

## **July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Regular Board Meeting**

### **VSWCD Staff Report for the Board:**

- Board Meeting Agenda (below)
- District Director Monthly Report (Andrew Hautzinger)
- Business Manager Report (Megan McCready)
- Education Manager Monthly Report (Laura McCann)
- Conservation Program Manager Report (Johnny Chavez)
- YCC Field Crew #2: Juztine Diaz (Crew Leader), Fran Keryte, Nate Kaib, Mikaila Chavez and Dulce Bautista

### **Final Agenda 20JUL2023: \*VSWCD Regular Board Monthly Meeting:**

**CALL TO ORDER 4 P.M.** (set for every 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month)

- *Verify quorum, conduct pledge of allegiance and agenda review with changes & approval*
- *Approval of 6/15/2023 Regular Board Meeting Minutes*
- *Public Comments (e.g., posted letters and emails from [public-input@valenciaswcd.org](mailto:public-input@valenciaswcd.org))*
- *District Staff Monthly Report*
- *CPR Training Class @ Whitfield*
- *Farmers Market @ WWCA*
- *Updates/Partner Reports /Correspondence/Other: NMDA Monthly Report (Katie Mechenbier), Monthly Rpt. (Nick Goodman), MRGCD Monthly Report, Friends of Whitfield Monthly Rpt. (Pres. Linda Frazer) and Correspondence/Announcements (e.g., RGALT's Elena's request for support)*
- *2023 Dan Goodman Scholarship-Update*
- *2023 NMACD Award Nominations and NMACD Region 1 Annual Mtg Recap*
- *Budget & Accounting: (typically led by Treasurer Draszkievicz (or her Acting), and Business Manager McCready)*
  - *Month of June 2023 expenditures review & approval*
  - *Resolution #1-2024: Final FY23 Budget/4th Quarter*
  - *Resolution #2-2024: Final FY24 Projected Budget*
  - *Grant Updates: (1) SWCC WQC Grant (denied), (2) AmeriCorps VISTA (approved!), (3) CASC-SC grant (pending), In the works: (4)Dept. Commerce EDA grant, (5) VC-ARPA*
- *Executive Session (for board discussion of a pending personnel matter re: Business Manager position)*
- *Return from Executive Session*
- *Consideration of a motion*
- *Supervisor Round Robin*

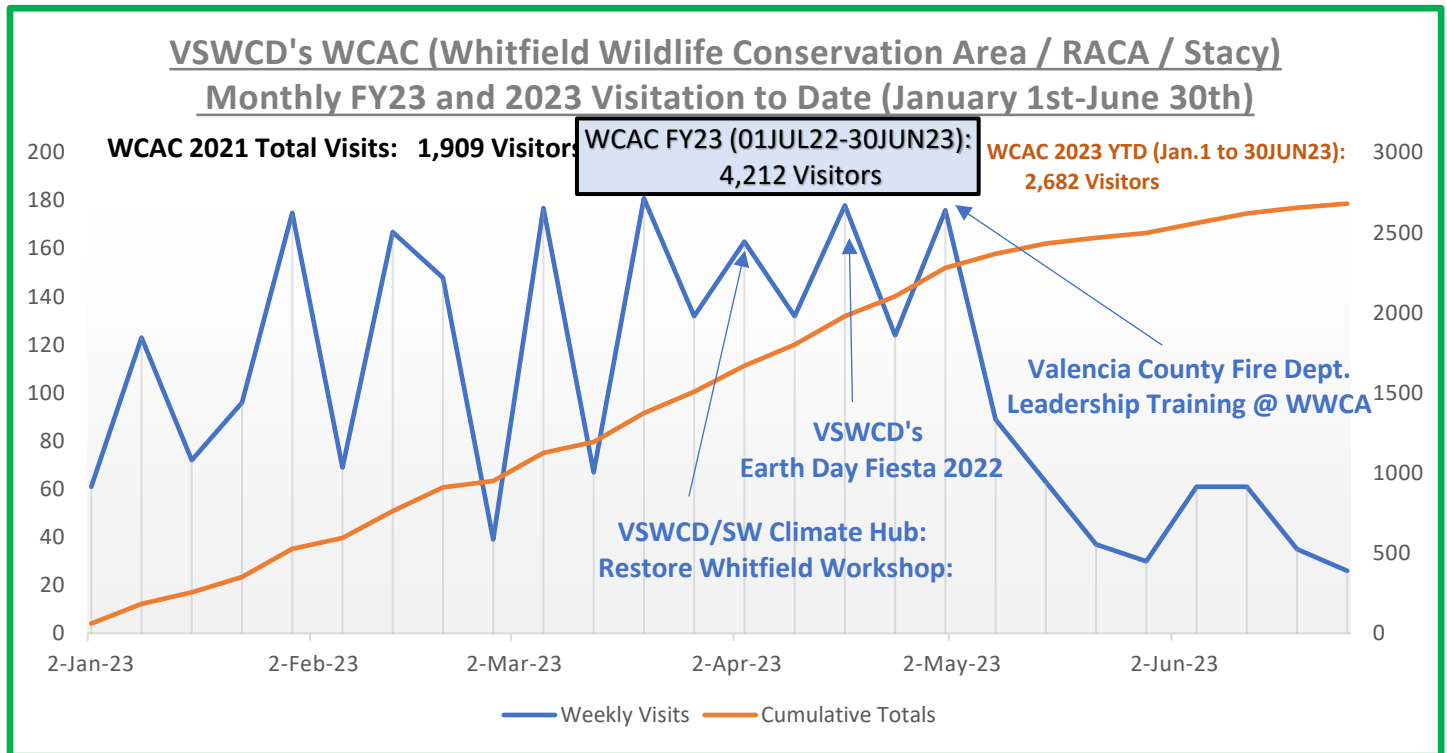
**Expected 7 PM ADJOURNMENT**

\*Any item listed on the published meeting agenda can be acted upon by the Board.

## District Director's Report to the VSWCD Board of Supervisors' July 20th, 2023 Regular Monthly Meeting

**Director Updates & Activities:** Please accept this abbreviated Director's report, as Andrew heads off for a week of camping in Colorado with family.

**Monthly Visitation:** As shown in the visitation chart below, the Whitfield Complex has enjoyed visits from over 4,000 people during FY23 (that ended June 30, 2023).



**VSWCD's Soil & Water Conservation Monthly Column:** Our fifth column of the year ran on 6/22/2023 entitled *"Step Up and Make A Difference"* an insightful interview between our Vice Chair Teresa Smith de Cherif and her fellow board member Duana Draszkievicz, giving Duana the chance to tell the readership why she volunteers for the VSWCD as one of her ways of using her given time to "make a difference".

### **Priority Updates & Activity Recaps:**

- **Welcome to New Earth Pad:** As Business Manager McCready details a bit below in her monthly report, a clear highlight of the last month was the quick turnaround project that made 100% use of expiring capital outlay funds for the Whitfield Educational Center's office building. As we continue to secure resources for the full project costs (estimated to be as high as \$1.5M for 1950 square foot building), we found ourselves needing to make use of \$65k in expiring funds from a 2019 outlay for the second building—we tried unsuccessfully to get an extension, but ended up needing to spend the funds by 6/30/23. As shown in this June 29, 2023 roof-top panorama, we now have a certified earth pad to place our building once full finances are secured 😊. Thanks to John Kirkpatrick for his on-call assistance.





- **Grant updates:** In Re: to several pending grant applications, we have received a denial from the SWCC for our 4/7/23 proposal submitted to rehab the WWCA pond (this was our second try---we'll improve and keep at it---NRCS's Cholas wants to have a more rigorous bio-survey of the pond prior to any actions). Our AmeriCorps Vista proposal (submitted in May) has been approved, with the operative MOA being processed (we expect VISTA volunteers to report to duty in October or November). Our "statement of interest" put in 5/31/23 with the USGS's South Central Climate Adaptation Science Center (CASC) is still pending (this is with USGS Pat Shafroth as Principal Investigator and relates to the development of a **Plant Matrix** manual).
- Andrew attended the office opening of HD2 Representative Gabe Vasquez's office on 6/27/23, a great chance to network with staff from the NM federal and state delegations.
- On June 28, 2023 Andrew attended the US Bureau of Reclamation's **Rio Grande Basin Study** All Parties webinar (the first such meeting after VSWCD's has signed the RGBS MOA).
- On July 7<sup>th</sup>, the Whitfield Complex was visited by Valencia County Commissioner Troy Richardson, who spent a few hours on complex with Andrew. Troy expressed support for the Bosque Management work of VSWCD and looks forward to an update of our work for his full commission.
- On July 15, Andrew and Megan completed what we hope is a report to NMDA to garnish all the points our district can to get full NMDA annual funds (e.g., \$17k received by VSWCD from NMDA in FY23).

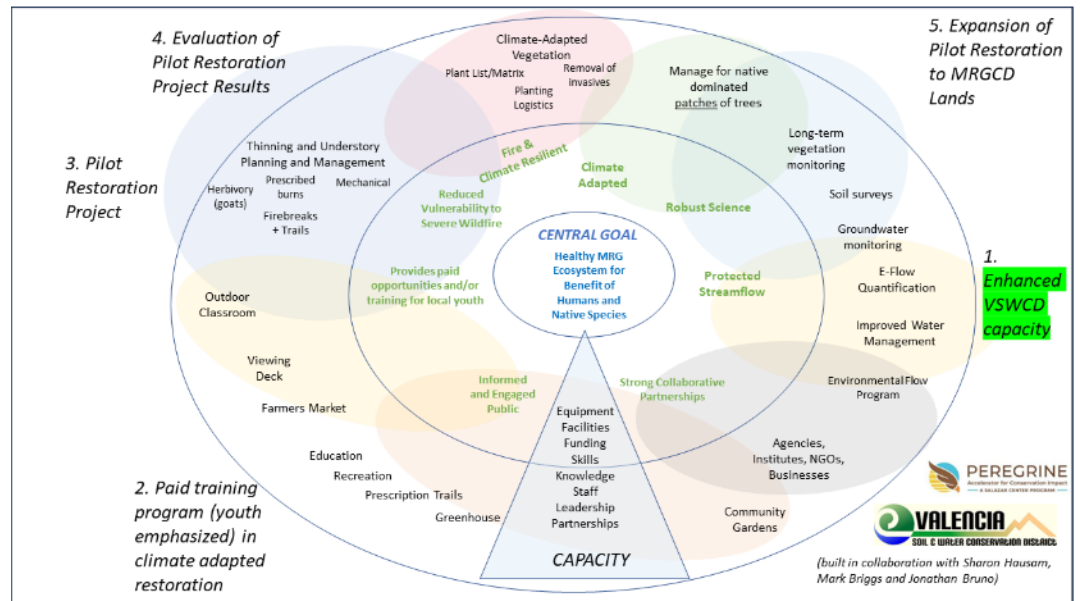




- There's been a series of excellent Peregrine Accelerator program webinars in the past month, including an excellent one from Theodore Roosevelt Foundation, entitled: 'Utilizing Unprecedented Federal Funding', and another on the Theory of Change learning module. The diagram below is an output from these conversation, put together by one of our Peregrine Accelerator mentors Sharon Hausam.

**MINI WORKSHOP:** VSWCD is planning on a MINI WORKSHOP on Wednesday August 9<sup>th</sup> at the Whitfield Visitor's Center. This will be facilitated by Sharon Hausam, and will include our second PA mentor Jonathan Bruno

(bringing decades of collaborative work in the fire world). We intend on getting as many of the VSWCD Board of Supervisors as possible to attend, as well as VSWCD staff and a set of core partners (e.g., drawn from MRGCD (Yasmeen Najmi has confirmed), MRGESCP



(Debbie Hill) and NRCS (Athena Cholas). This workshop is designed to address VSWCD near-term recovery plans, and details for the 9/7/23 Peregrine Accelerator Program Final Presentation (where 9 teams will argue for a +\$100k project implementation grant being offered to 1 or 2 teams). Lots of good progress on determining the optimal path ahead for the VSWCD!

- On June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, VSWCD staff the Whitfield Complex YCC Crew visited the Specter property (185 Armijo Road, Belen), to review the great work Chris and Harold Specter have done on their property. Acres of cleared debris, weed removal, new fencing and irrigation system with a solid native planting regime implemented---a stand out project meriting a VSWCD Financial Assistance Program Highlight writeup in the coming months.
- On July 19, 2023 Andrew attend the first session of the Water Resources Board (MRG+COG) since VSWCD joined the board. Great overview talk provided by NMISC's Andrew Erdmann (NMISC)—Andrew H. will try and get his excellent water resource slides in the board meeting folder.
- I'll sign off here on this director's report, hoping everyone is enjoying this summer (as the upcoming school year approaches).



*Andrew H. Erdmann*

VSWCD District Director



## **Business Manager's Monthly Report July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023: Submitted by Megan McCready**

Hello dearest board members,

I trust that all of you are in good health and enjoying these warm summer days. I know my family and I have been trying to beat the heat anyway we can. We have been making our own popsicles and playing in the water most days. This month has been nothing short of busy. Buckle up and enjoy the ride as we have much to discuss.

This month started with me being away at a family reunion as you all know, since I was not present at the last board meeting. I hope things went smoothly. I had the best time with my family and children. We incorporated so many things from a fishing contest (my oldest won with a 14-inch walleye), crazy hat night, shaking ping pong balls out of tissue boxes using only our hips, a horseshoe competition (my husband and oldest son were the winners), and I took a tens unit with me to watch all my cousin TRY to drink while I controlled their muscles. So much fun! I have the videos in case you would like to see what this looks like.

I also competed in a regional I-corps program for my father's business. I can go into greater detail as requested. In short, we followed everything we were supposed to do and received a 2,000.00-dollar stipend and have been offered a chance to compete at the national level where the prize is 250,000.00 dollars. We have not decided if we will participate in this yet as it comes at what will be my mid-terms and hunting season when my dad and brothers guide hunts. The timing just might not be right for us.

Upon my return to Whitfield, I was happily greeted by my peers and welcomed back with open arms, as well as a Megan help me list (I love getting these).

The first big thing was getting the capital outlay funds spent so that we would not lose them. I can happily say we did just that. We worked with an organization called Cooperative Educational Services, and with this organization we were able to speed up the bid process, get a construction team hired, and the groundwork done to get a fully certificated and compacted earthen pad laid down for the second building. Of course, this could not be done without a little hiccup or two. While the tractor operator was moving dirt, he accidentally found our water line. Because of this I had to scramble to find a plumber that would come out the same day to do the repair and reroute the line. To my surprise I was able to do just that I contacted Antonio's Plumbing and he got us completely taken care in 2 hours. Funny enough, the emergency repair bill from the plumber also allowed us to spend the entire capital outlay fund that was due to expire (\$65k from 2019 outlay). Talk about cutting it close all of this was done on the 28<sup>th</sup> our deadline was June 30<sup>th</sup>. Talk about a nail biter!

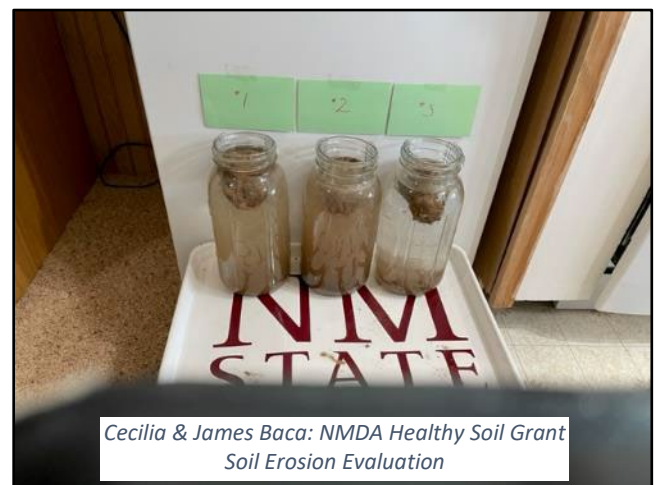
I have also had two meetings with Mr. Fogel this month. Our first meeting was spent preparing the books to receive payments in FY24 for expenditures that happened in FY23. Capital outlay funds being the biggest one, and there are two others. We must spend the funds and get reimbursed for them, and because neither transaction happened in the same fiscal year, we had to do some work in the books to fix that. We also went in and looked at each account and made sure we could reconcile them, especially the ones that had a balance carried over. For example, the payroll account has not seen a zero balance since April because some of our employees prefer paper checks to direct deposit. Until those checks are cashed the account has a balance of whatever that check or checks amounts are. This makes me a little batty just because it is another layer of checking on things I must do. If the outstanding checks do not equal the balance in the account, I must dig deeper.

I prepared for our second meeting by going through the preliminary budget, the profit and lost report, and the general ledger. I did this to ensure that we have the most up to date numbers and budget line items in each line item so that at our second meeting Mr. Fogel could double-check work and be ready for the work ahead. When Mr. Fogel arrived for our second meeting we went through my work and had to make some minor adjustments for the things I did not understand, but from there we were able to get our work started.

Mr. Fogel and I were able to create our annul budget with some adjustment from last year. We were also able to

get our 4<sup>th</sup> quarter report done; I have made the board resolution for each of these items (in board meeting packet). We have a lot to sign at our next board meeting that is for sure. I think I am getting a better grip on the reporting and the processes in place for the reporting, but I would like to ask Mr. Fogel for his support to do just the reporting part with me throughout FY24 to ensure that I really have this down.

I have also been working on HSP and FAP, for those of you that do not know that is a healthy soil program and our financial assistance program. The HSP is a NMDA Program, with the financials done through NMSU, and we are the designated “eligible entity” that provides support to the individual applicants and ensures all the reporting is done without errors (plus us providing technical support along the way). The last day of this program was June 16<sup>th</sup>, and we were able to assist Baca Family Farms and others with their projects as well as our own. In the last six months we have not had to pay for a soil test, and we also made a little more than 2,000.00 dollars being the eligible entity for individual applicants. We also closed out the FY23 FAP on June 30<sup>th</sup>, but I gave it until July 7<sup>th</sup> to have all documentation in. With the board’s support I would like to change the date of our FAP a little bit. I would like the closing date to be pushed to June 15<sup>th</sup> with all documentation required by the 20<sup>th</sup>. This will ensure that I get this program closed out completely within the appropriate fiscal year. Trying to justify payment for projects not in the same FY is a pain in the you know what. Both programs require a W-9 form to be filled out if your award is more than 600.00 dollars. I must say I am glad I had some kind of leverage to get what I needed from them before payment could be made. Not all were happy with me because of the W-9, but most understood. This is more so the case with the HSP people could not understand why VSWCD needed the W-9 and not NMSU; trying to explain to individuals that, that is the role of the eligible entity was enough to create some bald spots.



I have also updated our LGBMS access forms to keep us compliant and current. Our DFA contact Stephanie said, “thank you so much for being on top of these, I completely forgot to send the reminder out to all the individuals that I cover”. Glad I could help. So far, she and I work really well together and I am happy with the relationship I have there.

The last thing I have to share is that CES has asked me to assist in their RFP bidding process. I must have 12 companies gone through and evaluated before the 20<sup>th</sup>. This is not really hard work, but it is a lot of reading. I have done half of it so far and will do the other half on Monday the 17<sup>th</sup>. I would be happy to answer questions you all may have on any of these topics.

Thank you,  
Megan McCreedy, Business Manager, CPO

PS--If any of you have any questions or concerns, please send me an email ([meganmccreedy@valenciaswcd.org](mailto:meganmccreedy@valenciaswcd.org))



# Environmental Education Program Manager Report

Report to VSWCD Board of Supervisors July 20, 2023

Dear Board of Supervisors,

Can you believe it is already July? This summer is flying by...pun intended! In June I was busy doing a lot of planning for this month's Summer Conservation Camp (which we had just last week) and doing a couple of field trips with summer schools. I have also been working on preparations for reaching out to teachers for programs this upcoming school year. The new school year starts August 1<sup>st</sup>, which is right around the corner!

## Classroom Programs & Field Trips

The two school field trips on June 9 with UNMVC Upward Bound (high school students) and June 13 with K-6 summer school students from Los Lunas Elementary School went very well! Currently, I do not have any field trips on my schedule for the rest of this month. I am reaching out to schools this week in Los Lunas and Belen. My calendar opens for school field trips in September!

Update on the Whitfield Journals... Flyer Press has finished the printing! These were paid for by our Friends of Whitfield group. After consulting with District Director Hautzinger, we decided to do the spiral binding of these journals ourselves. Flyer Press would charge \$4.00 per journal to do this. Instead, we have purchased a coil binding machine and 1,000 coils to do this. This brings down the cost to less than 40¢ per journal! I will be enlisting the help of volunteers to bind the journals. We can do this a little at a time, rather than all at once. Furthermore, the binding machine will be useful in the creation of other VSWCD projects.

This summer I will be doing another training for those who wish to become field trip volunteers. **I HAVE CHANGED THE DATE OF THIS TRAINING TO AUGUST 19 FROM 9AM-1PM.** If you know of anyone who would like to be trained to volunteer to guide field trips, please have them contact me:

[EducationManager@valenciaswcd.org](mailto:EducationManager@valenciaswcd.org). More volunteers are always welcome, since this gives people a chance to volunteer when they are able, without being asked to come every week! \*See flyer at the end of this report.

## Update on Signage from P&M Signs

I am happy to report we have both the Upland Trail sign and the Owl Tree Memorial plaque from P&M Signs. Johnny and the YCC Crew will be installing the Upland Trail sign in the near future. The Owl Tree Memorial plaque will be in the Visitor Center for now, while we determine if or when it should be placed out in the conservation area near the tree. Both signs are here for you to look at today, and I have placed a video of the making of the Owl Tree Memorial plaque for you to view. It was put together by P&M Signs for us.

## Master Naturalist Program

All Master Naturalist Intern projects are in process. There is nothing new to report at this time. I will update you on these projects in the Fall.

## **REMINDER**

Master Naturalist Class 2024: The Master Naturalist Committee met and decided to hold the next class at a different time of year due to wind, length of day, and season. It will be August 15-October 17, 2024. Our celebration of completed coursework and 2023 Master Naturalists presentations will be on October 19, 2024. Johnny and I will be setting up an online location for course materials on our website. More on this as it develops...

## Events

**SAVE THE DATE!** Our next big event will be on Saturday September 16: **Desert Willow & Pollinator Festival**. We have ordered 49 Desert Willow seedlings from NM Forestry for the event! We will also have Trees That Please as



a vendor for more plant sales that day.. Johnny will also be tagging Monarchs that day. Johnny and I will also be doing our Monarch Butterfly presentation for this event. I have asked the Xerces Society and RD Wildlife to do presentations on supporting pollinators in your backyard and bat pollinators, respectively. I have also contacted vendors to have tables at our event. In the next 2 weeks I will finish planning this event and have a flyer created! I will email it to staff and Board Supervisors when it is ready.

We will also have a smaller event on Saturday November 4: **Whitfield Under the Stars!** This event will be a star party without the Fall Festival earlier in the day. We have tentatively scheduled it for 5:30-9pm. Details will be announced as we finish planning. *\*Since our Fall Festival was too close to Halloween last year, we decided to do a bigger Fall event in September and scale down to a star party in early November.* The sun goes down earlier at that time of year, and the date won't have lots of competition from Halloween events.

### Summer Conservation Camp

Our **Summer Conservation Camp** for youth ages 8-12 was held last week, July 10-14. I am happy to report it was a great success! We had 15 participants with all ages represented 8-12. Seven of our campers were disadvantaged youth from El Ranchito de Los Ninos. We had an extra young helper on Monday and another on Friday, who also participated in learning activities. So, in total, we impacted 17 young lives! Parents and guardians expressed gratitude for the camp and said they loved what their children learned about conserving our natural resources. Here is a message from one of the parents: "Thank you for hosting such an awesome week!! Please let us know ANY time you're hosting anything and we'll be there. (My child) can't stop raving. Have a great weekend, Laura!" Knowing young people are positively impacted by my teaching is every teacher's greatest desire. Knowing young people are learning to connect to nature and understand natural resource conservation is my goal as the VSWCD Education Program Manager!

Our partners were invaluable to helping make this camp a success. I wish to warmly thank Rocket Punch Farm, Sublime Pastures, Stephanie Russo-Baca and MRGCD, the Utton Center, NRCS, USFWS, NMDA, NM Raptors, the NMSU Agriculture Extension in Los Chavez, and our very own Friends of Whitfield group. These agencies helped provide education, site visits, activities, souvenirs, and financial donations for our camp. After totaling all donations and subtracting expenses, VSWCD only spent \$83.37 out of pocket for this Summer Conservation Camp. I look forward to doing this again next summer!

If you have any questions about this report, please let me know! As always, it is an honor to serve my community as the Environmental Education Program Manager at VSWCD!

-Laura







## Conservation Program Manager Report

Prepared by Johnny Chavez, [johnnychavez@valenicaswcd.org](mailto:johnnychavez@valenicaswcd.org)

VSWCD BOS Monthly Meeting –6/20/2023

### District-Wide Programs

#### Youth Conservation Corps

The Youth Conservation Corps members are doing a fantastic job. They have helped clear vegetation and limbs over trails that were in the way. The crew has been learning more about soils, ecology, hydrology, and plants. Chavez wants to continue to make a good learning environment for the members and allow them to choose what they want to learn in this field.

#### EVUGP

Gardens continue to go. Both Garden Managers are working hard to make sure the gardens stay wet during this dry season. They have some help but not as much as they would like. Chavez is still searching for more volunteers to help the gardens.

#### Peregrine Accelerator

As these training sessions continue and more engagement with the mentors, Chavez believes everyone involved is learning a lot from the program. Chavez has learned a lot about communication, connections, and implementations. Chavez is enjoying this engagement and hope to learn more.

### Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area Complex

#### Whitfield

Whitfield has a lot of diversity after the Big Hole Fire and continues to heal. The conservation area is doing well and natural revegetation succession is looking overall good. There are some “hotspots” of non suitable vegetation that will need to be looked at next growing season.

As the District continues to monitor the progress of the conservation area after the fire, we will be able to better start planning for a revegetation plan and see where we can work with NRCS with some of these designs.



*Desert willow at WWCA Center entrance area with native bee*



### Whitfield Monitoring

Monitoring projects around Whitfield continue with the Master Naturalists. These projects will continue for a year with the Master Naturalist program and see if the students will continue the monitoring projects.

The VGS monitoring software is still being worked on. Chavez is working with the University to get protocols in place for different types of monitoring.

### RACA

RACA is still on a hold till the new contract comes through. Some revegetation of non-native vegetation could be seen and will be tackled in the fall when we can hit the roots before the plants go dormant.

### Education

Chavez will finish his Conservation Ecology by the end of the month and will then start his next class. Chavez is learning more complex systems that connect all living individuals to a larger spectrum.



*Rock Squirrel (Spermophilus variegatus)*



*Illinois bundleflower (Desmanthus illinoensis)*