

June 19th, 2021 Regular Board Meeting

VSWCD Staff Report for the Board: List of Contents

- **Board Meeting Action Items (below, per agenda)**
- **District Director Monthly Report (Andrew Hautzinger)**
- **Business Manager Report (Amanda Carrasco)**
- **Education Manager Monthly Report (Allison Martin)**
- **Conservation Manager Monthly Report (Lindsey Diaz)**
- **Field Operations Monthly Report (Johnny Chavez)**

June 19th, 2021 VSWCD 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:** 5/15/2021 Regular Board Meeting;
- 3) Board Approval Sought** – Annual reappointment of Supervisors Richard Bonine and Sue Small;
- 4) Board Approval Sought – June 2021 Expenditure Report:** Board review and approval sought for the June 2021 VSWCD Budget Reconciliation ;
- 5) Board Approval Sought – Resolution #9-2021 Budget Adjustment for Final FY21:** Board review and approval sought for the FY21 Final Budget Adj. Resolution;
- 6) Board Discussion – Revising Board Meeting Stipends:** Per the NMDA May 2021 Report (Mechenbier), Board motion expected to comply with \$45 (or actual travel expenses) Board Meeting stipend policy;
- 7) Board Discussion** – Personnel Committee recommendations submitted for Board action affecting the Conservation Program Manager, Business Manager and Field Crew Leader positions.

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



District Director's Report for JUNE 2021
For the VSWCD Board of Supervisors' June 19, 2021 Regular Meeting

Director Updates & Activities

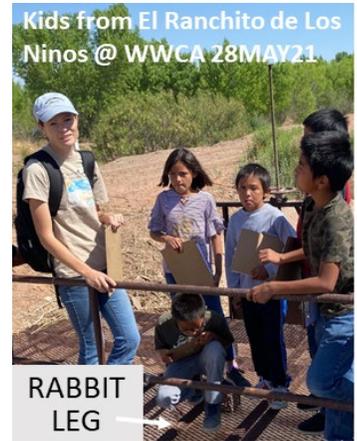
- ❖ **Operational Concerns:** Since the May board meeting, the heat has arrived and we see the drying out of certain areas within the complex, heightened fire danger and the emergence of seasonal weeds like pepper weed and the pervasive kochia pig weed. We continue to reduce our water use as we adapt our management in times of drought. We are making progress on maintenance items best done in the dry, hoping to have the east-west canal from the pump to the central wetlands cleaned and sculpted for efficiency of flow in the coming weeks. The public's use of our mulch has reduced a bit, but expected we still have several visitors a day getting free mulch (provided courtesy of Tree Experts, LLC, Belen NM).
 - **COVID-19 Update:** Effective May 19th, 2021, NM DOH changed Valencia County's designation from Green to Turquoise, which later in June became the color of the entire state. The District is reviewing these changes and will likely make operational adjustments soon. Our posted Covid -19 policy is:
 - OUTSIDE: Fully vaccinated people do NOT need to wear masks.
 - INSIDE: Fully vaccinated people do NOT need to wear masks, inside gatherings are limited (ask staff for details).
 - OUTSIDE & INSIDE: Children 12 years & older & adults who are NOT vaccinated should wear masks.
 - Of course, Vaccinated individuals may continue to wear masks, as they wish.
 - Social distancing and handwashing continue to be recommended.

- ❖ **Celebrating Lindsey Diaz's time with VSWCD:** With our colleague Lindsey's resignation from the District effective June 30th, we have arranged a celebratory potluck on Monday June 28th (Noon to 1 PM), to break bread with Lindsey as we wish her and her wonderful family Bon Voyage on the chapters ahead. Hope to see lots of folk at Whitfield to share recollections of her many contributions to the District and the communities we serve. Of special note is how Lindsey rose to be the EVUGP Champion, working with community members to grow these gardens into being true community assets.

- ❖ **Healthy Soils Update:** With building excitement, neat to note that VSWCD's focus on healthy soils continues to build momentum, with an expansion of partners and activities. At current count, Valencia has over 18 Soil Health Champs, joining similar concentration of lover of dirt in northern NM and around Las Cruces.
 - VSWCD is joining the Village of Los Ranchos Growing Healthy Soil Together Workshop, scheduled for June 19, 2021 from 10am to 3 PM. We are also working with local Soil Health Champs and partners in the NM Healthy Soil Working Group on a grant-funded post-event meal to discuss Seeding Regenerative Ag community groups and planning for soil health events later this year.
 - On May 25th, WWCA hosted a Mini Soil Health Workshop, led by NRCS's Soil Conservationist Gabriella Coughlin. Several local farmers / NMDA Healthy Soils Grant awardees and several of the VSWCD staff participated in this training, learning how to use new tools to make rapid soil health assessments.

- ❖ **Board of Supervisor SWCD Training:** sponsored by NMACD and NMDA. On Friday, June 11th, VSWCD participated in an excellent training session for Board Supervisors and SWCD staff, put on by NMACD's Linda and Troy Hood, and our partners at NMDA, including Katie Mechenbier. Troy mentioned that a recording of the Zoom training will be made available.

❖ **Visit to Whitfield: Children from El Ranchito de Los Ninos.** On Friday, May 28th Whitfield was graced with the visit of 15 kids from the nearby orphanage supported by Kathy and Mike Mechenbier. Allsion Martin provided a two-hour curriculum for the kids, walking the Whitfield trail and doing a nature-based scavenger hunt. In visiting with their program’s Co-Director Brian Thompson, it was clear the kids were engaged during their visit as they asked bright-eyed and insightful questions. One small disappointment was one of the boys introduced himself by saying “I’m here to see a grizzly bear”...best we could offer him was a rabbit leg a bird of prey left on the bridge over La Constancia Ditch (see picture). We at Whitfield are excited to arrange the next visit, and think we could forge a long-term partnership with the orphanage and the St. Mary’s School in Bellen (where all the kids attend).



- ❖ **MRG RCPP:** As mentioned in previous board meeting, happy to inform the board that MRGCD’s Casey Ish has submitted this RCPP, which we hope might bring resources to VSWCD (e.g., to address management of the complex lands, including fire assessment work and more water-resource infrastructure like a pump to help manage the Whitfield Pond). We expect to hear on awards in the next month or so.
- ❖ **EVUGP Notes:** With Lindsey’s near term departure, we are working with the two garden managers and Youth Development, Inc. (YDI) on transition issues...more soon on that. Meanwhile, while VSWCD’s 21APR21 request to the Valencia County Commission that the VCC consider providing \$15k to fund the EVUGP Garden Keepers for the coming fiscal year was not supported, reminding our Board of the good news that came two days later when our YDI partner Jack Siamu informed us that NM Children Youth and Families Department had awarded the EVUGP program with a Next Generation Fund. As Lindsey noted in her 5-15-2021 report to the board, these 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 Overhead	YDI	\$2,500	YDI
	Total	\$30,000	

❖ Finally, a reminder that it was only last month when the District and our many Friends and partners successfully pulled off a four day **Science Fiesta / Earth Day Celebration (April 30- May 3), including a Silent Auction through the Friends of Whitfield:** As detailed in last month’s staff report, the events were super successful, with a record 500 visitors, over 10 partner organizations participating and our Friends captured a truly amazing \$4,185 in proceeds for their wonderfully successful first ever online auction. Great achievement, spearheaded by our very own Allison Martin.

Respectfully submitted, Andrew Hautzinger, District Director



Amanda Carrasco
Business Manager Report
Monthly Report—June, 2021

As time is passing, I am learning the aspects of my job I realize there are many components of the Business Manager. I have learned a lot in the 7 months I have been an employee. I work a lot in Quick Books trying to clean things up and getting things precise. Everyday is a learning experience along with my regular duties. I am getting familiar with the reports and hope to utilize them in the future.

DFA have some additional training on June for Procurement and will attend 2 classes on Travel 101 and Purchasing Query. I look forward to learning additional ideas and protocols.

I worked with Teresa de Smith de Cherif on the minutes; it remains a work in progress. It still is a challenging task.

I enjoyed a meeting with Andrew and the Meadow Lake crew last week. They seem to be very good people to work with. I'm excited to be involved and take a part in this program.

Last but not least, I had the honor to be invited to attend a workshop for SWCD Supervisors. It was a great experience and Thank you Andrew for allowing me to attend.

Amanda Carrasco
Business Manager,
amandacarrasco@valenciaswcd.org



Education Manager's Report to the Board of Supervisors

Meeting Date: June 19th, 9:00 am

May & June Updates: End of the School Year stats

Education Virtual and In Person Programs Totals from January-May 2021

Schools Reached: Central Elementary School, Ann Parish Elementary School, Peralta Elementary School, Gil Sanchez Elementary School, H.T. Jaramillo Elementary School, La Merced Elementary School, Desert View Elementary School, Los Lunas Elementary School, Sundance Elementary School, School of Dreams Academy

How many students reached: 482 (That I have documented)

Education Video Views on YouTube via the Go Pro

Kindergarten: 71 views

First Grade: 50 views

Second Grade: 17 views

Third Grade: 13 views

Fourth Grade: Part 1: Rio Bravo 180 views

Part 2: Rio Nuevo 155 views

Part 3: Forest Health 78 views

Sixth Grade: 13 views

Home School Groups Eco Ed Series (6-12th) Partnership with El Ninos of New Mexico

Number of students: 6 programs, 13 students total

Ecology Program (4-5th grade) with Sandia Mountain Natural History Center

Number of students: 17

On site Visit: El Rancho de Los Ninos: 13 kids

Total students in all categories: 545 (includes 20 Equity Grant youth)

Upcoming Summer Programs:

I have two programs scheduled with Belen Recreation Center for June 29th and July 27th. Each will have about 50 participants in various grade levels, five presentations each day.

I have a presentation of the Changing River lesson on June 21st to 25 youth who are signed up with Nature Ninos Summer Program. We are meeting at Shady Lakes at 9:00 am.

I have a Rio Rancho virtual library Changing River's lesson on July 12th

Equity Grant Fieldtrips: June 23rd, 30th, July 7th, 21st, and August 28th.

Dan Goodman Award Application Update:

I have changed the application to reflect the new deadline of June 30th 2021. I have also updated our social media and website to reflect this information and have advertised it to individuals who are interested in applying.

Watershed Curriculum Update: Partnership with B.E.M.P. and Ciudad

Our group met on June 4th and discussed creating a roadmap to the benefit of our programs for all teachers in Albuquerque, Los Lunas, and Belen areas. We are creating a tri fold brochure to advertise our environmental education programs as a building block to each other and how each grade level can benefit and get involved as well as their direct alignment to the District teaching standards. We don't have a deadline for completion but hope to have at least a rough draft of this initiative by August 2021.

Fellowship Update: The fellows continue to host one meeting a month that is free and open to the public. The last meeting was to focus on Outdoor Classrooms and what they could look like. I was unable to attend this meeting that happened on June 10th, but will be getting the updates from EENM Director, Eileen Everett this month. We have our end of the month meeting on June 30th.

There has been an extension to June 30th to recruit 15 more fellows to join us for the remainder of the year. I plan on advertising this extension on our social media pages to recruit interested individuals. Please let me know if you need further information to help us advertise to get more fellows.

We are having a fellowship retreat on July 30, 31st and August 1st with the new fellows to discuss progress and future priorities in environmental education.

Pathway to Stewardship Project (Outdoor Equity Grant)

I am doing an outlined presentation for the students and their families of the 20 youth at Whitfield on June 16th at 6:00 pm. Please come if you can!

Items already purchased for the grant:

The Friends of Whitfield have supported this grant by the purchase of 25 water bottles with Friends' logo for a total of \$289.50. The water bottles arrived at my house on June 14th.

Other funds have been used to purchase food for Wednesday's presentation this week, 20 journals for each student and 20 Nature Guides for each student. 60 Water-boxes have already been purchased for the restoration planting day in August. The first fieldtrip is schedule for June 23rd at Whitfield at 10:00 am.

Nature Based Resource Grant Update: Total Funds Spent

This school year we had a total of four schools take advantage of this opportunity!

Funding provided to: School of Dreams Academy, H.T. Jaramillo Elementary School, Katherine Gallegos Elementary School, La Merced Elementary School

Total Funds Used: \$2,644,14

Total Funds Still to be Used for 2021-2022 School Year: \$6,107.86

Before the 2021-22 school year, I will advertise the remaining funding still available for this opportunity.

Meeting on American Rescue Plan Funding to be Delegated to Outdoor Classrooms to NMPED

On June 3rd, I attended a meeting with members of Environmental Education of New Mexico and New Mexico Out of School Network along with several members from the staff at the New Mexico Public Education Department to discuss and be a part of the proposal of designating some of these funds that are available (roughly 1.3 billion total available) to the schools to use how to best serve the students.

The following are our proposals to NMPED:

- An Outdoor Classroom at every New Mexico Public School. Cost: \$7 million (877 schools at an average cost of \$8,000/school)
- Outdoor Learning Coordinators spread throughout the state can greatly aid in the design, implementation, and use of outdoor classrooms. Cost: \$5 million annually (98 coordinators at \$50,000/coordinator and an Outdoor Learning Specialist at NMPED)
- An Outdoor Learning Micro-credentialing Program: Working with EENM and its broad community, develop an outdoor learning micro-credentialing program. EENM working with the outdoor and environmental education community can develop the content (e.g., standards-aligned outdoor learning, social and emotional learning in the outdoors, culturally responsive outdoor learning, risk management in the outdoors). Cost: \$200,000

Highlight:

-Designated funds have already been requested for a high school internship opportunity to recent graduates at every high school in New Mexico. I requested that the position add on an outdoor learning component for this position to help bridge the gap between outdoor and indoor learning at every school. One stop closer to fulfilling one of the above policies. There was discussion that my question would be looked into and discussed further to make this a possibility.

Friends of Whitfield Support to the Education Program

The Friends of Whitfield have supported \$4,040 for a Bosque Ed Training to be held at Whitfield in 2022. This will be a teacher workshop for Belen school teachers to also include our environmental education program we offer.

Friends of Whitfield Action item for July Board Meeting: Funds Needed to Support Bus Transportation for 2021-2022 School Year AND Education Assistant for 2021-2022 School Year (Action needed by July Board Meeting to Friends of Whitfield)

Bus Transportation for School Year 2021-2022

Total requested from the Friends of Whitfield: \$2500

Motion needed by: July Board Meeting

Hoping the schools will be able to take fieldtrips as normal for the school year 2021-2022, I would like to propose a total amount of \$2,500 to support the transportation of students to Whitfield. This is a lower amount than normal because we have word that through a grant obtained by Sandia Mountain Natural History Center through Facebook, the transportation will likely be covered for ALL fifth-grade students to visit Whitfield during the months of January and February of 2022.

Environmental Education Assistant Position

Total Requested from the Friends of Whitfield: \$10,500

Motion needed by: July Board Meeting

Job description is attached in the July Board Meeting information for your review.

I plan on attending the FWCA July Board meeting to discuss this position and look for a motion of approval.

Minnesota Trip: Vacation June 5th-12th

I enjoyed fishing, turtle racing, inner tubing, rafting, swimming and boat riding with my parents and children this last week. We had a great time and hope to go back next year! This was our first trip in well over a year!

-Respectfully,

Allison Martin (Education Manager, VSWCD)



Above photo from my recent visit to Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge as I plan the Equity Grant fieldtrip to focus on restoration work done.





VSWCD June 2021 Board Meeting Conservation Program Manager Report – June 12, 2021

Whitfield Conservation Area Complex

Soil Health Workshop

Andrew and NRCS Soil Conservationist led a soil healthy workshop to teach some basic methods for testing one's soils. The tests are specifically needed for the NMDA Healthy Soils Awardees, but we had others in attendance as well.

Crop Field

The cover crop seed that was planted last fall is not coming up as well as it should be. In meeting with local farmer Kirsten Coueves, who drill seeded the cover crop and has years of experience with this, we were not able to determine a reason for this. The seed was planted late, but should have sprouted in the spring. The bind weed has gotten extremely competitive on one half of the field, so that could be part of it. It's unlikely the seed was eaten, as it was drilled into the soil. Since we are nit irrigating as much this year we will wait to reseed again.

NRCS Funding

Last year's efforts to update management plans, NRCS reports and create a new CUA were not in vain. NRCS has identified funding for Whitfield Main Unit to remove invasive trees and plant native trees. Andrew, Lindsey and Johnny are creating a proposal for NRCS to review. Wonderful news!

District-wide Projects

Financial Assistance Program

Lindsey is completing organization and revisions to the FA Program. Lindsey has completed a compilation of all awards since the beginning of the program and all review documents for FY21. As well as revising/updating the FY22 applications and all forms for the programs for better efficiency next with less staff. All files have been organized and consolidated into one folder from what was before multiple folders.

July 19 Soil Health Workshop

NRCS has reserved 25 spaces for Valencia County folks to attend an in-person workshop on July 19 at the Agri-Nature Center of Los Ranchos from 10am – 3pm. Lindsey will attend and share with attendees about Valencia County's success with signing up Soil Healthy Champions.

IRSA

Lindsey reviewed the June IRSA meeting. It focused on 'next-steps' for IRSA. There will be a document compiling everything learned and will be an effective management tool for landowners on the Isleta Reach and attendees brainstormed what IRSA's future role could be.



East Valencia Urban Gardens Program

Community Gardens

Garden Keepers are recently promoted to Garden Managers to take over some of Lindsey's responsibilities. Lindsey is helping them as they transition to this role. They will lead intern groups, the donation program, volunteers and maintenance. Volunteer days are Fridays 8am – 10am at each garden and they need more volunteers. If the Board can share this info with people they know that would be helpful in getting the word out better. There has been an East Valencia Urban Gardens Program Facebook page since 2016 – if a Board Member is on Facebook, please 'like' this page and share events if you could. Thanks!

Intern groups are almost full, there are 2 more spaces available at the ECM garden.

EVUGP recently received \$30,000 in funds for the next Fiscal year (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022) from the CYFD Next Generation Fund. YDI is administering the grant and it pays for 10% of the CPM's salary (or towards a VSWCD employee who works on the program). It also pays for the Garden Manager's wages, an Education Intern to work on the Kids Gardening Program for 12 weeks and supplies. YDI recently informed VSWCD that this grant may extend for 4 years, or at least be available for a 4-year period next year. Our proposal was one of 9 (or so) selected out of around 150 applicants and one thing we know is that CYFD liked EVUGP's partnership between organizations.

Approximately 100 fruit and native trees and shrubs have been planted this spring within or around the two gardens. Gardens are beginning to harvest early crops now.

Lindsey is putting together a binder for Garden Managers to keep track of management of the gardens that will include planting and maintenance guidelines and timelines and record keeping spreadsheets for harvested veggies, volunteer hours, intern hours, veggies sold, and maintenance decisions.

EVUGP Management

With Lindsey's resignation and the Garden Keepers promoted to Garden Managers, management will change this next fiscal year. VSWCD and YDI will share leadership and we will have a meeting later in June to meet with other partners and identify roles and responsibilities as well as project long-term goals. Lindsey, Andrew and Jack have now met twice in order to identify how to manage grants efficiently and make this transition. Lindsey is preparing documents for Andrew and Jack that shares info about the program – partners with contacts, roles and responsibilities, processes, and grant deliverables, etc.

Other

Lindsey is organizing files and documents to prepare for her departure working with VSWCD, so that it will be a smooth transition.

Field Crew Report

To: VSWCD Board of Supervisors

By: Johnny Chavez

Title: Lead Field Worker

Date: 6/10/2021

General

Invasive weeds and hard woody vegetation have started to populate. Johnny Chavez has started to mow down the perennial pepper weed (*Lepidium latifolium L.*). This weed mostly grows in the center of the conservation area at Whitfield. Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila L.*) is also regrowing in areas where the field crew had cut during the winter. Chavez is researching better ways to control elms. Chavez took some annual leave from the 29th of May to the 5th of June. He returned back to work on the 8th.

Volunteer Work

Chavez has been talking with the District Director on how we might get some more volunteer work done around the complex. Chavez could use some help with determining how this was done in the past at Whitfield and how outreach for volunteer work can be done.

Volunteer work helps connect the people to their community. It is shown that volunteer work helps people connect and have ownership when helping clean up parks or roadsides. Getting a more frequent volunteer group can and will help the district get more outreach and a better connection with the community.

Partner Connection

On the 9th of June, Chavez got with Valencia County's Wildland Captain Rob Barr to discuss some of the work that needs to be done with the fire department. In the past, the wildland firefighters have teamed with the district on different projects or training events. One of these training events is the annual burning of the slash pile at Whitfield. This pile gets gathered by the field crew to help mitigate the fuel around the complex.

-June 26, 2021: Chavez was able to set up a time with the Captain Barr to run a training with the slash pile. The firefighters will arrive at the visitor center at 0830, have a briefing at 0900, then a prep and start ignition of the slash pile at 1000. Chavez also talked to the Rio Grande Estates Fire and Rescue in Rio Communities to participate in the training.

RACA was also talked about since there is a higher risk of fire outbreak. Chavez took Captain Barr to the location and talked about how the district and the fire department might be able to clear out the fuel on the ground. Most of the fuel is dead kosha (*Kochia scoparia*) and Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*) that could spread fast and into the Rio Grande.

You will see the plan in figure 1 below. Captain Barr and Chavez came up with a prep plan. Chavez will work on the fuel mitigation. Wildland Fire department and the Rio Grande Estates Fire and Rescue will most likely be participating in this project as well. We might bring in more local fire departments for fire control. Time on this has not been set and will be continued in the later months.

Chavez also talked to Captain Barr on GIS maps. Barr would like some new maps that are PDF geo-referenced so they could use them out in the field. Barr would give Chavez the shapefiles that they have so these maps could be created. Chavez will conduct these maps on his own time at home, but will be using the districts GIS software. Maps will be provided in next board meeting if maps are finished.

Operations and Organization

Chavez continues to organize his work flow with the reduced staff capacity, balancing the workflow as best as he can. Vegetation control at Whitfield is going well and work at Stacy Unit is also slowly continuing. Talking with the District Director on what might have to be dropped as we lose staff capacity. Chavez is continuing to work through some tough choices on projects and will expect any feedback on how to mitigate workflow.

Maintenance is a big priority for Chavez because preventative maintenance will help save time and money for the district. This includes work associated with conservation, buildings, vehicles, and tools. The more uptime the better for the field crew and district.

Learning Soils

In May, we were able to get a soils specialist from NRCS and some of our soil health champions to Whitfield for a mini soil assessment workshop. Chavez was able to learn more about soil and how to test with the new tools the district has bought. Chavez bought a book recommended by the NRCS soil specialist so he could continue to learn more. Continuation of these types of learning opportunities will be good for the district and for the community.

WFA

Chavez had taken a Wildland First Aid training (WFA) back in 2019. His certification will be ending this year has been talking to the instructor on upcoming re-certifications. Chavez will keep District Director in the loop on upcoming training.

Chavez has also looked into CPR for the District. Chavez has talked to the District Director on this and it could be a good opportunity to get local community or other agencies involved. The instructor will come down to Whitfield for free but everyone will need to pay a fee. Further information will come over the months.

State SWCD ID's

In May, the district got an email about state id's for employees. Before I left for my vacation, I contacted them to see how we might go through the process of acquiring these ids. This is still in the process but hopefully the staff will have their State SWCD ids soon.

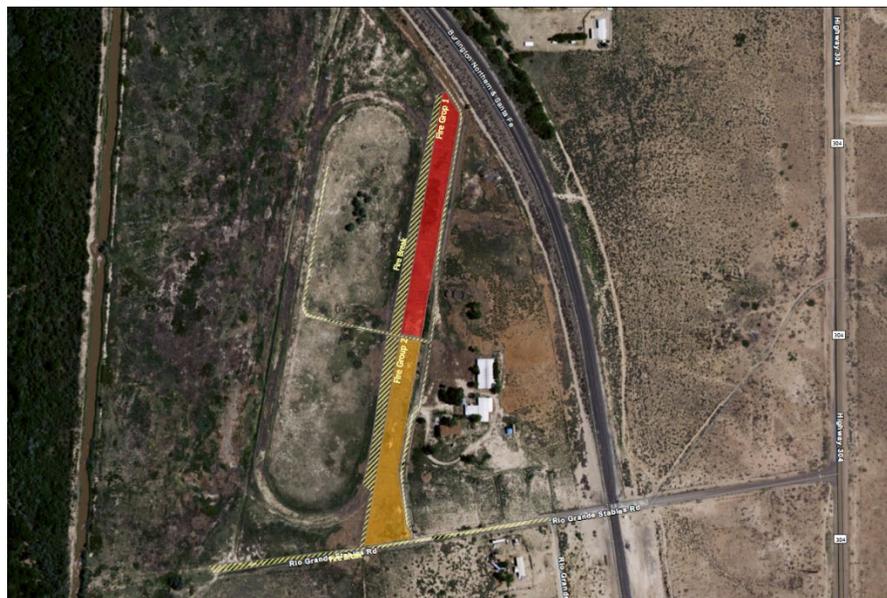


Figure 1 Fire Plan at RACA