

**MINUTES OF THE  
TWO THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED TWENTY SEVENTH REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE  
MIDDLE RIO GRANDE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT  
APRIL 24, 2018**

Directors having been duly notified, Vice-Chair Duggins called the regular meeting to order at 3:00 pm being held at the Bernalillo Town-Hall Council Chambers, Bernalillo, New Mexico. The following Directors and Staff were present:

<b>DIRECTORS</b>			<b>STAFF</b>	
John P. Kelly	Chairman	Absent	Mike Hamman	Chief Engineer/CEO
Glen Duggins	Vice-Chair		Tanya Scott	Chief Water Counsel
Joaquín Baca	Director		Bruce Wiggins	General Counsel
Karen Dunning	Director		David M. Fergeson	Secretary-Treasurer
Derrick J. Lente	Director		DeAnna Philps	GIS Mapping Technician
Beverly Romero	Director		David Gensler	Water Operations Manager
Valerie Moore	Director		Joe Lucero	MRGCD
			Michael Padilla	MRGCD
			Jose Luis Caro	MRGCD
			Mike Lopez	Construction
			David Sedillo	MRGCD
			Jason Casuga	Engineer Manager
			Mike Bland	MRGCD Albuquerque

The following names of individuals were interested viewers and/or participants:

Monette Hardern-Lopez, Lopez Farms Corrales  
Chanda Vigil. Corrales  
Dorothy Arquero, Cochiti Pueblo

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 1 – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Director Baca led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Director Lente asked for a moment of silence in honor of the Mike and Jennifer Reardon family.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 2 - WELCOME STATEMENT BY ACTING CHAIRMAN, DERRICK LENTE, SANDOVAL COUNTY, MRGCD DIRECTOR**

Director Lente, Sandoval County Representative welcomed everyone to the meeting, and Vice-Chair Duggins asked Director Lente to be Acting Chair for this meeting.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 3 – APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Director Lente called for approval of the Agenda.

Director Romero made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED.** Director Moore seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED.**

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 – INTRODUCTION OF SANDOVAL COUNTY DIGNITARIES**

Mr. Hamman introduced Viola Sanchez, Designated Engineer, Bureau of Indian Affairs.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 – INTRODUCTION OF MRGCD ALBUQUERQUE AND COCHITI DIVISION  
FIELD STAFF - Mike Hamman, MRGCD CE/CEO, Joseph Brem & Daniel Arquero, MRGCD  
Albuquerque Division and Cochiti Division Managers**

Mike Hamman asked that all staff present stand up and introduce themselves. All staff at the meeting introduced themselves to the Board and listed their job titles and divisions. David Gensler introduced the ISOs from Cochiti Division.

Director Lente stressed his thanks to all staff members for all the hard work they do and expressed that the District would not be as great if they were not in place. He also wanted them to know that they are always welcome at any meeting, and, if they ever have any questions, concerns, ideas, etc., for them to feel free to talk to Mr. Hamman, Mr. Gensler, or any one of the Board Members.

**AGENDA ITEM 6 - REPORT(S) FROM THE MRGCD CHIEF ENGINEER – Mike A. Hamman, MRGCD  
CEO/CE**

**a. General Focus & Priorities of MRGCD - Mike Hamman, MRGCD CEO/CE**

Mr. Hamman expressed that the District prides itself on the mission that we have, and the fact that we overlap in four counties with six pueblos and multiple other jurisdictions, unincorporated areas, and many people that we serve. It is one of our top priorities to maintain great working relationships with our intergovernmental groups. We also have a strong commitment to providing good support with focus on quality improvement within our personnel procedures and operations, providing support, services, and good benefits to our staff.

Mr. Hamman thanked the staff and explained the Board's commitment to make sure that all staff has what they need to do their jobs well and safe. Safety and development of our programs to protect our employees and provide them the year-end performance evaluations is another high priority of the management operations.

Staff has also been working very hard on the budget. The Board made some hard choices to raise the rates and bring the District back into good fiscal health. It has allowed us to do much more efficient and effective work. We are now in a position to begin replacing a lot of our older equipment, as well as keep the equipment that we do have in top working order.

Another priority is to make sure that we implement a good capital improvement program, which includes some upcoming large projects, i.e., the rehabilitation and rebuilding of El Vado Dam, which is just on the horizon. We have identified numerous structures, crossings, and other things that need attention throughout the District. Also creating new and updating existing facilities so that we can protect our water users from the possibility of water shortages as much as we possibly can, in the context of what Mother Nature provides us from year to year.

There is a high probability that the District is going to have some serious concerns looking forward to next year's irrigation season. It is hard to tell what Mother Nature will do. There are predictions that we may see some moisture this summer, either normal monsoon or above normal monsoon.

One of our number one focuses is preparing ourselves and our system in the event that we have consecutive low runoff years, so that we can still serve our water users the best that we can.

We also have made some strong commitments in the new Biological Opinion, which will allow us to move forward with an uninterrupted process of meeting our water users' needs, as well as keeping our species of interest (the silvery minnow, the southwest willow flycatcher, and the yellow-billed cuckoo population) in good condition as laid out in the BO. We also work closely with our federal agencies, making our improvements to habitat and to our dams, to allow fish to pass, etc., which is a significant budget request, which averages approximately half-million to three-quarters of a million dollars annually on the

Endangered Species Act.

Another high focus area is working with water users and the public to really understand what our constituents need to do to become more water efficient and, hopefully, prosperous irrigators and farmers.

We are looking at working with our municipal governments, some that are trying to transfer water out of the District to keep their water rights in order.

We are also working on securing our water rights with the State Engineer, and we are also hoping to get title transfer from the United States Government so that we can have control of our own destiny as a District in the future.

**b. Water Report & Irrigation Operations - - David Gensler, Water Operations Manager**

David Gensler has been hoping for a miracle all through the winter and spring, but he thinks he is about to stop hoping now. The die has been cast. We have a pretty good idea now what we're going to get this spring. Things looked a little better with the March 1 forecast, but things turned around even drier through the month of March. By the time the April 1 forecast came out, it had trended even lower.

We are now looking at something around 16% of normal flow entering the valley this spring. Inflow to El Vado is down also from our forecast of 18%. So, you can say this is the runoff that wasn't.

Peak flows through the valley have probably peaked already. We have seen the runoff. The higher elevation snow up in Colorado is melting now. Flows up in the San Juans are coming up, but none of it is getting here. There is less than 100 CFS crossing the state line into New Mexico from Colorado. These are levels are as low as or lower than we often see in the late summertime. They're certainly not typical spring flows for us.

However, our storage from last year remains the silver lining in this cloud. We have a lot of water in storage. As of today, Mr. Gensler thinks we have just a little bit over 120,000 acre-feet sitting in reservoirs upstream, potentially accessible for our uses. That's much more than we usually have this time of year. We will be using that water to get through this year. Is it enough? It is hard to say. In a normal year, even a bad year, Mr. Gensler wouldn't hesitate for a moment to say, "Oh, that's plenty of water." Most years, we use somewhere between 30,000 and 80,000 acre-feet out of storage to get us through the season. But this year, who knows? This is a very bad year. It is going to depend on what happens this summer, rain or not, how much or how little water we get out of Colorado this spring, and, most of all, how smart we are with managing our water. We are gearing up now to make the most of the season.

We will be operating lean and efficiently throughout the season, trading every drop as if it is precious, and it will be, and approximately 800 cubic feet per second is entering the valley. Things are operating relatively normal for this time of year, even though there's very little water in the river. We are bypassing about 600 cubic feet per second right now through El Vado Reservoir. We would like to be storing all that water, but, to do so we essentially would have no water moving through the middle valley right now.

We managed to store 10,000 acre-feet earlier this month. There was a very interesting event up at the San Juan, up around the Chama area; there was a rain event around April 7th that caused a rapid melting of snow in the 11,000-foot range. Those snows came down to the reservoir really quick, and were able to skim 10,000-acre feet off the top and park it. So, that was kind of a nice thing for us.

We have not stored any water the past four days. Flows dropped a little bit up north with cooler temperatures, but, as of today, flows are back up into the reservoir. We started storing this morning.

Mr. Gensler thinks we will continue to store water up there in relatively small quantities for about the next 10 to 14 days, but he thinks that would be it for us. It would be really nice if we could get a few more thousand acre feet into storage. He is hopeful yet that we will.

No matter what the Chama does, things are starting to drop down south. Elephant Butte Reservoir is dropping quickly. Project storage is roughly 440,000-acre feet today, and they are burning water out of

storage at over 2,000 acre-feet per day. So, we probably will be back in storage restrictions due to Compact Article VII conditions within about two weeks, maybe 18 days. So, that's going to be the end of our potential storage operations up at El Vado for sure.

There is 15 miles of dry river down near the Bosque Del Apache area. This happens slowly and carefully, allowing plenty of time for the fish to migrate upstream and plenty of time for Fish and Wildlife Service crews to rescue any left behind. They are finding a lot of fish down there. The river is choked full of silvery minnows this year, which is a good thing for us. We will try and keep as many alive throughout the summer as we can. They did have some fish die down there, quite a few, but, many, many more migrated upstream or have been rescued. This is definitely a different course for the minnow that what has happened for over the last 20 years. Whether it's successful or not for the species, we won't know for some time, probably not until October, maybe not even for another year after that. But we certainly believe it is going to be less harmful than what would have happened under the old operating paradigm. We know that would have been very devastating for the fish. We have had lots of water sit early in the spring and then just essentially pull the rug out from them later in the year, when everybody ran out of supplies. So, it's a different strategy, but I think it's a good strategy, and we'll make the best of it this year.

Mike Hamman added that if we had been under the old Biological Opinion, the District would have to try and keep the river wet until June 15<sup>th</sup>. Also, under the old BO, if we would have run dry, somewhere like now, they might be coming with a take claim against the agencies because of the fish that have perished to date, which currently total many thousand. The fine would be a "tough pill to swallow." So, we are very fortunate in that we have a good BO that is a no-take, no-jeopardy situation. That gives us some flexibility to actually do better for the fish in most cases, especially in low water years like what we expect.

Director Duggins asked if the District was stepping up operations on keeping the drain ditches open and flowing. Mr. Gensler responded that we use those drains extensively, even under a normal year, and recycle our water back into the system to capture the excess. They are already starting to operate those drains very specifically and recapture water and conserve it. The division managers in all four divisions have been very proactive about getting out there and beginning maintenance on the drains and getting them in good condition for the year. If we hear about any beaver dams out there, we will get out there promptly.

Mr. Hamman added that the way we operate with any federal water left as the season goes along are going to be critical to the carryover population of the silvery minnow as well. Having it well maintained and being able to deal with a little shot of water in the river at various locations below Isleta diversion dam is going to be very helpful to the survival of the silvery minnow.

Director Lente asked if there was some sort of PR campaign to get the message out to the public and the farmers about not wasting water. Mr. Gensler responded that there have been extensive talks over the last several years with the ISOs (irrigation system operators). Mr. Gensler believes that they are doing a good job of getting the word out to the farmers. We don't have a PR department, like the City of Albuquerque and their 1-2-3, 3-2-1 campaign that you hear on the radio. However, irrigators are pretty good communicating word of mouth with each other and with our ditch riders. Everybody out there in the field has been informed about all this.

Mr. Gensler also added, as an aside, that he is firmly committed to getting through this year with the water supply that we have. He believes we can make it work, but it is going to be a difficult year.

Mr. Gensler prepared a handout for Director Moore after she had asked for something to give to irrigators when they asked her about the water situation. It has kind of that same message, that it is a tough year, and we're all going to work together. We're going to be efficient and make things work, and everybody is going to take turns, and we will get through it.

He will provide some copies of the handout to all Board Members and the general public, as well as put it on the MRGCD website.

Director Moore thought the handout was great. She wondered if, perhaps, the ISOs could be given copies of the handout to give out to the irrigators. She was concerned about the anxiety that irrigators are already beginning to have, hearing that there will be a water shortage. Mr. Gensler said he will print some by morning to give out to the ISOs.

Director Duggins would like to take things further and make it the norm that the District will operate lean and tough. He believes things will not change in the future, and everybody needs to start being lean now. He believes that the acre-per-hour rule will eventually hit the entire District. He believes wasting of water will never be back. And he hopes we use the water wisely. He is proud of the farmers in his area and what they have done out of their own pockets to improve irrigation.

Director Dunning asked if anybody started having fire meetings and if anyone had heard talk that the Bosque will be closed. Mr. Hamman responded that he has heard that there is discussion and that people are getting nervous. He said that usually people worry closer to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, but he believes this year the talks will start much sooner. Director Duggins added that this morning Socorro County implemented a no-burn, no fires, in the Bosque in Socorro County. Director Duggins thinks that possibly in the next 30 days, the county will get even stricter.

**c. Projects in the MRGCD Albuquerque Division - Joseph Brem, MRGCD Albuquerque Division Manager**

Mr. Brem presented pictures of various projects, including Santa Ana Pueblo, Bosque One heading, where a Langeman gate installed; and shotcreting of the Bosque Three check repair, Sandia Pueblo repair, Albuquerque Main Canal, Roberson Check, just north of Paseo Del Norte, Arenal Main Canal, and the Corrales Riverside Drain.

Mr. Brem wanted to take a moment to thank his crew and let them know that their work is extremely important.

**d. Projects in the MRGCD Cochiti Division - Daniel Arquero, MRGCD Cochiti Division**

Photos were presented by Mr. Arquero of forms at San Felipe Pueblo; seven turnouts were completed in eight days. Discussion ensued with the board members, regarding the prototype and fabrication of turnouts. The prototype has been made up in Cochiti, but Director Lente asked if perhaps a manufacturer could make them for the District. After talking with his counterpart at EBID, Jason Casuga found a local contractor that could make the turnouts for \$600. Mr. Brem reported that he thinks his crew has the capability of producing for \$350 to \$400 each, and that their efficiency will increase over time with more forms that they make.

Director Duggins asked if the goal was to not use wood at all in the future. Mr. Arquero responded that the District will no longer use wood and will use galvanized steel. Director Duggins also asked if they could hook that turnout directly to the farmers' underground pipeline so that the culvert would not have to be replaced when it rots out. Mr. Hamman reported that he is in favor of using PVC instead of the corrugated metal. If the farmer wants to work with the District to add that small piece, we can work it out.

More photos were shown of a breakdown of a box at the San Felipe Pueblo, Monica Lateral. They also showed various pictures of other work in the main canal.

**AGENDA ITEM 7 – REPORT(S) FROM THE MRGCD ATTORNER(S) – Chief Water Counsel and General Counsel**

No reports for this meeting.

**AGENDA ITEM 8 - ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR**

There were no items from the floor.

With no further comments, questions or concerns, Director Dunning made the **MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**. Director Romero seconded the motion and the **MOTION CARRIED** unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:17 p.m.

Approved to be the correct Minutes of the Board of Directors of April 24, 2018.

**ATTESTED:**

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David M. Fergeson  
Secretary/Treasurer

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John P. Kelly,  
Chairman, MRGCD Board of Director