

**MINUTES OF THE  
2,220th REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE  
MIDDLE RIO GRANDE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT**

**FEBRUARY 10, 2025 - 3:00 PM**

Directors having been duly notified; Chairman Kelly called the regular meeting to order at 3:08 pm. The following Directors and Staff were present:

**DIRECTORS**

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

**STAFF**

Chief Engineer/CEO
General Counsel
Chief Water Counsel
Secretary-Treasurer/CFO
Chief Operating Officer
Water Distribution Division Mgr.
Water Operations Division Mgr.

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

Vincent Sanchez	Jeri Miller	Rudy Perea
David Montoya	Derek Jarner, MRGCD	Julian Avalos, MRGCD
Tarah Jaramillo, MRGCD	Amanda Molina, MRGCD	Angel Madera, MRGCD
Angelina Jimenez, MRGCD	Elaine Hebard	Santiago Maestas
Bethany Abrahamson	John Thompson, MRGCD	Raquel Dawson, MRGCD
Rochelle Times, MRGCD	Mike Padilla, MRGCD	Estella Gamboa, MRGCD
Christine Nardi, MRGCD	Mark Sanchez	Amelia Barrow, MRGCD
Josh Hind, MRGCD	Scott Edeal	

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

Vice Chairman Baugh led the Pledge of Allegiance at today's meeting.

Chairman Kelly 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 added 11(f) to discuss reconstituting the Election Committee. Chairman Kelly made a change to Item 13(h), stating that he was not at the Legislative committee Meeting, and added Vice Chairman Baugh.

Director Dunning made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE MEETING AGENDA WITH THE ABOVE CHANGES**. Seconded by Director Russo Baca The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

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

- a. **Consideration/Approval of Payment Ratification – February 10, 2025**
- b. **Consideration/Approval of January 2025 Invoice for Wiggins, Williams & Wiggins**
- c. **Consideration/Approval of January 2025 Invoices for Spencer Fane LLP**

- d. **Consideration/Approval of the Minutes for the Regular Board Meeting – January 13, 2025**
- e. **Memo on MRGCD Approved Licenses for January 2025 (For Informational Purposes Only)**

Vice Chairman Baugh made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA**. Seconded by Director Dunning. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 - CONSIDERATION/APPROVAL OF THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT WITH AFSCME** - Lorna M. Wiggins, General Counsel, Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO, Christine Nardi, HR Director, Eric Zamora, COO and Pam Fanelli, CFO

Chairman Kelly voiced that they had a successful negotiation with AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees) for ISOs. He discussed major elements of the negotiation, including ISOs still working 24/7 throughout the irrigation season but will be off during the offseason. They will continue to be paid on a 12 month basis, but will no longer accrue annual leave. The agreement states that an ISO must return an emergency phone call within 15 minutes, and there are two windows in the day when people can call for scheduling. He said they also have a tiered system where ISOs can take an exam and move up to an ISO II level.

Director Dunning added that they can now bid for four two-day weekends to give them an opportunity to bid on a couple days off.

Director Duggins shared that he thought this was a good idea and thinks it will help them attract the right type of person to the job. He pointed out that they have policies that collide with each other, as they say they are 24/7, but have set hours and no contact on Sundays. He said that is not reality, but is policy, so it seems they are talk in both directions. He also felt that when ISOs are moved around, there is a big cost to the farmers, as well.

Ms. Wiggins discussed the provision in Article 33, which states they contractually agree that the ISO shall be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. She said there are efficiencies and carved out time for communications built into the work schedule between ISO and irrigators, but that did not mean work duties are limited to those windows of communication. She added that they have addressed some of those contractual issues and it will provide more clarity for ISOs, their supervisors, and constituents.

Director Duggins commented that out in the real world it doesn't work like that. He said when they need the ditch rider, they call them no matter the day or time and they answer.

Chairman Kelly shared that this is a two-year contract so they will have time to work out any kinks as they go along.

Director Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT WITH AFSCME**. Seconded by Vice Chairman Baugh. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

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

Mr. Thompson gave a report on the New Mexico Legislature. He stated the last day to introduce legislation is February 20th. This year, they have seen a lot of education, public

safety, and public health bills advance, and there are four bills on the House floor calendar right now. He noted MRGCD's Centennial certificate will be read on the House floor tomorrow and anyone who wants to attend is welcome. He expressed that House Bill 308, which removes MRGCD from the Local Elections Act, was introduced last week, and he expects to see it in House government this week. He then discussed capital projects. Mr. Thompson stated they have gone well, and as of right now, the amounts that respective members, senators, and representatives will get have not been determined, but they have gotten good feedback on the projects. He thanked everyone who advocated for the projects. He talked about the water policy bills, stating Senate Bill 21 and Senate Bill 22 will be heard in Senate Judiciary today. He noted that there was an amendment on Senate Bill 22 to exclude irrigation, return flows, and farming activity from the water quality and pollutions legislation. He said that Senate Bill 7, regarding storm water service as a municipal utility, passed and has moved to the second Senate Hearing in Senate Tax and Business. Mr. Thompson expressed that the budget is still being sorted out, but he hopes to see funds relative to the newly created federal matching fund from last year. Executive recommended \$100 million and LFC Budget requested \$75 million. He added that he believes they will see a large injection into the Water Trust Fund, and shared that Senator Sanchez will be introducing bill soon to dedicate \$5 million to the MRGCD without county restriction for fire mitigation projects.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 6 - DISCUSSION/APPROVAL OF THE ELECTION BILL RESOLUTION M-02-10-25-219 - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO**

Mr. Casuga discussed and explained House Bill 308, which is to remove MRGCD from the Local Elections Act and allow MRGCD to continue administering their own elections. He stated that they have proposed a draft resolution to make MRGCD's intentions clear about the rule making process that MRGCD will go through if the bill is passed. He then read the resolution to the board. He pointed out that since this is a draft, edits can be made if needed.

Director Dunning voiced that one of the problems in the past was that if your property was put in an LLC or in a trust they were not allowed to vote, and this bill still does not cure that, but believes it would allow the Board to come up with a process that will cure that problem.

Ms. Wiggins explained that trusts can vote, but LLCs, DBAs, and Corps cannot, but they believe that the ability for MRGCD to enter a rule making process would allow them to correct that.

Director Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION M-02-10-25-219**. Seconded by Director Duggins. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 7- REPORT(S) FROM THE WATER OPERATIONS AND DISTRIBUTION DIVISIONS**

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

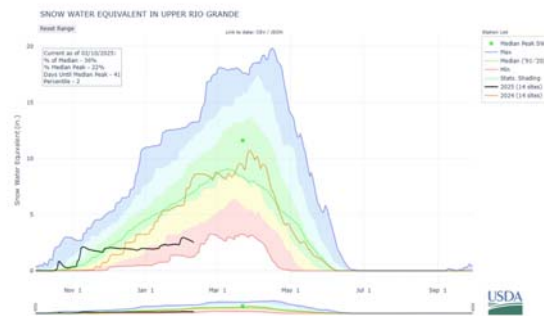
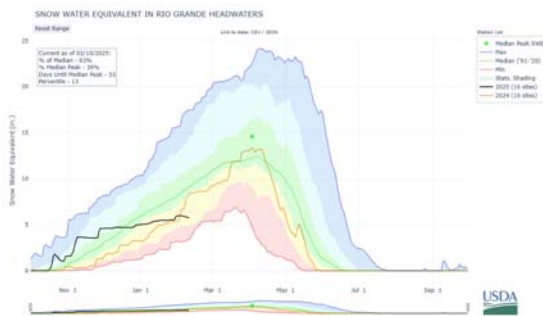
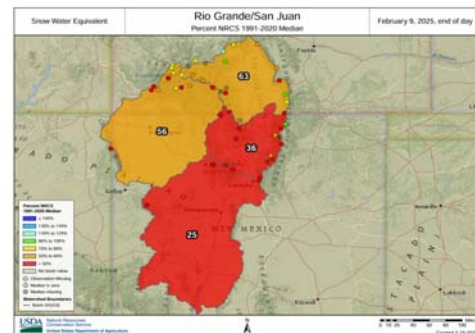
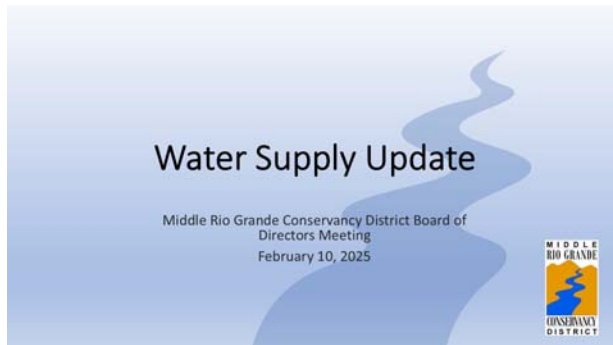
Anne Marken gave a report on water supply conditions. She expressed that the warm temperatures and minimal snowfall this winter have caused water supply levels to be significantly below where they need to be this time of year. She stated that snow accumulation in the mountains over the winter dictates the magnitude and duration of spring runoff and summer low base flows, and when snowpack is low like it is now, they can expect a short and weak runoff season, which may prompt MRGCD to have to release San Juan Chama water early. That is the only storage water they will have available this year. She noted that Rio Grande Compact debt is estimated to be 123,000 acre feet at the end of 2024, which will trigger Article 6 restrictions to make it impossible for New Mexico store any

water upstream for Middle Valley use, and low storage levels in Elephant Butte and Caballo Reservoirs have triggered Article 7 restriction, which further prohibit New Mexico from storing water in upstream reservoirs. Ms. Marken shared that snowpack in the basin that supplies that San Juan Chama water is currently 56% of median, so MRGCD is unlikely to receive a full allocation this year. She added that soil moisture conditions in the basin are poor, which also affects runoff efficiency. She explained that once the San Juan Chama water is used and gone, MRGCD will not have any additional water to supplement the river without significant rainfall or monsoon inflows, which will not be enough water to meet the needs of Middle Valley farmers. MRGCD will do its best to distribute available water, but farmers need to prepare for extended periods between irrigation deliveries. She shared that the National Weather Service's Seasonal Outlook suggest higher than average temperatures and below average precipitation over the next several months. MRGCD will start charging the system in two weeks, but they are uncertain of how much water will be available for charging the system. She voiced that irrigators should prepare for a limited water supply this summer, as without significant rainfall, water shortages are all but guaranteed.

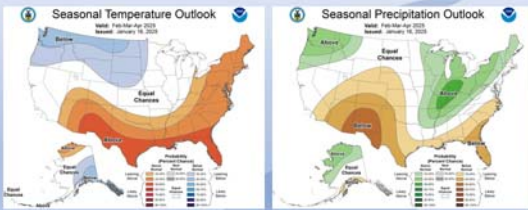
She highlighted some of the offseason work that field staff has been doing this winter, including a Langemann gate on the Cochiti Main Canal. She also gave a response to a question asked earlier in the Special Meeting regarding the volume of water stored for prior and paramount in El Vado, which was 2,120 acre feet, as of the 5th.

Director Duggins commented that they still have three months that it can snow more and he is choosing to stay positive and keep planting. He noted that it is a gamble every year and they have no idea what monsoons or showers are coming. He added that they have always made it and will continue to do so. He then asked what percentage of snowpack they are at.

Ms. Marken answered less than 50%.



## National Weather Service Seasonal Outlook



## Repair of Automatic Gate in Cochiti



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

Mr. Martinez gave a report on water distribution. He stated that they are two weeks away from the start of the 2025 irrigation season, and they will begin charging the irrigation system on February 24th. He explained that the pace in which they bring up the system will depend on many factors, including river flow, weather, canal conditions, availability of equipment, and personnel limitations. He noted that they have been coordinating with the Pueblos to understand their prior and paramount needs, and said an early start will help meet any early season Pueblo demands and address infrastructure setbacks. He voiced that the goal is to begin irrigation deliveries by mid-March, with some areas receiving water sooner. He stated that farmers with winter crops and pastures in the south are likely to have the earliest needs for water and the northern part of the District are expected to be intaking water likely in late March to early April. He expressed that water users should begin contacting their ISOs in early March to assess water availability, discuss farming plans, and place water orders as needed. Mr. Martinez expressed that advanced notice is important for planning efficient schedules and rotational scheduling ensures limited water supplies are shared equitably, and water users should not expect to receive water immediately upon request with a recommended minimum of 5 days' notice. He added that it is essential that water users be available to irrigate day or night, seven days a week, and ISOs will be available from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday, for scheduling water and 24 hours a day for emergencies. He noted that if there are any communication issues with ISOs, users can contact their supervisor or him. He shared that they have one ISO vacancy in Belen in zone BO8 and are working on a solution to cover that area. Mr. Martinez talked about two improvements underway at the Corrales pumping station, including redesigning intake strainers and a third pump to be rented and available soon as a standby unit. He assured that if rotational scheduling becomes necessary, they will provide as much advanced notice as possible through ISOs, updates on the websites, and social media. He remains hopeful that storms will improve water availability through either snow or monsoons, but regardless, the water distribution team will remain dedicated to providing the best service possible. Mr. Martinez informed that the process of scheduling and the delivery process always begins with a water order to know when someone needs water, as that should help open up lines of communication.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 8 - ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR (Comments are limited to three (3) minutes)**

**Bethany Abrahamson**

Ms. Abrahamson, agriculture agent for Sandoval County Cooperative Extension, introduced herself to the Board and explained that the Cooperative Extension is part of the New Mexico State University, which provides research based education in agricultural topics.

**Santiago Maestas**

Mr. Maestas thanked the Board for the improvements they made on the Pajarito Acequia, which included removing curves and several cottonwoods that had been dropping branches and blocking the right-of-way. He expressed that he hoped the District was able to use the \$60,000 capital outlay funds that were appropriated for that purpose. He also thanked Enrique Lamadrid, a member and commissioner of the Conservation Committee on the Pueblo Acequia, for lobbying funds for Valle Vista last year and Senator O'Neill for the \$75,000 that was appropriated. He assured the Board that both the South Valley Regional Association and Pueblo Acequia will support the District's request for funding for the Valle Vista Acequia education program. He asked if the elections in November will still be done, along with the elections for other offices. He noted that would assure more participation by eligible voters.

Mr. Casuga responded that the Secretary of State's Office did not want their election to take place in the same month as the general election, so MRGCD's elections will be in October instead.

**Elaine Hebard**

Ms. Hebard agreed that it would be better if voters were able to vote for board members at the same time, as it should not be very hard to print out two ballots. She also discussed that MRGCD is showing that it is taking the depletion reductions seriously. She encouraged the Board and staff to participate in region wide efforts to reduce over-consumption outside of agency silos, including MRCOG's Water Resource Board and the Rio Grande Basin Study, as those efforts give a chance of keeping the river flowing and satisfying Compact requirements.

**Dave Montoya**

Mr. Montoya attended on behalf of the Village to thank the Board for help on the extension of the Old Chamisal. He said their first meeting with the new mayor is next week and they hope to get a resolution out by the end of the month. He asked if MRGCD was doing anything to encourage more of a protection or special status like landowners currently have. He also asked if someone could speak on that subject with the legislature to encourage some special status so they can get some of the same support as landowners.

**Vincent Sanchez**

Mr. Sanchez, resident of the Village of Los Ranchos, recognized people that have helped him in communication and his journey this past year, including Mr. Zamora, Mr. Martinez, Mr. Ish, and Mr. Jarner. He explained that he has a private ditch that is platted and a prescriptive easement, but he has two neighbors that have fenced across the ditch and put in a drainage pipe. He said part of the problem is that his prescriptive easement has been blocked, but he has had little support from the Village. He expressed that MRGCD's prescriptive easement has also been blocked, because one of the fences was put up without a permit. He also asked if dumping concrete washout in the ditch would be considered polluting into the ditches.

Mr. Casuga stated that if it is an MRGCD facility, dumping there would be illegal, but if it were a private ditch, they would not have an opinion.

Chairman Kelly expressed that he would speak to Mr. Zamora about this issue, and they will contact him on what they can or cannot do.

**AGENDA ITEM NO.9 - REPORT(S) FROM THE SECRETARY-TREASURER/CFO - Pamela Fanelli, CMA, CGFM**

**a. Update on Investment Portfolio - Pam Fanelli, CFO**

Ms. Fanelli gave an update on the Investment Portfolio. She stated that the Finance Committee met with the financial advisors on January 28th, and they presented the results of the second quarter investments. She said year to date, the District has \$8.6 million of endowment funds invested in their emergency funds, \$6.2 million in the LGIP General Fund, the Districted received their first portion of the ad valorem, 3.2 million invested in U.S. Bank, which is a portion of General Fund Reserves and interest used for General Fund expenditures, and year to date they have earned \$378,000 in interest received and accrued.

**b. Consideration/Approval of Disposal of Obsolete Items Resolution M-02-10-25-218**

Ms. Fanelli presented on the resolution for the disposal of obsolete inventory items, as these items belong to a crane that MRGCD no longer owns. The total is \$2,673.38, and the District will to sell the items before having to dispose of them.

Vice Chairman Baugh made the **MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION M-02-10-25-218**. Seconded by Director Dunning. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

Chairman Kelly noted that Directors Russo Baca and Duggins were temporarily out of the room for the vote.

**c. Report on the Finance Committee Meeting, January 28, 2025 - Director Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca prepared a written report for this item.

Director Dunning made the **MOTION TO THE REPORT ON THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**. Seconded by Vice Chairman Baugh. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 10 - REPORT(S) FROM THE CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER - Eric Zamora, PE**

**a. Off Season Maintenance and Capital Infrastructure Updates**

Angelia Jimenez, Engineer I, provided updates on projects, including the Bosque Lateral No. 1 Wasteway and the Las Cercas Pilot Project with Rubicon Gates. The Bosque Lateral No. 1 Wasteway is located in Bernalillo and Santa Ana Pueblo, with the first part of the project was completed by their on-call contractor for \$312, 776, and the second part expected to be completed by Cochiti Division. She displayed the new weir structure and work completed at the outlet section of the new wasteway inside the Atrisco Feeder. She stated that they will be creating the new wastewater section that will tie into the inlet and outlet concrete sections, with some bank grading along the Bosque Lateral No. 1. The Las Cercas Pilot Project with Rubicon Gates project is located in Los Lunas, and

includes improvements on the check structure in the channel and modification of the Las Cercas Heading, including gate installations, for a total of \$108, 920. She displayed some of the work that has been done on the project.

Angel Madera, Engineer I, discussed they will be doing another project that include Rubicon Gates for the Parallel Wastewater Project in Belen. The project consists of pouring a new concrete wall and installation of two Rubicon slip meter gates. He stated that the project is complete and the gates cost \$74, 280. He then discussed the Socorro Main Canal Lining Phase 2, which involves lining with Concrete Canvas. They have currently spent \$2,715,852 on the project and are 80% complete. He displayed some of the work they have done on the project. Mr. Madera gave an update on the Low Flow Channel Maintenance Project, which is focused on clearing and dredging the Low Flow Conveyance Channel, totaling \$4,957,030. He stated that \$992,000 has been spent to date and it is 20% complete.

Mr. Casuga noted that the Low Flow Conveyance Channel Project extends until July, so O&M work is not confined by the start of irrigation season.

Director Duggins asked if they could use the minnow gate to sluice the sand out and help sediment.

Mr. Casuga responded that under normal operations, before monsoon season, they do use those gates to sluice, but it is hard to keep up with it if it rains. ‘

Director Duggins expressed that it gets so thick that they cannot use the water.

Mr. Casuga agreed and stated that they are looking into being able to mechanize and create atomization across the rest of the gate so the mill would not be needed anymore with some of their infrastructure, but they cannot do that until after Bureau of Reclamation finished their Fish Passage Project.

Director Duggins asked if the new lining keeps silt from building up at the bottom of it.

Mr. Casuga answered that sediment will continue to build, as it is just the nature of the ditch. He added that every concrete ditch will likely have sediment, but they expect that we will see a reduction.

Chairman Kelly commented that all the sediment is going to end up in the farm field instead of the ditch.

Mr. Casuga responded that it will allow them to move water more rapidly from north to south in changing conditions.

Mr. Madera then discussed the Belen Highline Canal Overflow Structure, totaling \$1,561,875, with \$293,514 being spent so far with 40% of the project complete. He stated that they are currently pouring the channel line section of the overflow and are on track to finish that section prior to the start of irrigation season.

Director Dunning voiced that she thought there was another pilot project to install the Rubicon Gates, so why are the Rubicon Gates they are installing here called a pilot project.



Mr. Casuga explained that the pilot project at Las Cercas is flume gates, which sit and tip, so they are a little different from the undershot gates. He adding that three of the gates will be communicating together using Rubicon software.

Chairman Kelly asked if they were going to dig out the section of ditch to complete the project on the Bernalillo Wasteway and if they have a disposal site for all that material.

Mr. Zamora answered yes, and they do have a disposal site less than a mile away, but if they Pueblos want the material, they can choose their own stockpile location and they will haul it there.

Chairman Kelly asked what the contractor was doing with all the woody debris.

Mr. Zamora responded that they have several stockpile locations identified that the Socorro Division generally uses, so it is being hauled there and burned.

Mr. Zamora then gave a presentation on Division O&M updates. He stated that in Cochiti Division, the Monica Heading Project was requested by San Felipe Pueblo to provide better control of the gate at the Monica Lateral. He explained that the V-Notch Weir was completed last week and hydrology will be out there to take measurements, so they will be able to coordinate it and develop it. He expressed that they may not get to this one this year, but they will continue to pursue it in the future. He said the Sile Main Canal new check was requested for a new pipeline system, and noted it is a temporary check that was installed last year, and they are currently doing modifications rather than taking it down and building a new one, as it will still provide years of service.

In the Albuquerque Division, there is a new heading at the Bosque Lateral No. 2. He explained that the wooden backboards rotted out last year and they did a quick fix to get through the season, so now they installed a new heading with a new pipe outlet, and will be installing the new gate in the next week or so. He noted it will be ready for irrigation season at the end of the month. The Riverside Drain project has been put off until later in March due to it being an area they can do work on during the irrigation season, which is on a drain right behind the Bosque School. Mr. Zamora expressed that they have been coordinating with Chief Martinez on the Corrales Pedestrian Bridge Project, and they have agreed that it is a seasonal project that can be done in March. They will start pouring the footings and working with the crane contractor to set the bridge after they run water. He discussed that San Mateo Drain, which needs a lot of work and crews have been working on vegetation removal. He noted that they are making improvements in reducing fire risk and are starting to see the drain. He then spoke about the downed cottonwood along the Corrales Drain near the Corrales Heading by the pumps.

In the Belen Division, the big project this year was re-dredging and reshaping the Highline Canal from Dump Road down to Feeder 3, that they finished last week, except for a little clean up and removal. He briefly covered the overflow structure, stating that they are about halfway done shooting that with concrete.

Chairman Kelly asked if they opened any blow sand pockets or if they still had a tight clay bottom there.

Mr. Zamora responded that they are going to slowly run this section of the ditch to identify that. He stated that the material turned out to be good overall, so he thinks they

will be okay, but they may do a preliminary run by wetting the ditch, letting it set for a little bit, and then come back to rerun it.

Mr. Casuga added that they had Proctor tests of the material they dredged out per their agreement in the settlement, and it passed. He said that they found in their profiles that they were not actually cutting very deep if at all. He added that most of the dredging was to widen it and there were very few sections where they took out a significant amount of buildup of silt.

Chairman Kelly inquired what their restrictions were and if they had to have a certain number.

Mr. Casuga responded that he was told that they followed up, BHI completed the testing of the material and it was found to be adequate to serve.

Mr. Zamora expressed that they do have bank build up left on the project and will be finishing up with some of the east bank building up. He said they have a lot of bank work to do that can be done during the season. He briefly spoke about the Wasteway Project and the installation of the Rubicon Gates. They partnered with the Town of Peralta for the Algodones Road Crossing Project. He explained that it was a crossing that was not licensed and a one way in, one way out facility that provides access for about 40 to 50 homes and is a school bus route. He said they bought the materials and MRGCD performed the work. MRGCD completed their portion, so the culvert installation is complete and the Town of Peralta is now placing a concrete cap and head walls on the inlet and outlet of the pipe. In Socorro Division, they had the check rehab project that had erosion at the outlet, so they installed a new turnout and concrete lined the outlet and inlet of the structure. They did extensive rehab on the Socorro Main Canal, where they did a great job reshaping and building up. He noted that they still have a few low areas they need to address on the Main Canal. He also thanked ER&T for their help on the project. Mr. Zamora voiced that their rubber-tired excavators and back hoes will be ready to run water.

Director Jiron commented that the ditch over by Mechenbier (ph) looks really good. He asked what the dredging and reshaping does to the CFS going down there.

Mr. Casuga responded that the cap that they have of 90 CFS will not change. He said they are confined by the structure at the end of Feeder 3 when it is all the way down, so the intention of the emergency overflows is for emergencies only. He explained this is the reason the pump station long term is needed in the hopes that Valencia County one day has their own flood control up and running.

Director Jiron inquired if the Pueblo asked them to dredge in front of the turnouts at Peralta Main again.

Mr. Zamora answered that they have not had any specific conversations but they will follow up to make sure. He shared that they have encountered an issue with the Tribal Road 7 Crossing at Peralta Wasteway. They expected the special order pipe to be delivered two weeks ago, but they plant that was manufacturing it had broken down, so it will now be manufactured by Sacramento. He said the late delivery may cause them to have to re-plan water deliveries. He noted that they inspected the pipe with pueblo staff, road department staff, the lieutenant governor, and Clint, and they believe they are safe to keep the pipe there for one more season.

# Construction Update

## 2024-2025 Offseason Projects

February 10, 2025



Presented by:  
Engineering Department

## Overview

1. Off-Season Construction Projects
  - A. Bosque Lateral No. 1 Wasteway
  - B. Las Cercas Pilot Project (Rubicon Gates)
  - C. Penalta Wasteway (Rubicon Gates)
  - D. Belen Highline Canal Overflow Structure 1 Project
  - E. Belen Highline Maintenance Bank Rehabilitation
  - F. Socorro Main Canal Reconstruction Phase 2
  - G. Low Flow Conveyance Channel Maintenance



**Bosque Lateral No. 1 Wasteway**  
Project Amount: \$312,776.37  
Spent to Date: \$312,776.37  
80% Completed



**Las Cercas Pilot Project (Rubicon Gates)**  
Project Amount: \$ 108,920.50  
100% Completed



Penalta Wasteway Project - Rubicon Gates  
Procurement of Rubicon Gates Amount: \$74,360.81  
100% Completed

## Socorro Main Canal Channel Lining Project Phase 2

Project Amount: \$6,044,913.13  
Amount Spent to Date: \$2,715,852.07  
80% Complete



**Low Flow Conveyance Channel Maintenance**  
Project Amount:  
\$4,957,030.00  
Amount Spent to Date:  
\$992,008.44  
20% Complete



Belen Highline Canal  
Overflow Structure  
Project Amount: \$1,561,875.40  
Amount Spent to Date:  
\$293,514.42  
40% Complete



**AGENDA ITEM NO. 11 - REPORT(S) FROM THE CHIEF ENGINEER/CEO**– Jason M. Casuga, PE

**a. Report on the Farmers/Irrigators' Information Meetings:**

- 1. Socorro County, January 16, 2025 - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO, Eric Zamora, COO, Amanda Molina, PIO, Chairman Kelly, Directors Duggins and Russo Baca**

Mr. Casuga reported on the Farmers/Irrigators Information Meeting for Socorro County. He said he came back resolved that they are doing the right thing and said it is okay for the public to see that the Board does not always agree on items. He believes that these meetings are the right forum outside of the board meeting to be very transparent on things and what they are working on.

- 2. Sandoval County, January 30, 2025 - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO, Eric Zamora, COO, Amanda Molina, PIO, Casey Ish, Conservation Program Manager, Chairman Kelly and Director Baugh**

Mr. Casuga reported on the Farmers/Irrigators Information Meeting for Sandoval County. He said they had some good questions. He explained that sometimes they got and have a little bit of information to give and other times it is just Q&A only. He voiced that Ms. Molina is adding a lot to the Q&A sessions and reminded everyone that every time they have one of these meetings, they update the frequently asked questions on the website.

- b. Report on the Annual Irrigation Leaders Workshop, January 21-23, 2025 - Derek Jarner, Albuquerque Division Manager, Julian Avalos, Socorro Division Manager and Tarah Jaramillo, Executive Assistant/Records & IPRA Specialist**


Tarah Jaramillo was honored to be invited to attend the 12th Annual Irrigation Leaders Workshop, the topic was efficiency. She participated on the panel with other executive assistants from Columbia Basin, South Columbia Basin, and Elephant Butte Irrigation Districts. She explained that they were asked about their backgrounds, roles, responsibilities, daily routines, and other questions from the audience. She learned that MRGCD has the highest number of employees out of all the panelists and executive team, and both panelists and attendees were intrigued that MRGCD has a board liaison and executive assistant who both have two job titles (GIS Tech II/Board Liaison and Executive Assistant/Records & IPRA Specialist).

Director Russo Baca thanked Ms. Jaramillo for representing them well.

## 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Irrigation Leaders Workshop

### "Efficiency"

Sponsored by: Irrigation Leader  
January 21-23, 2025  
Chandler, AZ  
Prepared by: Sarah Sarmiento



## Making Sure the Manager is Successful: The Invaluable Executive Assistant Panel

Panel Participants - Executive Assistants from:

- Quincy-Columbia Basin Irrigation District
- South Columbia Basin Irrigation District
- Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District
- Elephant Butte Irrigation District





## Key Takeaways

All panelists were asked questions about our roles and responsibilities, as well as took questions from the audience.

- MRGCD has the most employees, out of the irrigation districts included on panel, along with the largest Executive Team.
- Panelists and attendees were intrigued that MRGCD has a Board Liaison and Executive Assistant who both have two job titles (GIS Tech II/Board Liaison; Executive Assistant/Records & IPRA Specialist).
- It was interesting to understand how the other Executive Assistants work with their CEOs, Board of Directors and staff. I walked away feeling good that Jason, the staff, board and I have a good working relationship, with a lot of transparency and access, which I think helps to make MRGCD run smoothly.

Thanks to Derek and Julian for the moral support!

## Networking

- It was an honor to participate on the panel.
- I enjoyed connecting with the other Executive Assistants and learning how they make sure their managers are successful.





## Thank you...

for allowing me to attend and participate. It was an unforgettable experience.





Derek Jarner discussed some key takeaways, good ideas, and thoughts about the meeting. He said there was a diverse group of irrigation districts and ideas that were shared, but one main idea that came to him are the individual challenges that they face. He stated that he shared challenges about access, walking ditches, vegetation, the different constituents that sue the canals that aren't irrigators, and how to integrate their needs, wants, and desires in with the necessities that they have to follow with the ditches. He added that moving away from the larger pastures and irrigated areas to more of an urbanized area is a unique challenge that MRGCD faces that most others irrigation districts do not, with encampments and challenges with bikers and walkers. He voiced that his main takeaway was the uniformity that exists in a lot of other irrigation districts that does not exist here. Mr. Jarner noted that we could improve the way we manage and maintain the irrigation canals, and he is starting to work on taking back some easements in areas that they have challenges and is focusing on the areas that he can.

**c. Report on the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos Coalition Meeting, February 6, 2025 - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO, Eric Zamora, COO, Amanda Molina, PIO, and Directors Jiron and Russo Baca**

Mr. Casuga gave a report on the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos Coalition Meeting, stating that MRGCD, BOR, and the Office of the State Engineer attended. He highlighted that they had a good conversation about the election, and the Pueblos seemed to be united in supporting and recognizing the need for House Bill 308 to pass.

Director Jiron stated that the pueblos discussed start updates, and every pueblos was a little different. He reiterated that they were definitely in support of House Bill 308. He shared that they also took nominations.

**d. Report on the Oasis Presentation, February 6, 2025 - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO and Amanda Molina, PIO**

Mr. Casuga expressed that he really liked speaking to the group and they asked a lot of good questions. He noted that this organization caters to doing presentations to retirees and he was invited by Ms. Wiggins, who sits on the board.

Ms. Wiggins stated that Mr. Casuga and Mr. Ish did a great job explaining the Compact to them and they were able to understand it and gave rave reviews on the presentations.



**e. Information on Upcoming Events**

1. **Cultural Resources Law: Collaborating with Tribes on Energy & Infrastructure Projects, February 27-28 - Scottsdale, AZ**
2. **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Socorro Community Conversation on Water Manzanita, March 1, 2025 - Socorro County Fairgrounds Kelly Hall (11-2pm)**
3. **Land and Water Summit, March 5-7, 2025, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center - Albuquerque, NM**
4. **Law of the Rio Grande 2025, April 3-4, 2025 - La Fonda on the Plaza, Santa Fe**
5. **NM Water Leaders Workshop, April 14-16, 2025 - Silver City, NM**
6. **NWRA Policy Conference, April 28-30, 2025 - Washington DC**

**f. Discussion on Reconstituting the Election Committee**

Chairman Kelly reinstituted the Election Committee as Chairman Kelly, Director Russo Baca, and Director Jiron, to look at the internal procedures they are developing in line with the resolution they passed earlier today. He said they will also be looking at procedures for voting by LLC's, trusts, and maybe a decision on allowing mail-in balloting. He noted that the drafting of the rules will be taken care of Ms. Wiggins.

Mr. Casuga proposed that he, Mr. Stretch, Ms. Philips, and legal counsel meet to have a discussion about the rule making process, and would then submit a draft to the Election Committee to make any edits to it. He said the goal is to submit this to the Secretary of State before the end of April, so their rules can be approved prior to the proclamation going on in May for the October election.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 12 - REPORT(S) FROM THE MRGCD ATTORNEY(S) - Chief Water Counsel or General Counsel**

No discussion was had by either counsel during the regular session.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 13 REPORT(S) FROM THE BOARD**

**a. Report on the Centennial Committee Meeting, January 14, 2025 - Vice Chairman Baugh and Directors Dunning and Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca prepared a written report for this item.

**b. Report on the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission Meeting, January 18, 2025 - Director Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca prepared a written report for this item.

**c. Report on the World's Largest Matanza, January 25, 2025 - Director Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca prepared a written report for this item.

**d. Report on the Sandoval/Bernalillo County Constituent Meeting, January 27, 2025 - Chairman Kelly and Vice Chairman Baugh**

Vice Chairman Baugh voiced that it was very helpful to pull people from Sandoval and Bernalillo to discuss financial doings of the District and to better understand why they are raising the water service delivery fee. He said they had some great questions and he believes Bernalillo County and Sandoval County are willing to go above and beyond to help others with this.

Chairman Kelly made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE REPORT ON THE SANDOVAL/BERNALILLO COUNTY CONSTITUENT MEETING.** Seconded by Director Dunning. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**e. Report on the NM Food and Farms Day at the NM Legislature, January 29, 2025 - Director Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca prepared a written report for this item.

**f. Report on the Water Desk Journalist Training & Workshop: Exploring & Understanding the Modern Rio Grande, January 30, 2025 - Director Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca prepared a written report for this item.

**g. Report on the Sandoval County Water 101 Meeting, February 5, 2025 - Director Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca prepared a written report for this item.

**h. Report on the Legislative Committee Meeting, February 7, 2025 - Vice Chairman Baugh and Directors Dunning and Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca prepared a written report for this item.

Director Dunning made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE REPORTS FROM THE BOARD WITH THE EXCEPTION OF 13(d)**. Seconded by Vice Chairman Baugh. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

The chair requested a motion to go into closed session at 5:21 pm.

Director Jiron made the **MOTION TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION**. Seconded by Director Dunning. Rollcall vote was administered with all members voting yes. The **MOTION CARRIED**.

Director Sandoval	Yes	Chairman Kelly	Yes
Director Jiron	Yes	Vice Chairman Baugh	Yes
Director Dunning	Yes		

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 14 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**

The chair requested a motion to go back into regular session at 18:40 pm.

With no further comments, questions, or concerns, Chairman Kelly adjourned the meeting at 18:40 pm.

Approved to be the correct Minutes of the Board of Directors of February 10, 2025.

**ATTESTED:**

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
John P. Kelly, Chairman  
MRGCD Board of Directors



Good afternoon,

My name is Elaine Hebard, and I am a long time advocate of bringing sanity to water administration.

Last year, the former State Engineer Hamman wrote to the MRGCD, as one member of the MRG, regarding the need to reduce depletions. With the water distribution policy, the MRGCD is showing that it is taking this matter seriously.

While it does not appear that the other MRG water providers have received a similar letter, obviously, that is needed. Reducing our consumptive use cannot be just by surface water users -- be they fish or farmer, it must be a basin-side effort.

As such, I would like to encourage the Board and staff to participate in region-wide efforts to reduce the over-consumption outside of any particular agency silo. One is the MRCOG's Water Resources Board meeting on March 5, where the District could urge a discussion to reduce depletions. The Rio Grande Basin Study, on which the District has played a significant role, will be next meeting on February 19, and is another good place to urge for solutions to be modeled for implementation.

Only with such proactive efforts will we basin residents, and particularly your customers, have a chance of keeping the river flowing and satisfying the Compact requirements.

Finally, I would like to make a suggestion with respect to HB 308. While I am glad to see the acknowledgement that MRGCD voters are a unique bloc, why hold a separate election? Is it not really possible to have separate ballots for District voters on the same day as everyone else votes, but would be printed at vote centers throughout the four counties? As it stands now, it is likely that the Albuquerque mayoral race will drown out the Bernalillo candidates for the MRGCD running a month earlier.

Thank you.

**Stephanie Russo Baca Board Reports 2/10/2025****Report on the Centennial Committee Meeting, January 14, 2025**

There was a discussion about the MRGCD Centennial Certificate that will be read on the NM House Floor. Additionally, there was a discussion regarding the centennial celebration movie screening planned for August. There was also a debriefing session for staff about the winter centennial celebration. It was a successful event and should continue to be held outside the centennial, but the discussion will continue.

**Report on the Socorro County Farmers / Irrigators Informational Meeting**

This was a very well-attended meeting, with over 50 individuals in attendance. MRGCD staff and board members gave presentations, and then there was an open Q&A for the audience. There were many thoughtful questions about the RG Compact, water deliveries, and the water service charge.

**Report on the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission Meeting, January 18, 2025**

The ISC gave a legislative update on requests for funding, including \$500,000 for the Middle Rio Grande administration and enforcement. Additional requests were \$1 million for Elephant Butte Delta Channel work and \$5 million for Acequia and community ditch improvements statewide. There was also a key update of Draft/Preliminary Rio Grande Compact Status—initial calculations indicate that NM added approximately 1,300 af to its debit status, increasing it to approximately 123,500 af. Final accounting will be conducted by the Engineer Advisors later this year.

**Report on the World's Largest Matanza, January 25, 2025**

MRGCD sponsored this event this year to celebrate the centennial. The World's Largest Matanza celebrated its 25th anniversary of bringing the Valencia community together to raise scholarships for local graduates. I had the opportunity to speak and congratulate the Valencia Hispano Chamber of Commerce on another successful event.

**Report on the Finance Committee Meeting, January 28, 2025**

Overview of the MRGCD budget and discussions about the potential increase in the water service charge.

**Report on the NM Food and Farms Day at the NM Legislature, January 29, 2025**

I met with various elected officials, including those representing the Middle Rio Grande Valley. Local farmers and students also gave demonstrations and talks.

**Report on the Water Desk Journalist Training & Workshop: Exploring & Understanding the Modern Rio Grande, January 30, 2025**

I gave a 30-minute overview of water use along the middle Rio Grande, how the MRGCD manages water, and Rio Grande Compact compliance.

**Report on the Sandoval County Water 101 Meeting, February 5, 2025**

This was a presentation by Tessa Davidson and Mike Hamman regarding water issues in Corrales and a water law 101 presentation. This presentation should be available on the Corrales Village Council website: [https://www.corrales-nm.org/meetings/recent?boards-commissions=98&combine=&department=All&field\\_smart\\_date\\_end\\_value=&field\\_smart\\_date\\_value\\_1=](https://www.corrales-nm.org/meetings/recent?boards-commissions=98&combine=&department=All&field_smart_date_end_value=&field_smart_date_value_1=).

**Report on the Coalition of Six Middle Rio Grande Basin Pueblos, February 6, 2025**

Jason Casuga updated the MRGCD irrigation startup, the LEA, and O&M. This was one of the more well-attended meetings, with thorough presentations by federal and state agencies, including the OSE/ISC.

**Report on the Legislative Committee Meeting, February 7, 2025**

Discussion on the LEA and the MRGCD Centennial Certificate that will be read on the NM House Floor on 2/11. John Thompson also gave a legislative update on the bills that the MRGCD monitors during the session.