

Forest and Watershed Restoration Act (FAWRA) Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

October 6, 2020

1. Call to Order

A virtual Zoom meeting of the FAWRA Advisory Board (Board) was called to order at 9:00 a.m. on October 6, 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
Mark Myers, Forester, State Land Office (SLO)
Stewart Liley, Chief of Wildlife, Department of Game and Fish (DGF)
Julie Valdez, Office of the State Engineer (OSE)
Lucia Sanchez, Interstate Stream Commission (ISC)
Rebecca Roose, Environment Department (ED)
Abe Franklin, Office of the State Engineer (ED)
Kathy Holian, Public Member
Steve Hernandez, Public Member

- **Board Members Absent**

Mark Roper, Division Director, Economic Development Department
Randy Varela, Deputy Fire Marshal, Fire Marshal's Office, Fire Service Support
Brent Racher, Public Member

- **Invited Federal Agencies Present**

Steve Wells, Acting State Director, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Kris Graham Chavez, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

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

Lucia Sanchez moved to approve the agenda and Kathy Holian seconded the motion. The meeting agenda for October 6, 2020, was unanimously approved.

Approval of Minutes

Steve Hernandez moved to approve the minutes of the June 26, 2020 Board meeting, and Rebecca Roose seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

4. State Forester's Update

Laura McCarthy provided a Forestry Division update on three main topics, including the [Forest Action Plan](#), priority maps, and potential prescribed fire legislation in the 2021 New Mexico Legislative Session.

- Forest Action Plan (FAP) – Laura shared two maps via PowerPoint showing the risk of fire to watersheds and statewide priorities.
 - Fire Risk Map – considerations for the map included watersheds that are in active use for irrigation, municipal water supply, or mutual domestic water systems either in the watershed or downstream. Colored portions of the map highlight these important water sources. Reservoirs are not shown as physical features, but they are included in the composite for the risk to water supplies and used in the ranking for the priority watersheds.
 - Statewide All Priorities Map – shows three different values at risk -- water sources, communities/structures, and biodiversity, which is a combination of wildlife, fisheries, and rare plants.
 - There are more than 3,000 HUC 12 watersheds in the state (local, sub-level watershed) and 1,500 forested watersheds. The FAP prioritizes the top 500 watersheds.
- Laura pointed out that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Chupadera Mesa project was not considered for FAWRA funding last year primarily because it didn't fall within the priorities as they were defined in the 2010 Forest Action Plan.
 - Link to the Forest Action Plan and interactive map components are available at <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SFD/statewideassessment.html>. Laura suggested anyone considering or preparing a project proposal should use the priority map to show that the project is important to New Mexico.
 - The Forest Action Plan is centered around ten strategies: Restore Forests and Watersheds; Fire Management; Private Lands Stewardship; Utility Rights of Way; Rare Plants; Reforestation; Urban and Community Forestry; Land Conservation; and Outdoor Recreation.

Laura provided an update on two current projects underway in the Zuni Mountains and Turkey Mountains. Kathy Holian and Steve Wells requested copies of the slides, which will be posted to the Forestry Division Website. Steve Wells also asked how much money goes to the administrative side of projects and how much goes on the ground. Andrew Frederick explained that with a lot of our state funds 100% of the funding goes to work on the ground. We do not charge salaries, and while there are some title search costs with FAWRA they may only add up to a few thousand dollars.

5. Discuss FY22 Guidelines

The Board discussed numerous suggestions and edits for the FY22 Guidelines. The draft document was shared live on screen so that the Board and the viewing public could see the edits in track changes in real time. Steve Hernandez moved to adopt the edits to the FY22 Guidelines and Mark Myers seconded the motion. The FY22 Guidelines were approved unanimously with the changes as marked.

6. Reschedule Field Trip

The planned September field trip to the Zuni Mountains that was cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions was rescheduled for July of 2021.

7. Other Business

Laura explained to the Board that there could be some action items from a recent report presented to the Governor and the Legislature on prescribed fire in the state that could end up in the 2021 Legislative Session. One possibility is a “Prescribed Fire Act” that could address major issues that were raised in the report, including liability for prescribed burns, which is not currently addressed in state law, and setting a standard for ignition permitting.

8. Next Steps and Next Meeting Date

Laura McCarthy reviewed the next steps, including accepting the FY22 Guideline changes by October 13, 2020, creating a PDF of the slides shown during today’s meeting and posting them online, preparing the meeting minutes, and planning for a tentative field trip to the Zuni Mountains in July 2021.

9. Adjournment

Rebecca Roose moved to adjourn the meeting. Steve Hernandez seconded the motion. The Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting. The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for April 16, 2021.

Minutes submitted by: Wendy Mason

Approved by: Laura McCarthy