



Upper Chama Soil & Water Conservation District

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2022-2023 Annual Report of Accomplishments



GOVERNING BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Norman Vigil – Chairman

Agapito Candelaria – Vice Chairman

Horace Leyba – Secretary/Treasurer

Eloy Olivas – Supervisor

Paul Cordova – Supervisor

MISSION

The Upper Chama Soil and Water Conservation District promotes stewardship of natural resources by providing leadership, education, technical and cost-sharing assistance to landowners/users with the district.

STAFF

Becky Martinez, Business Manager

Kenneth Baca, Program Manager

Gary Mora, Conservation Technician

BOARD MEETINGS

Regular Meetings every 2nd Tuesday of the month at 3:00 pm

Location: District Office in Tierra Amarilla, NM

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Financial & Technical Assistance Programs

- The District continued to cost-share in the amount of \$15,000 towards the Northern New Mexico Cooperative Weed Management Area program. The program offers technical, financial and educational assistance in addressing the Invasive weed resource concern. Equipment and cost share assistance is offered to the landowners in order to address ***Invasive Weed Management***.
- The District in conjunction with the East Rio Arriba SWCD, sponsored a **Noxious Weed Meeting** at the Abiquiu Event Center inviting local, state, county and federal officials to develop a collaborative approach to address our weed infestation.
- Under the District's **CWMA** program:
 - Chairman Norman Vigil, Supervisor Eloy Olivas and Program Manager Kenneth Baca attended monthly CWMA meetings at the Rio Arriba Events Center throughout the fiscal year.
 - Chairman Norman Vigil met with Lucia Sanchez, Rio Arriba County Manager and Napoleon Garcia, Rio Arriba County Public Works Administrator, to educate and engage the County regarding the District's CWMA program.
 - Program Manager Kenneth Baca attended a CWMA workshop.
 - The District contracted work for spraying in an area along the Colorado border on New Mexico State Trust Land for various thistles, chicory, Russian knapweed, willows and mustard. As of June 30, 2023 approximately 120 acres have been sprayed and another 50+ acres are planned to be sprayed by mid-July.
- The District continued to cost-share with landowners for **Water Development Improvements, Forestry Management Practices, Brush Management and Erosion Control** through the funding obtained from the SWCC and RCSI RCPP.
- The District has an **Equipment/Implement Rental Program** for all landowners. The landowner provides seed, fuel and general daily maintenance of equipment/implements. The District provides the equipment to the landowners for 3 days with a maintenance fee and deposit fee which is refundable once equipment is returned. This year over 20 landowners utilized the equipment.
- The District continued to provide **Water Management Funding for Acequia Infrastructure Repairs** through the established Acequia program. Each request is reviewed and funding is determined according to need. Acequia projects must be a group governed by a board and must contribute in-kind or monetary cost-share. Acequias are also encouraged to apply for funding through NMACD Statewide Acequia RCPP, ISC construction program and NRCS. Individual projects are also considered on irrigation needs. The individual may use the funds provided for materials or technical assistance.
 - The District provided Acequia program guidelines to applicants.
 - The District provided monetary assistance from our Conservation Projects (Acequias) fund to Julian Herrera for Acequia de La Plaza Blanca, Landowner Genevieve Cordova, and Landowner Paul Cordova.

Grants

- The District applied for the SWCC Appropriation Funding and was awarded \$750,000. The program, **Building Resiliency in the Upper Rio Chama Watershed**, was initiated in June and the objectives are: a) Restore and build forest resiliency to deal with drought and catastrophic fires as the highest priority with adjacency as a key approach. The high fuel and drought

conditions have posed a health and safety issue for residents within the district and downstream. Hazardous Fuel Reduction will minimize the flooding and erosion impacts during the intense storms, reduce the intensity of wildfire, and reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfires, and b) Implement watershed rehabilitation to provide ecosystems benefits for livestock, wildlife, fisheries, acequias and erosion control. Taking a holistic approach toward watershed management will improve fish and wildlife habitat, water availability for wildlife and livestock, erosion control, and provide for the continuance of our cultural acequias.

- The District is partnering with the **NM Water Resources Research Institute** on the Canjilon Creek Hydrologic Project funded through the NMED River Stewardship Program; application was submitted and received funding from the SWCC. Connie Maxwell, PhD and the USCSWCD will lead the efforts in this project.
- The District submitted a proposal to the **2023 WTB** but appears that funding was not provided.
- The District submitted a proposal for the **2023 WUI** with the State Forestry but we were unsuccessful.

Partnerships

- Partnership with **East Rio Arriba SWCD** continues for the **Northern New Mexico CWMA Program**. The District is responsible for the chairmanship and the ERASWCD is the fiscal agent. It is the District's desire to keep this partnership active and positive in order to address the needs of all landowners with noxious weeds. Both Noxious Weeds Coordinators work together to make public the program. Over 300 acres were addressed this year. The program was once again approved for a grant this year.
- The partnership with **New Mexico State Forestry** has provided financial and technical assistance to private landowners through the use to NFL funds. The District and NMSF are continuously looking for opportunities to improve and sustain our watersheds.
- The District maintains a Memorandum of Agreement with **NRCS**. The major assistance available from the District is technical/financial assistance provided by NRCS programs and delivered by their staff. Mr. David Griego, District Conservationist, and staff report at our monthly regular board meetings.
- The partnership with **ERASWCD** and numerous other agencies, non-profit and organizations continue to provide funding for private landowners and public land leases to implement on ground conservation practices on forest, range, and irrigated lands in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado through the Rio Chama/San Juan RCPP. The District was involved with initiating the NM Acequia Rehabilitation RCPP in 2014 and subsequently totaling \$7.1 million. As a multi-partner the District's role was outreach to encourage and initiate Acequias interested in applying for financial funding and technical assistance. Applications were accepted at the District Office. Two applications were funded within the District and construction initiated in the spring of 2021 and completion was in the fall of 2022.
- The District has been actively involved with the **Carson National Forest** in developing the 10 year forest revision plan. The District attended and participated in the forest revision plan for the Carson National Forest as a cooperating agency.
- Chairman Norman Vigil participated in the **2-3-2 USDA Collaborative Group** (Colorado and New Mexico) in the executive group meetings and working group meetings throughout the year and on a monthly basis.
- The District partnered with East Rio Arriba SWCD and housed college student Estella Gomez, who was hired by East Rio Arriba for their **Youth Conservation Corps (YCC)** summer program.

- The District is a key partner in the **RCPP** implementation in both Colorado and New Mexico providing input throughout the year.
 - Chairman Norman Vigil had a call with Jefferson City from Colorado about RCPP program in March to share thoughts and lessons learned from New Mexico “alternative funding arrangement” for RCPP.
- The District paid dues to **NMACD** and **NACD** during the FY 22-23.
- The District continues its partnership with **Chama Peak Land Alliance (CPLA)**. The District has worked closely with this partnership to identify priority areas for forest treatment. CPLA and the District have developed a program to provide firewood to seniors and needy families in the Chama Valley. The joint effort has provided over 80 cords this past year.
 - Vice-Chairman Agapito Candelaria met with Brittany Ference, VISTA Intern, to discuss how the UCSWCD and CPLA collaborated on the Firewood for Senior Citizens program; a 2 minute video was posted on the CPLA website.



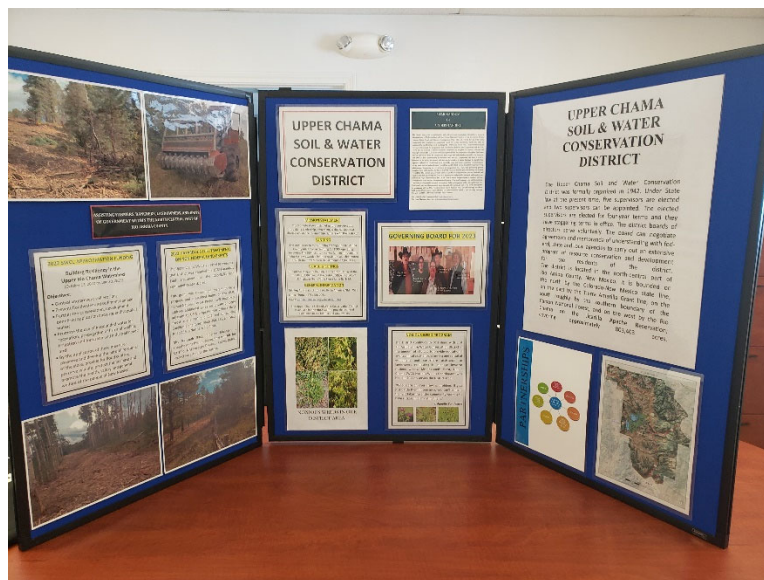
Fire Prevention

- **Building Resiliency in the Upper Rio Chama Watershed Program**, the District will...
 - Restore and build forest resiliency to deal with drought and catastrophic fires as the highest priority with adjacency as a key approach. The high fuel and drought conditions have posed a health and safety issue for residents within the district and downstream. Hazardous Fuel Reduction will minimize the flooding and erosion impacts during the intense storms, reduce the intensity of wildfire, and reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfires, and
 - Implement watershed rehabilitation to provide ecosystems benefits for livestock, wildlife, fisheries, acequias and erosion control. Taking a holistic approach toward watershed management will improve fish and wildlife habitat, water availability for wildlife and livestock, erosion control, and provide for the continuance of our cultural acequias.
- The District applied for in conjunction with Joe Carrillo, State Forestry, for the 2022 Hazardous Fuels Mitigation Projects in Wildland Urban Interface Areas (**WUI**) grant. We would have

served as the fiscal agent but we were not awarded any funding. The District will continue to apply in the future.

Education and Outreach

- District Chairman Norman Vigil and Supervisor Eloy Olivas attended all **CWMA** meetings throughout the fiscal year. Upper Chama SWCD chairs the CWMA and East Rio Arriba SWCD is the fiscal agent.
- Sec/Treasurer Horace Leyba attended the monthly **NMDA** meetings held throughout out the fiscal year.
- Chairman Norman Vigil and District Forester Joe Carrillo participated in a **Water Trust Board (WTB)** meeting and met with their partner, the NM Forestry Division in October.
- Chairman Norman Vigil and Vice Chairman Agapito Candelaria attended the **Rio Chama Congresso** on April 29 at the Rural Event Center in Abiquiu. They made a presentation on our forest thinning projects and the collaborative efforts with NM State Forestry, Rio Chama Watershed Group, Chama Peak Land Alliance, Trout Unlimited and San Juan Rio Chama Watershed group.
- The District attended and participated in the **Team 3 Local Work Group** meeting in Abiquiu.
- Vice-Chairman Agapito Candelaria and Sec/Treasurer Horace Leyba are participating in the **Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D)** which is a program led by local volunteer councils that help people care for and protect their natural resources in way that improves the local economy, environment and living standards.
- Chairman Norman Vigil, Vice-Chairman Agapito Candelaria, and Sec/Treasurer Horace Leyba attended the **Soil & Water Conservation Day** at the **Legislature** in February.



- Vice-Chairman Agapito Candelaria met with **Representative Joseph Sanchez** about potential projects he is willing to assist the Upper Chama SWCD with and has extended his community assistance with our lobbying efforts for capital outlay for the upcoming legislative session.
- Chairman Norman Vigil met with **Senator Leo Jaramillo, Representative Susanna Herrera and Commissioner Moises Morales** about our awarded Capital Outlay funds.
- The District reached out to our local high school, Escalante High, to see if any students would be interested in attending the **NM Youth Ranch Management Camp** and we would pay their registration fee.
- Chairman Norman Vigil attended an **Open Meetings Act Training**.

- The District allowed **CPLA** to utilize our facility to sponsor a workshop on *Why and How to Build Barn Owl Nesting Boxes*.
- The District rented office space to Kathy McKim, Coordinating Wildlife Biologist for **Pheasants Forever**.
- District Chairman Norman Vigil and Sec/Treasurer Horace Leyba attended monthly **NMACD** meetings throughout the fiscal year.
 - Horace Leyba, NMACD Vice-Chairman, attended NMACD Region II meetings throughout the fiscal year.
 - Chairman Norman Vigil, Vice-Chairman Agapito Candelaria and Sec/Treasurer Horace Leyba attended the **NMACD 76th Annual Conference** in Albuquerque November 7-9.
 - Vice-Chairman Agapito Candelaria received the 2022 District Supervisor Certification Training on November 7.
 - The District held the **NMACD Region II Meeting** on July 18 at the Canjilon Community Center. Presentations were made by Upper Chama SWCD-Norman Vigil, Chairman, East Rio Arriba SWCD-Marcos Valdez, District Manager, NM State Forestry-Joe Carrillo, RC&D Council-Peter Vigil, CPLA-Caleb Stotts, and NMED River Stewardship Program-Dr. Connie Maxwell.



- The District provided a monetary donation to the **Envirothon**.
- The District provided a monetary donation to the **2023 Rio Arriba County Fair Association** to assist with the 4-H program and another donation was made to those participants who made the County sale.



- Chairman Norman Vigil and Vice-Chairman Agapito Candelaria attended a **Water Association Training** via Zoom.
- Chairman Norman Vigil attended a training/meeting organization by the **DFA**.
- Chairman Norman Vigil and Secretary/Treasurer Horace Leyba attended the **Soil Health Field Day** on May 26 at Charlie Hibner's ranch; Chairman Vigil made a presentation.
- Business Manager Becky Martinez attended the **2022 DFA/LGD Virtual Budget Conference** in November.
- The students from Escalante High School participating in the **Conservation Writing Summer Program** were invited and recognized at a monthly meeting.
- The District signed up with Dr. David DuBois, PhD NMSU, State Climatologist, to set up a **Weather Station**; recruited landowner John Sena and the Canjilon Ranger District.



Training

- Chairman Norman Vigil attended a training on **How to Submit Congressional Direct Funding Request** with Governor Michelle Lujan-Grisham and Senator Martin Heinrich.
- Chairman Norman Vigil attended a national webinar for the US Forest Service with the **Grazing Permeates and the Tribes**.
- The District participated in the virtual meetings for the **San Juan Rio Chama Watershed** group, and attended and participated in the Rio Chama Watershed group virtual and on site meeting.
- Vice-Chairman Agapito Candelaria completed the **2022 District Supervisor Certification Training** at the NMACD 76th Annual Conference in November
- Chairman Norman Vigil and Supervisor Paul Cordova attended a **Local Outreach Acequia meeting** in January.

- Chairman Norman Vigil participated in the **2-3-2 USDA** collaborative group (Colorado and New Mexico) in the executive group meetings and working group meetings throughout the fiscal year on a monthly basis.
- The District was a key partner in the **RCPP** implementation in both Colorado and New Mexico providing input throughout the year.
- Chairman, Norman Vigil, attended, participated and provided input, as outlined in the District's long range plan, to the **Forest Revision Plan** for the Carson National Forest as a cooperating agency.

Personnel

- The District has a **part-time program manager** who is responsible for the Noxious Weed Program, coordination with the NMSF NFL and WUI programs and small acequia projects.
- The District has a **part-time business manager** who is responsible for all reports due to DFA, SWCC, NMDA and all business transactions and operation of the office.
- The District hired a **part-time Conservation Technician** who will assist with the implementation of programs, equipment maintenance, landscape maintenance, snow plowing, equipment rental and other miscellaneous tasks.
- The District hired a **Contract Program Manager** to oversee the Building Resiliency in the Upper Rio Chama Watershed Program funded through SWCC.