

Forest and Watershed Restoration Act (FAWRA) Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
May 27, 2020
DRAFT

1. Call to Order

A virtual WebEx meeting of the Forest and Watershed Restoration Act (FAWRA) Advisory Board (Board) was called to order at 9:00 a.m. on May 27, 2020 and presided over by Laura McCarthy, State Forester, Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), Forestry Division.

- **Board Members and Delegates Present**

Laura McCarthy, State Forester, EMNRD, Forestry Division, FAWRA Chair
Lucia Sanchez, Water Planning, Office of the State Engineer
Mark Myers, Forester, State Land Office
Abe Franklin, Environment Department, Surface Water Quality Bureau
Rebecca Roose, Environment Department
Stewart Liley, Chief of Wildlife, Department of Game and Fish
Randy Varela, Deputy Fire Marshal, Fire Marshal's Office, Fire Service Support
Kathy Holian, Public Member
Steve Hernandez, Public Member
Brent Racher, Public Member

- **Board Members Absent**

Mark Roper, Division Director, Economic Development Department

- **Invited Federal Agencies Present**

Elaine Kohrman, Deputy Regional Forester, US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service
Kristen Graham Chavez, Programs Director, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Tim Spisak, Acting State Director, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) New Mexico
Lisa Bye, Fuels Specialist, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) New Mexico

2. Welcome

Laura McCarthy, State Forester and FAWRA Chair, recognized the Board, public members, and guests. Board members, non-voting participants, and members of the public introduced themselves via round robin.

3. Board Business

Approval of Agenda

Rebecca Roose moved to approve the agenda and Stewart Liley seconded the motion. The meeting agenda for May 27, 2020 was unanimously approved.

Set Term for Chair and Hold Election

Kathy Holian moved to approve a two-year term for the FAWRA Advisory Board Chair position and to extend current Chair, Laura McCarthy, through a second year. Brent Racher seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Approval of Open Meetings Act Resolution

Rebecca Roose moved to approve the Open Meetings Act Resolution for 2020, which was seconded by Steve Hernandez. The Open Meetings Act Resolution was unanimously approved.

Approval of Minutes

Stewart Liley moved to approve the minutes of the November 13, 2019 FAWRA Advisory Board meeting, which was seconded by Kathy Holian. The minutes were unanimously approved.

4. Update on Mexican Spotted Owl (MSO) Injunction, COVID-19 Impacts, and Fiscal Outlook

Laura McCarthy provided an update on the impacts of the MSO injunction and COVID-19, which are ongoing simultaneously. Laura explained that the MSO injunction is still in place as of today, May 27, 2020, and this continues to have a significant impact on projects. The EMNRD Forestry Division is performing multiple projects, many with the help of local landowners, in order to assist the local wood industry and rural economies during the MSO injunction. Although the natural resource extraction industry has been deemed “essential,” the COVID-19 pandemic is also affecting workers and slowing work down. As for fiscal impacts, the Forestry Division will not know until the June 2020 Special Session of the New Mexico Legislature whether or not FAWRA FY21 funding will be available.

5. Status of FY20 Projects

Andrew Frederick provided an update on the status of FY20 projects as follows:

- Red Cabin 2019 No Name Springs #1
 - Under contract, work is ongoing
- Turkey Mountain Watershed Restoration
 - Under contract, work is ongoing
- Zuni Mountain Bluewater Phase I
 - Under contract, work is ongoing
- Santa Clara Creek Wetland Restoration & Rx Burn
 - Under contract, work is ongoing
- Small Diameter Wood Products in Taos
 - Under contract, project is ongoing
- Encino Vista Landscape Restoration Planning
 - Seeking Request for Proposals (RFP) for arch surveys, expect to implement in FY21
- Gallinas Watershed Restoration Phase 5
 - On hold due to MSO injunction
 - Working toward implementation in FY21
- Northside- Rio Hondo Corridor
 - VTSV does not have water rights so Northside cancelled; Rio Hondo Corridor is in MSO habitat
 - Working toward implementation in FY21

Abe Franklin asked if the Santa Clara Creek Project originally included a prescribed burn in the plan. Laura explained that the prescribed burn was added to the project with capital funding for watershed restoration and while we have the work under one contract it was only included in the handout for information.

Kathy Holian asked if board members can see the projects in person. Laura and Andrew said yes, field trips can be planned with COVID-19 guidelines in place possibly in August 2020.

Caleb Stotts, member of the public and Executive Director of the Chama Peak Land Alliance, asked why water rights were necessary for the Northside-Rio Hondo Corridor project to proceed. Laura and Cimarron District Forester Arnie Friedt responded (Arnie via chat) that to comply with the anti-donation clause of New Mexico's Constitution, the general public must benefit from the project and not just the landowner. The Northside project was designed to protect forest surrounding a spring on private land that is considered a water source for the Village of Taos Ski Valley. However, since the Village does not hold the water rights to the spring, that component of the project cannot move forward. The Rio Hondo Corridor component will still be viable if and when the MSO injunction is lifted.

6. Recap of Scoring and Spreadsheet

Forestry Division Forest and Watershed Health Coordinator Susan Rich presented information on FY21 project scoring and criteria. Andrew Frederick suggested sending project maps to the board, which they agreed would be helpful in scoring projects. Scores are to be submitted by June 19, 2020.

7. Project Presentations (11 total)

Bernalillo District Forester Todd Haines presented four projects to the FAWRA Advisory Board for FY21 funding consideration.

- Rio Grande Bosque Project
 - Amount requested: \$135,000
 - Proposed acreage: invasive plant removal along Albuquerque reach of Rio Grande Bosque and its tributaries.
- Pueblo of Sandia Rio Grande Bosque Restoration
 - Amount requested: \$55,000
 - Proposed acreage: treatment of invasive plants (grasses/trees) along Rio Grande Bosque
- Zuni Bluewater Landscape Restoration
 - Amount requested: \$300,000
 - Proposed acreage: 4,500 over next 10 years
- Zuni Puerco Landscape Restoration
 - Amount requested: \$200,000
 - Proposed acreage: 4,500 over next 10 years

Kathy Holian asked how many acres could be done with \$300,000 on the Zuni Bluewater Collaborative Forest Restoration Landscape Program (CFLRP) project. Todd replied 300 acres. Kathy also asked why there is no federal funding. Todd replied that the CFLRP project and funding are all on public land. Laura also said that additional capital or other federal funds could be added to the FAWRA Zuni Bluewater project, and that would mean the project could be completed in fewer than 10 years.

Brent Racher asked about the number of New Mexico residents will be employed by the Zuni Landscape Project. Todd answered that five of the 30 workers currently on the project are NM residents and all mill workers are local.

Socorro District Forester Jack Dickey presented three projects for FY21 funding consideration. Additional presenters supporting the projects: Zebb Andrews, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for Chupadera Mesa project; Gina Dello Russo, Save Our Bosque Task Force (SOBTF) for Escondida Wildlife

Management Area Fuels Reduction project; and Sarah Anderson, (SOBTF) for Conceptual Restoration Plan Update.

- Chupadera Mesa
 - Amount requested: \$270,000
 - Proposed acreage: 3,467 (including RX of 2,700 acres)
- Escondida Wildlife Management Area Fuels Reduction Project (NM Game & Fish Land)
 - Amount requested: \$204,969
 - Proposed acreage: 106
- Save Our Bosque Task Force (SOBTF) Conceptual Restoration Plan (CRP) Update Phase II
 - Amount requested: \$158,895
 - Proposed acreage: planning project

Kathy Holian, Brent Racher, and Mark Myers had multiple questions for the BLM representative for the Chupadera Mesa project, including how many local residents it will employ; whether or not this is more than a one-year project; and whether or not there are plans to manage grazing before and after the project.

Zebb replied approximately 20 locals will be hired for mastication and thinning; he clarified that Chupadera Mesa is a multi-year project; and there are plans for grazing management.

Laura pointed out the small number of acres for the Escondida project, and Gina replied that the river has altered course allowing the reestablishment of invasive tamarisk (trees and shrubs) in the area in need of treatment.

Regarding the Conceptual Restoration Plan (CRP) Update Phase II, Steve asked Sarah what a prior Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) grant was used for, which Sarah replied was put toward planning for Phase I. Sarah said SOBTF is also requesting additional BOR funding for this phase.

Chama District Forester Mary Stuever presented two projects for FY21 funding consideration. Additional presenters supporting the projects: Jessica Johnson, Cebolla/Nutrias Watershed Group for Cebolla-Nutrias Watersheds Forest Fuels Project; and Caleb Stotts, Chama Peak Land Alliance for Rio Chama Landscape Forest Management Plan.

- Cebolla-Nutrias Watersheds Forest Fuels Project
 - Amount requested: \$250,000
 - Proposed acreage: 200
- Rio Chama Landscape Forest Management Plan
 - Amount requested: \$158,150
 - Proposed acreage: planning project

Laura asked Mary if FAWRA funding is used for the Cebolla-Nutrias project, is she prepared to do title work, and Mary replied yes. Cheryl Bada voiced concerns about the small number of acres, Mary replied that this is a historic area for land grant families and landowners are committed to the long-term. Mary says her district is planning to go after a full 2,000 acres on federal and private land in the area over the next 12 years. Laura said if this project is funded, there must be a commitment to 2,000 acres over 10 years due to New Mexico's anti-donation clause.

Cheryl asked if there is a contract out for the proposed website for the Rio Chama Landscape Forest Management Plan. Mary replied that there is a contract out and this would not be a Forestry Division website, it includes partners who can also host it but it's not necessary.

Steve pointed out that for him, the Rio Chama Landscape Forest Management Plan is harder to score because "we don't know how many potential acres there are."

Cimarron District Forester Arnie Friedt presented one project for FY21 funding consideration. Additional presenter supporting project: Mark Myers, Forester for the NM State Land Office (SLO).

- New Mexico State Trust Lands Elk Ridge FAWRA
 - Amount requested: \$400,000
 - Proposed acreage: 250

Kathy Holian asked if locals will be employed for the Elk Ridge project, Mark Myers replied that local contractors will be used.

Brent Racher asked Mark about commitment of SLO funds. Mark replied that Elk Ridge has several project areas and the SLO has made substantial investments in adjacent project areas.

Las Vegas District Forester Shannon Atencio presented one project for FY21 funding consideration.

- Turkey Mountain Watershed Restoration -Continuing Status
 - Amount requested: \$300,000 annually for 10 years
 - Proposed acreage: 4,500

No questions from the Board on this project.

8. Timelines and Final Comments

Kathy Holian asked who the Board can direct comments to if they have questions. Laura responded that questions can be directed to her or Andrew Frederick by email.

Rebecca Roose asked for a follow up on setting a meeting date as discussed in the WebEx chat. Laura proposed June 26, 2020 as the next meeting date. Stewart Liley motioned to accept the date of June 26, 2020, which was seconded by Kathy Holian. The board unanimously voted to hold the next meeting virtually on Friday, June 26, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. via Zoom.

9. Adjournment

Steve Hernandez moved to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Kathy Holian. The Board unanimously voted to adjourn.

Minutes submitted by: Wendy Mason

Approved by: Laura McCarthy