

**MINUTES OF THE  
2,222nd REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE  
MIDDLE RIO GRANDE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT**

**APRIL 14, 2025 - 3:00 PM**

Directors having been duly notified; Chair John Kelly called the regular meeting to order at 3:00 pm. The following Directors and Staff were present:

**DIRECTORS**

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

**STAFF**

Jason Casuga	Chief Engineer/CEO
Lorna Wiggins	General Counsel
Christina J. Bruff	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

Ernest Marquez, AES	Patrick Taber, BIA	John Thompson, MRGCD
Christine Nardi, MRGCD	Timothy Smith, AES	Elizabeth Dicharry
Guy Dicharry	Amanda Molina, MRGCD	Tony Tafoya
Cecilia Rosacker, RGALT	John Fleck, UNM	Mike Hamman
Vince Steiner, BHI	Jimmie Rogers, MRGCD	William Zamora, SVRAA
LeeAnn Corwin, MRGCD	Marta Moerch, MRGCD	Santiago Maestas, SVRAA
Rudy Perea	Jennifer Faler, BOR	Ron Moya
Elizabeth Anderson, OSE	Casey Ish, MRGCD	Annie Sanchez
Tarah Jaramillo, MRGCD	Josh Hind, MRGCD	Raquel Dawson, MRGCD

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

Mike Hamman led the Pledge of Allegiance at today's meeting.

Chair Kelly declared a quorum, and the meeting was publicly noticed. This meeting was a hybrid meeting with Director Sandoval calling in; Director Jiron was not present.

Director Dunning led a moment of silence for former Senator Bill O'Neill.

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

Discussion was had with no questions or changes.

Director Dunning made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE MEETING AGENDA**.  
Seconded by Director Russo Baca. Rollcall vote was administered with all members voting yes.  
The **MOTION CARRIED**.

Chair Kelly	Yes	Vice Chair Baugh	Yes
Director Russo Baca	Yes	Director Dunning	Yes
Director Sandoval	Yes		

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

- a. Consideration/Approval of Payment Ratification – April 14, 2025
- b. Consideration/Approval of March 2025 Invoice for Wiggins, Williams & Wiggins
- c. Consideration/Approval of March 2025 Invoices for Spencer Fane LLP
- d. Consideration/Approval of the Minutes for the Special Board Meeting - March 10, 2025
- e. Consideration/Approval of the Minutes for the Regular Board Meeting – March 10, 2025
- f. Memo on MRGCD Approved Licenses for March 2025 (For Informational Purposes Only)

Discussion was had with no questions or changes.

Vice Chair Baugh made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA**.  
 Seconded by Director Dunning. Rollcall vote was administered with all members voting yes.  
 The **MOTION CARRIED**.

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

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 - MRGCD BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2025 ELECTION TO BE HELD OCTOBER 7, 2025 - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO**

- a. Consideration/Approval of Professional Services Agreement for Automated Election Services (AES) for the Administration of the 2025 Election Management and Turnkey Services

Mr. Casuga stated that HB 308 passed at the legislature, which restored MRGCD's administration of their election and removed them from the Local Elections Act. He asked the Board to review the Professional Services Agreement for the 2025 election, as in May they will be laying out the election calendar, assigning officers, and moving forward with the proclamation. He said the Election Committee will be working with AES and the election officer and director to determine the number of polling locations.

Chair Kelly added that this procurement is based on the RFP they put out, with intention to cover multiple elections. He found the proposed cost is in line with other elections.

Vice Chair Baugh asked if this is the first time we have used turnkey services for the election.

Mr. Casuga answered no, 2025 will be the fourth election cycle that MRGCD has used AES.

Director Dunning asked the Election Committee if they could bring a vote to the Board about the polling places before candidates are announced. She added that polling locations should be based on rational criteria and not what candidates want.

Mr. Casuga shared that based on previous litigation, legal counsel advised to table this discussion for Executive Session.

Director Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT FOR AUTOMATED ELECTION SERVICES FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE 2025 ELECTION MANAGEMENT AND TURNKEY SERVICES.** Seconded by Vice Chair Baugh. Rollcall vote was administered with all members voting yes. The **MOTION CARRIED.**

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

**b. Discussion on the MRGCD Draft Rule No. 20**

Mr. Casuga discussed Draft Rule No. 20. He explained that based on the advice from the Secretary of State's Office, they kept the rule pretty much the same as the 2023 season in this draft in this draft, with modification to qualified electors, specifically with an opportunity to allow for things like DBAs and businesses to be added in. He wishes for this item to come back in a month, with one more opportunity to be with the Election Committee and get comments from the Board so approval can be considered in May.

Chair Kelly asked Ms. Wiggins what changes the Board should know as they review it.

Ms. Wiggins expressed that they need to be mindful of when a provisional ballot is provided to someone that would like to cast a vote and need to be clear about what and who qualifies as an elector. She suggested having discussion in Executive Session on things like when they can provide business entities, in addition to trust.

Director Russo Baca pointed out that the election will be on October 7th, which is the first Tuesday in October.

Mr. Casuga added that the law required that.

**AGENDA ITEM NO.5 - NM STATE ENGINEER INTRODUCTION TO MRGCD BOARD OF DIRECTORS - Elizabeth Anderson, NM Office of the State Engineer**

Elizabeth Anderson introduced herself to the Board, as the new and first female New Mexico State Engineer. She stated that she has been trying to understand how the different Ag districts function, their processes and needs, how farming works and how farmers bring food to the table, and she is looking forward to getting to know the MRGCD and their systems better. She voiced that it is really important to emphasize this partnership as we face water scarcity, with a need to really focus on the Rio Grande. She expressed that she would like to participate in MRGCD meetings more often, with a standing spot on the agenda, to cover different topics of interest and/or offer presentations on specific topics. She thanked everyone for their support during the legislative session, and gave a special shoutout to Mr. Thompson, who was a great advocate for water issues at the state level throughout the entire legislative session. She talked about the importance of looking at the Rio Grande as a whole to improve water conveyance for deliveries and Compact compliance. Ms. Anderson said it is going to be a very hard year, and she wants MRGCD to know that they are here as partners and will be working closely with staff. She noted they have been working on outreach to other water users in the MRG and throughout the state to discuss depletion reductions and the impacts of drought on our system and having active conversations and planned communications to discuss those depletion reductions.

Chair Kelly asked if any of the other water users and federal agencies she mentioned received a letter like they got from her predecessor.

Ms. Anderson responded that they have not yet, but they are working on crafting something along those lines, as they need to extend that same sentiment to other water users in the MRG.

Chair Kelly expressed that her help was much appreciated on that. He said the Conservancy values their relationship with the Office of the State Engineer and sometimes it feels as though it is them and the State Engineer versus the feds and everyone below Elephant Butte Reservoir, so they need to present a united position on things that are of a great importance to the Middle Rio Grande and the state of New Mexico.

Director Russo Baca shared she would like to see someone from the OSC come to the meetings every month, even if they just called in. She stated that she listens to the ISC meetings and find them very helpful, so a recap to the MRGCD could be helpful to make sure they are on the same page, especially with the start of the Indian Water Rights Settlement.

Ms. Anderson responded that they are more than happy to do that.

Chair Kelly recommended a quarterly meeting.

Director Russo Baca added that a quick report given to the Board similar to what is done at the ISC meetings monthly is great, even if it is just added to the packets.

Ms. Anderson shared that she would work with Mr. Casuga on that.

Vice Chair Baugh asked Ms. Anderson if she could identify and clarify the difference between depletion and consumptive use and how flood irrigation works into that world. He noted that was a question brought up at the South Valley Regional Acequia Association, which brought up a cool discussion around flood irrigation getting back to the water table rather than depletion. He said it would be great for the Office of the State Engineer to encourage those conservations.

Ms. Anderson agreed that it is a great idea and said it would probably be more meaningful if she had her staff come and give a presentation or provide feedback on that.

Vice Chair Baugh asked how they report to the sediment plug that happened on the Chama River and how they are preparing for the future for more of the those to impact water delivery.

Ms. Anderson answered that studies are ongoing, and they are looking at the potential for additional sediment discharge into the river system, particularly on the Chama, as that is something they have to think about and look at how to minimize the impact of that.

Director Dunning expressed that she took this role at a really challenging time and wished her the best of luck. She added that she is also proud to have our first female state engineer.

Director Duggins asked if there is a formula to figure out a credit to irrigators for water that was not used and went down to the aquifer.

Ms. Anderson responded that it goes back to the concept of depletion versus consumptive use, and they can go over that in future presentation or report.

Director Duggins inquired why the feds are able to use water if they do not have water rights.

Ms. Anderson answered that goes back to the discussion about improved conveyance of water through the Rio Grande for deliveries, depletion reductions and Compact compliance. She said there are a lot of state and federal agencies working on solving those kinds of problems.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 6 - REPORT ON THE NEW MEXICO LEGISLATURE - John Thompson, MRGCD Lobbyist**

John Thompson gave a report on New Mexico legislature. He stated that the legislative session ended on the 22nd. 1,182 pieces of legislation were introduced and 195 passed, which is a 16.5% passage rate. He shared that 160 of 195 were signed, 18 were vetoed, and 17 were pocket vetoed. He expressed that their elections legislation passed, and he thanked Representative Lente, Representative Armstrong, Senator Woods, and Lindsey Bachman for their help with that. He said they added the Arch Hurley Conservation District, who were not able to run an election due to some complications but will now be able to under this new addition, and it also brought broader support for the bill. Mr. Thompson stated that the District okayed the capital outlay and received \$525,000 for the Loretta Project. He shared that they only received \$50,000 for the Valle Vista Project, but he looks forward to regrouping and figuring out what they can do to get a better result in the '26 session or perhaps explore another avenue to pursue funding for it.. He mentioned that HB 137 passed and was signed into law, which is the strategic water supply bill that deals with brackish water and the cleaning of it and includes a pilot program. He noted that we supported that bill, and he was happy to see it move through, as it had been a few years in the making. Other bills that passed were Senate Bill 37, the Strategic Water Reserve Fund, which expanded the purposes for how the fund could be used to include assistance and water management conservation efforts to support aquifer recharge, including supporting traditional and cultural practices, habitat improvement, recreational opportunities, and creating a dedicated fund, and Senate Bill 11, which deals with water quality permitting and pollution and gives the state primacy and gained state permitting and federal permitting. Mr. Thompson then discussed some of the bills that did not pass, including House Bill 348 and Senate Bill 219, which both dealt with maximum penalties for water law violations. He stated that paid family medical leave was tabled in the Senate Finance Committee, Senate Bill 7, stormwater services and municipal utility, passed into law, two minimum wage bills that initially passed in the House Labor Committee never advanced beyond that, and Senate Bill 332, Middle Rio Grande Fire Prevention, also fell short. Regarding the budget, he said there is \$75 million included in the Federal Matching Fund and House Bill 2 included another \$200 million for the Water Trust Board.

Director Dunning shared that she attended a social event last weekend where they discussed that many bills failed because they ran out of time. She asked if there has been any talk on how legislature could be more efficient.

Mr. Thompson responded that some of it is politics and some of it is gamesmanship. He commented that they have talked about memorials in the past and have seen a substantial reduction in the amount of memorials, as they are very selective on the amount of memorials that are done and certificates that are read.

Chair Kelly asked to keep them informed if a special session happens.

Mr. Thompson answered that there are conflicting messages on that but believes that if they see federal cuts to Medicaid or the federal Department of Education, there will be.

Mr. Casuga thanked Mr. Thompson for all of his hard work and assured the Board that they have the right man doing this.

Mr. Thompson also thanked Mr. Casuga, Representative Cates, and Mr. Hamman, and said this was all a collaborative effort.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 7 - PRESENTATION FOR RIO GRANDE AGRICULTURAL LAND TRUST (RGALT) 2024 ANNUAL REPORT - Cecilia Rosacker, Executive Director**

Cecilia Rosacker first thanked the Board for their partnership, which helps provide capacity for them to permanently protect land and water in the Middle Rio Grande. She said this partnership has allowed them to hire more staff, leverage federal and local funds, establish new partners and strengthen our current ones, and initiate and engage in policies for more conservation throughout the state and nationwide. She noted that they just closed on a conservation easement that protects 40 acres adjacent to the Valle de Oro and adjacent to the river by using the NRCS Agricultural Land Easement Program. She added that they also have two landowners that have benefited from the MOU that they have with MRGCD, and they put in three 2025 NRCS agricultural land easement projects that would protect 240 acres and around 900 acre feet of water rights, and 11 are under development. Ms. Rosacker explained that since NRCS is a federal program, they do not know exactly what is going to happen and are crossing their fingers, but they also have the New Mexico Natural Heritage Conservation Act. She shared that they did secure funding for two of the applications they put in for NRCS, but that program only provides \$1,500,000 a year, which would only do one farm in MRG. She expressed that this year they worked with the appraiser and got him to value the water rights as a separate property right, which doubled the value of the conservation easement and created a huge incentive to protect water rights. She voiced that protecting water rights in the Middle Rio Grande through conservation easements and keeping water in the Middle Valley is critical for Ag viability and the ecosystem. The goal is to protect 10% of the Middle Rio Grande, which will take partnerships and funding, and that is their strategic conservation goal for the next 5 years.

The Board heard from Ron Moya and Mark Garcia, landowners that benefited from the MOU.

Ms. Rosacker stated that this year they had about six of their landowners pass or sell their farm and they expressed how important it was to them that they were able to go on and know that their land is protected forever, so they are building new relationships and exciting conservation projects with their new landowners.

Director Duggins expressed that he and his son have an application with Ms. Rosacker, and it is the only way they can survive. He stated that because they are saving the land, they are saving water, but if there is no farmer, there is no farm. He asked what they are going to do about that. He said they need to be careful how they do their policies. He added that farmers have less representation than anybody here but are the most affected by what they do here. He said we are losing our farmers. He shared that this is a good program, but the Board needs to bring to reality how desperate we are, as the last 10 years have been some of the roughest he's seen.

Chair Kelly pointed out that Director Duggins is not the only farmer on this Board, as Director Russo Baca, Director Jiron, Director Sandoval, and Chair Baugh are all farmers as well.

Director Duggins disagreed with Chair Kelly on who is a farmer.

Chair Kelly voiced that as a member of the Finance Committee, he continues to support this group in our budget.

Vice Chair Baugh asked if there is a minimum for acreage allowed into a conservation easement.

Ms. Rosacker answered no, and that is part of the reason they have a separate partnership with Bernalillo County, as having smaller farms makes it harder for them to qualify for some of the federal and state programs. She added that when it comes to NRCS projects, they are ranking projects that are in growing communities higher.

Director Duggins expressed that this body should be lobbying to open the dry desert hills up for development and stay out of the Valley. He added that we are fools for covering our Valley land with concrete and protecting the desert.

Vice Chair Baugh stated that he is looking forward to collaborations on how Bernalillo County and Sandoval County can benefit from raising funds to get the price down.

### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 8- REPORT(S) FROM THE WATER OPERATIONS**

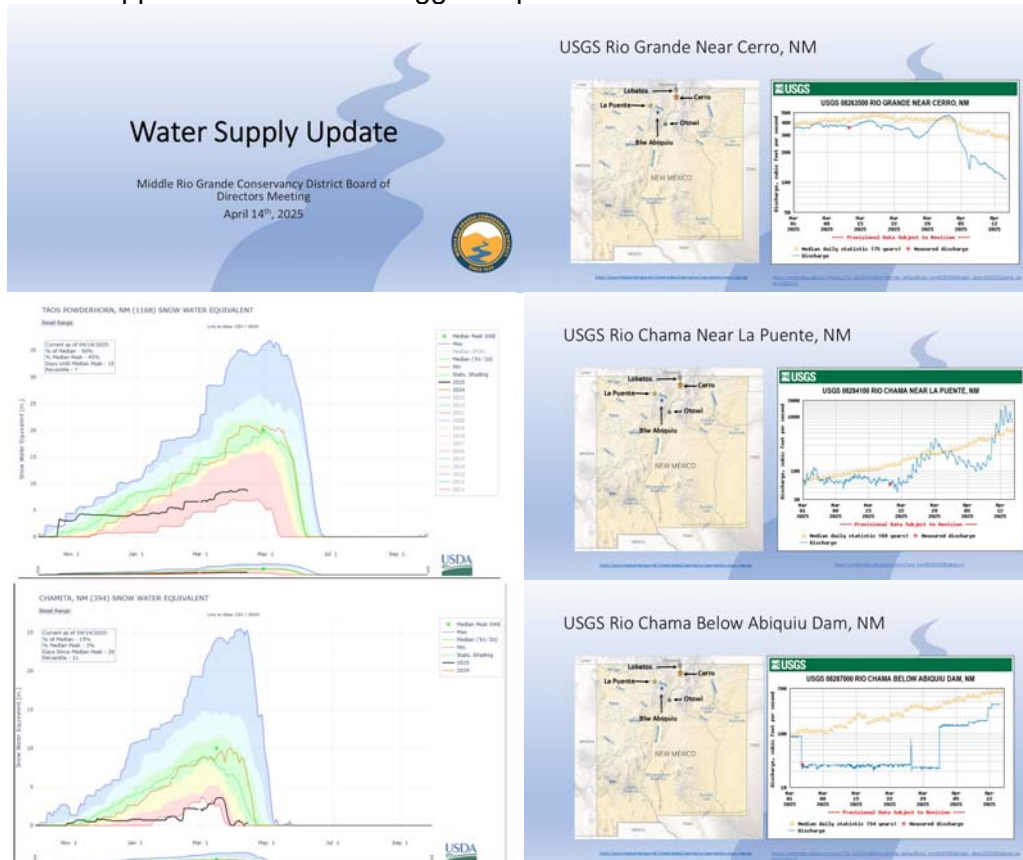
#### **a. Report on Water Supply Conditions - Anne Marken, Water Ops Division Manager**

Anne Marken gave a report on water supply conditions. She said the recent warm temperatures caused some snow melt and they are currently experiencing spring runoff conditions, but she does not anticipate they will experience the increase in spring river flows that they typically see in the runoff period. She went over hydrographs and SNOTEL graphs. The hydrograph from the Rio Grande near Cerro showed flows hovering between 300 and 400 CFS due to warmer temperatures at the end of the month triggered an increase in flow, but it was short lived, as cooler temperatures and Colorado's start of the irrigation season on the main stem brought flows down pretty quickly, so now flows are at 100 CFS. She voiced that to meet Compact delivery obligations, Colorado is targeting a 10% delivery of flow measured at the Rio Grande at Del Norte Gauge, so MRGCD should not expect meaningful contributions from Colorado inflow this year. Ms. Marken then discussed the SNOTEL graphs. The SNOTEL graph from the Taos Powderhorn site is beginning to show signs of snow melt and are currently only reporting 43% of peak median. Composite snowpack conditions in the Upper Rio Grande and Rio Chama are 26% of median, and the main stem of the Rio Grande in the Sangre de Cristos will be well below what the basin typically experiences. The SNOTEL graph from Rio Chama La Puente Gauge saw an initial increase in flows in late March but was followed by a dip in flows due to cooler temperatures. She shared that warm conditions last week likely brought about the peak of the Rio Chama spring flows, which is about 1500 CFS. However, flows from the Chama will not approach the 1500 CFS marker due to storage water for the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos prior and paramount lands, and water needed for Middle Valley use will be bypassed through El Vado and Abiquiu Dams. The SNOTEL graph at Chamita shows that most of the low elevation snow has melted off. She explained that the Abiquiu releases hydrograph measures all releases from the Abiquiu Dam, which showed that flows below the dam increased to 140 CFS in early April and increased to 400 CFS in recent days, due to La Puente flows peaking up high enough to bypass water for Middle Valley use. The Otowi Gauge graph also showed initial snow melt, a cool down, and now additional inflow from the Rio Chama. Ms. Marken noted that the instability in the flows have also translated downstream of Cochiti also. She said the Corps responded to the brief spike in the river flows up at Otowi by increasing flows from 750 CFS to 850 CFS for one day, even though MRGCD requested a small increase in flow before the dam in anticipation of the flows dropping on the main stem. They then decreased it by 50 CFS daily until they reached 550 CFS. She shared that MRGCD felt that

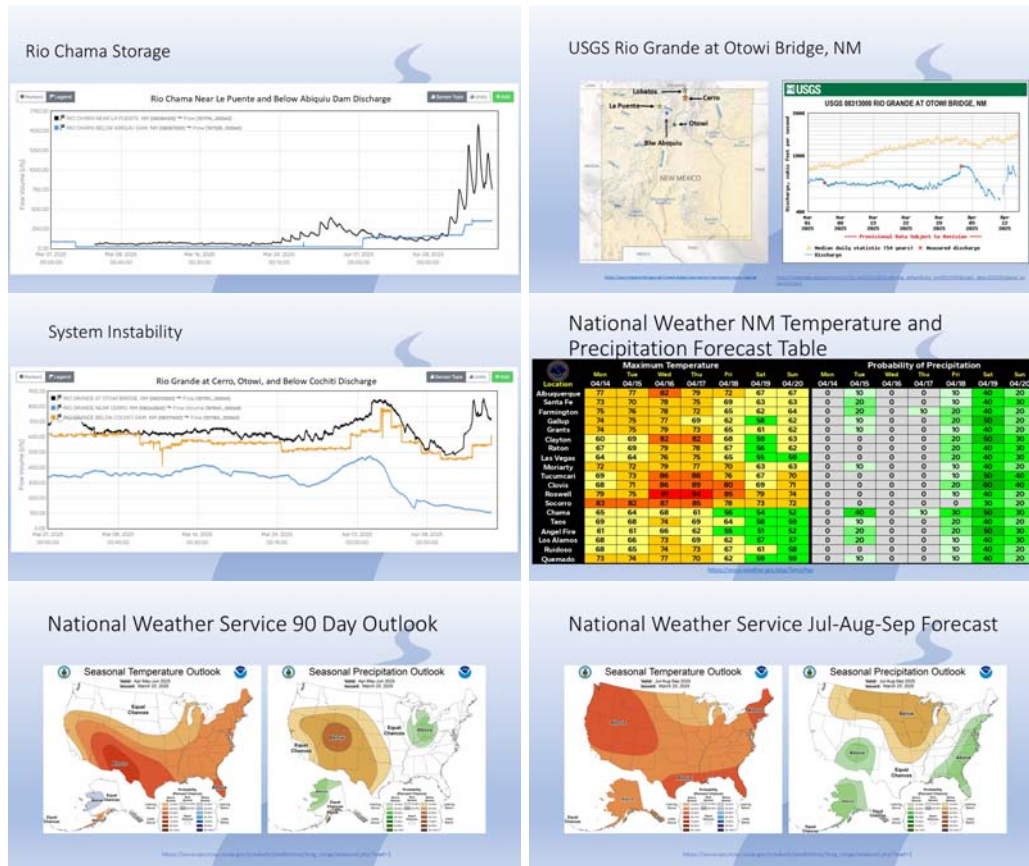
a more measured approach in the changes at Cochiti could have limited instability throughout the Middle Valley this week, because changes of 100 CFS or more from Cochiti can be challenging for our staff to manage. Today, current release from Cochiti is up to 700 CFS for Middle Valley use. She said MRGCD is not authorized to store any native Rio Grande water this year due to Compact restrictions, but New Mexico's 124,000 acre feet of Compact debt and Rio Grande Project storage being below 400,000 acre feet would have prevented MRGCD from storing native Rio Grande water this year even without the Compact restrictions. She expressed that the Chama is not expected to produce enough water to store the calculated volume for P&P storage this year. MRGCD is expecting a 45% San Juan Chama allocation this year, which is less than 10,000 acre feet, and they anticipate needing to release that water sometime in May dependent on conditions. Ms. Marken voiced that MRGCD has very limited ability to augment natural river flow, so unless we get significant rainfall, farmers should expect limited irrigation deliveries for most of the irrigation season and widespread river channel drying. She shared that there is a chance of rain this coming weekend, but the 90-day outlook through June calls for hot and dry conditions and above average chances for above average temperatures and below average precipitation through June. She expressed that the late summer forecast does show above average monsoonal precipitation, but that remains uncertain. She stated this could be one of the most challenging irrigation seasons the Middle Valley has experienced in recent history.

Director Duggins expressed that they are going to get through this by working together as farmers and neighbors. He noted that we need to pay more attention to these policies that prevent people from helping people, as right now it is a critical time, and they do not want to become cold and indifferent to our neighbors. He stated we are born to help each other, and in September, you will see that we got through this one step at a time.

Ms. Marken appreciated Director Duggins' optimism.







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

Mr. Martinez gave a report on water distribution. He expressed that the 2025 Irrigation Season has been shaped by a mix of challenging weather, variable river flows, and the need for constant operational adjustment, and these past few weeks have been a clear reminder that shifting spring weather, upstream activities, and reservoir release patterns are significantly magnified when dealing with below normal spring flows. He reminded that early progress in the system startup was impacted by the significant wind events that caused debris accumulation, canal plugging, and many operational challenges. However, in early April, they experienced a brief window when inflow exceeded demand and it allowed them to make solid progress in deliveries across the District, but flow then declined abruptly again. He thanked Ms. Molina for posting a notice last week to inform irrigators and farmers of the conditions. He said they pivoted into rotational scheduling last week, which is designed for equitable distribution. He stated that recent flow improvements will put them in a better position to meet irrigation demand, but they do expect to be in rotation most of the season and timing for water availability may not align with when irrigators or farmers need it. He explained that when they rotate water, they focus on ensuring sufficient flow to support efficient irrigation, which means irrigators must wait longer for water to be available in their area. Communication is key, and irrigators must understand supply constraints and ISOs must understand field needs to make the most of each delivery opportunity. He noted that they are also dealing with regular fluctuation inflows, which requires constant adjustments and field coordination to stabilize deliveries. He ensured that the fluctuations are not system malfunctions, but a byproduct of a system operating under highly constrained and dynamic flow conditions. Mr. Martinez gave some updates, including a decline in pump performance in the

Corrales Service Area, which is requiring daily repriming by the ISO to maintain delivery. He explained that on April 3rd, the intake pipes were removed and were found to be severely clogged, so they are continuing to monitor intake conditions closely. He voiced that they are seeing an uptick in planting activity, so he reminded farmers to be cautious before planting, given the low and highly variable water supply, as they cannot guarantee the timing or number of deliveries. He added that irrigators should confirm water availability with their ISO prior to making planting or fertilizing decisions. As the season progresses, they will remain focused on maximizing deliveries with available water and maintaining equity across the system.

Mr. Casuga expressed that there is instability along the Rio Grande related to releases coming out of Cochiti, which has made it harder in the lower flows to manage deliveries to farmers when we are diverting at multiple diversion dams, and those diversions require gate changes. He said they have relayed these frustrations and have sent correspondence hoping to try to even this out. He voiced that in the lower flows, they need discretion. He said the response they received is that MRGCD was never frustrated with this pattern before, but that was when we had water in storage. He added that they do not have a lot of water right now, so when these types of mistakes happen, it hurts.

Director Duggins shared that there was a constituent that watered early on, but a neighbor did not water. He said now he is wanting to water a second time but is being held up because the neighbor did not water the first time. He said that constituents should not be penalized because the neighbor didn't take water the first time. He asked if that is how the policy is, because that would slow the whole system down and is not fair.

Mr. Martinez answered no, as there is no specific policy, and there is a lot of discretion that ISOs and supervisors on the ground use. He said he is interested in hearing more details about this situation, as they want to make sure they are providing flexibility as long as it does not harm other irrigators.

Vice Chair Baugh asked if they are saying that we had a runoff, it got colder and stopped, and now we are not going to get another one.

Ms. Marken responded that they are experiencing a runoff on the Chama right now, but because of the storage, it is not going to translate down to the Middle Valley. She thinks they will see some additional inflows on the main stem, but it will not cause a significant spring runoff, so they should not expect to see flows much higher than what they are.

#### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 9 - ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR (Comments are limited to three (3) minutes)**

##### **Jerry Montano**

Mr. Montano stated that he has heard they are going to go on a 21-day rotation and said some ISOs are saying this. He asked if the update on the pump drain on Item 11 pertains to the drain to Feeder 3. He also inquired if they need to reschedule the meeting with Director Jiron.

Mr. Casuga responded that it is not true, as the rotation will be as long as it takes for water to get there. In regard to the pumping drain, Item 11 is about a completely different location in Bernalillo County. And for the meeting, they are trying to coordinate with Director Jiron and his schedule so that he can participate in the meeting.

**Guy Dicharry**

Mr. Dicharry expressed that he is still interested in the Board considering the motor vehicle ban to levee roads within the Project River Mile 163 Project. He found out from BOR that they expect the revegetation of the clear cut area to be a 3 to 5-year project, and state forestry has indicated their desire to have a fire access road on the west side of the river. He asked the Board to consider banning motor vehicles on levee roads on the north side of Main Street in Los Lunas, within the whole River Mile 163 Project area. He pointed out that there is a policy prohibiting motor vehicle traffic unrelated to irrigation on all laterals, so there is no reason to not have the same policy for the levee roads.

**Elizabeth Dicharry**

Ms. Dicharry shared that she lives on the north side of the river between the Huning Lateral and the Belen Drain, which is right in the middle of River Mile 163. She said they hold water rights and irrigate, and they completely understand the problem with the water. She said it is very dry and there is a lot of sand that blows on them and in the ditches when they have high winds. She commented that the Bureau of Reclamation has been receptive to their questions, and she understands that they are doing all they can to deal with them and the neighbors in the area. She added that they are also widening the levee road, and they are very concerned and monitoring that. She voiced that it is really important to keep the gates locked, because if they do not, motor vehicles and ATVs will go through there.

**Santiago Maestas**

Mr. Maestas thanked the District for their collaboration on the Primera Agua celebration and blessing at the Headwaters of the Atrisco Lateral. He stated that many people attended, and the message is clear that people want to keep the water in the Valley and keep it green. He asked for the District's collaboration on protesting water rights that are transferred outside of the benefited area, as that is really critical, and they believe that if they are working in collaboration, they can keep easements open and keep water rights in the Valley. He also introduced Vice President, William Zamora, who is working with Cesoss to assist farmers in the South Valley.

**Tony Tafoya**

Mr. Tafoya responded to Director Duggins' previous comment on being a farmer. He stated that he is a farmer that farms 3 acres and has grown chili for 60 years. He said that now, with the usually low water in Corrales, he hauls a lot of that water in 5-gallon buckets, and he is a farmer, as well as anyone who farms even a half-acre or a backyard plot.

**Glen Duggins**

Director Duggins commented that he is a full-time farmer that started with an 8 horsepower rototiller Sears and Roebuck and grew from there, and did not inherit his farm. He said he supports anybody, but they live in a culture today where everyone is a farmer, even if they are a gardener, but asked if they are irrigators or can relate to all of the farming problems.

**Stephanie Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca voiced that she is supportive of all farmers no matter what kind, and respects and appreciates all sizes of growers, as they are farming with the best intentions and best practices available to them and will continue to adapt during these water short years and really wet years.

**Elaine Hebard**

Director Russo Baca submitted Ms. Hebard's email expressing her concerns for the new State Engineer.

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**From:** Elaine Hebard <ehebard@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 14, 2025 9:06 AM  
**To:** Stephanie Russo Baca <russobaca@mrgcd.us>  
**Subject:** Q for the SE

Good morning, Stephanie,

I will miss your Board meeting and the intro of the SE. Shucks, I know!

Anyway, I hope someone will ask her if and when a letter like was sent to the MRGCD by Mkie Hamman will be sent to other water providers in the MRG. After all, the dire straits that we find ourselves in cannot be on the back of the MRGCD alone.

Thank you,

Elaine

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

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

Jennifer Faler reported that river drying is expected to start this week but appreciated Director Duggins' optimism. She stated the big problem this year is the lack of storage, as they have a reservoir that is 14% full of mostly non-irrigation water, 9% of irrigation water in El Vado, some water in Abiquiu that is not irrigation water yet, and 13% in Elephant Butte, without a lot of hope for additional storage. She explained that the lack of storage is due to Compact debt, inability to store during Article 7 times, and the hydrology. She added that their supplemental water is also pretty low, with 14,000 acre feet being the best case for this year depending on the San Juan Chama allocation. She shared that they are doing the first fill test at El Vado, after having to pause while there was ice and new sensitive instrumentation on the part of the metal plate without grout behind it. She said they are on phase three of Stage 3 and have stored about half of it. She pointed out that they are above the grout and have not gotten any calls yet, so no news is good news. Regarding prior and paramount lands, the call for storage is expected to be about 40,000 acre feet this year, but that is unlikely without major rain. She expressed that without cutting off Middle Valley farmers, that puts them into a shortage likely in late April. Ms. Faler stated that BOR and Indian Affairs do not support storing water for prior and paramount lands to the detriment of the Middle Rio Grande Valley. She voiced that they are committed to ensuring P&P lands are able to produce the food and fiber necessary to sustain the Pueblo's way of life and the Valley has a long tradition of cooperating for the greater good of all farmers and to maintain a healthy ecosystem, as it would be a shame if individual interests were to break that tradition and put us in the precedent of choosing one interest over another, especially when the state is willing to pursue adjudication and bring certainty to water rights in the Middle Valley. She said they will need help from Mother Nature to avoid widespread crop impacts. BOR is undergoing staffing reductions just like other federal agencies and they are in round one of incentivized separation. She noted that they have a retirement offer, voluntary separation payment, and another round of incentive separations, and they just finished round two of incentivized early resignation full retirement program. She explained that they have about 5,000 people and 1,000 signed up for that program, and

they are looking at a 25% to 30% reduction in staffing right now. Ms. Faler shared that in the next few weeks, they will be a consolidation of shared services, so they will probably start seeing involuntary separation. She assured them they will continue to work hard to serve the public, but it is going to take some time to adjust to the losses, so she asked for everyone to bear with them as they figure this out. She discussed River Mile 60 and the background history on it. She stated this will be a \$200 million project to fix the entire area, because the past several years it has had a lot of funding available to accelerate the project. She said they constructed a partial remedy to the River Mile 60 area in the meantime, which reduced depletions while working on the full fix that they plan to start constructing in 2027. Ms. Faler expressed that the Middle Valley benefits greatly from the presence of BOR, and if they ceased operations, there would be a lot less water for farmers. She said they may not be as nimble as MRGCD, but they think they have a fix for the problem and money to do it, but it is not on MRGCD's timeframe.

Director Dunning asked if a commissioner has been appointed yet.

Ms. Faler answered no, their deputy commissioner has been acting in that capacity and has been negotiating with their DOJ representative for the last four weeks.

Chair Kelly voiced that the District is appreciative of their partnership and is glad the project will get moving in 2027. He asked if they could rework the project to get it all done for \$150 million.

Ms. Faler responded that they plan to start at the bottom and work their way up. She shared that they have river maintenance construction crews that can hack away at it for years, taking \$10 million a year, and can focus it down there if additional funds do not come through, but they have not given up hope for additional funds. She gave the El Vado update that she did not remember to give during her report. She said they are going to be in transition on El Vado. They have a big meeting next week to prepare a detailed schedule. She noted that losing PMs could potentially slow down these projects, but they will adjust as soon as possible.

Director Duggins talked about 50 CFS going into the everglades. He asked if there could be financial relief to farmers that are being affected by the decisions by the Bureau.

Ms. Faler explained that all of the water is in the channel and not spilling out. The Low Flow can hold 80 CFS, so she is confident most of the 50 are making it back to the river.

Director Duggins inquired if there was anything scientific backing that up.

Ms. Faler responded that they have measurements. Regarding the financial relief for farmers, she was not aware of any. She pointed out that managing water is a very managed system, as there is nothing natural about snow melt and rivers delivering water to farmers. She said there are lots of losses in that system and they have evaporation in their reservoirs, but she doesn't have anybody asking for compensation for water that's evaporated in the reservoirs and all cumulative losses.

Director Duggins said we are losing farmers at an alarming rate, and they are going to feel that.

Ms. Faler did not disagree with that, as they have gotten \$60 million to keep farming viable in the Lower Rio Grande area to keep farmers in business, and they are committed to the long term viability of Elephant Butte Irrigation District in El Paso.

MRGCD BOARD MEETING (4-2-2025)

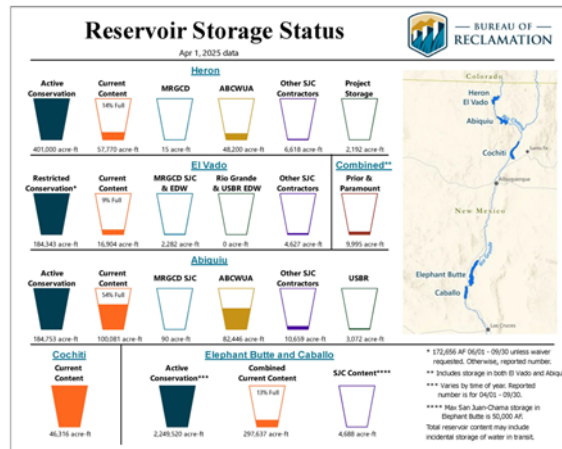
- Heron Summary**  
Content: 57,798 ac-ft (4/2/25)  
Accion tunnel: 25 cfs  
Total SIC inflow in 2025: 1,926 ac-ft  
Currently releasing: 0 cfs  
Current MRGCD storage: 14.7 ac-ft
- El Vado Summary**  
Total storage (all contractors and naturally): 16,901 ac-ft (4/2/25)  
Native in El Vado: 9,995 ac-ft  
MRGCD's SIC storage in El Vado: 2,282 ac-ft  
P & P: 9,995 ac-ft  
Other SIC contractors: 4,624 ac-ft  
Current release is 200 cfs. RG inflow is 190-300 cfs
- Storage in Abiquiu**  
Content: 100,141 ac-ft (4/2/25)  
MRGCD's SIC storage: 90 ac-ft  
P&P: 0 ac-ft

Total supplemental water released in 2025: 0 ac-ft

Space Water Equivalent at Sot/Tel Sites as of 4/2/2025 (% of median)

Rio Chama Basin ..... 39%  
Upper Rio Grande Basin ..... 42%  
Sangre de Cristo Basin ..... 27%  
Jemez Basin ..... 4%  
San Juan River Basin ..... 46%

- Reclamation carried over about 4,400 ac-ft of supplemental water from 2024 and may have losses for about 10,000 ac-ft of 2025 water, although that volume could be much lower depending on the San Juan - Chama Project allocation.
- The current capacity of the Rio Chama channel below Abiquiu Dam is uncertain but it is hoped that it may convey up to about 1,000 cfs.
- The El Vado "first fill" successfully reached 6,810 ft (16,297 ac-ft or 9.4% of full). As runoff tapers off, Reclamation plans to increase the reservoir to 6,820 ft (25,185 ac-ft).
- Most low elevation Sot/Tel sites have method-out.



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

Mr. Taber expressed this is going to be a challenging year and will require a lot of communication, but he is hopeful that farmers and other communities that use the water are going to get through it. He said that they need to take action now and look carefully and evaluate the consequences of low precipitation, and he is doing that internally and personally. He expressed that it is important for us to be clear in our requests, especially with things changing as dynamically as they are right now. He stated that BIA has reinitiated their weekly operations calls to discuss delivery and maintenance issues and has asked everyone on these calls to let him know if they notice any leaks so they can get in the request system, as this is not the time to be wasting water. He shared that he is recommending outreach, attending famers meetings, and presenting updates to the system status. They are also continuing to request consultations.

Vice Chair Baugh shared that he went down to Isleta Pueblo last week, where there were a lot of questions. He said it would be really great to give BIA the platform to clarify the distinctive roles that BIA has with allowing MRGCD to move water. He encouraged Mr. Taber and his team to come and be a part of that.

Mr. Taber responded he is happy to do that.

Mr. Casuga stated that they are in a tough time and Mr. Taber has a lot on his plate and a lot of history to consume, but the river does not give us time to do that, so MRGCD is here as a resource, and he has access to his staff as much as he needs.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 11 - REPORT(S) FROM THE CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER - Eric Zamora, PE**

**a. Update on the Issue of a Drain Pumping License to Randy Sena to Supplement Surface Diversions Due to Upstream Ditch Constructions - Mike Padilla, Right of Way Supervisor, Casey Ish, Conservation Program Manager**

Chair Kelly explained that Mr. Ish provided a detailed response to this, and Mr. Sena is looking to work out things with his neighbors up on the ditch. He asked if the directors reviewed the report and/or had any questions about it.

Director Dunning asked if the trees were going to be removed.

Mr. Zamora answered yes.

**b. Report on the MRGCD Safety Program, LeeAnn Corwin, Safety Program Manager**

LeeAnn Corwin shared that this will be her last report to the Board, as she is retiring at the end of the month. She expressed how much she has enjoyed working for the District in establishing a safety program and developing a safety culture among the managers, supervisors, and field staff. She discussed some of the special projects she completed during her role, including installing lighting and catwalks at Angostura Dam, replacing and upgrading lighting across the Isleta Dam, upgrading the existing men's restroom, adding a women's restroom at the ER&T facility, and adding lighting at the Corrales Pump Facility for ISOs that have to be out there at night. She highlighted that she introduced a documented weekly safety meeting presented by division managers and supervisors, introduced a job safety analysis checklist, near miss reporting, and established a training program for OSHA 10 and OSHA 30 supervisors and managers and anyone else that is interested, that includes competent person training, excavation and trenching exposures, rigging, and fall protection. She shared that they recently discovered that they have a confined space issues at the Neil Cupp Pumping Stations in the San Antonio area, so they certified nine employees up and down the valley that are competent in confined space. Ms. Corwin stated that she also provided safety oversight for the new weld shop the put up next door, did a big shade canopy next door that involved fall protection and scissor lift certifications, and performed scheduled and unscheduled site visits up and down the valley. She said they have done well with people realizing when they need to wear PPE and keep track of each other and the have developed and are implementing 16 standard operating procedures. They put in training facilities with screens and laptops. She mentioned that they have gone from a 1.17 EMOD rating to a 0.76 during her time here.

Director Duggins shared that he has seen her workers always stay safety conscious and never has seen them out of order. He shared a story about a man that fell and died after falling into something at his job due to a safety hazard. He asked her to share that with her workers just how fast something like that can happen. He also asked what happened with the problem he mentioned to her last year about a siphon going across an arroyo that did not have protection around it.

Ms. Corwin responded that she went up and looked at the siphon and agreed that it needed protection, but the division manager did not see a problem with it.

Mr. Casuga voiced that prior to Ms. Corwin coming to the MRGCD, they had a culture issue related to safety and an EMOD rating of over 1, which is bad, so to have it below 1 now is a testament of the work she does. He noted that this is not always work that people say thank you for, that comes with colorful language and complaints at times, but she has undoubtedly left the District a safer place than when she found it, and people went home safely to their families because of what she has done here. He said the bar for the next safety program manager is now set high and they will accept nothing less than what she brought here and is leaving behind. He expressed a job well done to Ms. Corwin and presented her a plaque and a bag of goodies.



Mr. Zamora thanked Ms. Corwin for her hard work and dedication and voiced that she is an employee that everyone wants on their team. Ms. Nardi added that she has been a godsend, and Ms. Fanelli stated that Workmen's comp rates dropped by \$50,000 a year because of Ms. Corwin.









**c. Presentation on the MRGCD Maintenance App - Danielle Feygin, Senior GIS Analyst**

Mr. Zamora presented the MRGCD Maintenance App. He voiced that they have been using this app at the division level to plan their work and report on activities a week ahead of schedule. He stated that Ms. Feygin developed this app, where they have identified all of the systems, canals, and drains. He explained that people can enter a work date and planned work date, and it highlights it in different colors to let the public and other employees know that you will be working in that area. He explained the



different colors and their meanings on the app and stated this will be a good reporting tool and will help in planning efforts. He said they will conduct a training session on it and see if it is a useful tool, as they do not want to create an administrative burden for division managers. The hope is that the app will improve our service, planning, and reporting to the public.

Director Duggins asked why they mow the weeds and then apply the herbicide instead of putting the herbicide on and then retiring the mower.

Mr. Zamora responded that they do think there are other alternatives, and they are in discussions right now with a couple of herbicide suppliers for pre-emergent, as they need something that is friendly around the waterways. They will be conducting upcoming meetings this month with two different suppliers to see what options are available.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 12 - REPORT(S) FROM THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT - Christine L. Nardi, MBA**

**a. Introduction of MRGCD New Hires**

Ms. Nardi introduced new hires and job title changes, including a new accountant, a promotion from ISO to an ISO II, and an Engineer I in the General Office, a field maintenance technician in Albuquerque Division, and two field maintenance techs and a heavy equipment operator in Belen Division.

**Belen Division**

CUTTER	HOUSTON	FIELD MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN	03/17/2025
WARREN	FINLEY	HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATOR	03/31/2025
JOSE	GURULE	FIELD MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN	04/14/2025

**Albuquerque Division**

ERIN	MOREL	FIELD MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN	04/28/2025
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**General Office**

MATTHEW	HARRIS	IRRIGATION SYSTEMS OPERATOR II	03/31/2025 PROMOTION
JIMMIE LEE	ROGERS	ACCOUNTANT	04/14/2025
ANTOINETTE	RAMOS	ENGINEER I	05/12/2025

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 13 - REPORT(S) FROM THE SECRETARY-TREASURER/CFO - Pamela Fanelli, CMA, CGFM**

**a. Consideration/Approval of the Investment Policy - Pamela Fanelli, CMA, CGFM**

Chair Kelly expressed that the Finance Committee reviewed the Investment Policy, which is something that they need to review and approve every two years. He said right now their average term of investment is 3 years, but the policy allows a portion of our investments to be invested up to 10 years. However, the Finance Committee feels that it should be much shorter, given the climate of the world right now, and Ms. Fanelli agrees. He recommended that they approve the policy as it was in the Board mailout, with the change that the maximum term of an investment be only 6 years. The Finance Committee recommended to approve the policy and continue with the better returns they are making through the private sector while maintaining our liquidity and security of investments.

Director Dunning made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE INVESTMENT POLICY**.  
Seconded by Vice Chair Baugh. Rollcall vote was administered with all members voting yes.  
The **MOTION CARRIED**.

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

**b. Report of Resolution #M-04-14-25-221 for Disposal of Obsolete Items**

Chair Kelly explained they are getting rid of old printer cartridges that were obsolete that they have to do via resolution.

Vice Chair Baugh made the **MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION #M-04-14-25-221**.  
Seconded by Director Dunning. Rollcall vote was administered with all members voting yes.  
The **MOTION CARRIED**.

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

**c. Consideration/Approval on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Financial Reports**

Pam Fanelli discussed the 3rd Quarter Financial Reports. The General Fund, year to date revenue, is \$19,437,000, ad valorem revenues trending \$400,000 above budgeted revenues, and the projected surplus will replenish the fund balance that was used for the Belen Highline Canal Project. She said year to date expenditures, excluding transfers, total \$19,867,000, and major expenditures are trending higher than FY 2024 are salaries and benefits, division maintenance, and federal and O&M services. The surplus in budgeted expenditure will be used on the Belen Highline Canal Projects of approximately \$400,000. She noted that year to date Grant Fund Revenues total \$10,115,000, and expenditures total \$11,408,000. She said that of the budgeted \$36,940,000 for FY 25, \$17,761,000 is expected to remain unspent, and they will re-budget the Grant Revenue in FY 26. Ms. Fanelli voiced that the Capital Investment Fund year to date revenues total \$2.8 million, and year to date expenditures, excluding transfers, is \$1.4 million, with most expenditures relating to equipment, Corrales pumping, and projects. Transfers to the Debt Services Fund totaled \$523,000, and transfers to the Grant Fund for grant match totaled \$839,000 year to date.

Chair Kelly reminded the Board that they get their second big influx of tax revenues in May and June, so they will end up in good shape.

Director Sandoval made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE 3<sup>rd</sup> QUARTER FINANCIAL REPORTS**. Seconded by Vice Chair Baugh. Rollcall vote was administered with all members voting yes. The **MOTION CARRIED**.

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

Director Dunning made the **MOTION TO EXTEND THE MEETING BEYOND 6:00 P.M. UNTIL ALL BUSINESS IS FINISHED**. Seconded by Vice Chair Baugh. Rollcall vote was administered with all members voting yes. The **MOTION CARRIED**.

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

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 14 - REPORT(S) FROM THE CHIEF ENGINEER/CEO**– Jason M. Casuga, PE

**a. Discussion/Approval of the Cooperative Agreement MOA between USBOR, MRGCD and NFWF concerning the Middle Rio Grande Water Resiliency Program - Casey Ish, Conservation Program Manager**

Chair Kelly explained that this is an agreement that is a continuation of what they have been doing. It is \$3.5 million coming from the State that they are going to use for a variety of projects, including on-farm efficiency. He expressed that in order to use this money, they have to approve the agreement at this meeting.

Chair Kelly made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE COOPERATIVE MOU BETWEEN USBOR, MRGCD, AND NFWF FOR THE MIDDLE RIO GRANDE WATER RESILIENCY PROGRAM**. Seconded by Director Dunning. Rollcall vote was administered with all members voting yes. The **MOTION CARRIED**.

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

**b. Update from the Public Information Officer - Amanda Molina, PIO**

Amanda Molina gave a quick overview on Centennial efforts and community outreach over the past few months. She said in January, they helped sponsor the Hispano Chamber of Valencia Counties World's Largest Matanza and had farmers and irrigators meetings. In February, Mr. Casuga and Mr. Ish gave presentations with Oasis and they attended three different job fairs. She said camels are coming to Whitfield for Earth Day in April. She noted that all of the events are updated on the website.





**c. Report on the Valencia County Flood Control Authority District Meeting, March 27, 2025 - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO**

Mr. Zamora expressed that he and Mr. Casuga attended this meeting, along with representatives from the USDA, where Mr. Casuga gave a brief introduction of the District, our history, and our role in the Valley. He said that he and the USDA representative talked about Belen Watershed Project and gave an update to the Board, which sparked several questions about their relationship with similar organizations in Sandoval and Bernalillo Counties. He stated that they shared information and contact information and will be sending sample agreements they have with AMAFCA and SSCAFCA for Valencia County to consider. He felt there was lot of openness and willingness to speak, which was greatly appreciated, and they plan on attending several more meetings.

**d. Report on the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblo Coalition Meeting, April 3, 2025 - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO**

Mr. Zamora reported on the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblo Coalition Meeting that he attended with Mr. Casuga and other staff members. He shared there was a lot of energy around the irrigation season, and they were able to convey information they had available. He said there was a lot of concern about storage that was pretty well covered. He stated that they talked about the new service order system, and said they will be getting training for the Pueblos on May 6th and will get them converted over to our service request system.

**e. Information on Upcoming Events**

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

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 15 - REPORT(S) FROM THE MRGCD ATTORNEY(S) - Chief Water Counsel or General Counsel**

Neither counsel had comments for the regular session.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 16 REPORT(S) FROM THE BOARD**

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

The chair tabled this item until the next board meeting as the director was not present at today's meeting.

**b. Report on the City of Albuquerque Meeting, March 11, 2025 - Vice Chairman Baugh and Director Dunning**

Vice Chair Baugh stated that he attended the City of Albuquerque Meeting with Director Dunning, and it was good. He said they have some good action plans and are excited to build strong relationships with us.

Chair Kelly added that this will involve creating the first licensed agreement for a soft surface trail to the City of Albuquerque for recreational purposes

**c. Report on the Urban Waters Meeting, March 11, 2025 - Director Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca submitted written reports – refer to Appendix I.

**d. Report on the Valencia County Arroyo Flood Control District Meeting, March 13, 2025 - Director Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca submitted written reports – refer to Appendix I.

**e. Report on Rep. Vasquez's Agriculture Advisory Group, March 18, 2025 - Director Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca submitted written reports – refer to Appendix I.

**f. Report on the Corrales Siphon Settlement Review and Discussion, March 20, 2025 - Vice Chairman Baugh**

Discussion would occur during the closed session only due to litigation.

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

Director Russo Baca submitted written reports – refer to Appendix I.

**h. Report on the ISO Meet & Greet Meeting, March 25, 2025 - Director Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca submitted written reports – refer to Appendix I.

**i. Report on the Finance & Personnel Committee Meetings, March 26, 2025 - Chairman Kelly and Directors Dunning and Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca submitted written reports – refer to Appendix I.

**j. Report on the Election Committee Meeting, March 28, 2025 - Directors Russo Baca and Jiron**

Director Russo Baca submitted written reports – refer to Appendix I.

**k. Report on the Backyard Refuge Day, March 29, 2025 - Director Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca submitted written reports – refer to Appendix I.

**l. Report on the Centennial Committee Meeting, April 2, 2025 - Vice Chair Baugh and Directors Dunning and Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca submitted written reports – refer to Appendix I.

**m. Report on the Law of the Rio Grande Conference, April 3-4, 2025 - Vice Chairman Baugh and Director Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca submitted written reports – refer to Appendix I.

**n. Report on the Pueblo of Isleta Farmers & Irrigators Information Meeting, April 9, 2025 - Chairman Kelly and Directors Jiron, Russo Baca and Baugh**

Director Russo Baca submitted written reports – refer to Appendix I.

**o. Report on the Mid-Region Counsel of Governments Executive Board Meeting, April 10, 2025 - Director Russo Baca**

Director Russo Baca submitted written reports – refer to Appendix I.

**p. Report on the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Primera Agua Celebration, April 12, 2025 - Director Russo Baca and Baugh**

Yasmeen Najmi attended the 5th Annual Primera Agua Celebration blessing of the ditches awareness of acequias and water at Atrisco Acequia Madre Heading, with a large crowd and a lot of people who came to table the District and Bernalillo County supported Cesoss in the event, and Vice Chair Baugh's daughter read a beautiful poem in Spanish. She said they also highlighted the Acequia Atrisco Madre Project. She gave a shoutout to Derek for helping them clean up and Anderson for sticking around through all of the ceremonial stuff to open the gate.

Vice Chair Baugh commented this was Ms. Najmi's hard work and dedication in bringing the community organizations together with the District and it was an enormous success. He said they talked about hardships they are facing, but also danced, sang, and celebrated the operating of the gate.

Vice Chair Baugh made the **MOTION TO APPROVE ITEMS 16B THRU 16P UNDER REPORTS FROM THE BOARD**. Seconded by Director Dunning. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

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

The chair made the motion to go into executive session at 6:12 pm.

Chair Kelly 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 Russo Baca	Yes	Chair Kelly	Yes
Director Dunning	Yes	Vice Chair 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**

The chair made a motion to go back into regular session at 7:20 pm.

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

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

With no further comments, questions, or concerns, Chair Kelly adjourned the meeting at 7:21 pm.

Approved to be the correct Minutes of the Board of Directors of April 14, 2025.

**ATTESTED:**

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

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

## **APPENDIX I**

### Director Russo Baca Board Reports April 2025

#### **Report on the Urban Waters Meeting, March 11, 2025, 6700 Edith Blvd NE, Albuquerque, NM 87113**

This was a well-attended meeting from various organizations, also at the Land and Water Summit. Interesting presentations were given by Emily Wolf, Rio Grande Coordinator for American Rivers; Juan Camacho, Ecologist for the Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program; and Ricky Reedy, Forest Health Manager for the Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District. More information about the Middle Rio Grande Urban Waters Partnership can be found here:

<https://www.ciudadswcd.org/middle-rio-grande-urban-waters-partnership>.

#### **Report on the Valencia County Arroyo Flood Control District Meeting, March 13, 2025, Valencia County Commission Chambers**

This was the first meeting for the Valencia County Arroyo Flood Control District. At the meeting, the County attorney suggested contacting the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District and Los Lunas and Belen to help identify those areas and work already done for flood mitigation. MRGCD Chief Operating Officer Eric Zamora told board members they also needed to consider whether they wanted to sign an agreement to become an agency sponsor for the Belen Watershed Project. The project is in the final stages of planning. It is in line for a potential \$25 million in federal funding for infrastructure to mitigate flooding south of Belen in the Pueblitos area. MRGCD is the current agency sponsor for the planning stages. Still, because the infrastructure would be built west of the Highline Canal, outside MRGCD jurisdiction, MRGCD hopes to work with VCAFCO to be the agency sponsor for further implementation, as the flood control district has authority through all of Valencia County.

#### **Report on Representative Vasquez's Agriculture Advisory Group, March 18, 2025, Virtual Discussion** on Vasquez announced the introduction of bipartisan and targeted bills designed to support agricultural producers in New Mexico and across the country:

<https://vasquez.house.gov/media/press-releases/rep-gabe-vasquez-hosts-agriculture-advisory-board-roundtable-announces-key>

Ranching Without Red Tape Act (co-led by Rep. Celeste Maloy, R-UT) – Allows ranchers to make minor range improvements, such as fence repairs and water line installations, without unnecessary bureaucratic delays. Habitat Connectivity on Working Lands Act (co-led by Rep. Ryan Zinke, R-MT) – Enhances wildlife corridors and promotes conservation efforts on agricultural lands. Farm Workforce Support Act (co-led by Rep. Juan Ciscomani, R-AZ) – Directs a comprehensive study of the H-2A program to assess its impact on farm labor, wages, and housing availability. Wolf and Livestock Fairness (WOLF) Act (co-led by Reps. Stanton, D-AZ, Schweikert, R-AZ, and Pfluger, R-TX) – Compensates ranchers for 100% of the value of cattle killed by gray wolves and for the decreased herd sizes due to predation. Ranchers are currently only compensated for 75% of the value of their cattle. Healthy Foods for Native Seniors Act – Expands Tribal self-governance in the Commodity Supplemental Food Program to ensure Native seniors have access to fresh, culturally relevant foods.

#### **Report on the Interstate Stream Commission Meeting, March 20, 2025**

There were some key updates on Rio Grande Basin Key Updates 2025 Rio Grande Compact Status – New Mexico added 2,500 acre-feet to its cumulative debit status in 2024, increasing

the debit to approximately 124,000 acre-feet. New Mexico will carry a debit of 124,000 acre-feet for all of 2025. Abiquiu Reservoir and Dam Operations – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and Reclamation are considering the best storage options for Prior and Paramount (P&P) water in 2025. Releases from Abiquiu Dam will be monitored during spring runoff. El Vado Reservoir Operations – Reclamation is currently storing approximately 16,300 acre-feet of San Juan Chama Project and P&P water. Reclamation's reassessment regarding construction to rehabilitate the dam is ongoing. Meeting information can be found at:

[https://www.ose.nm.gov/ISC/isc\\_meetings.php](https://www.ose.nm.gov/ISC/isc_meetings.php)

#### **Report on the ISO Meet & Greet Meeting, March 25, 2025**

This was an opportunity for irrigators and ISO's in the Belen Division to meet face to face. Now that the irrigation season has started, it is crucial to have a positive working relationship between ISO's and irrigators. This was a good opportunity for the MRGCD Staff to discuss the upcoming irrigation season, ongoing projects, and set clear expectations. Over the summer, additional opportunities for informational meetings will be hosted by MRGCD throughout the district.

#### **Report on the Finance/Personnel Committee Meeting, March 26, 2025**

Discussed the 3Q FY25 Financial Statements and review of the investment policy.

#### **Report on the Election Committee Meeting, March 28, 2025**

Discuss the passing of HB 308 and MRGCD's Rule 20 regarding elections. There will be a presentation of the proposed changes to Rule 20 at the board meeting for a vote in the May board meeting.

#### **Report on the Backyard Refuge Day, March 29, 2025**

Over 700 people in attendance at this event hosted at the Guterrez Hubbel House and in partnership with organizations like the xerces society, bird alliance of central New Mexico, Audubon, Tree New Mexico, Yerba Mansa Project, BernCo, Friends of Valle de Oro, UNM Sustainability studies program, urban waters federal partnership, US EPA, Native plant Society of NM and many more! More information about the Backyard Refuge Program can be found at: <https://friendsofvalledeoro.org/abq-backyard-refuge/>. I am hoping that this will be an event that MRGCD can participate directly in next year by tabling or possibly through partnership or sponsorship.

#### **Report on the Centennial Committee Meeting, April 2, 2025**

Discuss the past events to celebrate the MRGCD centennial and the future events that MRGCD will be hosting or attending.

#### **Report on the Law of the Rio Grande Conference, April 3-4, 2025**

At this conference, Jason Casuga presented infrastructure projects within the district's benefitted area. This was his first time presenting at this conference, and his presentation was well-received. Additionally, Elizabeth Anderson, the NM State Engineer, explained what is happening in New Mexico. Then there was a presentation regarding the Middle Rio Grande Adjudication and the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos water rights settlement.

#### **Report on the Pueblo of Isleta Farmers & Irrigators Informational Meeting, April 9, 2025**

Members of the Pueblo of Isleta, leadership, and Pueblo of Isleta staff attended this meeting. Great questions were asked about the season outlook, and a lot of the discussion focused on P&P operations, maintenance, and the new work ticketing system.

**Report on the Mid-Region Council of Governments Executive Board, April 10, 2025**

The FY 2024 MRCOG Audit was presented, and the preliminary 2026 budget and financials were discussed. Alice Main, CABQ Office of Sustainability, discussed the Central NM Comprehensive Climate Action Plan.

**Report on the Fifth Annual Primera Agua Celebration, April 12, 2025, *headwaters of the Atrisco Acequia Madre, located at the intersection of Central Ave. NW and Sunset Blvd. SE.***

This event was a welcome the new season and the return of water to our acequia communities, the Center for Social Sustainable Systems (CESOSS), in collaboration with the American Friends Service Committee, the Open Space Division of Bernalillo County, and the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, organized the Fifth Annual Primera Agua Celebration. This event took place on April 12, from 11 AM to 1 PM, at the headwaters of the Atrisco Acequia Madre, located at the intersection of Central Ave. NW and Sunset Blvd. SE. This celebration honors both the vital waters flowing into our community and also the enduring legacy and heritage of Atrisco, an iconic region deeply rooted in the history, values, and traditions of New Mexico's Indo-Hispano people. This gathering reaffirmed our commitment to resilience, sustainability, and preserving our cultural traditions in changing times. Colin Baugh's daughter read a beautiful poem.