

October 16th, 2021 Regular Board Meeting

VSWCD Staff Report for the Board: List of Contents

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- **Field Operations Lead Monthly Report (n/a--vacant)**

October 16th, 2021 VSWCD Board Meeting *Expected Action Items: (in order of appearance on Agenda)

- **Verify quorum, pledge of allegiance, current meeting agenda review with changes & approval**
- **Past Meeting Minute Approval:** 9/18/2021 Regular Board Meeting;
- **Business Managed Mayor r Position:** Board discussion of incumbent's recent resignation, to need to refill and provide interim support to meet DFA reporting requirements;
- **District IT Proposal:** Review and possible approval of IT improvements;
- **Whitfield Committee Update and Stacy Unit Proposal:** Including review and possible approval of proposal to have limited grazing on Stacy Unit.
- **Budget & Accounting:** 1) Review & Approval of September-2021 expenditures; 2) Review & Approval Resolution of DFA FY22 1st Quarter Report; 3) Review & Approval of contract to secure facilitation services from Rosemary Romero (RACA Town Hall Public outreach); 4) James L. Hartogenesis CPA LLC-- Contract for FY21-24 AUP Audit Services (NM Office of State Auditor)
- **Informational – Partner Reports (NMDA and NRCS) and Correspondence, including:**
 - Cover Cropping/Microbial Inoculations Soil Field Day Event: October 14th: 9:30 AM to 11:30 PM @ Sublime Farms followed by free SRA Lunch At WWCA (see EVENT FLYER)
 - Friends of Whitfield Fall Newsletter (Dolores Varella Phillip's last newsletter)
 - Rio Grande Ag. Land Trust—Silent Auction flyer
 - Proclamation of Support of VSWCD by the Rio Communities City Council and Mayor
 - Passing of Bill Brown (1939-2021), RC Councilor

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

District Director's Report for October 2021

For the VSWCD Board of Supervisors' October 16th, 2021 Regular Monthly Meeting

Director Updates & Activities:

With the arrival of fall, the district staff find themselves awash in transitions, seeing the Whitfield Complex's leaves turn to golds and reds, newly arrived sandhill cranes overhead, with 10/6/21 marking the 1st sighting of the year. Work on the conservation area also is shifting from growing-season driven tasks (cutting of the ubiquitous kochia), to tasks better done in the winter (e.g., improving our water delivery and holding system through Johnny's sculpting these dirt works with the tractor). We are queuing up

Transition is also upon us as our district team continues to evolve and change. 10/6/21 also marked the day our teammate Amanda Carrasco's resignation was effective. Her good-bye letter is below. She was a positive and friendly teammate, and will really be missed. We will discuss the refilling of this vital position during the board meeting.

Staying in the HR arena, we are super pleased to welcome Zion Martinez onto the team. Zion comes to us through the support of our key partner Youth Development Incorporated, and our YDI Liaison Monique Marquez, who will work with us during Zion's time with us. YDI fully funds the position up to 350 hours of service. Conservation Program Manager Johnny Chavez will be Zion's direct supervisor, with Ms. Marquez visiting the work site on a weekly basis. We have another active intern prospect that Education Manager Allison Martin is pursuing through collaboration with LLHS; we hope to have good news on that front soon. Rounding the corner, this District Director also wants to commend Allison and Johnny on the growth both of them are exhibiting for lots of reasons, but of specific mention as relates to their supervisory journeys. Both Allison and Johnny are new supervisors, and are providing Natalie and Zion (respectively) the support and guidance direct reports need, especially important in the initial stages of the intern/work experience.

Meanwhile, *as detailed in the pages to follow*, the past month has been chock full of activities pushing, nudging, enticing the mission forward. Here's a few highlights:

- ✂ September 27th and October 12th: Rio Communities City Council Meeting Attendance. VSWCD rep's attended and presented at these two administrative meeting of our directly proximate municipal neighbor. At the 9/27/21 council meeting, we introduced ourselves and shared details about our many community service. We were invited back for the 10/12/21 council meeting to witness the Council and Mayor Pro Tem execute a proclamation acclaiming the many areas where VSWCD's work advances the interests of the City of Rio Communities and her citizens.
 - ❖ The proclamation mentions that approximately over 400 students from Rio Communities are annually provided hands-on environmental education at either their school or at the WWCA outdoor classroom, all in service and support of New Mexico's Next Generation Science Standards.
 - ❖ The proclamation goes on to note how Whitfield has become a premier wildlife viewing destination, recently attracting 75+ visitors and their ecotourism dollars to Rio Communities during the district's recent **Get Outdoors Day!** public event;
 - ❖ After reading of the proclamation, each of the four council members shared supportive comments about the district's work and its alignment with priorities of the city. We agreed to have further dialog soon, focused on the advancement of a hoped-for 2021 Town Hall concerning the future of the RACA property. Rio Communities would logically be a natural partner in standing up such a public meeting, given the city's direct proximity to the RACA unit and its strong interest in providing recreational opportunities to its community members.
- ✂ Whitfield Committee Meeting: On Friday, October 1st, 2021 the Whitfield Committee meet, including Abel

(committee chair), Teresa, Sue, Johnny and myself. We caught up on the recent activities throughout the complex's three units:

- ❖ RACA conversations included the need to continue weekly visits to the property (per the August theft we witnessed), and then turned to preparing for a town hall as noted above. We are looking to secure the services of a professional facilitator, Rosemary Romero, to maximize the effectiveness of this public outreach. It will be great to see momentum gather on this project (i.e., management roadmap).
- ❖ WWCA discussions were centered on setting priorities to guide our small staff during this transition period (seasonal shifts as well as with Johnny shifting to meet his CPM responsibilities).
- ❖ The Stacy Unit was discussed at some length, given considerations of the tall stand of Alkali Sacaton grasses that will pose some fire danger concerns later in the year (as we all recall the 2019 Iron Works Fire that jumped the Rio and burned Stacy and other neighbors in our La Constancia neighborhood). Speaking of these neighbors, the committee discussed meeting the need to reduce fire likelihood through a partnership with our direct neighbor to the north, Annette Garcia (Baca) who might have five of her horses graze the area. Johnny prepared an analysis documents and a proposed grazing agreement / terms and conditions for Board review (drafts to be made available soon) that could have limited grazing on Stacy (e.g., 30-day one-time only occurrence).
 - This Stacy conversation further led to looking to coordinate with the all our proximate neighbors, on topics like fencing, fire, egress and coordination on conservation work (noting that several of these neighbors are participating in our financial assistance program). More to come.
- ✧ Financial Assistance Committee: As folk might recall, the application window for our *FA Standard Conservation Project* proposals closed 9/30/21. We received seven SCP proposals which will be ranked by the committee (process that will kick off during 10/21/21 FA committee mtg.)—we expect the Board will be presented award recommendations by the 11-20-21 Board meeting (or 12/18/21 meeting at latest).
 - ❖ Meanwhile, 9/30/21 also marked the day when approved Stand-Alone Practice proposals reach the \$10,000 in available annual funding. Since July1, we have received (and approved) 7 Stand-Alone proposals, largely to fund hoop houses and bio-reactors kits.
- ✧ East Valencia Urban Gardens Program: The two EVUGP community gardens at Meadow Lake and El Cerro Mission continue to thrive under the watchful eye of our valued team members Nohelia Cervantes and Ofelia Jimenez, who manage the Meadow Lake and El Cerro Mission gardens respectively. CPM Chavez is providing as much help as he can (e.g., making a near full switch out of ECM's irrigation system this month), while we continue to work with our key partner YDI and NM CYFD on the details of the Next Gen contract YDI was awarded to support the EVUGP.
- ✧ Adaptation Planning and Practices Course for the Rio Grande Basin. CPM Chavez and myself are both signed up for this course, having now attended the first 2 sessions of a 7 session weekly course. Great course designed to take real world projects and apply a well developed methodology that charts the impacts of climate on a project's viability, letting each student do the hard intellectual work of framing solid goals and objectives (e.g., using SMART principles). CPM Chavez and I are working together with the specific resource concern being fire management at the Rio Abajo Conservation Area. The course is all the more applicable to us as it is a great primer on the Rio Grande Basin Study, which is a monumental effort currently happening (district is in a support role to USBR lead) to capture the river basins supply and demand in balances in the face of predicted hotter and drier basin conditions.

Aspiring to be an effective agent of community-based services,

Andrew (VSWCD District Director)

Business Manager Monthly Report for October 16, 2021

After almost a year of being on the District Team, our colleague Amanda Carrasco tendered her resignation, effective October, 6, 2021. She leaves the District better than she found it; her wonderful attitude and friendly demeanor will be much missed. Andrew

October 6, 2021

Dear Board Chair, Officers and Supervisors:

I wanted to extend my gratitude for giving me the opportunity in being the first Business Manager of VSWCD. It was a pleasure serving and working in this position. Thank you for your patience with me growing in this position. I have learned a lot and will be able to use it in my future endeavors. As always thank you for all you do for our community. I hope my replacement will learn and grow as I have. (And maybe even a love for butterflies).



Best wishes,

Amanda Carrasco

VSWCD's 1st Business Manager

amandacarrasco@valenciaswcd.org

Education Manager's Report to the Board of Supervisors

Meeting Date: October 16th, 9:00 AM

September and October Updates:

School Programs

-Students and families from third grade classes at HT Jaramillo Elementary School visited Whitfield on September 22nd. This program had a total of 65 students and 23 parents. Robin VerEecke volunteered that day and lead a class around Whitfield. A great time was had by all and the students created thank you cards and pictures that same afternoon!

-Natalie and Allison visited one kindergarten class from Peralta Elementary School on September 28th. These students visited Whitfield on October 4th. Natalie led the activities at Whitfield and did a great job! This program had a total of 16 students and 11 parents.

-Allison and Natalie did mock interviews with 6 Los Lunas High School students who are part of a program that is supervised by internship coordinator and teacher, Chris O'Conner. This was a great experience with the students, which led to a connection with one of them who became interested in working with the education program!



Programs Coming Up:

-Allison had a meeting at Whitfield with Chris on Wednesday, October 6th to develop a framework and presentation outline for career day at Valencia High School that will serve 400 students on October 19th. Allison and Natalie will present a ten-minute presentation to the students and include a nature journal classroom activity that will highlight the career path to work for a Soil and Water Conservation District while discussing some of the work that happens in our District.

-Allison and Natalie will be visiting 40 PreK students at Coral Community Charter School on October 14th. The students will come down with their families to Whitfield on October 15th.

Nature Based Resource Grant New Applicant: Gil Sanchez, Second Grade Classes; Pollinator Garden Materials

-Allison has received a new application that will support 2 second grade classes from Gil Sanchez Elementary School. The materials that will be purchased will help with developing and implementation of a pollinator garden at the school in direct benefit for the students. As of October 6th, Allison has purchased most of the materials to support this garden and is continuing to receive packages. The teachers will be notified when everything has arrived. All purchased have gone through the Friends of Whitfield.

Total Amount Purchased (as of October 6th): \$761.59

Teacher Workshops for 2022 Planning

-Allison is working with Molly Madden (BEMP and the Rio Grande Nature Center) and Teri Wimborne (Leader at the Belen Partnership Organization) to plan for two teacher workshops in summer of 2022. One will be focused on the Bosque Ed Training Guide and the other will be focused on finding the barriers in the public education department to help incorporate new opportunities for teachers to get outside and create curriculum. The Friends of Whitfield are supporting the Bosque Ed Training Workshop. Thank you!!!

New Students Working with Us: Zion and Meadows

There are two new students who will be working with Allison and Johnny. One has already started and is

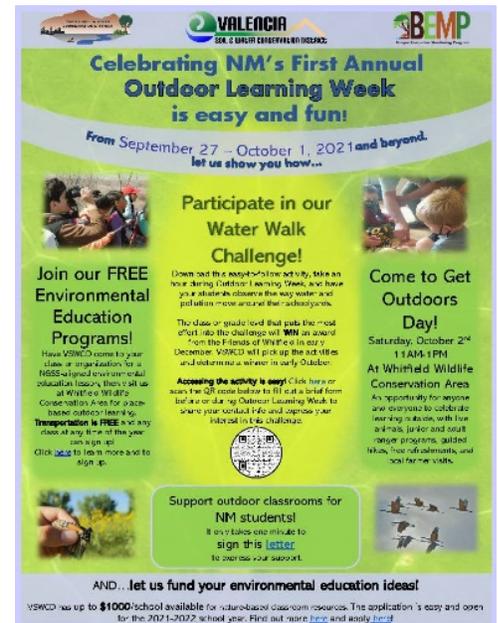
working with Johnny helping with maintenance and projects at Whitfield. His name is Zion. He is a senior at Los Lunas High School. Zion is being paid through YDI during his time with the District. The other student, Meadow, is interested in working alongside Allison and Natalie to be involved in the education program. Meadow will not be going through YDI and, instead, work directly as a volunteer intern. Meadow will be starting as early as mid-October and will spend the majority of her time here observing and participating in education programs and events.

Outdoor Learning Week Activity: (September 27th thru October 1st)

-Allison and Natalie launched a fun outdoor activity to all local schools during Outdoor Learning Week. Three local teachers and five teachers total responded. Natalie has reached out to those teachers to pick up the activities. Allison has a follow up scheduled meeting with B.E.M.P. and Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District on October 13th to discuss the reflection of this activity and the future collaborative project to expand and combine our school program offerings.

Outdoor Day at Whitfield: Saturday, October 2nd

-This was a great day with a great turnout of around 75 people. Rocket Punch Farm, Sublime Pastures, The Friends of Whitfield, Master Naturalists: Ted Hodoba and Jeannine Kimble, and Herpetologist, Jerry Tuttle all had activities at Whitfield. This event was a great highlight that represents the important work that we do, and also is a great way to bring the community together. Please enjoy the short video to represent some of the great fun we had that day: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QWjn5dtTlo>



Fellowship and EENM (Environmental Education of New Mexico) Updates including Auction Donation

-Allison is putting together an online auction to support EENM. We are accepting anything new and gently used to help strengthen the importance of connecting with the environment. If you have any items that represent outdoor learning or nature, please bring them to me at Whitfield by November 5th.
 -Allison attended a fellowship meeting on September 29th and presented to the fellows the work her and Natalie put together for Outdoor Learning Week for Valencia County schools. Allison received very positive feedback from the group and a congratulations for the huge effort that was created to get local students outside in a fun, engaging way.

Facebook Community Action Grant: To Support a Farm to Table Camp in Summer 2022

-Allison is asking the Friends of Whitfield to support a grant that, if awarded, will be funded directly to the Friends of Whitfield, in support of a Farm to Table Camp that is being planned by us and several local farmers and partner agencies for 20 5th-7th graders that reside in Valencia County. The camp will incorporate healthy soil principles and learning at Whitfield as well as healthy food knowledge and activities at various farms. We plan on seeking funding from a few grant sources, but this grant needs to go through a 501 C 3.

Education Committee Meeting: October 21st

-Allison has a scheduled Education Committee Meeting to discuss current and future programs, presentations, workshops and events with Supervisors Joseph Moya and Gail Goodman on Thursday, October 21st at 2 PM

Natalie's Reflections:

Outdoor Learning Week

- A demonstration of how an idea can be quickly turned into a reality, as only a few weeks before OLW began we still had to reach out to teachers but we didn't let this timeline deter us from pursuing this opportunity to show teachers how easy outdoor learning can be.

Get Outdoors Day

- Shows how important it is to have a strong network and show up for community members, as we had a lot of support from the community in both "presenters" and visitors
- Not only was this a really fun day, but it was also an opportunity to meet so many community members, including Friends (of Whitfield), board members, and folks from near and far who are excited about Whitfield and getting outdoors.
- A huge takeaway from this event is how worthwhile it is to take the time to gather community together, especially in celebration of something that aligns with our mission and the work that we do.

Farm to Table Camp

- This camp is a really exciting intersection of VSWCD's agricultural and EE work, as well as a partnership between us, local farmers, and other community organizations.
- This was a big agenda item from the past few weeks, we've been making great headway on pursuing funding (grants) and cementing our vision of what this 2022 summer camp might look like.
 - I worked on one grant from America Walks that was small (\$1500), had an approaching deadline (two days out), and not super relevant to our camp. This was good practice in not getting too committed to a grant that we are not very competitive for, and it was a helpful activity for really imagining what the camp might look like.
- Facebook Community Action grant
 - This grant *is* one that we'd like to be really competitive for, and it has us thinking about how we can, without sacrificing the goals and mission of the camp, integrate more technology and outreach into the camp's structure.
 - Amelia of Rocket Punch Farms helped us to brainstorm ideas on incorporating more cooking technology into the camp, and helped us think in detail about what a day on her farm might look like.
 - This grant also shows how important it is to have community connections - not only did we have Amelia to call on for ideas, but Allison also sought out the advice of David Williams, the local community development manager at Facebook, who encouraged us to scale up the reach of the camp.

Class Visits

- Visit with kindergarteners at Peralta elementary
 - Another illustration of how teachers who already interested in EE are maybe more likely to pursue our programs. Ms. Ila had already been showing students images of Whitfield in class, and she asked for pictures from Whitfield that students could print out to put in their nature journals!
- Visit to Los Lunas High School for mock interviews in Chris O'Connors internship class/program.
 - This was my first instance of working with older students, and of working with students in a less EE-focused environment.
 - It was amazing to see how committed these students were to creating opportunities in their futures, and how many of them showed excitement for the work that we are doing at VSWCD.

Whitfield Visits

- Peralta Elementary kindergarten class (so much fun!!)
 - Allison and I determined that this would be my first attempt at doing more program-leading, rather than just watching and learning from Allison.

- We decided that I would introduce all of the activities and then she would be my back-up and follow up with ideas/concepts that I had missed. This generally worked well, with my greatest hiccup being not always being able to get the students' attention (parents, teachers, and, of course, Allison all had lots of tips and tricks that I'll work on next time). Focus on for next time:
- Translating ideas/concepts to a kindergarten level. I felt competent in facilitating observation of/engagement with the natural world, but need to practice turning observations into lessons.
- Attention-getting tricks, quiet-down methods
- Time management! More planning ahead...

Respectfully,
Allison Martin (Education Manager, VSWCD)



-Allison's son, Sam, and his classmates listening intently to Herpetologist Entertainer Jerry Tuttle as he talks about the different reptiles, insects, and birds he has on display (or on Allison's shoulders 😊).





Conservation Program Manager Report

Prepared by Johnny Chavez, johnnychavez@valenicawcd.org

VSWCD BOS Monthly Meeting – 10/16/2021

District-Wide Programs

Partnerships

Johnny Chavez continues to work with partners around the district. He has been contacting other organizations like Quivira Coalition for understanding and information on range land/ grazing. Rex Reilly is also another potential partner. He is wanting to create a 501 ©3 that will help local fire delegation in Valencia County. More information on this will be given next BOS meeting in November.

District Director Andrew Hautzinger and Chavez has been working with one of the neighbors on the northside of Stacy Unit. Annette Garcia, one of our neighbors due north of Stacy, is the point of contact for this proposal that will be put forth to the Board of Supervisors. Garcia wants to be able to graze Stacy Unit, and with fire danger at Stacy starting to build up again, letting Garcia graze for 1 month could help out the district and Garcia at the same time. Not much from the district will be needed beside monitoring (once fence repair is done). Chavez wrote up two documents in preparation for the board (one being an analysis of the action and a draft land use agreement with terms and conditions).

Habitat Council

District Director and Chavez met up with the Habitat Council in Albuquerque at the Open Space site known as Candelaria Nature Preserve. This was a great way to see how other organizations are using conservation and restoration around New Mexico and get insight on how we could do that same, or share information with them to help their restoration. The next Habitat council site visit will be at the Whitfield Conservation Area Complex, on the 28th of October. Chavez and the District Director will show the other Habitat Council participants Whitfield, Stacy Unit, and the Rio Abajo Conservation Area. This will help use teach and also be taught on what we can do and what we might want to do in the future.

YDI

Zion has joined the field crew on the 5 of October, working closely with the YDI Site Liaison Monique Marquez. He is starting to help Chavez out on the conservation area doing grounds maintenance. This will help increase work production for the district.

EVUGP

Work continues at the gardens, but volunteers would be greatly appreciated by the Garden Managers. Chavez continues to go up to the gardens when he has a chance and volunteers his time on Mondays to go up and do some work that is needed. Chavez is continuing to make sure the Garden Managers are heard and looked after as he tries to balance his work load. The Gardens are looking well and transitioning into fall/winter crop for the coming cold weather. Both Gardens have already planted their fall crop. Chavez is working on the drip irrigation system at El Cerro since the expansion of the gardens. Hopefully soon he will finish so the Garden Manager will be able to move on to other things rather watering each plant individually, opening up their work load for more important tasks.

Whitfield Conservation Area Complex

WWCA

As the season starts to shift, work at Whitfield will continue. During the colder months when most of the vegetation is dormant, Chavez will start to work on cutting down invasive woody vegetation. There are areas that Chavez has already set up for work zones in the conservation area. This work will continue thought the winter.

RACA

Continue work at RACA is being done on weed control and on providing an on-site presence at least once a week.

Education

Chavez is reading about grazing and ranch land to better understand the techniques and measurements of performing sustainable conservation.