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Bob Nichols, Chairman Eddie Vigil, Member

Rick Baish, Vice Chairman James Evrage, Member

Jeff Rabon, Secretary/Treasurer Colt Howland, Member

Clifton Varbel, Member

**OTERO SWCD MINUTES**

# MARCH 5, 2025

**MEMBERS PRESENT MEMBERS ABSENT GUESTS**

Bob Nichols Eddie Vigil Katie Kruthaupt, NMDA

Rick Baish Clifton Varbel Sid Gordon, OCCEA

Jeff Rabon Laura Doth, SCM RC&D

Colt Howland **STAFF** Chad Novack, USFS

James Evrage Vicky Milne Lisa Phillips, BLM

 Jana Onsurez, BLM

 **NRCS STAFF** John Tunberg

 Kristi Wright

**CALLED TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 am.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The agenda was reviewed. James Evrage motioned to approve the agenda, Rick Baish seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**REVIEW OF MINUTES**

The minutes from the February meeting were reviewed, James Evrage motioned to approve the minutes, Rick Baish seconded, motion passed unanimously.

## FINANCIAL REPORT

The monthly financial report was presented, Colt Howland motioned to approve the report as presented, and pay the bills listed, Rick Baish seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**CORRESPONDEN****CE**

The Department of Finance and Administration chief approved our second quarter budget.

Otero County has invited us to participate in the flood mitigation and watershed restoration project with the Army Corps of Engineers on April 3rd from 2-5pm.

BLM has released the funding for our weed and brush management grants.

**REPORTS**

NM Department of Agriculture – The NMDA report provided information on upcoming deadlines, meetings, and grant opportunities.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – Kristi read the report. The EQIP ranking deadline is March 14th. CSP classic application deadline was February 7th with a ranking deadline of February 28th. Staff have been visiting Healthy Soil Program applicants. NRCS State Technical Committee Meeting will be held on April 9th from 9am – 4pm.

Otero County Cooperative Extension – Sid provided a report. The pesticide applicator CEU workshop will be held on March 11th. The seed to supper program has 30 people. The Otero County Cooperative Weed Management Area meeting will be held this afternoon. The Firewise meeting in Cloudcroft had over 100 people in attendance.

South Central Mountain RC&D – Laura provided a report. The Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update is ready to be contracted. Timberon Phase VI is beginning implementation. The EWP in Ruidoso has 12 million dollars spent of the 53 million obligated to the project.

US Forest Service – Chad Novack provided an update. He has been searching the archives for data on the dams. He would still like to assist us with getting a project developed to hold water in the watershed above Curtis Canyon Dam. There was also discussion about the Denny Hill project, their work will be outside the area of Bear Creek Dam. The South Sacramento Restoration Project is receiving final edits. The Non-Native Invasive Plant Project EIS is at the USFWS for consultation.

Bureau of Land Management – Lisa Phillips provided an update. BLM is interested in adding funding to our master agreement. They are looking at projects for brush/weed management and tank level monitoring. Colt spoke briefly about the tank level monitor and how it is functioning on his ranch. Colt Howland motioned to approve submitting for the additional funding, Rick Baish seconded, motion passed unanimously.

SWCD – The commercial applicator for the musk thistle project is still not interested in doing the spray this year. A new applicator requested information and expressed interest in the project. His rates would be higher. After initial contact, he has not responded to further questions. The spring newsletter needs articles.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Drone mapping – Colt has been in contact with a new person at Holloman. It appears that we will be able to start when the African rue is active in April.

Watershed Dam Rehabilitation Planning – The recent meeting information was discussed. Their initial assessment of Bear Creek Dam is that the only way to meet Principal Spillway Hydrograph criteria is to raise crest of the auxiliary spillway 21 feet. To meet Freeboard Hydrograph (runoff volume & rainfall distribution) criteria the width of auxiliary spillway would need to be (90 feet), raise the crest of the dam 28 feet, constant depth of auxiliary spillway (6 feet), and increase the width of the auxiliary spillway to 350 feet.

## NEW BUSINESS

John Tunberg spoke about the Landscape Scale Restoration Project he is working on through the NMDA funding. He has drafted the proposal and reviewed it with the board. Laura had some input on the cost information. Rick Baish motioned to submit the application with the updated cost information, James Evrage seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Healthy Soil Program application. Courtney McCary has presented her application to the board for previous funding cycles. Her current application is basically the same. She was unable to attend the meeting today due to her commitment to the NM Farmers Marketing Association Conference. Since she has presented her project previously Rick Baish motioned to approve sponsoring her application, James Evrage seconded, motion passed unanimously.

NM State Land Office has completed the preliminary work for the Timberon Project with South Central Mountain RC&D assistance. The project will thin 100 acres. Colt Howland motioned to approve the project, Jeff Rabon seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Curtis Canyon Dam Early Warning System – Colt Howland researched available systems that were satellite based as cell coverage in the area is not viable for this purpose. He found a company that can provide a system for approximately $20,000 installed. The system would alert emergency services and provide notice to the downstream residents during an emergency. There was discussion on the ability to install the system prior to monsoon season. If our capital outlay funds can be used, the purchase can be made immediately. Should they not be available a request could be made to Otero County for the funds as an amendment to this year’s budget. The final option would be to use some of the funding the legislature provided. Vicky will contact NMDA for approval to use the capital outlay funds and then submit a request to Otero County if necessary.

The annual funding request for Otero County is due by March 24th with a presentation to the commissioners on April 22nd at 9am. There was discussion on the amount to request. It was decided to submit the same request as last year with the additional $1,500 to cover the monitoring cost of the early warning system. Rick Baish motioned to approve the funding request, Jeff Rabon seconded, motion passed unanimously.

With no further business to discuss, James Evrage motioned to adjourn, Rick Baish seconded, motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 12:05 pm.

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Bob Nichols, Chairman Jeff Rabon, Secretary/ Treasurer