concluding Comments

- The CFO/Secretary/Treasurer, Controller, and Accountants, as well as all the other District team members were very helpful and great to work with.
- Thank you for the opportunity to serve Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District.
- We value our relationship and hope to continue to build on it.

CARR, RIGGS & INGRAM, LLC

12



## **AGENDA ITEM NO. 15 - REPORT(S) FROM THE CHIEF PROCUREMENT OFFICER - Richard DeLoia**

Mr. DeLoia presented approval for Loretta Drive Alameda Drain River access engineering design task order, with a recommendation to Bohannan Huston Inc. for \$93,727.38 with tax, through the MRGCD on-call engineering contracts.

Director Kelly explained this was a capital outlay project where they are the fiscal agent with Bernalillo County. He stated he reviewed the proposal and sees a proper mix of using junior engineers for most of the work with oversight from senior level engineers.

Director Kelly made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE ENGINEERING DESIGN AGREEMENT WITH BOHANNAN HUSTON INC.** Seconded by Vice Chair Dunning. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **AGENDA ITEM NO. 16 - REPORT(S) FROM THE PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER - Amanda Molina**

### **a. Report on Website Updates & Board Meeting Videos**

Ms. Molina stated they are starting to take shortened down presentations given at board meetings and posting them on the website to allow people to view them. She said they were starting to grow a social media audience and asked people to share the videos and messages when they could to remind everyone of the work MRGCD is doing.

Mr. Casuga encouraged everyone that had social media to subscribe.

## Website/Social Media

- Board Meeting Videos (clips of presentations)
- Truncated Videos for Social Media
- Helps when board members, staff share with network
- LinkedIn




CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTORS HAVE BEEN SELECTED TO COMPLETE THE VALLE VISTA ELEMENTARY PROJECT. THE PROJECT WILL BE COMPLETED IN PHASES. PHASE 1 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CLASSROOM. PHASE 2 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE OUTDOOR ACEQUIA CLASSROOM. PHASE 3 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 4 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 5 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 6 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 7 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 8 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 9 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 10 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 11 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 12 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 13 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 14 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 15 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 16 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 17 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 18 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 19 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 20 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 21 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 22 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 23 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 24 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 25 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 26 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 27 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 28 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 29 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 30 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 31 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 32 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 33 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 34 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 35 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 36 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 37 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 38 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 39 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 40 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 41 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 42 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 43 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 44 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 45 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 46 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 47 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 48 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 49 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 50 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 51 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 52 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 53 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 54 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 55 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 56 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 57 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 58 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 59 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 60 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 61 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 62 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 63 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 64 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 65 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 66 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 67 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 68 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 69 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 70 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 71 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 72 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 73 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 74 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 75 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 76 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 77 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 78 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 79 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 80 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 81 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 82 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 83 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 84 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 85 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 86 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 87 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 88 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 89 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 90 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 91 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 92 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 93 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 94 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 95 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 96 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 97 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 98 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 99 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. PHASE 100 WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND.





**b. Report on Valle Vista Elementary Project Kickoff, February 16, 2024**

Ms. Molina talked about the February 16th clean up kickoff. She expressed that it was wonderful to see the kids have so much enthusiasm and work so hard. She stated she was working with Mr. Casey Ish, Ms. Ashley Viehl, and Ms. Yasmeen Najmi to continue moving into the design of the classroom.


Director Baugh suggested making a special agenda item to have the kids come and talk about what they were excited about and highlight their work. Ms. Molina concurred.

## Valle Vista Outdoor Acequia Classroom

Feb 16 Clean Up

VALLE VISTA ELEMENTARY PROJECT KICKOFF




**c. Notice of Belen Public Meeting, April 10, 2024**

Ms. Molina acknowledged an upcoming public meeting on Wednesday, April 10th, from 5:30 to 7:30, at the Belen Public Library to discuss the Belen Watershed Study.

## Belen Watershed Study

**Public Meeting #2**  
**Wednesday, April 10, 2024**  
**5:30-7:30 p.m.**  
**Belen Public Library**



**AGENDA ITEM NO. 17 - CONSIDERATION/APPROVAL FOR PROPOSED LAND SALE** - Eric Zamora, COO

**a. Map 150 Tract 44-B-1 - Vega Farm**

Eric Zamora explained this was the sale of the remnant parcel the District acquired through taxes years back that has been under lease for irrigation purposes to the Vega Family, who has now requested the District offer it for sale.

Michael Padilla, Right of Way Supervisor, further explained Tract 44-B-1 on map 150 in Socorro County has been in a lease for years, and they were going to do a land swap with Vega Farm but determined that would not benefit the District and decided to sell it to the Vega Family.

Mr. Casuga explained they were not approving the land sale today, but asking the Board to agree with the recommendation that the property is excess property to go forward with moving a land sale forward.

Vice Chair Dunning asked if they were selling it with the water rights associated with it or if they were keeping them. Mr. Casuga answered they keep the water rights associated with it, so it does not become severed.

Madam Chair Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE ITEM 17 AS EXCESS PROPERTY**. Seconded by Director Baugh. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 18 - REPORT(S) FROM THE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER** - Eric Zamora, PE

**a. Report from the Right-of-Way Department - Michael Padilla, Right-of-Way Supervisor**

Mr. Padilla gave an update on the Right-of-Way Department. He explained that the Right-of-Way Department takes a key role in protection of the MRGCD lands and works closely with division managers to address any concerns or issues. He said they provide information to the public as they come in and are fully staffed. He expressed they were having more and more land sales come in and hope to complete the first one in Socorro County. He discussed other current projects they were working on throughout the District.

**b. Report on the 2024 Southwest Hay & Forage Conference, January 24-26, 2024 - Eric Zamora, COO and Jose Contreras Alvarado, Ag Irrigation Specialist**

Mr. Zamora gave some updates on the Hay & Forage Conference. He said it was a good conference with good information with regard to herbicides, weeds, pesticides, developing pest issues, and farm level issues. He voiced that it was very beneficial to their Ag Irrigation Specialist and the Conservation Department.

**c. Report on the Family Farm Alliance Annual Conference, February 22-23, 2024**

Mr. Zamora stated the Family Farm Alliance was an engaging conference that bridged the gap between federal policy and local water management agencies with good discussion and useful information. He mentioned that he did not realize how engaged the University of Arizona was with BOR and the local management organizations in Arizona. He said they discussed challenges dealing with the ESA Administration and there were many different reactions to that

information, and he talked about some of the issues water managers in the west are facing, including bumblebees being classified as fish to have protection under the Environmental Species Act. They discussed a report from the Peru Creek Water Irrigation District, a biological opinion from the executive director with the Klamath Water Users Association, and advisory from a 70-year-old Wyoming cowgirl on avoiding the 9th Circuit and start building legal funds. He added that Tanya Trujillo, Interior Department Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, won the distinguished service award for her service to water users in the southwest.

Madam Chair Russo Baca asked about brainstorming with the Ag Science Center in Los Chavez on if the issue of not using surface water is why their relationship with them is not as strong. She said she would like to figure that out.

*Note: Director Duggins left the meeting at 5:56 pm*

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 19 - REPORT(S) FROM THE CHIEF ENGINEER - Jason M. Casuga, PE**

**a. Report on the New Mexico Society of Professional Engineers Conference, February 23, 2024 - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO**

Mr. Casuga stated the keynote speaker was the State Engineer, Mike Hamman, and that he reported on what he was trying to do with the legislature. He was asked about his view on whether or not the state engineer position should stay as an engineer, to which he answered yes. Mr. Casuga expressed there was recognition for the big engineering schools in the state with many students and up and coming engineers being recognized for academic accomplishments.

**b. Report on the Meeting with Jaime A. Pinkham, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works (PDASA(CW)), February 28, 2024 - Jason M. Casuga**

Mr. Casuga reported on the meeting where he hosted, and said they had a good discussion. He was asked if there was any work being done by the Corps to relook at how they calculate the cost benefit ratio for their projects, and he answered that was something they were taking feedback on right now and looking to change the parameters of that.

**c. Report on the Oasis Presentation, February 29, 2024 - Jason M. Casuga**

Mr. Casuga talked about the Oasis Presentation and said he enjoyed doing the educational presentation for Oasis and it was good training. He stated they put old photos up to show the impact of the District's work. He expressed this is their third time doing the presentation and they want them to keep coming back.

**d. Report on the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos Coalition Meeting, March 8, 2024 - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO**

Mr. Casuga reported on the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblo Coalition Meeting and commented it was a pretty low impact on the amount of time they were there, and they got feedback that they were earlier than they should have been with the irrigation season in the Cochiti Division.

**e. Discussion regarding a Summer El Vado and San Juan-Chama Facility Tour - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO**

Mr. Casuga explained he was contacted by BOR to host a tour of El Vado to MRGCD on June 25th. He said he wanted to entertain making it a two-day tour to cover El Vado, Heron, Pagosa, all diversions for the San Juan-Chama project, and the Azotea Tunnel. Mr. Casuga added this would be valuable to some of the staff that had not been exposed to this yet.

Mr. Casuga took a brief pause at this time for a motion to extend the meeting.

Director Kelly made the **MOTION TO EXTEND THE MEETING**. Seconded by Director Baugh. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

**f. Information on Upcoming Events**

**1. Law of the Rio Grande Conference, Santa Fe, NM - April 11-12, 2024**

Mr. Casuga announced the Law of the Rio Grande Conference in Santa Fe, and stated he would be attending the Rio Grande Compact Commission meeting in El Paso on April 26th, along with Ms. Marken.

Madam Chair Russo Baca added she was invited for Ag Appreciation Day at Whitfield on March 23rd, to represent agriculture and how the Valencia County Soil and Water Conservation District coordinates with MRGCD and Ag.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 20 - REPORT(S) FROM THE MRGCD ATTORNEY(S) - Chief Water Counsel or General Counsel**

Dr. DuMars explained that a group of individuals whose land abuts the river got the New Mexico State Game Commission to promulgate a regulation and got a statute and regulation passed that says anyone who abuts a river is entitled to exclude others from that land. He said that was challenged by the Adobe Whitewater people, and the court stated that because water belongs to the public at large under the appropriation statute and because it is the law in most other Rocky Mountain states, individuals cannot exclude people floating or walking through the river. Dr. DuMars argued the case, but the judge ruled against him; therefore he is filing a writ of superintending control.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 21 REPORT(S) FROM THE BOARD**

**a. Report on the Conservation Advisory Meeting, February 15, 2024 - Chair Russo Baca**

Madam Chair Russo Baca said they talked about gauges, on-farm program updates, and the engineering department helping develop several water conservation spreadsheet for pipeline and canal lining projects. She stated there would be a discussion on a project review panel to help with project selection. They went over the Storey Wasteway updates, watched drone footage, and talked about the Valle Vista Elementary project.

**a. Report on the Socorro County Community Conservation on Water, February 17, 2024 - Chair Russo Baca, Vice Chair Dunning, and Director Duggins**

The chair acted as the inviter with the University of New Mexico for the Matanza for individuals to come to the table to talk water. The event was held on Saturday from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm at the Socorro Fairgrounds Kelly Hall. She stated that the Vice Chair and Director Duggins also attended and that MRGCD helped sponsor the event. She said they had over 150 attendees.



Vice Chair Dunning said John Fleck facilitated and did a great job, and the Baca family was amazing and worked really hard.

**b. Report on the MRG Pollinator Networking Group, February 20, 2024 - Chair Russo Baca**

Madam Chair Russo Baca expressed she was asked at the Sandoval County public meeting to attend where they discussed pollinator projects they are working on in the District.

**c. Report on the Land and Water Summit, March 6-8, 2024 - Chair Russo Baca and Directors Sandoval, Jiron, and Baugh**

Director Baugh said the Land and Water Summit was really fun, they touched on projects that they got to see on their field trip, and MRGCD was well received. He stated plants were a big part of the conversation and he got some good resources and ideas. He suggested inviting some of the people to present to the Board on some ideas on what the bosque could look like going forward.

**d. Report from the Finance Committee Meeting, March 7, 2024 - Directors Kelly, Dunning, and Russo Baca**

Director Kelly stated the million dollars promised to capital equipment would come partly from the operating budget and from the capital funds budget, and they were still working on replacing equipment.

Madam Chair Russo Baca talked about the cap they were going to enforce on \$25,000 for any association agreements, excluding the watershed management.

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

There was no need for the closed session; with no further comments, questions, or concerns, Madam Chair Russo Baca adjourned the meeting at 6:18 pm.

Approved to be the correct Minutes of the Board of Directors of March 11, 2024.

**ATTESTED:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pamela Fanelli, CMA, CGFM  
Secretary-Treasurer/CFO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Stephanie Russo Baca, Chair  
MRGCD Board of Directors