



## **Winkelman and Redington Joint NRCD meeting Final minutes**

September 10, 2025

Location: Elks Lodge, San Manuel, AZ.

The meeting was called to order at 10:07 am.

### **Board and Staff**

WNRCD: Bill Dunn, Steve Turcotte, Senator Barbara McGuire, Jonah Cude, Hattie Hedrick & Alyssa Warren. Absent: Gary Vinson, Carol Dubois, Chris Postel (WNRCD Clerk).

### **Agencies and Organizations and Public**

Brooke Gladden (AACD), Deborrah Smith (AACD), Alisha Phipps (NRCS), Keith Warren (ASARCO), Stace Walker (SRP San Pedro River Preserve), Nick Schobinger (AZGFD), Raina Johnson (Rio Sol), Alexiss Adams (Rio Sol), Jack Ford (Rio Sol), Tyler Williams (RNRC), Noah Silva (AZGFD), Suzanne Ehret (AZGFD), Wyatt Philabaum (AZGFD), Greg Lindsey (Pattern Energy), Shain Bingham (RNRC) Mauricio Fisher (Redington NRCD), Alex Binford-Walsh (Archeology SW), Dan Wolgast (Nature Conservancy), Mike Mercer (RNRC), Troy Keller (SW Power), Seth Kelles (SW Power). Cooperators: Becky Dunn, Gerry Kaufhold, Bobby Blake, Button DuBois, Keith Benbow, Stefanie Smallhouse, Katie Cline, Bryan Hartman, Zary May, Duane Reece, Kaycee Jones, Don McDowell.

### **Approve Final Meeting Minutes**

Steve Turcotte moved to approve the final meeting minutes. Senator Barbara McGuire seconded the motion. The motion passed 3-0.

### **Review/Approve WNRCD Financial Report**

The WNRCD financial report was reviewed. Steve Turcotte made a motion to file and accept the report; Senator Barbara McGuire seconded the motion. The motion passed 3-0.

### **Old Business**

#### **NRC Board Update**

Deborrah Smith reported that conservation districts are now administered by the Natural Resource Conservation Board (NRCB). Their first meeting was in May. The NRCB requested information from the AGs office. Any monies that are managed or under district control are considered public monies and must be used in ways that align with district state statute.

### Water Protection Fund Grant Update

Bill Dunn reports that this grant has been secured to clear 25 acres of river bottom in Dudleyville. The contract has been signed, and the contractor is working on clearances hopefully by winter before protected species return to begin work.

### Sunzia Update

Steve Turcotte reports that line 1 will be going up commercially hot in January. They are currently heating up the line for testing. Contractors are ready to start installing the gates. Alexiss Adams reports Line 2 is still in the development period; construction is to begin in late 2026. She asks for the NRCD's to help get a stock tank they bought for mitigation purposes registered. Biologists in the San Pedro River valley are conducting surveys. El Rio sol reports land rights have been acquired for the easement to reach structures.

### Wind Energy Committee Update

Bill reports that a 6000-acre solar project is to be developed southwest of Florence Junction. Bill reports that Pinal County Supervisor Steve Miller informed him they are slowing solar projects at his time as Incentives for renewable energy projects are being cut due to the Trump admin. The Land Department also will be requiring the developers to identify and remove native plants and artifacts that will cost them millions of dollars. No one has heard anything about the wind energy project on state lands in the district since last meeting.

### **New Business**

#### ASARCO Meetings Update

Keith Warren is the Corporate Manager of Sustainability with ASARCO. Keith reports that ASARCO wishes to help with salt cedar removal in the river, about 2,000 Acres between Winkelman and Kelvin/Riverside that the company owns. They are looking for a partnership with the district for technical support and funding opportunities. Deborrah Smith reported on the Regional Conservation Partnership Project (RCPP) funded by the Natural Resource Conservation Service would be a great fit for this project. RCPP requires the producers to apply for the funding. Funds will be rolled out at the end of October or beginning of November. Keith reports the first priority of Asarco is the safety of residents, and second is removal of the salt cedars. The town of Winkelman proposes possible bird viewing locations and trails to be added in place of the invasive cedars as a benefit to the communities. Contractors will do the work. AACD, Arizona Game and Fish, Quail Forever and Pheasant Forever, Department of Fire and Forestry Management are the partners heading this project.

#### Form Committee to plan for river Vegetation management Grant

Deborrah Smith recommended a committee be formed within the NRCD, Committee will be Bill Dunn, Keith Warren, Jaspm Ablanlp, James Stewart, Steve Turcotte, Jonah Cude, Zary May, and Button Dubois, Nick Schobinger, Mayor of Winkelman, and possibly mayor of Kearny and

local fire departments. The committee will be called the “River Re-Vegetation Committee.” Bill mentioned putting in several grass and shrub species as re-vegetation plants.

#### Local Workgroup Planning Meeting

Tabled.

#### WNRCD Possible Boundary Changes

East Maricopa NRCD has become inactive leaving their producers without an NRCD to service them. Bill explained that state statute allows districts to change their boundaries and defines the process for doing so. He proposed boundary changes to the Winkelman district to include some of the producers and lands within the East Maricopa boundary. A proposal for boundary change must include a map and reasons why the portion to be added needs to be. The proposal is sent to the state Natural Resource Conservation Board for approval. Steve Turcotte made a motion to begin the proposal process with the indicated boundaries. The proposed boundaries for inclusion to the Winkelman district from the East Maricopa district include lands bordering the Tonto district, east of Gold Canyon and north of I-60 to Superior. Senator Barbara McGuire seconded the motion. The motion passed 3-0.

#### AACD Sponsorship Approval & Potential Joint Projects

Steve Turcotte made a motion to increase level of commitment to NACD by back reimbursing the next level to \$3,000. Senator Barbara McGuire seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

#### WNRCD & RNRCD Sponsor & Approve 2 Ag Ambassador Scholarships:

Steve Turcotte made a motion to provide one scholarship of \$1,600.00 utilizing local funds for the Pinal County Farm Bureau Ag Ambassador scholarship program in our area. Senator Barbara McGuire seconded the motion. The motion passed 3-0. Redington passed a motion to provide another scholarship. Requirements for the scholarship state that students must be graduating seniors living in Pinal County, GPA of 2.5 or higher, and are planning to attend college, trade school, or the military with an agricultural focus.

#### Reports from Agencies & Other Organizations:

NRCS (Alisha Phipps): Alisha Phipps reports the federal fiscal year begins October 1st. See attached report. Bill said that our national association (NACD) announced a call for Technical Service Providers (TSP) hires by districts and asked if the Tucson NRCS could use some extra personnel since they are short-handed because of DOGE cuts. Alisha responded that they could use people who could do monitoring and other field work.

Game and Fish (Nick Schobinger) Nick states he is covering all southwest AZ. Funding has been allocated for this fiscal year. He recommends beginning planning now to apply for funding necessary for projects for next fiscal year. Deputy Suzzane with Game and Fish stated they

have contacts at Az Mule Deer Association and Az Bighorn Sheep Society, and an OHV maintenance grant for possible funds for projects. Concerns can be turned in for any ongoing issues concerning hunting and OHV.

ASARCO: Nothing to report at this time.

\*Senator Barbara McGuire reports that the Ed center may have an opportunity to partner with Brian Sepalla at Resolution, similar to that of the partnership between Resolution and the Boyce Thompson Arboretum.

Call To The Public:

Don McDowell reports Southwest Ranch will do surveys to figure costs for potential funding in other parts of the state for small projects and could help with some here for producers. A small project could be considered anything under \$50,000.

The Nature Conservancy is putting together a “Bioblitz” event in November and will notify NRCD’s of this for potential education partnership.

Next Planned Meeting Date: November 12, 2025.

Reports from Supervisors and District Personnel: None at this time.

Adjournment WNRCD

Senator Barbara McGuire motioned to adjourn the meeting at 12:23pm, Steve Turcotte seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

Final Minutes Submitted by: Chris Postel & Alyssa Warren

Date: 11/12/2025

Approval of Minutes:

Date: