

**ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF MANAGERS
OF SPECIAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT #3
OF THE RIO GRANDE WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
March 6, 2025 at 8:00 a.m.
8805 Independence Way, Alamosa, CO 81101
And By Zoom/Teleconference**

Present: LeRoy Salazar, President; Nathan Coombs, Vice-President/Secretary/Treasurer; Sam Vance, Manager; Warren Crowther, Manager; Doug Bagwell, Manager; Ruben Sandoval, Manager; and, Elliott Salazar, Ex-Officio Member.

Staff and Consultants: Pete Ampe, Hill & Robbins, P.C; Angelo Bellah, Program Manager; Quinton Norris, Program Manager; Rose Vanderpool, Program Assistant; Linda Ramirez, Program Assistant; Wylie Keller, Water Resource Specialist; Kylie Gregg, Office Manager; Michael Carson, Database Administrator; Clinton Phillips, Davis Engineering; and, April Mondragon, Administrative Assistant.

Guests: Michelle Lanzoni, Chuck Finnegan, Steve McCutcheon, Jason Lorenz, Ryan Gilleland, John Salazar, Estevan Salazar, Jill Lucero, Jack Gilleland, Brandon, Chayito Espinoza.

Meeting Called to Order

President Salazar called the meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. A quorum was present. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Sam Vance led the opening prayer.

Approval of the Agenda

President Salazar asked for changes, additions or a motion to approve the agenda. The agenda was amended to add a discussion with Mountain West Insurance regarding Prevent Plant. A motion was made by Sam Vance to approve the agenda as amended. The motion was seconded by Doug Bagwell and unanimously approved.

Approval of the Consent Agenda

President Salazar asked for changes, additions or a motion to approve the consent agenda items:

- November 25, 2024-Special Meeting Minutes
- December 5, 2024-Quarterly Meeting Minutes
- December 5, 2024-Executive Session Minutes
- February 3, 2025-Special Meeting Minutes with Subdistrict No. 6
- February 3, 2025-Special Meeting Minutes
- February 21, 2025-Special Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Nathan Coombs to approve the consent agenda. The motion was seconded by Warren Crowther and unanimously approved.

Election of Officers

President Salazar asked for election of officers. Pete Ampe reminded the Board of the current officers. He opened the floor for nominations for President including self-nominations or a nomination to retain the current slate of officers.

A motion was made by Sam Vance to maintain the current slate of officers. The motion was seconded by Doug Bagwell and unanimously approved.

Public Comment

President Salazar asked for public comment. There was none.

Program Manager's Report

President Salazar asked for the Program Manager's report.

• **Financial Report:**

Angelo Bellah went over the costs, expenses, reimbursements made and the remaining balance due to the District for formation. He presented the Balance Sheet and the Profit and Loss Statement. Mr. Bellah highlighted the assets, liabilities, equity, income, expenses and net income. Kylie Gregg reported on an outstanding invoice from a prior year and the Subdistricts assets held in the Districts account.

A motion was made by Doug Bagwell to approve the financial report as presented. The motion was seconded by Nathan Coombs and unanimously approved.

- **2024 Irrigation Season and ARP Year**

Angelo Bellah went over the November depletions on the Rio Grande, Alamosa and Conejos River systems and how they were remedied. Mr. Bellah provided the current reservoir account balances and the cost to store water in the different reservoirs.

- 2025 Irrigation Season and ARP Year

Angelo Bellah provided a status update on the various SWSPs and reported on the likelihood of starting the irrigation season with zero curtailment on the Conejos. Mr. Bellah asked the Board to ratify the proxy vote for the Angela Mestas payment.

A motion was made by Nathan Coombs to ratify the vote for payment to Angela Mestas. The motion was seconded by Warren Crowther and unanimously approved.

President Salazar explained the Los Sauces SWSP/augmentation station project. Mr. Bellah reported on the status of the Roslind Weaver Pine River SWSP.

A motion was made by Doug Bagwell to purchase Subdistrict No. 3's share of the 2024 project allocation from CWCD which is 29 acre-feet being stored in Platoro for \$5.00 per acre foot. The motion was seconded by Sam Vance and unanimously approved.

Mr. Bellah went over a one-year lease agreement with BLM on Lovato Ditch Augmentation Credits. He presented a credit for contract BLM spreadsheet.

A motion was made by Nathan Coombs to approve the BLM/Lovato lease agreement for Subdistrict no. 3. The motion was seconded by Doug Bagwell and unanimously approved.

Mr. Bellah provided an update on the Lupita/El Coda Ditch Shares in an effort to secure a permanent forbearance agreement. He also updated the Board on the Alpha Hay Farms recharge pond/automating the recharge operations, fencing, tracts for sale, and the CWCB loan and project update. Discussion was held on how to proceed with the Sowards well. Pete Ampe explained why abandoning the well would not be a good idea.

A motion was made by Warren Crowther to inactivate the Sowards well and add it to the Subdistrict's portfolio for sustainability. The motion was seconded by Nathan Coombs and unanimously approved.

- Review of the 2024 Preliminary Water Report

Angelo Bellah provided the 2024 preliminary groundwater withdrawal amount, five (5) year average, and the monthly stream depletions. President Salazar commented on the progress made by the Subdistrict so far. Mr. Bellah highlighted the new fish well consumptive use rate on the San Luis Valley Drain/La Jara Creek.

- Update on Progress of the Annual Replacement Plan for 2025

Angelo Bellah reported on the Annual Replacement Plan (ARP) due date and gave the date of the special meeting to review and approve it. He asked the Board for direction on the 2025 forbearance agreement bonuses and on an issue brought up by nonprofit status ditch companies.

A motion was made by Nathan Coombs that if a ditch company requests a lesser forbearance agreement bonus, staff can grant the request without having to obtain Board approval. The motion was seconded by Doug Bagwell and unanimously approved.

Mr. Bellah asked for direction on the upcoming expiration of a participation contract with the BLM who is requesting a renewal.

A motion was made by Nathan Coombs to charge a \$500 contract inclusion fee and accept the one-year contract renewal. The motion was seconded by Doug Bagwell and unanimously approved.

Mr. Bellah reported on an offer from Mr. Cordova to purchase his well for sustainability. He highlighted the HCU analysis done by Davis Engineering. Discussion was held on an attempted change case by a prior owner, the max injury the well could cause and if/how the well could benefit the Subdistrict.

A motion was made by Sam Vance to request a formal proposal from Mr. Cordova. The motion was seconded by Warren Crowther and unanimously approved.

Elliott Salazar commented on aquifer sustainability and left the meeting.

The Board recessed at 9:20 a.m. and resumed at 9:30 a.m.

Discuss Potential Measures to Achieve Aquifer Sustainability

President Salazar asked to discuss potential measures to achieve aquifer sustainability.

• *Pumping Reduction Program*

President Salazar explained the Subdistricts requirement to make replacements and remedy injurious depletions as well as maintain a sustainable aquifer. He gave a recap on what the Subdistrict has accomplished so far and the struggle it has been to create a sustainable aquifer. President Salazar presented the Change in Composite Head versus Groundwater Diversion table provided by Jason Lorenz. He commented on the 51% of normal snow pack and described what some of the other Subdistricts are doing. Pete Ampe explained the process to amend the Plan of Water Management being done by Subdistrict No.1 as well as other purchases and programs they have offered. President Salazar went over the options to decrease pumping: offer incentive pay, higher pumping fees, mandatory 10% decrease, and allocation based on hydrological conditions and forecasts.

• *Prevent Plant*

Chayito Espinoza described the Prevent Plant Program and how the Federal Crop Insurance Program is administered. She went over the crops covered by the program and presented an example of how eligibility is determined. Brandon explained the limitations and restrictions associated with planting a cover crop.

• *Allocation Program*

President Salazar commented on the funds within the sustainability account to assist with those willing to reduce pumping based on their five (5) year rolling average. Nathan Coombs reported looking into a way to possibly do a change case on surface water where the well becomes an alternate point of diversion for the surface water. Chuck Finnegan commented on the groundwater balance reflected in the model. John Salazar reported on the need to go to the State Legislature regarding the change in the climate and snowpack. Jason Lorez suggested treating the aquifer like surface water and increasing fees to fund an incentive-based program. Jill Lucero voiced her concern and asked for consideration for users on the San Antonio that are unable to use direct flow storage or project water. Mr. Coombs commented on the number of unique situations and the need to have a look at what is best across the board. Ryan Gilleland reported a mandatory cut back would be the easiest and quickest way to see results. Sam Vance commented on those that have voluntarily cut back. Discussion was held on not having done enough, the need to work together and be committed.

Attorney’s Report

President Salazar asked for the Attorney’s report. Pete Ampe reported being in the process of reviewing the Alpha Hay Farms to prepare for a future change case. He highlighted the court cases coming up in 2026 and gave an update on the Texas vs New Mexico and Colorado case.

New Business

President Salazar asked staff to draft and send out farm unit pumping reports. Discussion was held on the overpayment made to the compact.

A motion was made by Nathan Coombs to direct/allow Angelo Bellah to draft an application for a pumping reduction program as outlined in his Program Managers report. The motion was seconded by Doug Bagwell and unanimously approved.

Next Meeting

A special meeting was scheduled for April 11, 2025 at 8:00 a.m.
The next quarterly meeting was scheduled for June 5, 2025, at 8:00 a.m.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:53 a.m.



President



Vice-President/Secretary/Treasurer