

**MINUTES OF THE  
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE  
MIDDLE RIO GRANDE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT**

**FEBRUARY 10, 2025 - 2:00 P.M.**

Directors having been duly notified; Chairman Kelly called the special meeting to order at 2:01 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         | Absent  |
| Michael T. Sandoval, Director  | Present |
| Karen Dunning, Director        | Present |

**STAFF**

|                |                                  |
|----------------|----------------------------------|
| Jason Casuga   | Chief Engineer/CEO               |
| Lorna Wiggins  | General Counsel                  |
| Jeff Wechsler  | 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

|                         |                        |                       |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Valerie Moore           | Barbara Gastian        | Laura Paskas          |
| Patrick Taber, BIA      | Tarah Jaramillo, MRGCD | Estella Gamboa, MRGCD |
| Rebecca Thompson, MRGCD | Raquel Dawson, MRGCD   | Julian Avalos, MRGCD  |
| Christine Nardi, MRGCD  | Doug Strech, MRGCD     | Casey Ish, MRGCD      |
| Josh Gamboa, MRGCD      | Josh Hind, MRGCD       | DeAnna Philips, MRGCD |

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

DeAnna Philips led the Pledge of Allegiance at today's meeting.

Chairman Kelly declared a quorum, and the meeting was publicly noticed. He also noted Director Duggins was not present at this meeting, which was a hybrid meeting.

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

No changes were made to the agenda.

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

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 3 - WATER AVAILABILITY REPORT - Anne Marken, Water Operations Division Manager**

Anne Marken 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.

Director Dunning asked if there would be a problem charging the system in Corrales because the pumps do not work when the river is low.

Ms. Marken responded that they anticipate having enough water to initially charge Corrales but is it contingent on how much water is in the river.

Vice Chairman Baugh asked if there were similar years in the past, they could reference for farmers to let them know how to prepare for this season.

Ms. Marken stated that water supply conditions are very similar to 2018, but they had a lot of storage in 2018 to manage as opposed to now.

Mr. Casuga added that comparing 2018 to the last few years is a good example of seeing how important and beneficial storing is, which is why they are talking about how important the Rio Grande Compact is. He suggested putting up a map of that at the next board meeting to show the comparison to this year.

Vice Chairman Baugh suggested giving also a tentative end date to give planning awareness.

Mr. Casuga responded that they could talk to their PIO and maybe propose something, but he is fearful because they have tried to do that in the past, and the valley took that as MRGCD turning the system off.

Director Sandoval inquired if the pumping equipment in Corrales is in working condition.

Ms. Marken said they serviced pumps last week and she believes they will be ready on the 24th.

Chairman Kelly asked for the status of the P&P storage.

Ms. Marken responded that BOR is storing P&P water in El Vado right now, but they are still waiting for the Corps to sign off on the agreement between the Utility Authority, the District, and BOR to store water in Abiquiu. She expressed that once that is signed, she believes they will be able to start storing water in Abiquiu.

Chairman Kelly asked how much has been stored.

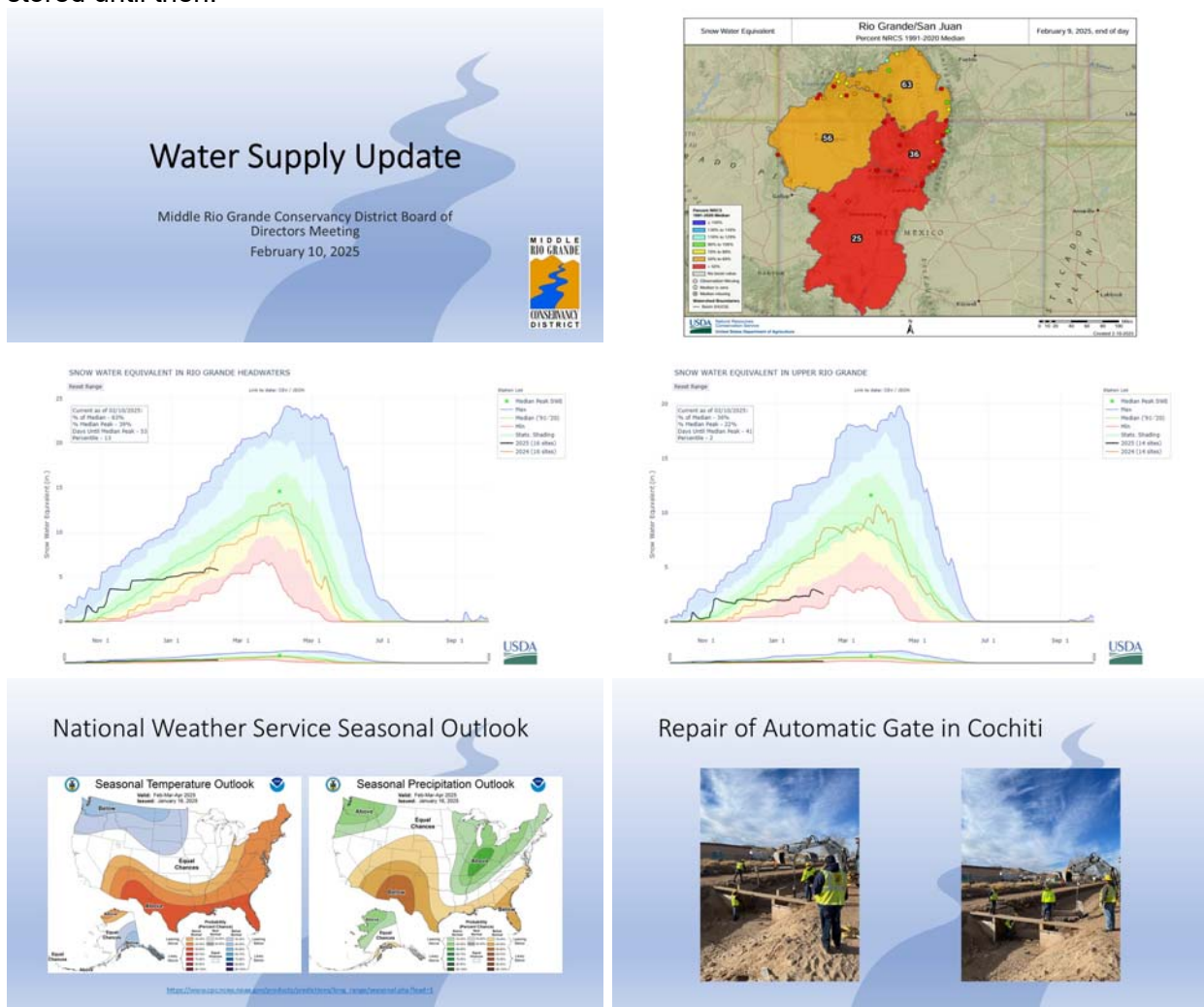
Ms. Marken responded that she thinks several thousand acre feet, but she will update them with the specific value before the next meeting.

Chairman Kelly stated he has heard they are expected to have a good monsoon season.

Ms. Marken said she had not heard that, but monsoon seasons are not understood as well as other weather patterns and she takes those forecasts with a grain of salt, but she is optimistic about monsoon season.

Mr. Casuga asked Ms. Marken when the first calculation of P&P water volume will come out.

Ms. Marken responded that they estimate what needs to be stored based on the forecast, but the final volume is based on the May 1 forecast, so they will not know the total volume to be stored until then.



## **AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 - MRGCD RECOMMENDATIONS ON WATER SERVICE CHARGE AND WATER BANK LEASE RATES AND FEES - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO and Pam Fanelli, CFO**

Mr. Casuga explained that staff recommend the water service charge be increased to \$59.25 per acre/per year. Staff are not recommending that the administrative fee change or a change in the lease rate.

Chairman Kelly expressed that they have increasing costs, including the completion of two union contracts that increased labor costs and inflation on things like fuel, heavy equipment, and concrete. He said they do not have the ability to increase the mill levy, and the water service charge is their only available option. He noted that the water service charge does not cover the entire cost of the ISOs within their budget. As a member of the Finance Committee, he concurred with the staff's recommendation.

Director Dunning added that the federal spigot eventually is going to be turned off, so their ability to get other sources is going to be much less in the future.

Director Russo Baca explained that she was initially concerned with the increase, but the budget would have to be cut from somewhere else and it is important that they do not cut the equipment budget, so their workers have proper and good work equipment. She stated that as someone who pays ad valorem and the water service charge, she believes this is a fair increase for what they are getting for the ISOs and to continue equipment purchases.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 - ITEMS FOR THE FLOOR (Comments are limited to three (3) minutes)**

**Valerie Moore**

Ms. Moore, a former MRGCD director, expressed that she understood why they are raising the fees, but hoped that they would consider that if they keep raising it and raising it, it will push people to sell their farms, and if they start taking out all that acreage, it will affect the Compact. She said they must try to keep farmers farming their land in every way they can. She appreciated that they are going back to a five-day workday. She voiced that MRGCD needs to be transparent in letting irrigators and farmers know what is going on and the reasons for the things they are doing. She suggested doing that by sending out it out on a sheet in the water service bill or sending out a mass e-mail. Ms. Moore added that it would also keep them from getting a lot of blowback if people know what is going on.

Ms. Fanelli responded that the new service charge rate would not be due until December 10, 2025, so they have time to get the word out.

Chairman Kelly added that they did outreach with that sort of thing last year with the irrigator meetings and they plan on doing that again this season.

Ms. Moore expressed herself that she was not even aware that those meetings were happening, so she needs to add her email so she can know about those things.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 6 - CONSIDERATION/APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION M-02-10-25-217 FOR THE ADOPTION OF WATER BANK AND ALTERNATE CURTAILMENT LOCATION FOR THE 2025 IRRIGATION SEASON**

Chairman Kelly asked Mr. Casuga to discuss the alternative curtailment lands.

Mr. Casuga explained that alternate curtailment allows a person who owns multiple pieces of property to choose to dry on property and move water to another property, but it is not a

standalone policy. He said staff are drawing up a draft policy for alternate curtailment in the future to separate that from the water bank and make it clearer. He added that he can meet with the Irrigation Committee towards the end of the irrigation season so it can be reviewed by the Board and properly advertised, but it will not be finished before the start of the irrigation season.

Director Dunning asked what year the water bank was shut.

Mr. Casuga responded 2020. He expressed that the water bank is closed for leasing water, but the alternate curtail portion of the water bank contract is still available, so that is why they want to separate it.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 7 - CONSIDERATION/APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION M-02-10-25-216 FOR THE ADOPTION OF WATER SERVICE CONTRACT RATES FOR THE 2025 IRRIGATION SEASON**

Director Jiron discussed the water service charge and said he wants to advocate and be a voice for farmers. He said he understood that going up on the charge is hard for farmers, but it is needed, as they must weigh the good and the bad. He added that it is a tough decision, but they must get water down to all the farmers, keep production, and keep moving.

Director Baugh commented that all the meetings they have been having with their constituents have been pleasantly surprising. He said they stand there and take all the hard questions and Mr. Casuga, and his staff do a fabulous job. He shared that following the Socorro Irrigators Meeting, one of the farmers voiced that they understood the charge and that water is the cheapest thing on their farm compared to everything else. He stated that he thinks they are getting a better understanding of where money is brought into the District and where it goes, and he is happy to be a part of something that seems to be correcting itself and heading in the right direction.

Director Dunning made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE ADOPTION OF THE WATER SERVICE CHARGE RATE PER ACRE FOR THE 2025 IRRIGATION SEASON TO \$59.25 PER ACRE PER YEAR AND THE ADOPTION OF THE WATER BANK AND ALTERNATIVE CURTAILMENT LOCATION FOR THE 2025 IRRIGATION SEASON.** Seconded by Vice Chairman Baugh. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The chair requested a motion to go into the closed session at 2:40 pm.

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

|                     |     |                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|---------------------|-----|
| Chairman Kelly      | Yes | Vice Chairman Baugh | Yes |
| Director Sandoval   | Yes | Director Dunning    | Yes |
| Director Russo Baca | Yes | Director Jiron      | Yes |

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 8 - EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- a. NMSA 1978 Open Meetings Act, Section 10-15-1(H)2
  1. ISO Collaborative Bargaining Agreement

The chair requested a motion to go back into the regular session at 2:57 pm.

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

|                     |     |                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|---------------------|-----|
| Chairman Kelly      | Yes | Vice Chairman Baugh | Yes |
| Director Sandoval   | Yes | Director Dunning    | Yes |
| Director Russo Baca | Yes | Director Jiron      | Yes |

With no further comments, questions, or concerns, Chairman Kelly adjourned the meeting at 2:58 pm.

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

**ATTESTED:**

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Pamela Fanelli, CMA, CGFM  
Secretary-Treasurer/CFO

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John P. Kelly, Chairman  
MRGCD Board of Directors