



*ANNUAL REPORT
FISCAL YEAR 2020*



Compost Study Peppers

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VALENCIA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year 2020

July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020

DISTRICT BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

- **A b e l Camarena, Chair (seat 1)**
- **Teresa Smith de Cherif, Vice-Chair (seat 4)**
- **A n d r e w Hautzinger, Treasurer (seat 2)**
- **P . Joseph Moya, Supervisor (seat 3)**
- **Gail Goodman ED.D., Supervisor (seat 5)**
- **R i c h a r d Bonine Jr., Supervisor, appointed, (seat 7)**
- **S u e Small, Supervisor, appointed (Seat 6)**

VSWCD STAFF:

- *Madeline Miller, District Manager*
- *Ted Hodoba, Whitfield Project Manager (retired May 31st)*
- *Allison Martin, Education Manager*
- *Lindsey Diaz, Conservation Program Manager*
- *Johnny Chavez, Field Project Lead*
- *Ruben Amador, Field Project crewman, custodial*

U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service

- *Pearl Armijo, Team 2 District Conservationist
& Roxann Moore Team 2 Acting Conservationist*
 - *Fawanna Lee, Range Conservationist*
- *April Luna, Soil Conservationist*

New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service

- *Newt McCarty, County Extension Agent*

New Mexico Department of Agriculture

- *Katie Mechenbier, Program Specialist*
- *Jim Wanstall, Noxious Weed Coord.*

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1. Vision Statement

To provide resource conservation for a quality environment demonstrated thru active leadership, cooperation, and partnership.

2. Mission Statement

To provide education, technical assistance, and recognition to current and future stewards of the land in natural resources conservation



3. Operations and Funding 2020



- For fiscal year 2020, the District was able to meet the quarterly and annual reporting and budgeting requirements to the Department of Finance and Administration, and the annual financial reporting to the Office of the State Auditor. For FY19 and FY20, the District prepared to report at the Tier 6 level of the Audit Rule.
- The Open Meetings Act Resolution for calendar year 2020 was passed at the December Regular Meeting of the Board. The Board passed that meetings would be held the 3rd Saturday of the month starting at 9 am. The Board held 11 regular and 2 special meetings during the year.
- The District submitted their annual resolution as required to the Soil & Water Conservation Commission for their intent to collect the ¼ mill levy for the 2019 and 2020 tax collections and these were approved by the Soil & Water Conservation Commission. Additionally, the Board approved pursuit of a new mil levy by vote on the ballot for the November 5th 2019 local election and the NM SWCC held a special meeting on July 8th 2019 for review and approval of this Board action and for submittal to the County Clerks in August for Secretary of State deadlines. Unfortunately, the new mil levy vote was not passed.
- Starting cash balance July 1st 2020 of FY20 for the District was \$436,791. Additionally, revenues for the 2020 budget included the full NMDA Points award for the year of \$13,914. The collection of the quarter mill levy of \$354,968 along with savings from the USDA Wetlands Reserve Program easement earnings (federal dollars) and a grant obtained through the NM Game and Fish Commission in 2009 for restoration needs of the Rio Abajo Unit of the Whitfield Complex. Total operational expenditures for the year were \$543,891 coming in under the approved anticipated expenditures of \$606,738. The 2020 general operational budget includes the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Complex and funding for the Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program, Financial Assistance Programs, the Rio Abajo Conservation Area

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restoration funding and the East Valencia Urban Gardens Program. The District did not expend any capital outlay funds in the year but was expecting reimbursement for the Whitfield Maintenance Building Improvement Project early FY21.

- The FY19 Tier 6 Agreed Upon Procedures (AUP) audit as required by the State Auditor's Office for accountability was completed December 31st 2019 with permitted extension. The AUP was conducted by Assurance Accounting and approved by the State Auditor's Office. There were 6 findings which the Auditor explained for which most were immaterial but with an AUP there is no level of materiality. The District management response to the findings was documented in a subsequent Board meeting for improving internal controls in processing payments and prior period adjustments needing to be brought to the Board for review.

- Grant funding in 2020 for educational programming directed by the new education manager was provided primarily through the Friends of Whitfield 501c3 for bussing, outreach supplies. See the Education Manager's Report for full details.

Grant funding was also pursued for the East Valencia Urbans Garden Program. A second NACD Urban Agriculture Grant of \$50K was awarded and the grant period from January FY20 thru FY21 for support of youth intern and garden keeper programming at the gardens, part of the Program Coordinator's salary, and equipment for the program. Program partner YDI Inc. provides administrative support for the interns and garden keepers.

- The District made their last cost share payment for the loan component part (\$6950 total loan) of Water Trust Board funding obtained through the Greater Rio Grande Watershed Alliance group. The loan was for the VSWCD share of funding for the bridge fuel break riparian restoration project in Veguita, New Mexico approximately 9 miles south of Belen (just west of Hwy 304 on Hwy 346 at the bridge crossing the Rio Grande River). The project was completed in 2010.

- The District paid minimum dues of \$500 to the New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts and also continued their membership with the National Association of Conservation Districts at the minimum level of \$775. For professional development opportunities and support for District employees, the annual due of \$10 was paid to the New Mexico Conservation District Employees group for the District Manager, Education Manager, and E. Valencia Urban Gardens Program Coordinator.

- The District granted \$10,000 for sponsorship of Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program monitoring programs (BEMP) in the District Area in FY2020 in support of the youth stewardship opportunities and staff of the BEMP. This is a reduction from the previous year as the District was bringing expenditures in alignment with annual revenues. The Program additionally provides annual updating of reporting and analysis of the data for District at a regular Board meeting. The data is useful for adaptive management in planning for conservation of habitat, resources, water quantity and quality, and watershed health within the District. BEMP has been providing rigorous non-proprietary data for a variety of agencies addressing land management concerns within the Middle Rio Grande corridor including most significantly the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

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- The District pursued capital outlay funding in FY20 for phase 2 of the building program for the Whitfield Visitor Center and District administration. The District was approved for an additional 75K of the modified building plan total of \$460K.
- The District promoted all activities and provided public information primarily through the VSWCD website at www.valenciaswcd.org and Facebook pages for the District, the East Valencia Urban Gardens Program and the District Education Programming. During the year the District also set up a YouTube account for public access to the Board meetings when they went virtual in April, and for posting educational videos, and other information for virtual outreach during social distancing requirements of COVID-19. Also, the three quarterly newsletters published in FY20 for the District activities and programs, were distributed electronically to fellow Districts, and posted on the VSWCD website and hard copies made available through an outdoor rack for the public following office temporary closure in March thru the remainder of the year.
- The District had a booth at the Valencia County Fair, and Ag Field Day at the NMSU/NRCS Plant Material Center of Los Lunas in August 2019 for outreach about the District financial assistance programs and encourage native and pollinator plantings. The District Manager promoted the soil testing program and financial assistance opportunities at a Valencia County Cooperative Extension Office event on land agency funding opportunities. The District also had a booth at the Soil & Water Conservation District Day at the Capitol January 28th, opening day of the 2020 state legislative session.
- The 2019 Local Election on November 5th, the first through the Counties went well. Abel Camarena in Seat 1, Andrew Hautzinger in Seat 2 filed for candidacy to retain their seats, and Gail Goodman, filed to run for vacant Seat 5. All ran unopposed. New Supervisor Goodman was sworn in at the Valencia County Clerk's office. Abel Camarena and Andrew Hautzinger were sworn in just before the January 2020 Regular Meeting of the Board by Rio Communities Municipal Judge Heather Benavidez.



From the VSWCD Fall newsletter:

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*'Dr. Gail Goodman is the newest incumbent occupying seat 5 as a Board Supervisor for the Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District. In addition to her academic work in the field of language development, multi-cultural education and research, teaching at all levels in the USA, Mexico, Israel, and the Navajo Nation, eventually earning an Ed.D. Gail Goodman is an internationally recognized authority on one of the world's oldest purebred dogs, the Saluki. She is the editor/publisher of the reference volume **The Saluki: Coursing Hound of the East** as well as contributing articles to magazines worldwide about these lovely dogs. The terrain and climate of our Middle Rio Grande Valley is perfect for walking with Salukis....an ancient hound in an ancient landscape.'*

- Board Officers for fiscal year 2020 remained the same: Abel Camarena continued as Chair, Teresa Smith de Cherif Vice-Chair, and Andrew Hautzinger Treasurer. Also continuing were Richard Bonine appointed Seat 7 representing Laguna Pueblo and Sue Small, El Cerro Mission resident in Seat 6. Formal confirmation of these re-appointments were delayed to fall of 2020 though the Board formally requested at their June 2020 meeting that Richard and Sue continue. Supervisor Jeff Goebel in Seat 5 resigned just prior to start of FY20, and also Associate Supervisor Myrna Goebel. Associate Supervisor Jim Lane was voted to be removed as an associate Supervisor in December 2019 for lack of participation and in accordance with the NM Soil & Water Conservation District Act, having missed more than 3 consecutive meetings.
- The Board of Supervisors in June 2019 did pass a resolution to pursue a referendum vote to increase the existing .25 mil levy to 1 mil. The Board also submitted a letter to the Attorney General's Office requesting a determination on status of the existing mil levy if the referendum for an increase was not passed during the election cycle in November 2019.



Orange Sulfur Butterfly

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4. Board leadership through the Year:

- Supervisor Abel Camarena was recognized by the NM Association of Conservation Districts for 10 years of service with the Valencia Soil & Water Conservation District.
- Board Supervisor Andrew Hautzinger and staff attended the Soil & Water Conservation District Day at the Capitol on the first day of the legislative session which proved to be not a day to find legislators to ask for support of the District capital outlay request. The District was seeking additional funding for the Whitfield Building Phase 2 project.
- On March 16th 2020, the Chair met with staff following the Governor's first orders for minimizing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in New Mexico. The VSWCD Office and visitor center at the Whitfield Complex main unit were closed until further notice. The Whitfield Committee later decided that a partial reopening of the grounds for visitors on Thursday, Friday and Saturday weekly would be allowed. The office and visitor center remained closed and some staff was working from home while field staff remained on site at District center of operations. Also, the shift to virtual Board meetings also in March was a challenge to get up and running and the March regular meeting was cancelled.
- Sue Small volunteered as a judge during the NM Envirothon state competition held in April 2020. She expressed to the Board following that she recommended any and all to volunteer for future competitions.

1. Board Committee Activities in FY2020

Board members continued through Committees to address District programming: The Mil Levy Committee, Land Use Plan Committee, Financial Assistance Committee, Whitfield Committee, Education Committee, East Valencia Urban Gardens Program Committee and Personnel Committee were active during the year:

1. Mill Levy Committee

Sue Small, Abel Camarena, and Teresa Smith de Cherif served on the Mil Levy Committee and worked with staff in outreach efforts for the referendum vote during the November local election cycle. The vote did not pass.

2. Land Use Plan

Andrew Hautzinger, Richard Bonine, and Sue Small served on the Land Use Plan Committee and were revising the plan format at start of the year. At mid-year, following community member requests the

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committee was tasked with reviewing installation of wind turbines by Pattern Energy impacting residents in the southern part of Valencia County. The Committee at the February Board Meeting discussed and planned to meet with Pattern Energy representatives to find out more about the project; community concerns were expressed about the impact of the turbines on the land. This project initiated through the Renewable Energy Transition Act of New Mexico (RETA) was already on the ground. The District Board did approve (by majority vote, one dissent) sending the final draft letter recommended and prepared by the committee to be sent to Pattern Energy primarily to encourage future engagement on restoration of land impacted by installation of the wind turbines through southern Valencia County.

3. Whitfield Committee

Abel Camarena, Andrew Hautzinger, and Teresa Smith de Cherif served on the Whitfield Committee which now includes the Rio Abajo and Stacy Unit Areas. Committee support included for completion of the Whitfield Comprehensive Management Plan – updated to include the Rio Abajo and Stacy Unit and approved by the Board June of 2020. Also staff reorganization planning for the future, capital outlay planning for the 2nd building, and temporary measures for COVID-19 planning. Andrew Hautzinger with staff Lindsey Diaz did prepare in June 2020 the preproposal for NFWF Conoco Phillips Spirit of Conservation Grant 2020 for funds towards bird habitat restoration at the Whitfield Complex. The competition for the nationwide grant program was extensive and the preproposal was not selected for full proposal consideration. The intent was for funding of restoration planning for the Rio Abajo and Whitfield Main units in the next fiscal year.

4. Education Committee

Andrew Hautzinger and Gail Goodman served on the Education Committee. Both helped with finalizing a grant proposal prepared by the Education Manager for a new funding opportunity through the NM State Tourism Department, the Outdoor Equity Grant Opportunity, hopefully for service learning opportunities with youth in the new fiscal year.

5. East Valencia Urban Gardens Program Committee

Supervisors Teresa Smith de Cherif and Sue Small served on the East Valencia Urban Gardens Program to work with the Program Coordinator and other staff in bringing recommendations to the Board about the future of the program after the fifth year of singular District leadership. The Board review of the future of the program beyond the 5th in June 2020 guided the Program Coordinator to work with Committee Supervisors in pursuing partnerships and collaborations with other agencies to share the fiscal and administrative responsibilities of the program.

6. The Personnel Committee

Committee members Abel Camarena, and Teresa Smith de Cherif throughout the year were addressing staff reorganization needs, changing staff roles and job descriptions. The committee brought

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recommendations to the full Board that proposed reorganization in the new year. This allowed the District to achieve their goal of annual revenues equaling annual expenditures. In fact, on a monthly cash flow basis, the District moving forward has revenues exceeding expenditures to help with the irregularity of mil levy collections throughout the year.

7. **Dan Goodman Award Committee (Ad Hoc)**

For review of Dan Goodman Award applicants, in the 34th Annual recognition award provided through a trust from a former Board member in 1987, Daniel Goodman, Supervisors Sue Small, Andrew Hautzinger, and Gail Goodman reviewed three applicants and brought their recommendation to the full Board in May 2020.

2. *Staff Honorable Mentions:*

Allison Martin, Education Manager was given an opportunity to apply and was selected to be one of the first fellows of the Exploring Equitable Education Outdoors Program lead by Director Eileen Everett of the Environmental Educators of New Mexico Association in 2020. The program funded through a grant developed by Director Everett. The intent is to create a multi-year collective strategy for systemic change in providing equitable, daily access to the outdoors and environmental learning for every preK-12th grade student in school and their local communities in New Mexico. The Exploring Equitable Education Outdoors Fellows in 2020 have started the program working with a transformational leadership model and engaging in an emergent process to grow their own leadership while exploring systems thinking and gaining skills in advocacy and messaging. Allison's educational outreach with the District provides the real world opportunity for growing a community of support for this effort. By year end, Allison and Fellows of the program collectively developed policies centered on environmental education which they are planning to take to the 2021 Legislative session. Other activities include facilitation of webinars that support equity in the outdoors throughout 2020 and establishing partnerships and collaborations in creating greater access to the outdoors in the communities where people live which supports District outreach about conservation of our natural resources.

Lindsey Diaz, Conservation Program Manager

Lindsey has officially enlisted as a Soil Health Champion with the National Association of Conservation Districts Program for her work with the East Mesa gardens. The interns will be painting a sign for each of the gardens that invites visitors to ask interns, garden keepers and the Coordinator about gardening and their management of the gardens. Lindsey will be working with the Garden Keepers and Youth Leaders and Interns to be fully trained in Soil Health Practices and encouraged them to sign up as Soil Health

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Champions. Lindsey also completed a Permaculture Design Certificate training through Oregon State University allowing her to educate and train others in application of permaculture methodologies as well as complete designs for the two community gardens that use fewer resources and improve soil health.

Johnny Chavez, Project Lead

In May Johnny began GIS training through the SW Climate Hub program with instruction from Caiti Steele. During the year, Johnny also started an online bachelor degree program in wildlife biology.

5. Educational Outreach:

Education Manager’s Report: Allison Martin in her second year of maximizing the District’s educational outreach capacity was in full swing with school programming, and special events prior to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions starting in March 2020. Allison has been partnering with several organizations to help create meaningful educational experiences through the District. These partners include: Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge, Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument, Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, Central Audubon New Mexico, Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program (B.E.M.P.), Belen and Los Lunas Public School Districts, and many other local organizations and businesses in Valencia County.

1. Brief Recap of Outreach and Educational Programming 2019-2020

MONTH	EVENTS	Participants	SCHOOL VISITS	Participants	Month’s Outreach
July 2019	Teach Workshop	16	Bosque Farms Daycare	10	145
	Los Lunas Library	26			
	Presentation	38			
	Bosque Farms	55			
	Library Presentation				
	Daniel Fernandez Rec Center				
August ‘19	Desert Willow Festival	46			46
Sept. ‘19	Bosque Farms Library	46	Bosque Farms to Whitfield	80 + 80	466
			School of Dreams	33	
			Academy	80 + 78	
			Sundance Elementary to Whitfield	69	
			Katherine Gallegos Elem.		

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Oct '19	Night Under the Stars	116	Katherine Gallegos Elem. Sundance Elem. La Promesa Elem. Gil Sanchez Elem. Peralta Elem. School of Dreams Academy Katherine Gallegos Elem.	98 + 89 91 +85 31 +31 31 +31 42 22 +22 62	751
Nov. '19	-	-	Canon Christian Academy Raymond Gabaldon Elem. To Whitfield Peralta Elem. Sundance Elem. To Whitfield Ann Parish Elem. To Whitfield Valencia Elem. To Whitfield	22 +22 55 +53 42 68 +67 89 +54 53 +49	574
Dec. '19	Whitfield Birthday Party	49	21 st Century to Whitfield Dennis Chavez Elem. Tome Elem.	183 +88 20 60	400
Total participants in educational programming July-December 2019					2382
Jan. '19	•		Raymond Gabaldon Elem to Whitfield Gil Sanchez Elem to Whitfield Katherine Gallegos to Whitfield	65 +62 45 +53 107	332
Feb. '19	Bernalillo Master Composters – Composting Workshop Belen High School Career Day	48 216	Tome Elem to Whitfield Dennis Chavez Elem Bosque Farms to Whitfield	64+64 22 81+81	576
March '19	Bird House Making Science Fiesta Planning Meeting	7 17	Los Lunas Elem. Dennis Chavez Elem.	64 44	
Total participants for Educational Outreach before COVID of 2020					1040
April '19	Grab and Go Initiative: Lesson:	3000	Schools closed/Whitfield closed		6000

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	Nature Stories in Your Backyard Virtual Distribution: 3,000 + Earth Day Facebook and YouTube Video Virtual Audience reached: 3,000 views, 67 shares, 33 comments	3000			
May '19	Live Videos via Facebook Video: Mammals Habitat Virtual Distribution: 253 views, 4 shares, 8 likes and 5 comments Video: Ground Water Level and Riparian Habitat Virtual Distribution: 223 views, 5 shares, 12 likes, 7 comments Video: Biotic and Abiotic: What's in the Dirt? Virtual Distribution: 84 views, 13 likes, 6 comments, 1 share	253 223 84	Schools closed/Whitfield closed		560
June '19	Whitfield Reopening: Junior and Adult Ranger Programs: 18 total have been completed.	18	Schools closed/Whitfield partial reopen		18
Total virtual outreach April-June 2020					6578

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Additionally, programming costs for educational outreach continues to be grant funded primarily by the Friends of Whitfield (501) c (3) and other private community members. Below is the recap of funding for FY20 programming.

1. Education Program Funding:

July 2019 – December 2019

1. Transportation for Busses: -\$900.00 Funding Source: Friends of Whitfield
2. Sixth Grade Phenology Traveling Trunk:- \$150.00 Funding Source: Friends of Whitfield
3. Teacher Workshop-\$1,000.00 Funding Source: Friends of Whitfield
4. District Video-\$7,000.00 Funding Source: Joyce Hutchinson, Community member
5. Night Under the Stars: \$180.00 Funding Source: Friends of Whitfield

Total: \$9,230.00

January-August 2020

1. Transportation for Busses in January and Feb. -\$500.00 Funding Source: Friends of Whitfield
2. Earth Day Virtual Video and Prize Giveaways: -\$3500 Funding Source: Facebook
3. GoPro Camera and Video: \$400.00 Funding Source: Friends of Whitfield
4. Teacher Workshop-\$1,000.00 Funding Source: Friends of Whitfield
5. Teacher Classroom Resources initiative: \$4,400.00- Funding Source: Central Audubon

Total: \$9,800.00

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2. Dan Goodman Awardees

The 34th Annual Dan Goodman Award for Soil & Water and Environmental Improvement was available for youth grades 9-12. Three applicants were selected and recommended to the full Board for recognition of their environmental stewardship. John Begay, Senior at Belen High School was awarded first place. Ashlyn Ahlgrim, Junior at Los Lunas High School was awarded second place, and Mellene Pablo, Senior at Valencia High was awarded third place. The Board congratulated the three virtually at their July regular meeting. Excerpts from the Education Manager's published notice (Valencia County News Bulletin August 6th 2020: "...This year



Ashlyn Ahlgrim, second place, from Los Lunas High School.

there were three awardees of the Dan Goodman Soil & Water and Environmental Improvement Award. John Begay, 1st place from Belen High School, Ashlyn Ahlgrim, 2nd place, from Los Lunas High School, and Mellene Pablo, 3rd Place from Valencia High School....Begay's accomplishments and presentation were exceptional. His knowledge on habitat fragmentation is not only important, but critical when thinking about all lives on the planet. Hopefully he will remember his attention to wildlife, their habitat and how to find ways to give back to the environment in his future plans....Ahlgrim showed a desire to start her own garden at home. She recognized that using rabbit manure helped plants grow big and healthy enough for her family to enjoy at the dinner table. Her aspirations to teach others the importance of agriculture and horticultural benefits were recognized and honored. Pablo's knowledge of animal raising were recognized, while her far reaching interest is to be a leading force in thinking about future habitat, water distribution and avenues for everyone to have access to clean drinkable water, starting with her own community."

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John Begay, first place, from Belen High School.



Mellene Pablo, third place, from Valencia High School.

3. Special Events

The Soil Health Academy Healthy Soils Workshop in Los Lunas New Mexico on October 23rd was sponsored by the District. There were 130 attendees.

4. Soil Health Champions

There has been a concerted effort in New Mexico especially thru the Healthy Soils Working Group to identify soil health champions and encourage them to participate in the NACD program to help develop a network of champions who can share their experiences in soil health management across New Mexico. Over the year, Kirsten and Nathan Couevas, Amelia Vogel, Jeff Goebel, Lindsey Diaz, Madeline Miller, Eli Sanchez all of the Valencia SWCD area were invited and accepted becoming Soil Health Champions. Kirsten Couevas attended the NACD Annual Conference in February 2020 as a soil health champion and shared her regenerative farm experience with producers from across the nation.

6. District Special Projects and Programs

1. East Valencia Urban Gardens Program – 5th Year

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1. Program Coordinator update at year end just prior to her changing roles at the District:

EVUGP Year-End Reporting FY2020

Monitoring Item	Quantity
Community Garden Volunteer Hours (estimate)	220
Youth Internship Hours	672
Community Garden Harvested Produce Lbs. (estimate)	2,500
Total # Events and Classes Hosted or Contributed To	16
Total # Participants at Classes/Events (Estimate)	756
Total # One-on-one Private Farm and Garden Consultations	14

2. Funding to Date from Outside Grants and Partnership Commitments Towards

EVUGP Program (Excludes Donations):

Item	Implementation Year	Summary of Projects	Grant Amount
Conservation Fund	2017 - 2018	10 Youth Intern Stipends, 2 Garden Keeper positions, supplies	\$17,500
Permaculture Grant	2019	2 Garden Keeper positions, 5 Intern stipends, supplies for fruit trees, hoop house and hoop house supplies	\$18,059
Youth Development Inc.	2019	10 Youth Internship stipends	\$3,600
NMDA Healthy Soils	2020	Bioreactor study and soil champion training, primary for soil test, reimbursement to participants for time	\$12,430
NACD Grant	2020	EVUGP Coordinator Salary, 2 Garden Keeper positions, materials for garden expansion fencing, plants and supplies and a EVUGP computer	\$50,000
Youth Development Inc.	2020	12 Youth Internship stipends	\$6,240
Youth Development Inc.	2020	2 Youth Leader stipends	\$1,920
Total Funds			\$109,749

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3. Youth Internship Program

The Youth Internship Program started on June 2, 2020. The Coordinator implemented NM Department of Health Safety Standards according to protocol for “Youth Summer Programs.” Valencia County and Youth Development Inc., partner agency was informed. For the 2020 growing season there were 11 Youth Interns and 2 Youth Leaders.

On Wednesday, June 10, 2020, Coordinator Lindsey Diaz met with Garden Keepers and Youth Leaders from both Meadowlake and El Cerro Mission Community Gardens to plan how/where/when to sell and donate food. The group decision was for gardens to work as a team to sell food approximately every month or 2 weeks (depending on garden production) at the Farmer’s Market in Tomé on Thursday afternoons to raise money for garden supplies. The gardens will also donate food weekly to local East Mesa locations (locations TBD) to support community members in need to access healthy foods.

The Coordinator in 2020 continued to support Garden Keepers and Youth Leaders in planning for designated volunteer days for more of the community to visit and help. At year end as the El Cerro Mission Garden expansion in coordination with Valencia County was underway and bigger volunteer events at the El Cerro Mission Garden were being planned for. The Coordinator has been pursuing donations for fencing, soil amendments and plantings for this expansion.

4. Seed Donations started this year

In a partnership with NMSU Extension and from donations from RAKS, EVUGP has been able to donate over 300 packs of vegetable seeds to District community members through the Little Free Libraries. We have created Little Seed Libraries within the little libraries in Belen, Tomé and the new one at El Cerro Mission.

Ron Goens and Pati Woodard Mission Little Free Library Valencia County welded and mounted the to donate and take seeds.



donated their time and resources to build the El Cerro outside the ECM Community Center!! The Valencia library. Lindsey coordinated the project to create a location

2. Financial Assistance Program

FY2020– Mil Levy Taxpayer Awards Year End June 30th 2020

Board of Supervisors

Abel Camarena, Chair • Teresa Smith de Cherif, Vice-Chair • Andrew Hautzinger, Treasurer • P. Joseph Moya, Supervisor • Richard Bonine Jr., Supervisor • Sue Small, Supervisor • Gail Goodman, Supervisor



*Alfalfa valve for Ken & Janelle Baca,
Joty Road field, Belen, NM*

The Valencia SWCD Financial Assistance Program for FY20 came to a close June 30th 2020. Changes to the program in FY20 included providing a list of common land practices related to the priorities of the program for soil health management, water quantity and quality conservation, pollinator habitat restoration; preservation, support of wildlife habitat where possible and protection of soils with vegetative cover and more for preservation of the natural resources of the District. Ranking of practices in high, medium and low priority categories aligned the conservation value of the practice to the rate of reimbursement of assistance to applicants – 75%, 50%, and 25% respectively.

Applications were due for community and agricultural assistance by December 31st 2019. The original District program budget for the year was \$40K mil levy dollars. There were 9 agricultural, and 4 community applications received from qualifying applicants. This included 6 requests for drip irrigation additions across applicants; 3 requests for mulching to address soil and weed management; 6 cover cropping applications in plans for permanent pasture livestock feed, soil health, erosion and weed management applications; and pollinator plantings in 5 of the plans in both agricultural and community applications. Along with irrigation control structures, and land leveling for water delivery efficiency and water conservation, the FY20 Awards were at varying points of completion at year end (June 30, 2020); One agricultural assistance request was deferred to FY21 as work was expected to start after June 30th (R & P Sanchez), and one (First Baptist Church proposal) was not able to start during the year and is expected to reapply in FY21 (i.e.,. Others were granted extensions for fall plantings, and due to delays in receiving supplies needed. As of this report, all 4 community applications have been completed, and 5 of the 9 agricultural awards completed with 2 more awaiting fall plantings, while the last remaining deferred project (R&P Sanchez) is being reviewed for planning of removal of invasive trees with intent to recover historically farmed field in permanent pasture. While total acreage addressed was 54.86 for agricultural land and less than two acres across the 4 community applications, important to note that 8 of the 9 ag applicants were for small acreage farming (this year project involved 8 acres or less), the predominant farm size within the District.

The Financial Assistance Committee of the Board of Supervisors annually review applications. Following is the recommendation put forth to the full Board for action at their February regular monthly meeting.

Board of Supervisors

Abel Camarena, Chair • Teresa Smith de Cherif, Vice-Chair • Andrew Hautzinger, Treasurer • P. Joseph Moya, Supervisor • Richard Bonine Jr., Supervisor • Sue Small, Supervisor • Gail Goodman, Supervisor



Ray Feldbusch Organic Chile Farm, Belen, NM – new field in FY20



*Rocket Punch Farm, Belen NM - first crops
Arugula, Broccoli, Chard*

Board of Supervisors

Abel Camarena, Chair • Teresa Smith de Cherif, Vice-Chair • Andrew Hautzinger, Treasurer • P. Joseph Moya, Supervisor •
Richard Bonine Jr., Supervisor • Sue Small, Supervisor • Gail Goodman, Supervisor

P.O. Box 170, Belen, NM 87002 /Office: 2424 Hwy 47, Belen, NM /505-864-8914 • VALENCIAswcd@live.com

MEMO:

Table 1:	
VSWCD Financial Assistance Committee Recommend Funding Levels for FY2020 FA Proposals	
Project Description and Conservation Benefits: (in ranked order, highest to lowest)	Reimbursable Amounts
1st Baptist Church: 5-acres bare weedy ground replaced with cover crop, trees, shrubs, community gardens, pollinators, efficient irrigation, and protection-of-pre-1907 water right: <u>resulting in benefits to</u> water conservation, soil quality/erosion, open space, wildlife habitat, community involvement, demonstration area. VSWCD RANKED SCORE=76	\$ 9,472.50
R&P Sanchez: 3.36 acres of land to be cleared, ripped, disked, laser land leveled, with new irrigation works, 2 years of cover crops and 3 Bat Houses: <u>resulting in benefits to</u> water conservation (slight) by est.native plants & small runoff berms; soil quality per less erosion, est. native plants & seeded areas, wildlife habitat for bats is much improved by installing three bat houses and the cover crops. VSWCD RANKED SCORE=60. Project deferred to FY2021 (as of 2-15-2020)	(\$ 8,567.00) Deferred to FY21
K&N Couevas: 4-acres of mixed use land to be a Regenerative Farm with mix of pasture and native plantings with water system improvements, <u>resulting in benefits to:</u> water conservation (slight) through est. native plants & small runoff berms; soil quality via less erosion, est.native plants and seeded areas; the agricultural sector is enhanced by producing and selling a variety of unique vegetables and meat products; wildlife habitat via pollinator and grass establishment. VSWCD RANKED SCORE=49.	\$ 2,059.75
A. Vogel / Rocket Punch Farm: 1-acre farm on cleared land returning to production with mix of native and market-based plantings, with drip-irrigation system, with <u>resulting in benefits to:</u> the agricultural and local Growers Markets sectors are enhanced with the production of naturally grown (organic) vegetable crops; water conservation is greatly realized by est. drip irrigation system, soil quality (slight)by est. native plants & seeded areas, all naturally mulched, while pollinator & wildlife habitat is slightly improved by the est. of pollinator and wildlife plant species. VSWCD RANKED SCORE=47.	\$ 1,342.00
A&L Godfrey: 1-acre for cover crop No-Till plantings; roof runoff system into large water catchment barrels; drip Irrigation system and sprinkler irrigation system; various fruit and berry plantings; <u>with resulting benefits including</u> strong water conservation via new drip and sprinkler system; soil quality (slight) improved via heavy mulches and the No-Till Drill Cover Crops, soil health practices. Innovation is enhanced with the '3-clump' planting of trees and berries. VSWCD RANKED SCORE=47.	\$ 5,429.50
K&J Baca: 5-acres of irrigated land to switch from dirt ditch to PVC pipeline delivery and no-till farming of alfalfa and pasture, <u>with resulting benefits to:</u> water conservation, which is greatly realized via new PVC pipeline and valves, while some soil benefit is expected through less erosion & est. seeded areas. The ag sector is supported by est. & sale of high-quality hay, with some wildlife benefits from the plantings. VSWCD RANKED SCORE=39.	\$ 10,368.00
R. Feldbusch (ELOY): 4-acres of land for installation of a Drip Irrigation System, Plastic Cover over raised Chile Beds and Chile Seed. <u>Benefits:</u> Water conservation is slightly realized by establishing the Drip Irrigation System. Soil quality is slightly improved by preventing erosion, while the agricultural sector is aided by producing and selling traditional Chile crops. VSWCD RANKED SCORE=38.	\$ 4,150.00
R. Feldbusch (East): 1.5-acres of land, very similar to Feldbusch ELOY application (see above). VSWCD RANKED SCORE=29.	\$ 1,719.25
Moya Farms: 30-acres of irrigated land to be cleared, ripped, disked, laser land leveled. <u>Benefits:</u> water con. Is moderately realized with the laser land leveling, while soil quality is improved by preventing erosion. Open space is protected via less bare soil and erosion. VSWCD RANKED SCORE=23.	\$ 4,556.00
Agricultural Applications(9) Subtotal:	
\$ 39,097	
Community Applications (4):	
J. Law: Water harvesting & pollinators (VSWCD RANKED SCORE=47)	\$ 427.50
M. Milarch: Establish water harvesting, pollinator support garden (VSWCD RANKED SCORE=40)	\$ 1,500.00

D. Draszkwicz: Water harvesting & pollinators (VSWCD RANKED SCORE=37)	\$ 416.25
S. Haagaman: Water harvesting & pollinators (VSWCD RANKED SCORE=27)	\$ 1,132.50
Community Applications(4) Subtotal:	\$ 3,476
Combined Total for 2020 Agricultural and Community Proposals:	\$ 42,573

Date: 2/15/2020

To: VSWCD Board of Supervisors

From: FA Committee (Board Members Small, Moya and Hautzinger)

Re: Financial Assistance Committee’s FY20 Review of Applicant Proposals

This memorandum serves the purpose of providing to the Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District (VSWCD/District) Board of Supervisors recommendations from the Board’s Financial Assistance Committee as relates to thirteen Fiscal Year 2020 proposals received from qualifying applicants by the VSWCD’s Financial Assistance Program.

Qualifying applications are those that were provided to the District between October 1, 2019 and December 15, 2019, and that contained sufficient content to be processed (e.g., including project benefits, budget, tax records, signatures, technical designs as needed, etc.). For FY2020, the District directed the public to use one of two applications: (1) *Agricultural* and (2) *Community*, of which 9 and 4 were received and processed by the District, respectively (see Table 1).

The VSWCD Financial Assistance Program was established by the District in February 2016 to partner with our community members to support the preservation of soil and water resources in a manner that is strategic, cost-effective and that shows proper due-diligence of public funds. It is our goal to promote innovative conservation practices that can be used across all of the many different landscapes found within the Middle Rio Grande Valley’s beautiful floodplains, uplands and mesas.

In FY20 the District approved a budget of \$40,000 for this program. The 13 processed proposals were evaluated by District staff and the Financial Assistance Committee through applicant interviews, site inspections and research and analysis as called for. The Agricultural proposals were typically more involved, and were provided with a detailed *Site Conservation Plan* that was developed by the District (whereas the simpler Community applications were determined to not call for a full plan). Both sets of proposals were ranked independently, through use of a ranking system newly developed by the committee and based on the USDA-NRCS scoring system for conservation projects.

The ranking system entailed a prioritization process that provides three different levels of reimbursement to the applicant, based on the conservation practice(s) level of importance, innovation and positive impact (high=75% reimbursement level, medium=50% and low=25%). Table 1 below provides summary details for the projects and provides the results of this ranking and review process.

It is the recommendation of the Financial Assistance Committee that the Board approve all of the 13 evaluated projects described above, while deferring funding of the R&P Sanchez project until FY21. If the Board accepts this recommendation, a total budget of \$42,573 would be required.

Now in its fourth year, in FY 20 the Financial Assistance program received more requests for assistance than ever before. To help meet the rising public interest in the FA program, many improvements were made in FY20 (e.g., development of site conservation plans and of a ranking system), and more are expected in FY21 (including improvements to the application forms and ranking system, broadening program outreach efforts and expansion of the application deadlines).

The Board’s ongoing support of this important program and its consideration of the Financial Assistance Committee’s recommendations for project funding in FY20 is sincerely appreciated.”



The Board approved the total budget of \$42,573 for the year. Actual award dollars obligated by June 30th were \$17,964.08. Carryover projects in FY21 total is expected to be \$17,836 for total year spending of \$35,900.33.



Perennial pollinator plantings, Margaret Milarch, Los Lunas, NM

1. Financial Assistant Applicant Highlights from the Year:

Rocket Punch Farm – Amelia Vogel, Belen, NM



Mulch and drip for pollinator plantings, Rocket Punch Farm, Belen NM

Amelia and Jason’s testimonial:

“We moved to Belen, NM in November 2019 and purchased a 1-acre property with the intent of building a "beyond organic" produce farm. Immediately, VSWCD proved to be an invaluable resource. As we are committed to tractor-free no-dig farming, we made good use of the free mulch at the Whitfield parking lot. So far, we have spread over 80 pick-up truckloads of mulch to suppress weeds and enrich/protect the soil...and we're not done yet. The financial

assistance grant we received from VSWCD subsidized the cost of our drip irrigation system and allowed us to purchase nearly 150 native flowering plant seedlings. Our successful vegetable harvests (so far) have included lettuce, spinach, arugula, peas, onions, kale, collards, cabbage, mustard greens, turnips, radishes, celtuce (stem lettuce), beets, Swiss chard, and basil. The tomatoes are just starting to produce and it looks like other summer favorites aren't far behind. We sold at the Belen Farmers' Market in June and enjoyed laughing with customers over "dinosaur kale" (RAAAWWR!). However, the worsening pandemic convinced us that it would be in our best interest to stay home, as either of us getting sick could mean the end of our farm's story before we've even really gotten started. We are not selling to the public at this time.

Instead, we are putting all of our energy into research and development. We are continuing to trial lots of different vegetables to see what grows best. We are working to make our garden more climate-resilient and attractive to beneficial wildlife through hedgerow and pollinator corridor planting. We are exploring ways to create shade. We plan to install gutters on our house and to capture rainfall in barrels for irrigation use. In the future, we want to install a hoop house to protect our most sensitive leafy greens from pests (row cover fabric does not stand up so well against strong winds and neighborhood cats). We also want to plant more perennial crops and edible berry bushes.”

Sublime Pastures – Kirsten and Nathan Couevas, Tome, NM



Permanent electric fence for rotational grazing, small acreage farming.

Kirsten and Nathan moved to New Mexico approximately 2 years ago and inherited 4 acres of farmland in Tome New Mexico with the intent to farm. Though new farmers, they have moved quickly in setting up ‘Sublime Pastures’. The narrow strip of prime farm land in the Middle Rio Grande Valley has in the 2nd year moved into full production grazing of cows, pigs, chickens, and vegetable growing.

Kirsten:

“We are a regenerative farm. It’s so important to have healthy soil because that is the start to regenerate the world. When you have healthy soil you will have healthy animals and produce that provide food that help people to become more healthy themselves. Our motto here on the farm is healthy soil = healthy animals = healthy people. We put into practice the five healthy soil principles; we seed with a no till drill to minimize disturbance to the soil (1), we have a multi-species mix of seeds for cover cropping (keeping living root in ground year round and maximizing biodiversity 2 and 3), our livestock graze on the cover crops (incorporate animals into productions for soil health management benefits 4) and then we provide pasture raised meat and eggs high in omega 3&6’s. This type of farming can be done on small and large acreage (actually many told Kirsten she would not be successful with such intense management of

small acreage but she is proving otherwise). We have seen some major improvements over the last year with this type of farming and it has been amazing to watch the soil return to health.”

Kirsten and Nate have also been visiting with neighbors to lease fields nearby that will allow them to rest the fields more effectively in their rotational grazing management. Kirsten hopes to have more steers and heifers in the future which requires more acreage to ensure proper rest of fields for optimal soil health while managing during the ongoing drought conditions.

Presently the Couevas are also participating in a District study of compost applications on pasture grass and vegetable crops. They are using compost from a static aerobic system developed by David Johnson*, Las Cruces soil microbiologist, to restore functional components of the soil. These living functional components of soil provide nutrient delivery to the roots of growing plants as well as significantly improve the water holding capacity of the soil.

*The District sells Johnson-Su Compost Bio Reactor kits for setting up the composting system– maturation in 9 to 12 months.



*First year of acorn fruit
on native shrub oak at Whitfield*

3. Whitfield Conservation Area Complex

While most the active part of the year before closing facilities to the public was related to educational outreach (see education manager’s report), some projects in the background were being completed.

At the Whitfield Main Unit, the Maintenance Building Project paid for with State legislative funds of \$34,500 was being completed to include some interior build for office, storage and bathroom, and a water harvesting system for potable use in the building which the District intends to share information about with the public. While there were some delays in finishing the project at year end it was finally completed early August 2020.

The revised Whitfield Conservation Area Complex Comprehensive Management Plan was completed end of May by the outgoing manager, Ted Hodoba who retired May 31st, 2020 after working for the District 11 years. The Plan was submitted to full Board for review and approval in June and July.

Additional funding for capital outlay was pursued during the legislative session of 2020. An additional \$75K for a total of \$175K for the new construction project. The Whitfield Committee proposed and the Board approved by majority vote in December to pursue a loan for the balance of the cost to ensure the project could move forward as soon as possible.

1. Stacey Unit Wildfire Update (Ironworks Fire 2019, Valencia County)

Johnny and Ted met with Valencia County Wildfire Chief Rob Barr in May to discuss their partnership in removing trees along the fence line and creating a fire break between the Stacey Unit and the neighbors. They prioritized

removing salt cedar, Russian olive and Siberian elm from the site, and vegetation that is along the south side where there will be fencing repairs. Firefighters will use the remaining dead trees for firefighting trainings. Greater Rio Grande Watershed Alliance may be a potential funding source for fire prevention and restoration especially if involving surrounding residents and landowners. Lindsey spoke with Rob Barr to confirm that an official wildfire report was not completed by the wildfire team and that FEMA funds were not applied for to fund the damaged fencing bordering Joseph Moya's property. As such, District Field crew is moving forward with fencing with District funds and preparing a plan for appropriate fencing construction.



*Ted Hodoba helping with the Birthday Celebration Raffle (left picture)
retired May 31st after 11 years with the District.*

Ted Hodoba continued as project manager for the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Complex, and the Visitor and Conservation Education Center thru May 31st 2020 upon his retirement. The Conservation Program Manager, a new position for management of the Whitfield Complex and other conservation programs of the District replaced the Whitfield Manager position. Lindsey Diaz accepted this position as a lateral re-assignment as the District Board looked forward to a changed role with the East Valencia Urban Gardens Program. Johnny Chavez continued with a new title by year end of Project Lead for lead responsibilities of Field crew and volunteers for all District field activities, and in May 2020 a new employee Ruben Amador who came to us through the Youth Development Incorporated young adult intern program as have many before him.



*The Red winged Blackbird commonly seen at Whitfield
became the focal of the Friends of Whitfield logo.*

In carrying out the mission of the District, Whitfield provides demonstration of the local ecology, native vegetation and wildlife. Through outdoor classroom programming and opportunities for service learning and visiting the open space, The District provides demonstrated land stewardship and an ethic of resources

conservation to the communities of the District. The Whitfield education center and conservation area has provided the means for a variety of outreach and support for partner agencies as well during fiscal year 2020.



December 14th 2019 Whitfield celebrated its 10th annual birthday celebration of the opening of the Visitor Center

2. The Rio Abajo Unit of the Whitfield Complex

Following removal of two outbuildings from the old Horse Training property the continued development of the vision and next steps for the unit restoration and development was on hold in FY20 due to the many interruptions related to staff reorganization and COVID19 adjustments for the year.

The Education Manager has pursued three different grants to date for a service learning planting at the Rio Abajo Unit. The 3rd was submitted in August 2020 for possible spring 2021 planting at the Unit with area youth who have limited opportunities for outdoor experiences.

The Rio Abajo Unit is approximately 130+ acres of uplands and bosque area in south Belen area just east of the San Juan Canal. The property in part used to be a privately owned horse training facility. Former Chair Dale Jones explored the area in 2005 shortly after the donation of the Whitfield property (aka Old Curran Dairy) and was interested in more of the upland area contiguous with the river riparian habitat to the west offering opportunity for restoring upland habitat. The area has also served as an important access area into the riparian zone along the Rio Grande for firefighters and thus provides many benefits as an open space area for local communities.

The Rio Abajo Conservation Area includes prime Bosque along the Middle Rio Grande, a valuable link along with the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area (three miles north) and the Stacy Unit within the Middle Rio Grande corridor for migratory fowl.



Habitat in these areas are home for the yellow billed cuckoo, SW Willow Flycatcher, Rio Grande Turkey, and Gambel Quail to name a few.



The elusive Rio Grande Turkey

4. NM SWCC Water Quality Grant

Following selection for award by the NM Soil & Water Conservation Commission for SWCC Water Quality Program end of FY19, the BEMP Wastewater Outflow Study (chemical inputs into irrigation water for the District) got started late summer 2019. The District partnered with the Bosque Ecosystems Monitoring Program (BEMP) for sampling of wastewater inputs into the irrigation waters of the District during high flow periods of the year. Sampling was completed in June 2020 but the District requested an extension for full analysis and a final report of the findings. The SWCC approved the extension for completion by October 2020. The Final report is attached (See Appendix A). The Board expects to visit with BEMP at their September regular meeting and consider next steps for this evaluation of waters into agricultural lands in the District.

From BEMP’s Final Report August 12th 2020: “The main objective of this study was to monitor and assess the capacity of wetlands to filter wastewater inputs. We focused on pharmaceuticals and personal care products (PPCPs), *E. coli*, and anions. Monitoring was conducted above and below points where effluent entered the Rio Grande as well as the area of discharge from the wastewater treatment plants in Albuquerque and Los Lunas and along a gradient until the confluence with the Rio Grande. The study was designed to assess the mitigating influence of the natural wetlands below the wastewater treatment discharge in Los Lunas. The wastewater discharge in Albuquerque was used as a control, as the discharge flows into a conveyance channel before flowing into the river. This study lays the groundwork for assessing the impact of wastewater effluent on riverine ecology and the potential of wetlands to mitigate this impact. This study provides an initial assessment of the water quality of river flows used to irrigate agricultural lands. Wastewater treatment plants along the Rio Grande, including Albuquerque, Bosque Farms, and Los Lunas, discharge treated effluent into the surface waters that are then used for irrigated crop and pasture land. Effluent is treated to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and New Mexico Environmental Department (NMED) standards for parameters such as suspended solids, total dissolved solids, alkalinity, nitrogen, sulfate, chloride, and fecal coliform. Not included in effluent standards are limits on most pharmaceuticals, personal care products, and many pesticides and herbicides. These not-naturally occurring pharmaceuticals and personal care products (PPCPs) become incorporated into the waters and soils. Concern has been raised over the quality of water used for irrigation, and whether organically grown crops and livestock can be considered “certified organic” when irrigated with water downstream of wastewater treatment plants. Many studies have shown the effectiveness of wetland ecosystems in mitigating pollutants. This study was designed to help identify mitigation provided by wetlands on wastewater effluent as it was returned to the Rio Grande.

Goal 1: BEMP partnered with VSWCD. BEMP was funded to monitor and evaluate the water quality of the Albuquerque and Los Lunas Wastewater Treatment Plant and immediately upstream, downstream, and through the wetlands adjacent to the plant and provide the data, analysis, and reporting to Valencia SWCD Board of Supervisors.

Goal 2: Assess impact of wetlands on water quality.

Goal 3: Provide findings as public information and non-proprietary with regards to sampling and conclusions and adaptive planning of VSWCD based on the study.”



Participant in VSWCD compost study with application on tomatoes to the right, Tome, NM

5. NMDA Healthy Soil Grant FY20 – Compost Study

The first year of funding available through the NM Healthy Soil Act of 2019 was available in FY20. Lindsey Diaz submitted a proposal for study of compost generated at Whitfield over the last year using the Johnson- Su Bioreactor System (developed by David Johnson, Soil Microbiologist, Sustainable Agriculture Program Director, NMSU, Las Cruces, NM), a static aerobic system for producing a fungal dominant compost. The study is working with District producers in monitoring applications in their growing. The program started with the growing season of 2020 and

monitoring and analysis of results will be completed in Fall of 2020 or FY21. At end of the year, June 2020, Lindsey had visited will all participants and all but 2 youth gardens have received compost and had applied the compost to begin monitoring; Different applications are being tried including inoculating a slurry or tea into the soil near living roots, or on seed before planting, as well as directly applying the compost on top of the soil or at the base of plants. The two youth gardens participating applied compost in June at start of reopening of the gardens. The interns participating need more mentorship in applying the compost and monitoring their projects. They have been encouraged to see if they can receive school credit for this project.

7. District Collaborations and Partnerships

1. *Isleta Reach Stewardship Alliance (IRSA)*

In fall of 2019, Paul Tashjian¹ with Audubon New Mexico was inviting stakeholders within the Isleta Reach area of the Rio Grande to participate in a project pursued by Audubon funded through the US Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART program. This effort involves forming a restoration group for the Isleta Reach of the Rio Grande from the South Boundary of Isleta Pueblo to San Acacia NM. Since October the group has been meeting about every 2 months with Paul Tashjian facilitating development of a conceptual restoration plan for the reach, including both riverine and farmland habitat. The group developed and distributed a survey to residents in the reach about the Rio Grande.

The District hosted the February meeting of the group on February 11th at the Whitfield Visitor Center in Belen which included presentations from USACE, NMISC, and MRGCD and also VSWCD with each presenter concluding with their 3 top opportunities within the reach and 3 top constraints within the Reach. Andrew Hautzinger presented on behalf of the District. The Agenda:

Greater February 11 Morning session: river management: 9:00am start time
USACE Levees (USACE, Mickey Porter)
River management path forward (NMISC, Grace Haggerty)
Water delivery challenges, opportunities (MRGCD, David Gensler)

2. *The Greater Rio Grande Watershed Alliance (GRGWA)*

The Regional Conservation Priorities Program funding and Water Trust Board funding available to the District as a member District of the group was available during the year for planning riparian restoration projects in the District. However, there were no active projects during the year. The District Manager and Supervisor Sue Small continued to attend meetings and the District Manager was working with NM Forestry, MRGCD and Valencia County contacts to prioritize and plan for projects in the District.

3. *BEMP MOA 2020*

The District maintained their working Memorandum of Agreement with the Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program (BEMP²) for activities and deliverables. For the Board for planning with adaptive management of riparian areas in the District (the Bosque) and environmental education opportunities for District youth. The year included a grant of \$10,000 to BEMP for these efforts which is less than the actual costs incurred by BEMP to provide this programming in the District.

4. *MRGCD*

The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District held a Collaborative Agency Meeting on February 7th, 2020 at their main office in Albuquerque. Whitfield Program Manager, and Supervisors Gail Goodman, Andrew Hautzinger, and Sue Small attended. After a brief history of the District, they gave an update on what they are doing this coming year and projects they have underway. They are looking to work with soil and water conservation districts. In addition to VSWCD being represented, Ciudad and Coronado SWCDs were there.

5. *Youth Development Inc.*

Has continued to partner with the District in administrative and fiscal support for youth interns and garden keepers for the East Valencia community gardens of the Meadowlake and El Cerro Mission communities of the District. The Memorandum of Agreement between YDI Inc. and the District was updated in FY19.

6. *Friends of Whitfield 501©3*

A community organization for support of the Whitfield Conservation Area Complex. COVID-19 restrictions slowed Friends activities significantly for the year. Their support was primarily in funding of the educational programming through Whitfield (See Education Manager’s Report)

*******END OF 2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT*******

8. **Footnotes**

1. (Paul Tashjian, Director of Freshwater Conservation, Audubon New Mexico, 1800 Upper Canyon Rd., Santa Fe, NM 87505
Phone: 505 217 4531, nm.audubon.org)
2. The BEMP sites in Valencia County were established at Valencia SWCD’s request in 2003 and 2004, originally as a cooperator for the bosque restoration projects of the District funded through the U.S. Forest Service Collaborative Forest Restoration Program. The additional sites to date are the Bosque Farms, Los Lunas, Belen, and Crawford Sites. The MOA is in place for furthering the District mission and provides 10 monthly monitoring visits per year at 8 BEMP sites through BEMP’s active partnership with public and charter school students for collection of the data. Partner schools to date have included Jaramillo Elementary School, Bosque Farms Elementary, Los Lunas High School, Infinity High School of Belen, School of Dreams Academy of Los Lunas, and Rio Grande Elementary of Belen.

BEMP has 32 monitoring sites along 300 miles of the Rio Grande, including 8 sites in Valencia County. BEMP monitors abiotic factors including depth to groundwater; water level in the ditches; precipitation; temperature; and water quality of the river, ditches, and groundwater. BEMP monitors biotic factors including litter fall of native and exotic trees; vegetation cover (including species richness, abundance, and diversity); cottonwood monitoring (size and sex); woody debris/fuel load; surface - active arthropods; and tamarisk leaf beetle presence, abundance, and impact. BEMP tracks the impacts of restoration projects (mechanical clearing, wood chipping, mastication, and bank-lowering), flooding, and fire on the biotic and abiotic variables mentioned above. The data collected, compiled into reports, and presented through various meetings including directly to the Board of Supervisors annually provide reliable data for District management decisions in the restoration of the

Middle Rio Grande corridor as well as opportunity for science education of Valencia County youth. The Report to VSWCD was presented to the Board at their April 2019 meeting and is posted on the BEMP website at www.bemp.org.

9. APPENDICES:

1. APPENDIX - A

1. SWCC Water Quality Grant FY20 Final Report – BEMP Study

(Attached separately)

2. APPENDIX -B

1. ACTION PLAN 2020 - OPERATIONS, SPECIAL PROJECTS, & PROGRAMS*

District Program and Action Items:	Authority /Board action	Who:	Expected Completion Date:	Completed (yes/no) - Notes	
Operations					
1	Meet all budget, financial reporting requirements, deadlines	NM SWCC & NM DFA	D. Mgr., staff, Board review and approval	7/1, 7/15, 7/31 st , 9/1, 10/30, 1/31/20, 4/30/20, 7/1/20, and grant proposal deadlines	7/1/19, 7/15, 7/31/19, 10/31/19
2	Meet all NM SWCC reporting requirements, deadlines	NM SWCC/SWCD Act	D. Mgr., staff	Same as above, also SWCC updates when NM SWCC meets (quarterly)	
3	Outreach for Programs, projects: Website, FB, News-Bulletin	Board/Annual Budget			
4	Fulfill Local Election Act requirements	NM Local Election Act	MM, ML Committee	1 st & 2 nd quarter up to Nov. 5 th 2019	
5	Mil Levy vote November 5 th 2019 – special outreach effort for the vote in 2020	Board Resolution 2019, Board	Mil Levy Comm.	Dates to be scheduled at local	To date – County Fair, Ag Day Aug 15 th , 8/24 Food Fiesta booth, 9/4 County

		action for 2019 & 2020 budget		meetings up to November 5 th 2019	Comrs.' mtg., 9/10 City of Rio Comm. mtg.
6	Committee level operations: Whitfield Complex Committee (combine RACA and Whitfield Committees in 2020)	Board approved charter Nov '19	District Manager, Board action	September 20 Board meeting	
7	Conversion of Employee Handbook to VSWCD Policy Handbook to include employee, Supervisor, accounting and operational policies, procedures in one handbook for the District; initial draft to be established 1 st quarter of year – living document to be added to/revised/reviewed as needed.	Personnel Committee recommended	District Manager, Personnel Committee review, Board approval	October 18 th Board meeting	Nov 19 mtg. provided outline – December 2019 submit to Board by DM – need Intern, volunteer additions
8	<p>Training for Employees:</p> <p>a) Grants management improvement/training for management staff.</p> <p>b) GIS training – open source and ArcGIS and applications for use of geo-data and geospatial communications with public online other apps development – community engagement for future planning.</p> <p>c) Smart Sheet training for coordinated project management for staff – in house to develop coordinated and consistent management of projects, grant funding and reporting, evaluation.</p> <p>d) First Aid training – for all staff</p> <p>e) Chief Procurement Officer recertification for District Manager October 2019</p> <p>f) Individual Training Plans with direct impact on 2020 outcomes.</p>	DM recommends; 2020 Budget	District Manager, staff – Personnel Committee oversight as appropriate	<p>GIS training by December 2019, Grants mgt. training – planning by DM Nov-Dec. – maybe training in December.</p> <p>HR training/DM training – Sept. & Oct. – staff training Oct.</p> <p>i) DM midyear review of individual plans by December 15th 2019</p> <p>k)DM and admin help for soils October 2019, WQ data follow up by Whitfield mgr. with associates (Kim Eichhorst, Kevin Hobbs)</p>	<p>Some yes</p> <p>No Smart sheets</p> <p>Migration to MS Teams during year with more remote staff arrangements</p>

	<p>g) HR training for District Manager</p> <p>h) Conservation Planning training for DM if available</p> <p>i) Review employee action plans mid-year along with Budget review– District Manager</p> <p>Employee training for entering data into database, use of data for planning, community engagement through training program, explore use of drone mapping and remote sensing applications for Whitfield Complex and broader applications (erosion mitigation projects). Develop at least one community interaction application for data already thru database; may need to start with areas of major flood events west side upland areas of District.</p> <p>j) Set up soils data, water monitoring data collection since 2012 and 2009 respectively.</p>				
9	Isleta Pueblo partial de-annexation certification by Secretary of State Office - completion	NMSWCC , SWCD Act procedure, SOS procedure		District Manager – ongoing – as soon as possible.	Not received
10	<p>Laguna Pueblo:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rangeland focus – Richard Bonine leads initiatives for Laguna Pueblo needs • Develop and strengthen relationship for Local Work Group engagement with Laguna Pueblo 	DM recommend	R. Bonine, D. Mgr.		No – developments for FY 21 given to LUP Committee

11	<p>Local Work Group development:</p> <p>Develop new District led framework to strengthen local work group participation – more meetings, review of conservation needs, District outreach effort – tied to land use plan, mapping capacity; identifying priorities for LWG-protocol and procedures for VSWCD program; determine if VSWCD only or regional District approach and meet with other Districts, Pueblos as needed.</p>	<p>USDA Local Work Group (need to cite reference here – District Mandate</p>	<p>D. Mgr., Board</p>	<p>Following NRCS led meeting Sept. or Oct 2018 for Field Office FY requirements, then start new process November 1st 2019.</p>	<p>No- development for FY 21 given to LUP Comm. – same as above</p>
12	<p>Budget adjustments 2020: Decisions in first quarter to bring expenditures into line with annual revenues; reduce budget by 2020 – decisions to be made. If new mil levy vote in November is positive, the remainder of fiscal year still requires budget cut until add 'l tax is effectively being collected to meet current operating levels.</p>	<p>Board Action June 2018</p>	<p>D. Mgr., Board review and action</p>	<p>Mid-year review, March and/or April Board regular meeting Budget planning for FY21</p>	<p>Yes</p>
13	<p>Consideration of NM Finance Authority Loan for Building Phase 2 project; terms of loan will depend on mil levy vote outcome in November – Intent is to pursue construction in 2020 – complete construction with \$100K capital outlay award obtained in 2019 and loan for balance.</p>	<p>Board Resolution 5-2020, SWCD Act compliance, NMFA Public Project Revolving Fund</p>	<p>D. Mgr., Whitfield Mgr., Whitfield Committee, Board action</p>	<p>Post Nov 5th 2019 vote, Whitfield Committee meets, MM revisits with NMMFA, Board action Jan or Feb</p>	<p>Yes</p>

14	Land Use Plan – 1 st Draft to Board – following initial adoption will proceed with updates as needed; 2 nd phase mapping / database additions assessed / complete (funding approved in FY17)		Land Use Plan Committee: MM, TH, A Hautzinger, Sue Small, R. Bonine, L. Diaz, A. Martin, Board action /approval	Meet 1 or 2x per month for Dec Board meeting deliverable, recommendations for additions, 2020 action planning review / changes	No – not yet completed.
15	Grant Seek, management for District	Board action to meet programming needs	DM, Staff, Board	Need management plan for year – Staff development upon review of programs in action plan – Action Plan is reviewed and approved by Board for 2020, changes/additions need approval by Committees, Board	Yes

District Program and Action Items:	Authority / Board Action	Who:	Expected Completion Date:	Completed (yes/no) - Notes
Education Outreach				
1	School Programs: a) Programs b) Teacher summit	AM, volunteers, LD, JC	School programs: Sept– Dec and March –May, Nat. Hist. Collab at Whitfield Jan- Feb, Other programs all year, Teacher Summit July 2019, plan 2020 summit	b. 2020 Summit plan all year – Committee review Yes
2	Community Events			
2	Service opportunities; learning special restoration projects	AM, TH, LD, MM	All year	Yes and No – COVID19 limited outreach

	development – youth participation at Whitfield, other project sites in District; pollinator, wildlife habitat, ag applications, soil health, water quality, water conservation applications.				
	Published Educational Outreach: Quarterly Newsletter Website Education FB Page				Three quarterly newsletters within the year
3	Whitfield Master Naturalist program: transfer program to Education Manager, carry out program		AM, TH	Mar-May	Cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19
4	Community Science-Whitfield GW monitoring program development		AM, TH, MM, Ed. Committee, Interns		Some development of District monitoring program with Andrew Hautzinger, Supervisor taking lead – assessed existing monitoring efforts across various programs – ongoing
5	Whitfield Outdoor Classroom programming		AM, Educator volunteers, Ed Interns, TH & JC if needed (substitute educators)		Yes
6	Dan Goodman Award: Outreach Review of applicants		AM, MM, Board review committee. Board action	TBD by EM – typ. Outreach Feb, March, Apps due April 2020, Comm. review, Board action May or June 2020	Yes

7	<p>East Valencia Urban Gardens - Youth Intern Program, school programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing seasonal program for community gardens • YDI Collaboration for admin support continued • School on site programming development • Educational opportunities for interns, community small farms, backyard gardens • Permaculture Workshops? • Grant seeking for educational programming 		<p>LD, AM, YDI Inc., MM, EVUGP Committee, Board action as needed</p>	<p>Planning done prior to mid-year Board review of Budget: January or February regular Board meeting</p>	<p>Yes</p>
8	<p>NM Envirothon – teams from District for State competition – outreach, state competition workshop in Valencia County if possible- if teams formed here.</p>		<p>AM lead, MM</p>	<p>October start outreach,</p>	<p>Attended planning meeting- difficult year for outreach – teacher turnover – unfamiliarity with opportunity / capacity to participate</p>
9	<p>Soil Health Workshops:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Soil Health Academy October 23rd Statewide Soil Health Conf. b) 2020Hoop House Training c) No – Till equipment training and certification with Morgan Minor – proposal to F.A. Committee for adjunct to No Till equipment rental program start thru F.A. 		<p>MM, AM, associates; District collaborations</p>	<p>Planning completed prior to mid-year review – December 15th 2019 target</p>	<p>October 23rd Soil Health Academy workshop was conducted – 130 attendees</p>

10	Develop education intern program for Education program capacity building: Intern job descriptions		AM with associates, MM, Whit Mgr., Ed Comm.		No
11	Meet with Education Committee as needed for development of programs, review of programming		AM, Committee: AM, District Manager, EVUGP Coordinator, A. Hautzinger on Board, Friends President Eileen B., volunteers, interns, Whitfield Manager	As needed and prior to Board regular and special meeting review of Budget FY20 and 21; mid-year Jan or Feb and Mar & April	Yes

District Program and Action Items:	Authority / Board Action	Who:	Expected Completion Date:	Completed (yes/no) - Notes
Financial Assistance Program				
1				Dec & Feb
Community – special projects with deadline		MM, CS, FA Committee	September for program revisions, Oct-Dec for field work, applications.	Dec & Feb, year round – Yes
Ag – Special projects with deadline ; revised programming, applications reviews, site visits, outreach on work done		MM, CS, FA Committee	Jan-Mar Board action on applications	Dec-Yes

2	<p>New In 2020 No – till equipment rental program set up – if funding permits; includes certification program for use of equipment – those certified can provide contract work with the equipment for producers at nominal rental fee.</p>		<p>MM, LD, TH, FA Committee, Board action to purchase No Till equipment for rental</p>	<p>September, Programming Jan-March; Committee, Board action oversite to be determined</p>	<p>Timing needs to be reviewed, Need new mil levy to fund or grant to fund</p> <p style="text-align: right;">- No</p>
3	<p>New in 2020 - Ongoing hoop house, rain harvest tank & barrel purchase for ml taxpayers.</p>		<p>MM, CS, FA Committee plan/recommend, Board action</p>	<p>September Board mtg. action on new program</p>	<p>No – developed for FY21</p>
4	<p>Technical Support – conservation land use planning, soil health management plans, pollinator plantings, rain garden and harvest planning, soil erosion projects - outreach focused on west side uplands areas in coordination</p>		<p>MM, CS, MRGCD Collaboration,</p>		<p>Yes</p>

with MRGCD federal funding to address storm water and flood event critical areas for restoration.				
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District Program and Action Items:	Authority/Board Action:	Who:	Expected Completion Date:	Completed (yes/no) - Notes
Special Projects				
Whitfield Complex Programs				
1	<p>Whitfield Complex – a) ongoing Fall plantings for permanent pasture transition for wildlife crop area Add pollinator plantings, other landscape demo sites, b) Finalize updated Comprehensive Management Plan in 1st quarter of 2020 – before Board meeting September Emergency preparedness additions – wildfire for main unit with intent to add Stacy and RACA units in 2020 Education Manager addition Stacy and RACA unit additions</p>	TH, JC, VC, AC, AH, MM	Fall, Spring	Yes – end of year completion

				meeting – install fence date and who TBD	
East Valencia Urban Gardens Program					
3	<p>East Valencia Urban Gardens Program:</p> <p>a) Seasonal community gardens coordination with youth interns program</p> <p>b) Review original five year plan and current outcomes of program – evaluation and possible changes at EVUPG Committee level – meet at least quarterly.</p> <p>c) Finalize revised MOA with Valencia County for securing community garden spaces at Community Centers (2)</p> <p>d) Bioreactor composting and other soil health applications practiced in gardens documenting,</p> <p>e) Monitoring and evaluation; prepare handbook guide for compost applications.</p> <p>f) Community advisor group meetings; transition of gardens to community ownership; redirect funding of coordinator long term need of gardens – to be assessed</p> <p>g) Incorporate financial assistance program for other landowners in Meadow Lake and El Cerro Communities where possible as part of program</p>		EVUGP Committee: LD, MM, SS, TSdC, Valencia County, Board action		<p>Yes – in part NMDA Healthy Soil Grant continued into FY21</p> <p>Some continued discussions with MRGCD, Applied Terrain Systems regarding upland flood event management</p>

	<p>h) Utilize geospatial data base where helpful in outreach for urban garden program broadening scope to private landowner participation.</p> <p>i) Upland Flood Protection/Storm water salvage in southern Valencia and northern Socorro County; partnership with Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District lead – anticipate in-kind match with financial assistance program in supporting private landowner participation in upland restoration efforts starting in 2020.</p>				
Water Quality Program					
4	<p>SWCC Water Quality Study – carry out study as planned in collaboration with BEMP during year – quarterly reporting requirements.</p>		MM, AM, AH	June 30th	<p>Jun 30th Extended to October 2020 – completed August 2020</p>
Bosque Restoration Program					
5	<p>Greater Rio Grande Watershed Alliance Projects as planned for fall 2019 and winter 2020 contracting (to be determined) - Rio Abajo Unit restoration project – 6 acres in SW area of property bosque area east of the San Juan canal along the western border of the property.</p>		MM, TH, Field Crew as needed, Whitfield Committee on timing, scope of work for RACA	<p>Fall – Sept., Oct., Nov. identify 2020 projects, timing Winter – project at RACA mgt. by TH, Field Crew</p>	<p>Fall, Winter – no projects – some planning for FY21</p>
6	<p>Valencia County Wildfire Mgt. Cooperation; FEMA</p>	FEMA/Va. Cty.	TH, MM, Board action	TBD	<p>No FEMA funding pursued by County</p>

					- pursuing other sources
END OF ACTION PLAN					