



May 15th, 2021 Regular Board Meeting

VSWCD STAFF REPORT FOR THE BOARD: LIST OF CONTENTS

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May 15th, 2021 Board Meeting *Expected Action Items: (in order of appearance on Agenda)

- 1) Verify quorum, pledge of allegiance, current meeting agenda review with changes & approval**
- 2) Past Meeting Minute Approval (1/2): 3/20/2021 Regular Board Meeting;**
- 3) Past Meeting Minute Approval (2/2): 4/17/2021 Regular Board Meeting;**
- 4) Board Approval Sought – Formation of FY2021 Dan Goodman Scholarship Committee;**
- 5) Board Approval Sought – April 2021 Expenditure Report:** Board review and approval sought for the April 2021 VSWCD Budget Reconciliation;
- 6) Board Review and Approval Sought – Resolution #9-2021 Budget Adjustment for Final FY21:** Board review and approval sought for the FY21 Final Budget Adj. Resolution (BAR);
- 7) Board Approval Sought – Resolution #10-2021 Preliminary FY22 VSWCD Budget:** Board review and approval sought for the Preliminary FY22 VSWCD Budget;
- 8) Board Approval Sought – Resolution #8-2021 (revised from 4-17-21):** Board review and approval sought for this delegation of Board authority to District Director to apply for grants;
- 9) Board Discussion – Revising Board Meeting Stipends:** Per the NMDA May 2021 Report (Mechenbier), Board motion expected to comply with \$45 Board Meeting stipend;
- 10) Board Discussion – Revising Position Description for District Project Crew Leader:**

* - Any item listed on the published meeting agenda can be acted upon by the Board.

District Director's Report for May 2021



For the VSWCD Board of Supervisors' May 15, 2021 Regular Meeting

May 15th, 2021 Board meeting: Director Updates & Activities

- ❖ **Operational Concerns / COVID-19 Update:** Since the April Board meeting, federal and State of NM Covid-related policies have been shifting. For instance, NM DOH has changed the county's designation from Yellow to Green. Meanwhile, CDC declared mid-April that masks are not required outside when people are fully vaccinated. On 5/13/21, CDC also changed their recommendation for use of masks inside so masks are not required for fully vaccinated people inside buildings. As we await NMDOH guidance, the District is reviewing these changes and will likely make operational adjustments soon.
- ❖ **FOUR DAYS OF EARTH DAY EVENTS!!** 500 souls visited Whitfield during our four day Earth Day Science Fiesta / Nature Challenge event. It was successful in many ways, perhaps most that with such great turnout there were no unhappy customers---plus no injuries occurred and the over \$4,000 raised by the Friends of Whitfield's (first ever) Silent Auction, which was a small miracle in the making (powered in good measure by Linda Zaragosa and Frank Mazza and their just crazy diligence in knocking on near every businesses' door in the county asking for auction donations—Big Thanks to Linda and Frank!)
 - And on topic of thanks, I need to send strong **Kudos to Allison Martin** who was the proverbial point of the spear for these events. While everyone on our team were big contributors, Allison juggled all the coordination (nine organized hikes! Ten plus partner organizations! She worked with Johnny to run the online program that made the auction work). An amazing feat from our energized dynamo doing six things at once, and pulling them all off. 500 visitors came to Whitfield over four days. The most ever. **Tnxs Allison!**
- ❖ **Business Manager Update:** As Amanda Carrasco notes below, Amanda recently completed her training and testing to become a Certified Procurement Officer. Not only should she be duly proud to have passed her difficult tests, she should also be proud in the knowledge that her improvement is our improvement.
- ❖ **Information Technology Improvements:** In continued review and evaluation of our technological situation, here's the current status of various IT-related issues: Happy to report that we are now storing our electronic files in a secured cloud environment. This includes the efficiency of placing Board meeting documents in a cloud folder (vs. my incessant emailing of mtg. doc's), hopefully making life easier for staff, Board, partners, public and others.
- ❖ **Meeting with (retired) USFWS Fire Ecologist Mark Kaib:** On Sunday 4/18/21 Andrew met with Mark Kaib, touring the Whitfield Complex. Mark has decades of experience in supporting National Wildlife Refuge Managers in managing their properties, having a strong dual focus experience with both fire management considerations and supporting underlying ecological concerns. He provided valuable feedback with his most pointed observation being: It can be argued that our most impressive asset in the complex is the mature gallery of cottonwood trees at Rio Abajo (roughly estimated at a stand with more than 50 individual trees). Further, this stand is imperiled per dense understory of invasives and other dead woody debris making for a fuel source that will likely burn hot, a type of fire event that cottonwood trees are unlikely to

survive. Surveying the site leaves one certain that the scale of work needed to clear the understory fuels is immense, and will have to be pecked away at. Mark's high elevation suggestion: break RACA into units (5?) and begin devising a program to establish fire breaks, fire-fighting access and ways to deliver water (likely drawing from the Lower Peralta drain).

- ❖ **Meeting with Rio Communities City Manager Dr. Martin Moore:** On April the 23rd Dr. Moore paid his first visit to both Whitfield and the Rio Abajo Conservation Area, making comment that Whitfield's proximity with the City makes for natural partnerships. Andrew and Marty discussed common issues with providing recreational opportunities, with Marty sharing Rio Communities plans to rejuvenate several of their closed parks. The tour of RACA (which almost abuts the City's southwest corner) was super fun, with Marty emphasizing the opportunity to do something/almost anything exists at RACA, while we need to expect slow going re: fire prevention work, trail development, facility maintenance. We discussed how a public workshop later in 2021 would be ideal to have as the District forms its RACA management plan (and maybe the City might help with some of the (literally) +10,000 feet of obsolete horse-facility related pipe fencing). Finally, great to see Martin on the first day of our Earth Day celebration—thanks for coming Martin!

- ❖ **Meeting at Willie Chavez Park with City of Belen, Rio Communities and BEMP:** After the RACA visit, Marty and Andrew H. joined Belen City Manager Andrew Salas and Parks and Rec. Director Josh Kern and Rich Wagner from the Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program for a planning tour of this long closed Park that Mayor Cordova is pushing to reopen (through a phased approach). Great discussing on the process that needs to be followed on the eastern segment of the original Park, where the old playground is (sitting upon leased MRGCD land). Fire again was first topic, as MRGCD needs certain standards to be met for use of their lands (e.g., some perimeter of cleared/maintained buffer space around public use area). Lots of great interpretive opportunities, areas for informational kiosks. Happens that there's 4 near-by BEMP sites including the Crawford Site, an especially important one to the BEMP community. Andrew Salas said they're making good progress on the project, and Director Kerns was getting cost estimates refined for clearance, playground equipment, etc.

- ❖ **Meeting with MRGCD's Hydrologist Casey Ish:** On Thursday 5/6/21 Andrew met with Casey Ish, touring the Whitfield and RACA. This meeting had several impetuses, including advancing the MRG RCPP that the District has partnered with the Conservancy on. This meeting also allowed discussion of the water management and measurement efforts at Whitfield's (and its 11 watered areas), advancing MRGCD CEO's Mike Hamman kind offer of support at the April board meeting. Casey provided great insights on management options we can consider across the conservation area, including agreeing in general with our developing 2021 water conservation plan, but advising we at least hit our food plot (with Fall-2020 planted seeds) one good irrigation. We also touched upon the option of using a pump-out technique in the main WWCA pond, to rejuvenate the highly saline groundwater-sustained pond (and perhaps offer the salt-tolerant Salt Grass Meadow a mid-summer pulse of water). Casey emphasized we'll need to secure a powerful pumping & piping system, as groundwater will be refilling the pond 24/7 in 360 degrees. The tour of RACA was also eventful, as Casey hit topics that were reinforcing Kaib's input captured above. Great potential, but just to reduce fire danger is a project large in scope (best taken in slices). Casey has been in subsequent contact, asking for VSWCD to advance project ideas for the RCPP, which is due next month.

- ❖ **Meeting with Facebook’s David Williams (Allison and Andrew)**: David Williams (Facebook Los Lunas Data Center) reached out to the District, looking to take next steps in partnering activities between Facebook and the District. We will meet at Whitfield late morning May 15 with a report out to the Board next month.

- ❖ A reminder that last month Andrew’s fourth monthly column on the District and related natural-resource issues ran in the Valencia News Bulletin (22APR21 edition), entitled “Celebrating Earth Day: Home and Abroad”, featuring a quick review of a few cool ways other nations (Uganda and Italy) were celebrating Earth Day. The column then mostly turned to advertising Whitfield’s coming four-day event extravaganza: **Earth Day – Science Fiesta-City Nature Challenge: Silent Auction through the Friends of Whitfield**: As detailed above all the events were super successful, with a record 500 visitors, had over 10 partner organizations participating and our Friends captured a truly amazing \$4,185 in proceeds for their wonderfully successful first ever online auction (that ran April-1 to May-4). The District can’t express its appreciation for the Friends of Whitfield enough! So many good things to come from this!

- ❖ **EVUGP Notes**: On April 21, 2021 I (Andrew) presented to the Valencia County Commission, requesting that the VCC consider providing \$15k to fund the EVUGP Garden Keepers for the coming fiscal year. Unfortunately, our request was strongly denied even when the commission was reminded that the gardens were the county’s idea to begin with, and that the District had salvaged the underserved community-focused program to comply with a grant that had our names on it (Valencia County’s Jacobo Martinez asked us to perform strictly as a fiscal agent and they’d lead all other aspects of the garden project. Mr. Martinez took a new job within month of the grant being awarded, and the county refused to step up to their prior commitments upon his departure). The 2016 NACD grant was issued to VSWCD, and we therefore had some legal (and reputational) liability on defaulting a grant that the county had asked us to enter into. But, on first principle, our effort to develop the gardens and hire the coordinator was powered by the knowledge that trying to bring gardening and fresh produce to the food desert of the eastern foothills was the right thing to do in service to one of the District’s communities. So, five years later we respectfully come to the Commission asking their assistance to continue a community program that has grown into a success, but that largely run out of funds this year (the grant is timing out and the District cannot pay the full bill).
 - Nonetheless, our request was denied through a 5-0 motion introduced by Commissioner David Hyder, saying “There are maybe five people in each district in favor but probably 25,000 who aren’t”.
 - I contend that the Commission choose to ask overly broad questions and demand that I contradict the patently false claims made by NMSU’s Newt McCarty about our District’s budget (he said our annual budget is over \$500k while it is typically ~\$350k), as convenient back up for a decision already made.
 - For the (venting) record, back on 2-20-21 our Conservation Program Manager Lindsey Diaz made an informational presentation on the EVUGP project to the very same VCC commission members in preparation for my 4-21-21 place on the agenda requesting the \$15,000. Point being: the commission had ample opportunity to ask us any questions that they wanted to between February and April, but none came (even when I sent my draft presentation to our sponsor asking for input: crickets).

Respectfully submitted, Andrew Hautzinger, District Director

Education Manager's Report to the Board of Supervisors

Meeting Date: May 15th, at 9:00 am

April and May Updates:

Education Virtual and In Person Programs Update:

I got to visit the School of Dreams Academy 30 3-5th graders on April 18th for an hour-long animal habitat presentation. It was so nice to be back at the school!

Upcoming Summer Programs so far:

-Rio Rancho Library: July 12th Zoom Changing River Presentation

-July 27th and 28th Belen Summer Parks and Recreation Division

-Equity Grant youth weekly presentations at H2 Academic Solutions building starting June 23rd.

Dan Goodman Award Application Update:

The Dan Goodman Award Application is due May 15th and I will be doing a giant "push" (science teachers, principals, admin staff, counselors in Belen and Los Lunas High Schools) for applicants the week prior to the VSWCD Board meeting to get as many as I can apply! We will shortly be forming the committee with Board supervisors to review applications that come in.

Advertising and PR for Earth Day Science Fiesta and City Nature Challenge:

On Earth Day, April 22nd, I was able to be a part of the Valencia News Bulletin "Ask Me Anything" Facebook live event where they interviewed me about my programs and upcoming events. The event was an hour in length with some really great questions! If you want to see it, I believe you can visit their Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/valenciacountynewsbulletin>

I interviewed with KRQE a few days prior to the event. The interview can be viewed here:

<https://www.krqe.com/krqe-plus/community-reports/earth-day-science-fiesta-connecting-community-with-nature/>

I interviewed on April 30th with Belen Parks and Recreation Division about the event.

City Nature Challenge Hikes at Whitfield (April 30th thru May 3rd)

During the Earth Day Science Fiesta, we had two guided hikes scheduled each day for a total of 8 hikes. I had 43 people signed up for those hikes and many joined in that were already at the science fiesta. We had the MOST City Nature Challenge sightings in Valencia County! I have sent in photos to Fiana Shapiro, one of the leaders of the local challenge and also an educator with Sandia Mountain Natural History Center.

Picture of Whitfield Nature Sightings:



Earth Day Science Fiesta Event: (April 30th through May 3rd)

We had an awesome event! Thank you all so much who supported and were part of this event! We could not have pulled this off without you! I will be sending a video to all the organizations that participated for them to download that represents the event as well as an evaluation form. The total visitor count over the four days was 500! Friends' Board Member Linda Zaragoza has volunteered to write thank you's to all participating organizations on behalf of the Friends of Whitfield and the District.

I have generated an evaluation form for this event for our participating organization to fill out:

<https://forms.office.com/r/6JcPxZ4gey>

Friends of Whitfield Silent Auction Update:

The Friends of Whitfield Silent Auction was very successful. The final amount was \$3,685 which \$400 donated from Mike Mechenbier and \$100 donated from Joseph Moya, which then totals over \$4000. Great job everyone! If you have items you need to pick up still from the auction, we have everything available at Whitfield Thursday through Saturday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm. Linda Zaragoza and Frank Mazza mentioned doing an

evaluation of the online auction to discuss for future fundraisers.

Equity Grant Update:

I am working with Noelle to finalize dates and send out the registration forms for the 20 youth to apply for the grant opportunity. The date of June 16th is still the date we hope to start the grant with a visit to Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge or possibly starting at Whitfield. We still plan on a September planting. We have received all 60 waterboxes from AZ Trees Please Nursery and they are in the maintenance building. The first reporting of the grant is due in June. We have until the beginning of December 2021 to use the funds.

Nature Based Resource Grant Update: School of Dreams Academy Application Review

The School of Dreams Academy has requested \$1,000 under the Nature Based Resource Grant Opportunity to provide funding for a mounted Red-Tailed Hawk for educational research and lessons for students in grades K-12th. I am asking the Friends of Whitfield on May 8th Board Meeting to generate a check for the amount of \$1,000 made out to The School of Dreams Academy for: Nature Based Resource Grant. Once this is complete, I can give the school the check so they can work with Sevilleta NWR to get the bird mounted right away. Anyone that is interested can review the application, just let me know.

Proposal to the Friends of Whitfield on May 8th Board Meeting: Funds Needed to Support Bosque Ed Teacher Training at Whitfield Summer or Spring of 2022

I am excited to announce that I will be partnering with The Museum of Nature History and Science and the Rio Grande Nature Center to host the Bosque Ed Training for our local teachers in Belen Schools! The training will be focused on how to incorporate environmental education into daily curriculum through the Bosque Ed Guide. The other focus will be on how to incorporate my specific programs and the fieldtrips that the students take to Whitfield to enhance curriculum to support environmental education opportunities.

Molly Madden, former President and Friend of Whitfield, is currently writing a grant through Share with Wildlife to support this effort in hopes that the Friends of Whitfield can also match the funding for this workshop depending on how much they receive or do not receive. The following is a layout of the total amount for the Friends of Whitfield to support in this proposal:

The Target is 20 teachers for Belen Schools. This could be extended to Los Lunas Schools, too. Materials:

laminated materials that relate to the specific lessons in the Bosque Ed Guide and the lesson that I do with fourth graders: \$30.00 each for a total of \$600.00.

-Field Guides to the Bosque in support of the Bosque Ed. Guide: \$27 each for a total amount of \$540.

-Gift Certificates to purchase children's books to support and relate specifically to enhance lessons and understanding: \$30.00 each for a total of \$600.00

Food: \$300 catered for lunch and snacks for the day of the training

Stipends: \$100.00 for each teacher for a total of \$2,000.00

Total amount of in this proposal: \$4,040 for Bosque Ed Training Teacher Workshop for Summer/Spring of 2022

News Bulletin Articles:

There were two articles that came out in the Valencia News Bulletin to support our programs and events:

Article regarding EE in our community: http://www.news-bulletin.com/news/education/vswcd-education-manager-makes-environmental-ed-a-priority/article_5b48f04c-adde-11eb-a457-27efa96b2cb5.html?fbclid=IwAR1LP5MNuxYzJZ16uLsjZNI5s48jWDjo8J3FfujsaYHxVfDGgZxESQ7Iqdg

Article regarding the Earth Day Science Fiesta: http://www.news-bulletin.com/news/features/earth-day-science-fiesta/collection_da249de6-adf0-11eb-bbcb-d3215f21d1dd.html

Article regarding the Earth Day Science Fiesta: http://www.news-bulletin.com/news/features/earth-day-science-fiesta/collection_da249de6-adf0-11eb-bbcb-d3215f21d1dd.html

-Respectfully,

Allison Martin (Education Manager, VSWCD)

Some of the fun we had April 30th-May 3rd



VSWCD Board Meeting

5.15.21

Conservation Program Manager Report

Prepared by Lindsey Diaz, lindseydiaz@valenciaswcd.org

NRCS Wetland Reserve Program

After Lindsey has been working with NRCS these past few months to update reporting for the Wetland Reserve Program, we have been notified that NRCS will have some funding available to support Whitfield Main Unit over the next 2-3 year. Lindsey and Andrew are working out what projects can be funded and how much funding is available but will likely include non-native tree removal and planting of a greater diversity of native trees.

Next Generation Fund

EVUGP has been awarded \$30,000 through the Next Generation Fund to be used during the period of July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022. Lindsey wrote the grant in April for YDI to apply. The greatest development in this grant is that Garden Keepers become Garden Managers, with increased hourly wage, and take on many of the responsibilities Lindsey previously held – leading interns, leading volunteers, food donation distribution, selling produce, purchasing supplies, etc. The Education Intern will lead the upcoming Kids Program at the gardens. Supplies will include garden supplies and outreach supplies. The funds will be distributed as follows:

Line Item	Details	Contract Amount	Administrator
Personnel	Garden Manager (12 hrs/wk, 48 wks)	\$9,300	YDI
	Garden Manager (12 hrs/wk, 48 wks)	\$9,300	YDI
	Conservation Program Manager (.10 FTE)	\$4,900	VSWCD
Other	Student Education Intern Stipend	\$1,800	TBD
	Supplies	\$2,200	YDI
Administrative Overheard	YDI	\$2,500	YDI
	Total	\$30,000	

USDA NIFA Community Food Project Grant

Lindsey recently wrote a four-year proposal for \$163,050 for EVUGP and applied for the grant as YDI as the lead on May 4, 2021. The grant would cover similar to the Next Generation Fund contract with additional funds requested for travel for all positions, increased hours for the Garden Managers and \$2,500 annually towards a yearly professional-level agriculture or ranching related workshop led by VSWCD with a focus on conservation and/or regenerative practices. Projects completed would be: Internship Program, community garden volunteers and demonstration, Food Donation, Farmers Market, Kids Program, School Garden Network, Seed to Supper w/ Garden Kit incentive (English/Spanish), Beginner Farmer Workshops (English/Spanish), VSWCD-led professional sustainable or regenerative agriculture or ranching yearly workshop, establishing a functioning Community Advisory Board, and beginning a local farmer's coop with use of community center kitchen. A total of \$181,424 was identified as match to fund EVUGP over these four years through cash or in-kind donations with EVUGP partners: YDI, Valencia County Government, Valencia Community Action Network, volunteers and NMSU County Extension Services. EVUGP is a collaboration between these partners to deliver all programming and would not be possible without these partners.

YDI applied for and would administer the bulk of the grant funds. YDI will notify VSWCD of an award, and it is unknown when we will hear back.



Field Crew Report

To: VSWCD Board of Supervisors

By: Johnny Chavez

Title: Lead Field Worker

Date: 5/7/2021

General

As the days become more and more dry, Andrew and Johnny have been working together to see how the District could help save water. They have been looking into how much water Whitfield uses and seeing if there is an opportunity to save water here. Also, they are looking into ways on how to measure the output of water used at Whitfield. This might be done with the help with MRGCD as we continue to figure the water situation.

Whitfield Conservation Area Complex (WCAC):

1. Stacy Unity

- a. Stacy Unit is looking good. Work on the Southside of the property is still underway. There are a lot of old vegetation in the way for the new fence line and will continue to cut these down. Fence line project is slowly chugging along and will keep people in the loop with updates.
- b. Old scraps are still being worked on in this unit. There are materials that are buried but with the help with the front loader, should be a little bit easier. Will try to take as much material to recycling if possible.
- c. Fire break to the north of the property is being kept maintained. There are areas that need to be fixed as some areas still have old burned trees in the path of the fire break. This fire break is not a fail safe but more of a way to help the fire not jump to the other properties as fast as it did last time.

2. Whitfield

- a. Work behind the maintenance building is still being done with the old scraps from the previous cattle farm. There is a lot of recyclable material that will be taken, and some will need to be taken to the dump. Johnny Chavez wants to clean up this area so he can be more efficient with equipment and make more room for work/project items.
- b. As the days become more green, noxious weeds like Kochia (*Kochia scoparia*), pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*) which grows in the front of the conservation as you go down the ramp. This weed spreads fast and Johnny is going to make sure they do not go to seed. There is a lot of work do be done around Whitfield by itself, so Johnny Chavez is going to try his best to make sure his workload is hitting the right priorities.
- c. Going to work with MRGCD to get water measurements down so Johnny could start monitoring the impute that the conservation uses each year (Andrew met on-site with Casey Ish last Thursday).

3. RACA

- a. RACA is doing well for what it is. Kochia is continuing to take over the property, but at this point, not much Kochia is growing. This could be the combination of lack of rain fall and old Kochia that has been pushed down to the grown to be used as grown cover. This help prevent weeds from growing since sunlight is lessened.
- b. With all this fire fuel covering RACA, this area is still a high risk of fire and could lead to destruction of nearby homes and infiltration into the Middle Rio Grande (MRG)
- c. Work can be done to help prevent fire outbreak and fuel reduction. Talk in the past about working along with the local fire departments to have a burn day to get rid of these fuel piles. Johnny Chavez will also work on other ways that the District might not have to burn and use this organic matter in a more ecological meaning example (Bio reactor material).

Projects:

1. Community Garden Signes

- a. Johnny Chavez will be working on the frames for the new signs that Lindsey Diaz got for the gardens. He is going to be making the frames and putting the posts in the ground and make sure the signs are secure (working with VCANs Celestino L.).
- b. Bio Reactor kits are still being finished. With the Science Fiesta, the Bio Reactor kits had been put on hold and now I'll continue to finish.

Soil/Tools

- The tools for soil testing and compaction have come in. Johnny Chavez has already read up on how to use these tools and will be practicing with them so when they are needed, they would be working correctly. These tools will be used with the Soil Health Champions and they will be trained on how to use these tools either with NRCS or with Johnny Chavez. This is a good start at tool rental for the district.

Training

- Johnny took the Soil Health Basics for TPS's through NRCS on April 27-29. These classes were very informative, and Johnny Chavez has learned a lot from this online class. Johnny continues to go through the material they have provided him and will hopefully take the test in the next two weeks to become a TSP in soil health. More information will be provided next board meeting.
- Johnny is also taking a Monarch Essentials class that lasts 8 weeks. It falls on Wednesday's from 5:30pm to 7pm. This will help Johnny expand his knowledge on Monarch butterflies and their habitat. This class will start May 12th and will end June 30th.

Events

Earth day/Science Fiesta

- During the 4 days of the event, no major incidences happened. All went according to plan. Safety measures were taken to make sure everyone in and outside of the building where safe. Temporary fencing was put up in parking area so people would not drive into the event area and so people would not drive into the MRCGD ditch. Signage and banner were purchased for the event and where used on 47 to help people find Whitfield safely. Overall, the event was a success for the district, the districts partners and The Friends of Whitfield.