

**MINUTES OF THE
2,221st REGULAR MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
MIDDLE RIO GRANDE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT**

MARCH 10, 2025 - 3:00 PM

Directors having been duly notified; Chairman Kelly called the regular meeting to order at 3:03 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
Micheal 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

Richard Barish	Richard DeLoia, MRGCD	Elizabeth Dicharry
Guy Dicharry	Steve Bassett	Jason Scullion
Mike Gadler	Jorge Garcia	Elaine Hebard
Sheri Crider	John Fleck, UNM	John Thompson, MRGCD
Santiago Maestas	Raquel Dawson, MRGCD	Casey Ish, MRGCD
Peter Rice	Steve Kinberger, MRGCD	Amelia Barrows, MRGCD
Doug Strech, MRGCD	Jared Jojola	Josh Gamboa, MRGCD
Josh Hind, MRGCD	Tarah Jaramillo, MRGCD	Amanda Molina, MRGCD
Linda Liptak	Patrick Taber	Mike Padilla, MRGCD
Luke Smith	Mark Sanchez	Angel Madera Enrique, MRGCD
Christine Nardi, MRGCD	Randy Sena	

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1 – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Richard Parrish 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 with both Directors Sandoval and Jiron attending online.

AGENDA ITEM NO.2 - APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Chairman Kelly took Item 8(c) and 8(e) off the agenda, and added Item 14(g) under Reports from the Board, which is a report from Vice Chairman Baugh on the Acequia and Land Grant Education Lesson Plan Development Meeting.

Vice Chairman Baugh made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE MEETING AGENDA WITH THE ABOVE CHANGES**. Seconded by Director Russo Baca. 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. 3 - CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Consideration/Approval of Payment Ratification – March 10, 2025
- b. Consideration/Approval of February 2025 Invoice for Wiggins, Williams & Wiggins
- c. Consideration/Approval of February 2025 Invoices for Spencer Fane LLP
- d. Consideration/Approval of the Minutes for the Special Board Meeting - February 10, 2025
- e. Consideration/Approval of the Minutes for the Regular Board Meeting – February 10, 2025
- f. Memo on MRGCD Approved Licenses for February 2025 (For Informational Purposes Only)

Director Dunning made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA**.
 Seconded by Director Russo Baca. 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. 4 - REPORT ON THE NM LEGISLATURE - John Thompson, MRGCD Lobbyist, Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO, Amanda Molina, PIO, Vice Chairman Baugh and Directors Dunning and Russo Baca

Mr. Thompson gave a report on New Mexico Legislature. He thanked all the board members that contributed this legislative session. He discussed House Bill 308, the elections legislation, stating that it passed the House floor on a 55 to 6 vote last Wednesday, and passed the Senate Rules Committee. The only committee it has left before going to the Senate floor for full consideration is the Senate Conservation Committee, which is tentatively set for a Thursday hearing. He feels there is ample time to get it passed and up to the governor before the 22nd. He then talked about capital projects, which were submitted on February 26th, and they should have a list of fully funded projects soon. He mentioned there are growing significant concerns about federal budget cuts and the impacts it will have on state coffers; however, there is no official word on that. Mr. Thompson stated there are several water policy bills floating around, including HB 137, which is a desalination/clean-up of brackish water, that was double referred in the Senate, which will be a challenge for that legislation. Another bill he mentioned was SB 37, that expands uses and creates a more secure form of funding, which is expected to pass. He also discussed SB 21, that has to do with state primacy relative to federal permitting, that will be heard tomorrow morning at House Energy. Other bills he is watching are SB 210, that establishes penalties for Water Law violations, HB 11, Paid Family Medical Leave Act, SB 7, Storm Water Service as a Municipal Utility, SB 332, that would give \$5 million to MRGCD for fire mitigation efforts, and two minimum wage increase bills,

Mr. Casuga added that HB 137 originally started off with brackish and produced water but has now been shrunk down to brackish water. He explained that MRGCD supports these bills, as it would be short-sighted to be opposed to researching and looking at other water sources that could reduce demand on service water.

Vice Chairman asked if SB 37 was the stormwater as a utility bill.

Mr. Thompson responded that SB 37 is the modification to the strategic water reserve, but SB 7 is the stormwater as a municipal authority legislation.

Chairman Kelly voiced he had reservations on the produced water aspect of HB 137, so he is pleased to see it is now just focused on brackish water. He asked if HB 308 was received in favor by the respective committee Chairmans.

Mr. Thompson answered yes, and they have also used that as a talking point.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5- REPORT(S) FROM THE WATER OPERATIONS

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 moisture from this weekend did not result in much accumulation in the metro area and did not do much to improve the water supply outlook, but did contribute some to the watershed. She displayed the Natural Resource Conservation Services SNOTEL map, which showed well below average snowpack conditions for the year, showing the Rio Grande Headwaters at 67% of median, 65% in the San Juan Chama Basin, 42% in the Rio Chama Basin, and 25% in the Elephant Butte Basin. She said combined storage in Elephant Butte and Caballo Reservoirs are below 400,000 acre feet, so Article 6 and 7 Compact restrictions remain in effect. The only storage water available to MRGCD in 2025 is the 2025 San Juan Chama allocation and small carryover from the 2024 allocation, as San Juan Chama is not subject to Compact restrictions. She explained that a full San Juan Chama allocation is 20,900 acre feet, and the 2025 San Juan Chama allocations are expected to 45% of a full allocation, which is equivalent to just under 12 days of water. New Mexico ended 2023 with 121,500 acre feet of Rio Grande Compact debt and current estimates indicate the debt increased by about 2,000 acre feet. Ms. Marken displayed a hydrograph of the Rio Grande Albuquerque Gage to provide insight to past water conditions in comparison to where we are this year and to show value and importance of having storage water. She expressed that without storage, summer and fall water availability will remain uncertain, as MRGCD will be reliant on summer rain events to deliver water after spring runoff is over. The NWS Seasonal Outlook for March, April, and May shows above average temperatures and below average precipitation, and the summer outlook is showing above average temperatures and equal chances for above or below average precipitation. MRGCD will only have a small amount of water to augment river flows when natural river flow is insufficient to meet needs and may need to release water earlier than usual. Farmers should expect limited irrigation availability once spring runoff ends and MRGCD has exhausted the San Juan Chama water supply.

Director Dunning asked what happened in August 2018 in regard to the graph.

Ms. Marken answered a large monsoon event but noted that 2500 CFS is not too out of the range of what they can see from a monsoon event.

Mr. Casuga added that the graph is a good illustration of the mantra that MRGCD has been saying in meetings, that compliance with the Compact is a conservation measure.

Vice Chairman Baugh thanked Ms. Marken for providing this graph to show people the comparison of years past. He said it also highlighted that when we dialed in with this storage, we operate on that minimum standard but still function in a lot of ways.

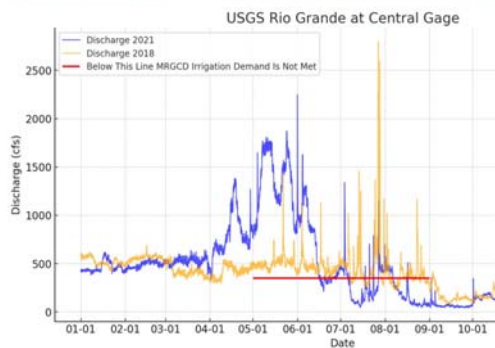
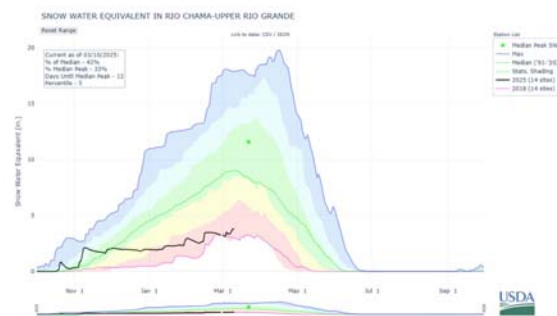
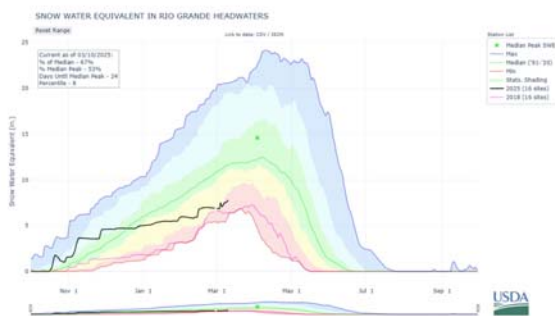
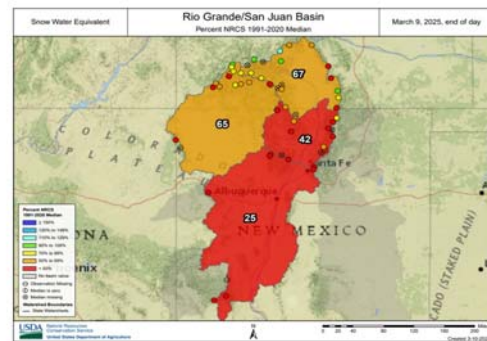
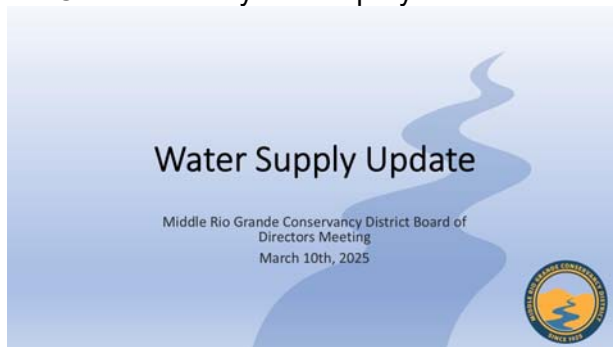
Director Russo Baca voiced that at the ISC Commission Meeting last month they said this year may look more like 2020-2021 season. She asked Ms. Marken's opinion on that.

Ms. Marken responded that it may have been before they got the February forecast out, because since that has come out, the March forecast looks much worse.

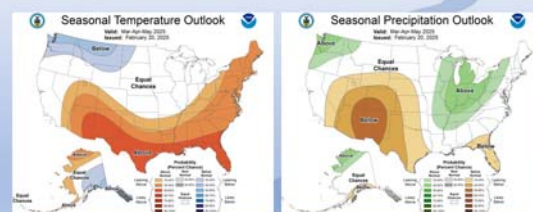
Director Russo Baca asked if the 2019 season was when they released the last of their storage of the 37,000 acre feet they had in savings.

Ms. Marken answered it was 2020.

Chairman Kelly said to pray for more snow and cold temperatures.



National Weather Service Seasonal Outlook



National Weather Service Summer Outlook



Questions?

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

Mr. Martinez gave a report on water distribution. He expressed they are entering the third week of the 2025 irrigation season and have made steady progress in system charging and early deliveries. He recognized the hard work and dedication of their team. He stated the high winds presented significant challenges and impacted system charging and scheduled deliveries, which lead to major cleanup efforts and issues. Canals had to be shut off or lowered in response, and they paused system charging by March 5th to focus on stabilizing the canals with water. He reported that a large portion of the system has now been charged and flushed, but they still have cleanup and re-runs to do. He showed videos illustrating the impact of wind events. He expressed that they dealt with tumbleweeds, downed trees, and branch failures.

Mr. Martinez then provided area specific updates. For the Socorro Division, he stated that initially the San Acacia was used to begin system charging, but as Unit 7 flows increased, they no longer need diversion, and new canal lining improvements enhanced charged up efficiency. He noted that many canals had to be lowered or shutdown due to the high winds, but all four ISO zones are actively scheduling and delivering water. In the Belen Division, initially the focus was bringing up the west side before transiting to the east side, and operations were moving as planned until the high winds forced them to shift to a more cautious strategy. Initial deliveries began in the lower west side zones and irrigation deliveries in the division are permitted if they do not interfere with charging, and they expect to make deliveries in more zones by the end of the week. In Albuquerque Division, week one operations prioritized charging of a canal serving Isleta Pueblo at their request, and they then focused on bringing up the south valley system. They were on track to begin deliveries until the high winds caused issues that required additional cleanups and re-runs, but they plan to start initial deliveries this week. However, in the north part of the division, the winds forced adjustments to the charging schedule, particularly for the upper Albuquerque Main from Angostura Diversion to Sandia Pueblo, so efforts were redirected to running the lower Main and laterals within the north valley, and the upper main canal and lateral serving Santa Ana and Sandia Pueblo are scheduled for charging this week. In the Corrales Division, pump efficiency remains strong, and pumps have been operating mostly interrupted since February 24th, and the ISO is turning on the second pump as needed but shutting it off at night when the risk of weed clogging increases. He noted they are prioritizing deliveries in Corrales, as they will be the first to feel impacts of low river flows. In Cochiti Division, system charging was postponed due to the weather conditions, but today they began running the Cochiti east side Main Canal for the first time this season, and they expect to have the full Cochiti system charged by the end of the week. Mr. Martinez voiced that they remain on track to meet the overall goal of making widespread deliveries by March 15th for those who need them and have made significant progress in the season startup. He noted that the Middle Rio Grande Valley only received around 0.1 inches of rain, and in higher elevations they had 3 inches of snow, but it melted quickly and soaked into the ground. He said water users can begin contacting their ISOs to access water and place orders, and they are encouraged to ensure their water service charges are current and on-farm systems are prepared and ready to receive water before placing orders.

Vice Chairman Baugh said the videos were great to educate. He asked how heavy the tumbleweeds get when waterlogged.

Mr. Martinez answered that they get very heavy.

Vice Chairman Baugh suggested a more proactive approach to vacant lands that are a nuisance to some of the vegetation plug to maintain fields without weeds

Mr. Casuga responded absolutely.

Mr. Martinez suggested putting fencing along certain sections of canal to catch those weeds, but they have 1200 miles of canals and that would be cost-prohibitive.

Chairman Kelly said that if tumbleweeds land in the lake, it becomes a good crappie spot.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6 - ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR (Comments are limited to three (3) minutes)

Elaine Hebard

Ms. Hebard submitted written public comments – reference Appendix I.

Sheri Crider

Ms. Crider explained that she resides on the north end of River Mile 163 Project and knows MRGCD oversees that area. She discussed the increased traffic, which causes safety issues for the families walking on these roads. She suggested some mitigation of traffic. She is also concerned about removing a lot of vegetation and bringing the spoils to the riverbank, as she feels they will have a lot more tumbleweeds. She added that the fire mitigation they are getting from the project will be lost if they put sand on there and grow tumbleweeds.

Guy Dicharry

Mr. Dicharry voiced he is in the northern part of Valencia County, right next to the River Mile 163 Project. He explained the whole project is within the Bosque Open Space Preserve that was a joint powers agreement between MRGCD and the Village of Los Lunas. He expressed that when the project is over, he would like MRGCD to do a multiyear ban on any motorized vehicles using the gate on the west side of the river north of Main Street, as the revegetation will not take place if motor vehicles are in there. He stated that BOR said they will block the access roads using some of the downed trees, but MRGCD needs to assure and assess the adequacy of those boundaries to make sure motorized vehicles are not going into the Bosque during revegetation.

Elizabeth Dicharry

Ms. Dicharry stated that she lives along the Lateral and the Belen Drain, north of Los Lunas. She said she has met with BOR before and during the project and it is much larger than they were led to believe. She shared that they have seen a lot of destruction, including hundreds of cottonwoods have been destroyed, and probably at least a thousand Goodding willows and coyote willows on the west side of the river so far. She showed a photograph of where it is clear cut along the river. She said where she lives there are three 30 to 40 feet wide east-west roads, and when people of Valencia County and Albuquerque discover this, they will find out how easy it is to get their trucks and ATVs back there to party and tear up the vegetation. She said this project has created a very difficult situation and it is necessary that it be replanted, re-seeded, and monitored. Ms. Dicharry explained this will increase the flood risk because the water is running quickly, which is why they are putting spoils on top of the levee. She added that they want it monitored and want to know who is monitoring it.

Randy Sena

Mr. Sena, a farmer in the South Valley of Albuquerque, said he is looking to put a farm of 38 acres back into production. He explained that one of his neighbors on a community ditch upstream has torn the ditch out and installed a 15-inch CMP culvert, and he is concerned about that. He asked if he could put a 6-inch pump, at his cost, and pull water out of the drainage ditch that borders his property to assist with getting the property irrigated to get adequate flow. He explained that if that is not done, he will be in violation of the one hour per acre irrigation rule. He spoke with Mr. Ish about going through one of his programs to apply to see if there is any cost sharing or funding to get this matter resolved, such as to upsize the pipe with time or possible look at rebuilding the ditch to make it more efficient to water the property to put back into a farm and was advised to come here to speak to the Board on the matter.

Chairman Kelly responded that he made a compelling argument and said he would have Mr. Ish follow up with the Bernalillo County Board Members on this as things develop.

Jorge Garcia

Mr. Garcia was there in the capacity of representing the South Valley Regional Association of Acequias, as the secretary, and he is also an irrigator. He thanked the Board for all the support they have provided to the region, especially in education. He said their main goal is to bring consciousness into the community, because unless they raise consciousness with kids and raise creative people that understand what it is going on, nothing is going to happen. He noted they are working with as many schools as they can and are expanding into Valencia, as the future of water in this valley and region relies on naturally developing consciousness from the bottom up. He was grateful for the collaboration taking place in Valle Vista, and they look forward to continuing to expand the model into other schools.

Richard Barish

Mr. Barish commented on what has been happening in Valencia County. He said he was walking north of Main and Los Lunas on the west side the other day and found there was clearing all the way down to Main Street in that area. He expressed he did not understand what that is for. He was shocked at the extent of the clearing and said there were chips left in place. He shared that he would love the Bosque to just be a nature preserve but knows that it is not practical, but did not think it was too much to ask that when work is done in the Bosque, that they minimize the damage to the Bosque. He stated that he hopes the Board will take some action to ensure that the minimization does take place when action is permitted in the Bosque and there is serious restoration of the areas that have been cleared.

Mr. Casuga responded to the River Mile 163 Project comments. He explained that Bosque projects are difficult, and the reality is that we have all enjoyed a Bosque that was set by floods and other things years ago that were worth protecting, enjoying, and investing in, but that is now changing. He said they are looking at an Otowi index with a median that is 20% less than the median five years ago. He added that when they look at projects with the State of New Mexico, BOR, and MRGCD, there is a time coming where the Bosque is going to be touched. He agreed that it looks bad, and they all look bad at the start. However, he asked what it looks like after a damaging flood happens that changes landscape. He noted they are in a time where they have built a system made up of dams and levees and that system requires water to make it to Elephant Butte to function properly. Mr. Casuga further explained that 163 is one of the narrowest sections on the river for this area and that constriction has been a problem on the river for many years and has only got worse as thickness in vegetation came in. One of the primary elements of the project is to reduce the flood risk, as well as fire risk. He shared that he'd be happy to sit down with people and go over the information they have. He said this is a

federal government project out of the River Maintenance Group, and we are in partnership with them and believe it needs to be done, but he could not say exactly what the mitigation plan is.

Director Russo Baca shared that on the MRGCD's website home page, on latest news, there is a public notice specifically about this project and linked the frequently asked questions by BOR.

AGENDA ITEM NO.7 - REPORT(S) FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

a. Bureau of Reclamation - Jennifer Faler, Area Manager

Ms. Faler was not present at today's meeting.

b. Bureau of Indian Affairs - Patrick Taber, Acting Designated Engineer

Mr. Taber expressed that it is going to be a dire year, and the BIA is hoping that they will be able to have enough runoff to meet the estimated demand for prior and paramount as it currently stands. He said there will be storage in El Vado for that, but it is still under testing, and they will find out how that will be. They will continue startup operations of maintenance calls with the Pueblos either next week or the following week, and Cochiti release started last week. He encouraged the board to review emergency management plans.

Chairman Kelly agreed the emergency action plans that have wonderful information, but the most important thing is to keep list of contact's current.

Vice Chairman Baugh asked why they are unsure if they will be able to start storing prior and paramount water depending on the runoff.

Mr. Taber clarified that prior and paramount storage calculations are based on an estimate of stream flow, and given how low the stream flow is, that would increase the amount of storage potential. He said if the irrigation season starts early and the demand exceeds what is available, they may not be able to store the full amount.

Chairman Kelly asked if the conservancy district provided the service and quality of work he was expecting.

Mr. Taber responded there were a few areas that he heard there were some issues, but he thought for the most part things were good.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8 - REPORT(S) FROM THE CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER - Eric Zamora, PE

a. Report on the Pueblo of Cochiti & MRGCD Coordination Meeting, February 24, 2025.

Mr. Zamora thanked Governor Herrera and his staff for meeting with him and Mr. Casuga. He noted that it is the only time in his recollection that a Pueblo governor had a meeting here in our offices, and it was a special meeting. He said there was a lot of discussion on water and water delivery, system operations, and projects.

Mr. Casuga added that most of time they are asked to go to the governor's area for meetings, but they wanted to come and meet with us here, and he appreciated that.

b. Report on the Cultural Resources Law: Collaborating with Tribes on Energy & Infrastructure Projects Conference, February 27-28, 2025

Mr. Zamora expressed the conference was geared toward energy and infrastructure projects, and it was nice to know that in a lot of cases, coordination and collaboration efforts with the Pueblos are on par with what they heard at the conference. He noted he learned some things they need to be aware of that he can report on later.

c. End of Off Season Operation & Maintenance Updates

Mr. Zamora gave an update on their construction projects. For the Socorro Main Canal Project, he showed the newly constructed weir, which is a little over a mile south of the San Acacia Dam. For the Bosque No.1 Lateral Wasteway Project, he showed the structure constructed by Lopez Precision. He stated the canal continued south into a highly densely populated area with no outfall, so the structure will divert water and give them the ability to close the turnout at the tail end of the structure, and it now drains to the west into the Atrisco Feeder.

Mr. Casuga added that it was a project designed in-house with engineering staff, with feedback from the field divisions, and he noted there is a movement to name the Wasteway the Angie Wasteway.

Mr. Zamora thanked Pueblo of Santa Ana for their coordination efforts and said they were very good and accommodating to work with. He showed the completed Las Cercas Pilot Project with the Rubicon Gates. Regarding the Belen Highline Canal Overflow Structure, it is under construction right now and the concrete work is complete. He said the contractor is working on the energy dissipator and there has been a change in the access ramp to the left, but the project is moving along. For the Socorro Main Canal Channel Lining Project, he showed the section that was lined with concrete canvas, which was a low cost alternative to lining the channel, and so far it is working out great with much more manageable flows. He talked about the Low Flow Conveyance Channel Maintenance Project, stating work is complete on the left side and crews have started catching up on the right side. He noted that work is proceeding nicely they are ready to continue going south soon.

Director Dunning asked if the Rubicon Gates were delivered before the tariffs.

Mr. Zamora clarified that order was for the Langemann Gates from Canada. The Rubicon Gates are from Australia, but the gates get assembled here in the country.

Vice Chairman Baugh commented that down in Socorro, it seems like all the projects have noticeably helped a lot and suggested talking about that and highlight that.

Mr. Casuga responded that good metrics would gather over time, especially as they see the more on/off, as that is where they see the benefit of the lining. He agreed that to the degree that they can provide it, that can be something they want to do, and they will also want to report later on the maintenance metrics they will see.

Vice Chairman Baugh voiced that the design for the Wasteway is unique, and he loves how it is off to the right. He asked if there was a name for the type of side right weir.

Mr. Casuga answered it would still be considered a weir, but he did not know if it would go in the category of long crested. He thanked Mr. Zamora and his team for the day in and day out work they are doing.

Chairman Kelly thanked Mr. Zamora and the team for all their hard work.

Mr. Zamora updated from the O&M side of things. He had a discussion with Mr. Padilla from the Lands and Licensing Department about reaching out to county zoning to have better coordination effort to get out and talk to people when it comes to projects and issue notices.

Mr. Zamora expressed that Valencia County approved a flood commission and their organizational meeting is March 13th, and he will be in attendance to try and bring them into our Belen Watershed Project. He said Valencia County was reluctant to sign on as an agency partner at their last commission meeting and deferred that decision to the newly formed authority. He said they will resume Bosque cleanup in the Los Lunas area probably next week, doing one day a week for the foreseeable future to try and clear up encampments. Next month they will resume division manager updates for the Board and will begin with Ms. Corwin, as she will be retiring in May. He explained that weather is warming up and there is a lot more activity on the ditch banks, so be aware that MRGCD is out there working. He added that he has instructed staff to do be cognizant that there will be more people out there as well. He thanked Ms. Fanelli and Mr. Gamboa for getting them up to speed on the service order request system, as they are ready to start scheduling training for the pueblos. Mr. Zamora showed a new piece of equipment they acquired, an aquatic vegetation removal tool, which is the mechanical alternative to vegetation management. He said parrot-feather causes problems mostly with slow moving drains and limits the amount of flow they can get through a drain.

Director Russo Baca mentioned that her fish loves to eat parrot-feather, and she suggested bagging it up and reselling it.



Overview

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









Low Flow Conveyance
Channel Maintenance
Project Amount:
\$4,957,030.00
Amount Spent to Date:
\$3,506,940.00



AGENDA ITEM NO. 9 - REPORT(S) FROM THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT -
Christine L. Nardi, MBA

a. Introduction of MRGCD New Hires

Ms. Nardi introduced new hires, including a new field maintenance tech in Albuquerque, and two medium equipment operators, one who is a rehire.

b. Employee Recognition

Ms. Fanelli recognized Raquel Dawson for the Excellence Award in recognition of her outstanding contribution in budget management resulting in MRGCD being awarded the 2024 Director's Award for Budget Management and Fiscal Integrity.



L to R: Pam Fanelli, CFO; Raquel Dawson, Budget Analyst & Jason Casuga, CE/CEO

Note that Director Sandoval left the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10 - REPORT(S) FROM THE CHIEF PROCUREMENT OFFICER -
Richard DeLoia

a. Consideration/Approval of the Tub Grinder Bid - Casey Ish, Conservation Program Manager

Vice Chairman Baugh made the **MOTION TO PURCHASE THE TUB GRINDER**.
 Seconded by Director Russo Baca. Rollcall vote was administered with all members voting yes.
 The **MOTION CARRIED**.

Chairman Kelly Yes
 Director Sandoval Yes
 Director Russo Baca Yes

Vice Chairman Baugh Yes
 Director Dunning Yes

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

a. Consideration/Approval of Resolution M-03-12-25-220 for Disposal of Obsolete Items

Director Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE M-03-12-25-220 FOR DISPOSAL OF OBSOLETE ITEMS**. Seconded by Vice Chairman Baugh. Rollcall vote was administered with all members voting yes. The **MOTION CARRIED**.

Chairman Kelly Yes
 Director Russo Baca Yes

Vice Chairman Baugh Yes
 Director Dunning Yes

b. Report on the Fiscal Year 2024 Financial Report

Alan Bowers, Jr., with Carr Riggs & Ingram, gave a report on the Fiscal Year 2024 Financial Report. He discussed the scope of work, timeline, responsibilities, and the auditor's reports. He explained that they did an audit of the financial statements for June 30, 2024, looked at the overall financial statements related to Middle Rio Grande, a single federal program audit and risk assessment, tested the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, and tested for compliance related to the New Mexico State Audit Rule. He explained that in the financial statement, there are three reports, the Independent Auditor's Report, which showed an unmodified opinion, no areas that could not be rendered, and that financial statements were presented fairly, a GAGAS Report, which showed negative assurance and one significant deficiency, and a Uniform Guidance Report, which showed an unmodified opinion.

Chairman Kelly thanked Mr. Bowers for his report, and asked Ms. Fanelli about the significant deficiency.

Ms. Fanelli responded that it was an invoice that was paid after the fiscal year end and accrued back to FY23, and was put in as design for professional services, but should have been put in construction in progress. She found the error and reported it to the auditors, and they ran the transaction through the current year. To make sure that does not happen again, they ramped up the search for unrecorded assets on all accruals.

Chairman Kelly asked Mr. Bowers if they were able to get questions answered and if complete data provided in a timely manner.

Mr. Bowers answered absolutely, and added they are a pleasure to work with.

Chairman Kelly asked where they are in the procurement process of having to change auditors.

Mr. Bowers explained that since they reorganized in January, this is year one and they can have 8 years with one auditor.

Chairman Kelly expressed that they appreciate Ms. Fanelli's work and the fact that they found no significant findings at all. He also thanked Mr. Bowers and voiced that he looks forward to continuing the relationship.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 12 - REPORT(S) FROM THE CHIEF ENGINEER/CEO– Jason M. Casuga, PE

a. Report on the 2024 Rio Grande Water Fund Activities - Steven Bassett, The Nature Conservancy

Mr. Bassett, Director of Conservation Programs, gave a report on the 2024 Rio Grande Water Fund Activities. He said that he was in the San Juan Chama Project Headwater this morning and it is very different than any other March he has been up there. He explained that the Rio Grande Water Fund started shortly after the Las Conchas Fire threatened the drinking water supply and alerted New Mexicans to the threat of high severity fire, and they set out to support implementation of landscape-scale forest restoration treatments. He talked about extreme fire risk and voiced that the National Interagency Fire Center says this spring has an elevated fire risk, and the San Juan Chama Project source comes out as one of the highest wildfire risk areas. He expressed that since the Las Conchas Fire, more acres have been thinned and burned to build resilience to fire and that is quite an accomplishment. Mr. Bassett talked about their success, including signatory members of the Water Fund, raising federal funds and directing it to source watershed protection, working with many contractors in producing economic stimulus to some parts of the watershed, and they have treated 251,000 acres together, which is way more than the area burned by wildfire. He discussed the San Juan Chama Project accomplishments, including 15,000 acres identified as priority treatment locations that should be restored to mitigate the future fire threat, directed \$1.58 million to the watersheds and restored 1954 acres, and funding being directed to 241 acres of thinning and mastication in the San Juan Chama Project source watersheds. Their goal is to treat around 15,000 acres. Mr. Bassett voiced they have five strategies they are using with the Rio Grande Water Fund, such as coordinating collective action, implementation, influence, strategic analysis, and inspiring investment. He added that they received \$9.8 million from the Forest Service to get this work done, and said they could not do this without their partners. He talked about goals for the Rio Grande Water Fund but focused mostly on the 15,000 acres in the San Juan Chama Project source areas, as they have a lot of momentum there. He noted there are plenty of opportunities to engage with Rio Grande Water Fund.

Director Dunning stated that when this first started, many economic development officials were excited and trying to figure out ways to turn this into economic development and use forest thinning for some projects. She asked if anything ever happened with that or what they do with the lumber they cut down.

Mr. Bassett responded the San Juan Chama Project Source Watersheds in the Navajo drainage is a successful timber operation that they turned into lumber, but the lower value products they are thinning out from the other forests up there do not have a place to go and produce revenue to offset the cost of treatments. He added they were hopeful that something would come up for that, but none of it has been economically viable.

Vice Chairman Baugh expressed that they hope to be getting money from the state to create a fire prevention concept in the Bosque, and MRGCD just bought a big piece of machinery for the trees and debris they have. He said it seems they also have a lot of good expertise and would like to lean on them for direct collaboration.

Mr. Bassett responded that it would be wonderful.

Director Dunning said that originally there was some hope that this would increase available water supply, but early on research said no. She stated that somebody told her that now they think it does.

Mr. Bassett responded that he is not aware of anything super conclusive for the San Juan Source Watersheds, but studies are ongoing.

Mr. Casuga stated he knows the risk is targeted at water, but other models show how fire could progress. He asked if anyone is actively doing modeling like that on what happens in the Bosque through the urban areas if there is a Bosque fire.

Mr. Bassett answered that he does not believe there are any current fuel models to allow that for the Bosque. He added that they update the fuel models for forests regularly, but he does not think the Bosque has been a priority and he has seen a deficiency there.

Mr. Casuga shared it would be worth the conversation, as there is a significant risk. He voiced that he would like to chat about moving that effort forward because he is wondering if they need to start thinking about reducing fire danger associated with the Bosque.



Rio Grande Water Fund Update

Report to the MRGCD Board of Directors

March 10, 2025

Steve Bassett
AJ Jones
Jason Scoulion

Director of Conservation Programs
Forest and Watershed Health Manager
Forest Strategy Director



Rio Grande Water Fund

The RGWF supports the implementation of landscape-scale forest restoration including thinning, controlled burns.



Founded in the aftermath of the Las Conchas Fire (2011)



Collaborative protection of water sources from high severity wildfire.



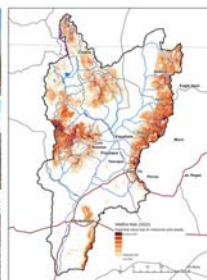
100+ Signatory Organizations

Extreme Fire Risk

- Not just bad luck:
The deck is stacked against us.
 - Forests are overgrown.
 - Weather getting worse.

- Any individual action is likely insufficient.

- Collaboration is how we can address this giant challenge facing New Mexico.
 - Focus on highest ROI activities.
 - Water: San Juan Chama Project



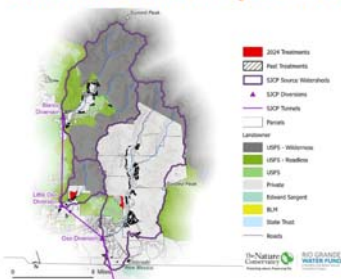
A Decade of Success

Together, with our partners, we have achieved great success:

251,000 acres of forest restoration activities	\$5.3 Million directly raised for restoration	\$52.8 Million public funding brought to the landscape	50+ projects funded	25 Implementing partners	103 Signatories	1,500 Jobs supported
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San Juan Chama Project Accomplishments



- 15,000 acres identified as priority treatment locations that should be restored as quickly as possible to mitigate the threat of future fire.
- Since 2014, the RGWF has directed \$1.58M to these watersheds and restored 1,954 acres.
- In 2024, RGWF funding was directed to 241 acres of thinning and mastication in the SJCP source watersheds.



Cohesive Strategy at Multiple Scales

Strategic Pillars



- The RGWF will realize its vision and missions through five core pillars that leverage the power of collective action, data-driven strategy, and policy



Partnerships for Success

The RGWF has a strong partner network that enables implementation at scale.



Goals for the Rio Grande Water Fund

1. Treat the highest risk acres with partners
2. Treat 15,000 acres in the SJCP source areas
3. Spatial and collaborative planning
4. Grow the RGWF network
5. Advance supportive legislation



Opportunities to Engage with the RGWF

- Implementation Planning
- Communications and Outreach
- 2026 RGWF Signatory Meeting
- Policy (e.g., CO fire liability legislation)



Questions or Comments



AJ Jones
Forest and Watershed Health Manager
ajjones@tnc.org

Jason Scullion
Forest Strategy Director
jason.scullion@tnc.org

Steve Bassett
Director of Conservation Programs
sbassett@tnc.org



b. Report on the South Valley Regional Association of Acequias Spring Meeting, February 13, 2025 - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO and Vice Chairman Baugh

Vice Chairman Baugh expressed that it was productive to talk to a lot of their constituents regarding the letter coming out of the Office of the State Engineer in response to how the MRG irrigators would be curtailed if we were out of compliance. He noted that Mr. Casuga did a great job unpacking the complexities with irrigators and coming to a good conclusion that the District and the South Valley Regional Association of Acequias being together and being united will be stronger with each other's voices.

c. Report on the Pueblo of Sandia Farmers Meeting, February 20, 2025 - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO and Anne Marken, Water Ops Division Manager

d. Report on the Village of Corrales Regular Council Meeting, March 4, 2025 - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO, Eric Zamora, COO and Amanda Molina, PIO

e. Information on Upcoming Events

1. Family Farm Alliance Annual Conference, October 30-31, 2025 - Reno, NV

The chair asked for a motion to table agenda item nos. 12c, 12d, 12e and item 14a.

Director Russo Baca approved the **MOTION TO TABLE ITEMS 12(c), 12(d) and 12(e) and 14(a) TO THE NEXT MEETING.** Seconded by Vice Chairman Baugh. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

AGENDA ITEM NO. 13 - REPORT(S) FROM THE Mc, RGCD ATTORNEY(S) - Chief Water Counsel or General Counsel

Nothing from either counsel for regular session.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 14 REPORT(S) FROM THE BOARD

- a. **Report on the Farmers for Future Farmers Meeting, February 11, 2025 - Director Jiron**

Tabled to the next meeting.

- b. **Report on the Earth Science Day NM Legislature, February 17, 2025 - Director Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca submitted written reports; reference Appendix II.

- c. **Report on the Interstate Stream Commission Meeting, February 20, 2025 - Director Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca submitted written reports; reference Appendix II.

- d. **Report on the Socorro Community Conversation on Water Matanza, March 1, 2025 - Directors Russo Baca and Dunning**

Director Russo Baca submitted written reports; reference Appendix II.

- e. **Report on the Land and Water Summit, March 5-7, 2025 - Chairman Kelly, Vice Chairman Baugh and Directors Russo Baca and Sandoval**

Director Russo Baca submitted written reports; reference Appendix II.

- f. **Report on the Personnel and Finance Committee Meeting, March 10, 2025 - Chairman Kelly and Directors Dunning and Russo Baca**

Chairman Kelly noted this was covered in the earlier special meeting and during discussions on the audit in this meeting.

- g. **Report on the Acequia and Land Grant Education Lesson Plan Development Meeting, March 8, 2025 - Vice Chairman Baugh**

Vice Chairman Baugh reported on the Acequia and Land Grant Education Lesson Plan Development Meeting. He said it was an incredible collaboration that was birthed out of the need to find a state certified curriculum and lesson plan for teachers to take into the classroom to highlight cultural relevance and future reality that all students are facing, and how they can have an active role and ownership in that.

Vice Chairman Baugh made the **MOTION TO APPROVE ALL THE REPORTS FROM THE BOARD EXCLUDING THOSE TABLED TO THE NEXT MEETING**. Seconded by Director Dunning. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

The Chair requested a motion to go into closed session at 5:37 pm.

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

Director Russo Baca	Yes	Chairman Kelly	Yes
Director Dunning	Yes	Vice Chairman Baugh	Yes

AGENDA ITEM NO. 15 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**

Note that Director Jiron left the meeting prior to going into the closed session.

The Chair requested a motion to go back into regular session at 6:13 pm.

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

Director Russo Baca	Yes	Chairman Kelly	Yes
Director Dunning	Yes	Vice Chairman Baugh	Yes

With no further comments, questions, or concerns, Madam Chairman Russo Baca adjourned the meeting at 6:13 pm.

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

ATTESTED:

Pamela Fanelli, CMA, CGFM
Secretary-Treasurer/CFO

John P. Kelly, Chairman
MRGCD Board of Directors

DeAnna Philips

From: Elaine Hebard <eheward@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2025 3:44 PM
To: DeAnna Philips
Subject: Re: Hebard Comments

Good afternoon,

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, and one playing to the choir at that, MRGCD must step up its game because of the drought.

ABCWUA uses three metrics to determine whether a drought exists and if so, what severity and thus what actions are needed. The threshold metric is the Drought Severity and Coverage Index number for Bernalillo County as shown on the Drought map at <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/CurrentMap.aspx>. When it is less than 300, no drought is declared. It seemingly doesn't matter if the two other indices (gpcd and groundwater pumping) are higher than planned. Nor does it seem to matter that the projections for river flows are to be quite low, temperatures this spring and summer quite a bit higher than normal and precipitation lower than normal. Last week, the ABCWUA Board was told that no additional measures need be taken.

At the same time, farmers were told that there is a reduced snowpack which will turn into a reduced delivery. River flows at Otowi are forecast to be 36% through July. And, since New Mexico owes so much water to our downstream neighbors, storage opportunities are slim. Surface water users are being curtailed, but not groundwater ones?

The message has to be the same -- we're in a drought and everyone must act like it. I would urge the MRGCD to assist its customers by ensuring that all regional stakeholders are hearing the message and acting accordingly.

Drought is a part of reality, especially if used euphemistically for climate change. While desired, new sources of water -- such as brackish water-- have to be evaluated with costs, hydrologic impacts and toxic wastes in mind. Again, MRGCD must be in the conversation!

While World Water Day this year is focused on the importance of glaciers, why not focus here on the importance of snowpack!

Thank you,

Elaine Hebard

PS -- I was quite disappointed that the Board voted on HB 308 prior to hearing the public weigh comment, as your Board Liaison can tell you.

Director Russo Baca Board Reports March 10, 2025**Report on the Acequia Day & MRGCD Declaration NM Legislature February 11, 2025**

Vice Chair Baugh, Director Dunning and Director Russo Baca were in attendance in the gallery during the reading of the declaration celebrating MRGCD's Centennial. There were many parcientes in gallery, as well as many legislators were parcientes on their own acequia. Vice Chair Baugh was given a shout out as the Mayordomo in Duranes on the Pierce Lateral.

Report on Earth Science Day, NM Legislature, February 17, 2025

Earth Science Day at the NM Legislature was an important day to highlight natural resources, water, ag and forestry in New Mexico. The New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources presented the Earth Science Achievement Award for Public Service and Public Policy to New Mexico State Forester Laura McCarthy.

Report on the Interstate Stream Commission Meeting February 20, 2025

Legislative update to the NM ISC and regarding the MRGCD Request by NMISC staff for Amendment #1 to the FY2025 Middle Rio Grande Basin Work Plan to add \$1,000,000 to Element 1 – Channel Maintenance and Restoration – from the funding source 2023 River Channel Special (ZH5106). The report out to the ISC was that 2025 will be another dry year. It looks like there will not be 80% of average snowpack, much below 50% and a potential for repeat of 2021-2022. On the Rio Grande: NM added 1300 AF to Rio Grande debit, discussion to where to store prior and paramount currently stored at Abiquiu. NM is expecting low water, which means a higher P+P storage obligation. BOR continuing to test storage capacity at El Vado—keep at 6,000. Discussion regarding the sediment plug needs more attention. Updates regarding MRGCD- Start irrigating March 6 and all SJCP contractors will get 45% of full allocation.

Report on the Socorro Community Conversation on Water March 1, 2025

This event was a follow-up to last year's gathering that brought the community in Socorro County along the Middle Rio Grande together to talk about important water matters while enjoying a hearty meal. Panel topics included Hydrology of the San Acacia Reach- NMBGMR and NM Tech, the Future of Farming in the Valley- MRGCD- Anne Marken, the Rio Grande Compact, and the Lower San Acacia Reach Improvements Project. Anne Marken gave a very good overview of MRGCD, the Rio Grande Compact, as well as an outlook on irrigation.

Report on the Land and Water Summit, March 5-7, 2025

This year's conference was celebrating 30 years of "Nature-Based Solutions, Putting Our Thumb on the Scale for Mother Nature." This year's conference started with a fabulous tour of the valley starting in Los Lunas to Valle De Oro, Soilutions, Gutierrez Hubbell House, and ending with conversation and walk down Pajarito Acequia. There were many great talks during this conference including about the Rio Grande and the Making of a Modern American City, Bosque Restoration at Sania Pueblo, as well as out of state projects that could possibly be implemented here in NM.



...from the matanza!

