

**Forest and Watershed Restoration Act (FAWRA) Advisory Board**  
**Meeting Minutes (Final)**  
**April 13, 2022**  
FINAL

**1. Call to Order**

A virtual WebEx meeting of the FAWRA Advisory Board (Board) was called to order at 9:00 a.m. on April 13, 2022, and presided over by Laura McCarthy, State Forester, Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), Forestry Division.

- **Board Members and Delegates Present**  
Laura McCarthy, State Forester, EMNRD, Forestry Division, FAWRA Chair  
Mark Myers, State Land Office (SLO)  
Stewart Liley, Department of Game and Fish (DGF)  
Julie Valdez, Office of the State Engineer (OSE)  
John Rhoderick, Environment Department (ED)  
Abe Franklin, Environment Department (ED)  
Kathy Holian, Public Member for academic or non-profit organization  
Steve Hernandez, Public Member for local government
  
- **Board Members Absent**  
Randy Varela, Deputy Fire Marshal, Fire Marshal's Office  
Brent Racher, Public Member for industry  
Tim Hagaman, Economic Development Department (EDD)
  
- **Other Federal Agencies Present**  
Laura Moser, US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service (USFS), Southwestern Region  
Andrew Mangham, National Weather Service (NWS), Albuquerque Weather Forecast Office
  
- **FY23 New Project Presenters Present**  
Joe Carrillo, Chama District Timber Management Officer, EMNRD, Forestry Division  
James Anzalone, Socorro District Forester, EMNRD, Forestry Division  
J.R. Logan, Taos County WUI Coordinator

**2. Welcome/Introductions**

Laura McCarthy, State Forester and FAWRA Chair, recognized the Board, public members, and guests. Board members, non-voting participants, and members of the public introduced themselves via round robin.

**3. Board Business**

**Approval of Agenda**

Julie Valdez moved to approve the agenda and Steve Hernandez seconded the motion. The meeting agenda for April 13, 2022, was unanimously approved.

### **Open Meetings Act Resolution**

Steve Hernandez moved to approve the Open Meetings Act Resolution and Mark Meyers Seconded the motion. The resolution was unanimously approved.

### **Approval of Minutes for the September 16, 2021 FAWRA Advisory Board Meeting**

Stewart Liley moved to approve the minutes for the September 16, 2021 Advisory Board meeting and Mark Meyers seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

## **4. State Forester's Update**

- **Fires:** Recent weeks have produced several challenging fires across New Mexico, including the Big Hole Fire (Belen), the McBride Fire and the Nogal Canyon Fire (Ruidoso area), and the Hermit's Peak Fire (Las Vegas) which started as a prescribed burn. The Forestry Division remains committed to the safe and effective use of prescribed fire, and training is essential. The Forestry Division is developing the proficiency workbook that those seeking state certification under the Prescribed Burning Act will have to complete in order to be certified. Both the workbook and the prescribed burn rule are expected to be completed this summer.
- **Funding:** In addition to the \$2 million received annually in FAWRA funding, in FY23 the Forestry Division is receiving \$17 million from a combination of general fund and severance tax bond funding. These are record levels of funding for the Forestry Division, and the Forestry Division has a large project list it is working through to get started with these funds. There is also additional funding from the federal Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act that will come through the USFS that the Forestry Division will be able to use for term positions and to increase capacity to put both federal and state funds to work on the ground.

## **5. Progress report on funded projects and proposed continuing projects**

Laura McCarthy presented information and images from projects that have previously received FAWRA funding. Project progress slides include existing projects that have not requested additional FAWRA support including Upper Coyote Creek-Elk Ridge, Joplin Ridge, 16 Springs, Santa Clara Pueblo Wetlands Restoration and Prescribed Burning, Encino Vista Landscape Restoration and Archeological Surveys, and Red Cabin No Name Springs.

Continuing projects slides (projects that have requested additional FAWRA support, but which will not be scored again by the Advisory Board per FY23 FAWRA Guidelines):

- **El Caso Ranch & Quemado Lake:** A map demonstrated the proximity of private inholdings within the Gila National Forest (Quemado Lake Estates and El Caso Ranch units), to Quemado Lake and the Slaughter Mesa National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) area where forest health treatments are 90 percent complete. A table showed anticipated funding needs to complete the remaining 600 unfunded acres within the private inholdings. Once completed the project will effectively tie together treatments in the Slaughter Mesa Area and recent treatments using Non-federal Lands support from USFS located in Quemado Lake Estates. Photos demonstrate pre- and post-treatment conditions at the border of national forest and private lands.

**Sandia Pueblo Bosque Restoration:** Photos show conditions within the Romero Fire burn scar where the fire crossed the Rio Grande on to Sandia Pueblo lands. A map demonstrated completed, ongoing, and proposed new treatments located on Sandia Pueblo lands. Additional photos demonstrated conditions before and after goat treatments.

- **Turkey Mountain Watershed Forest and Watershed Restoration:** A map demonstrated the 4,500-acre project area and the scale of the work to be done, including locations of 2,250+ acres that have already been treated. A slide presented narrative details on project status and remaining work, including the development of a prescribed burn plan and plans to continue using this project a training for those seeking burn certification in the future.
- **Zuni Landscape Restoration:** The first phase of this project focused on private lands, and the continuing proposal focuses on state trust lands. A map demonstrated the proximity of state trust lands to previous treatment areas and town of Thoreau, NM. The project is on track to have approximately 628 acres completed by mid-April. This project has delivered 50 cords of firewood to nearby communities in need. Additional photos demonstrated conditions before and after thinning treatments.

The Board had no comments on the progress reports.

## 6. FY23 Ranking Sheet and Project Scoring Criteria

A slide presented the FY23 Project Scoresheet. Laura McCarthy presented the “FY23 project criteria for ranking”, which were displayed on the scoresheet and have not changed from the previous fiscal year.

## 7. Presentation of New FY23 Project Proposals

### **Jicarilla Range District Cultural Evaluation:**

Joe Carrillo presented project overview slides covering a proposal to conduct 5,000 acres of heritage surveys on the Carson National Forest Jicarilla Ranger District. Once surveys are completed, treatments will be designed to improve vegetative diversity and health stand structure in older Ponderosa pine stands in two headwater drainages of the San Juan River with additional goals of protecting historic cultural sites, improving habitat, and protecting oil and gas infrastructure in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas on the Carson National Forest. Project partners include the Forestry Division, USFS (landowner), San Juan Soil and Water Conservation District (contractor), Department of Game and Fish (supplemental funding for habitat improvement), and oil and gas industry (mitigation funding for cultural surveys).

### **Taos Valley Watershed Landscape Restoration:**

J.R. Logan presented project overview slides for landscape-scale forest restoration projects planned for lands in the Carson National Forest as well as Taos Pueblo lands. An image presented the community of Arroyo Seco and El Salto, with nearby Taos Pueblos lands, and the high elevation mountains bordering these communities. A map demonstrated proposed FAWRA project areas across a 320,000-acre project area, identical to the Taos County Watershed Coalition (TVWC) Boundaries, which were drawn to capture tributaries that flow into the Rio Grande off the west flank of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The project area also includes three traditional land grants and numerous acequias. Over the past seven years, TVWC has worked to help clear four NEPA areas totally 27,400 acres. Treatment areas for the next five-to-10 years are focused where there is both a threat of stand-replacing wildfire and threats to downstream communities. An initial 141-acre project (thinning followed by pile burning) is proposed for FY23 FAWRA funding is located on the DH Lawrence Ranch, which is owned by the University of New Mexico (UNM). Additional goals for this initial project are to tie together existing and planned treatments on the Carson National Forest that are immediately adjacent, protect cultural structures and values on the ranch, and protect nearby communities from stand-replacing fire. Future FAWRA funding is requested and would be used for prioritized treatments aimed at protecting water resources on

pueblo and federal lands. Project Partners include TVWC, the Forestry Division, Carson National Forest, acequia commissioners, land grant representatives, and Taos Pueblo.

Abe Franklin expressed a concern about stream temperatures in Rio Hondo Canyon, which is indicated for treatment in the map and requested that project proponents include specification on any treatment contracts to not reduce the amount of shade on the river itself. The prescription for this area has not been developed yet, and J.R. Logan indicated that they would be happy to coordinate the prescription with the Environment Department and the Carson National Forest.

Steven Hernandez inquired whether the University of New Mexico would be contributing to the initial project. As part of the agreement, UNM has agreed to make fuelwood produced from the project available to the community and this will be counted as an in-kind contribution. While UNM is the steward of the publicly owned cultural properties on the ranch, they lack the forestry expertise to necessary to accomplish that goal and compliment the cultural resource preservation activities they are already doing on the ranch.

### **Mimbres to Signal Peak:**

James Anzalone presented project overview slides covering a proposal to conduct cultural resource surveys on 11,400 acres over 10 years to set up fuels reduction and prescribed fire on 52,800 acres. Additional funds are requested for prescribed fire preparation and hazardous fuels reductions through mechanical thinning. A map was shown demonstrating the Signal Peak-Bear Creek Joint Chiefs project and the Upper Mimbres NEPA area in the Gila National Forest where work would occur. Outcomes include reduction of hazardous fuels in the WUI, improved watershed and riparian condition through soil stabilization, and protection of sensitive Mexican Spotted Owl habitat. Watersheds that benefit include the Gila River, Upper Mimbres, and Bear Creek, as well as numerous ditch associations. Partners include the Forestry Division, Gila National Forest Silver City Ranger District, The Nature Conservancy, Grant Soil and Water Conservation District, the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, the USDA, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service.

Abe Franklin inquired whether the project would include fencing. While mentioned in the written proposal, any fencing that occurs would be the responsibility of the USFS and not a part of the FAWRA funding.

## **8. Timeline for Submitting Scores and Preview of the Agenda for Next Meeting on May 11, 2022**

Scoring spreadsheets are due by May 6. The May 11 meeting will include:

- discussing new project rankings,
- finalizing ranking recommendations,
- reviewing FY23 guidelines,
- setting a date for the fall 2022 meeting to adopt FY24 guidelines, and
- discussing possible field trips for fall 2022.

## **9. Other Business**

None.

## **10. Adjournment**

Draft minutes submitted by: Jacob Pederson on April 15, 2022

Draft minutes approved by: Laura McCarthy April 18, 2022

Final minutes approved by FAWRA Advisory Board: May 11, 2022 (no changes)