



Photo by: Ariel Fury

# Northeastern Soil & Water Conservation District

~ 20 North 2nd Street Clayton, New Mexico 88415 ~ (575) 374-9461 ext. 3 ~

Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2023/2024

## **Board Members / Employee:**

Justin Bennett, Chairman  
129 Bennett Rd., Des Moines, NM 88418

Brett Bannon, Vice Chairman  
4721 Dry Cimarron HWY, Folsom, NM 88419

Henry Brown, Member  
536 Long Canyon Rd., Folsom, NM 88419

Kenneth Taylor, Secretary/Treasurer  
15 Mormon Rt., Clayton, NM 88415

Lynn Clay, Member  
123 Plainview Rd., Clayton, NM 88415

Ariel Fury – District Clerk  
600 East Market St., Texline, TX 79087



## **CONSERVATION - DEVELOPMENT - SELF GOVERNMENT**

The following are the activities and accomplishments of the Northeastern Soil and Water Conservation District for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2024.

The NSWCD is in the northeastern corner of New Mexico; covering 2,302,160 acres. The district has a five-member board comprised of Justin Bennett; Chairman, Brett Bannon; Vice Chairman, Kenneth Taylor; Treasurer/Secretary, Lynn Clay; Supervisor, Henry Brown; Supervisor and Ariel Fury; District Administrator. The board meetings are normally held at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) office located at 20 North Second Street, in Clayton, New Mexico on the second Monday of each month at 10:00 am. Twelve regular meetings were held this year with a quorum present at all 12 meetings. Any meeting that had a date or time change was thoroughly announced via local newspaper, email, Facebook, quarterly newsletter, and the district website as well as posted on the door of the building in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

The district:

- Had board Chair Mr. Justin Bennett and admin. Fury attended the NMACD Annual Conference in Albuquerque, NM and represented the NSWCD at the annual state meeting.
- Held the Local Work group for NRCS on Sept. 20th, 2023 and was attended by board members, Mr. Henry Brown, Mr. Kenneth Taylor, Mr. Justin Bennett, and district admin. Ariel Fury.
- Held the Annual Producer's Meeting 3/6/2023 in Clayton, NM. The total attendance was 38. Individuals from the Union County Leader, the Forest Service, NRCS, and FSA were in attendance. Lunch was catered by The Local Hive and hosted at the Herzstein Museum in Clayton, NM. Guest speakers were Dean Bruce on the Healthy Soil Program and Glenn Duff with NMSU Livestock Research Center.
- The Annual Producer's Meeting was hosted in part by Union County Lodgers and Ziegler Geological Consulting. An award for the Outstanding Conservationist in Union County was awarded to Mr. Alfred Newkirk for the year.
- Placed an ad in the Union County Leader newspaper for the Annual Producers meeting as well as flyers posted, and Facebook updated with the information.
- An article was requested by The Union County Leader to go with the photos from the annual producers meeting; written and submitted by district admin. Fury.
- Admin. attended the 2023 Prairie Partners Meeting, and the district sponsored the event.
- Applied for the Land of Enchantment Legacy Funding grant for capacity building with help from board member Brown and Infrastructure Capital Improvement Planning with the help of board member Bennett.
- Applied for Clayton Lodgers Tax funding and received \$2,140.
- Entered into a Joint Power Agreement with Roosevelt SWCD for the Cloud Seeding Project within Union County.

**MAJOR CONSERVATION EFFORTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

Our district has completed the 2023 phase of the multi-year Union County Hydrology Study Project. It is now entering the 17<sup>th</sup> year of monitoring. During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, ZGC measured static water level in 100 wells and collected samples for analyses from six wells at least once a year. The geochemistry illustrates the complexity of the geology in the subsurface that controls the distribution of groundwater resources within the district and is being coupled to the geologic mapping information as that aspect of the project progresses. In addition, water quality has been assessed at many of these wells using general chemistry and recharge potential has been assessed using tritium. Union County producers continue to benefit from this long-term monitoring study and new producers continue to join the program every year.

As noted in previous progress reports, combined information from water chemistry, static water levels, well log data, and surface mapping demonstrate the complexity of the geology in Union County (see also Zeigler et al., 2019a, b). The primary aquifer units (or hydrostratigraphic units) in Union County include the Exeter Sandstone, Morrison Formation, Dakota Sandstone and Ogallala Formation with more limited groundwater resources occurring in discrete layers within the Dockum Group. Future work includes continued monitoring of static water level measurements to continue tracking rates of changes between minimum and maximum use seasons and on an annual basis, as well working through more of the geologic mapping to continue to refine our understanding of the aquifer systems in use. Further sampling for major cation/anion geochemistry, trace metals, and tritium will help us continue to refine our understanding of where modern recharge is occurring on the landscape.

The district sold trees and drip supplies to 8 other conservation districts in 3 states as well as around 100 of the districts' constituents. During the district's Annual Tree Program, 1,887 trees, 2,361 dripline items, 2,165 feet of weed barrier fabric and other drip accessories were distributed. In the past, most of the trees sold by the district were used in wind breaks. Some are still sold for wind breaks or to replace trees that have died in windbreaks, but most trees purchased are now used in landscaping. While the tree sales are held once every spring, drip supplies and fabric are available all year!

June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023 found the district had received the Healthy Soil Program grant as well as one of the producers who applied through the district was awarded the grant! Working with NMDA, local producers, Bamert Seed Co, and Ward Labs was a great experience for the district. We enjoyed learning the process and helping local producers in the fight against soil erosion. Our district purchased 350 acres of seed for distribution to up to 10 producers each receiving up to 35 acres each. Each producer was visited and had in-field soil assessments performed by the admin. as well as a soil sample sent in for every site to the testing lab. Results were given back to producers and seed distributed. We had a great response and have submitted our application for next year's grant opportunities.

**(The district has no source of State or Federal funding other than the income that is generated by our District Programs and the money that the state legislature gives NMDA.)**

### **INFORMATION AND EDUCATION ACTIVITIES:**

One of our priority programs is informing and educating district youth in the value of conservation and natural resources. The Northeastern SWCD continued its Annual Kindergarten Tree Program. This is the 40th consecutive year for this program. Each Kindergartener from Clayton and Des Moines, NM, as well as Texline, TX and the Stateline Christian School were given a one-gallon Afghan

Pine tree for each graduating Kindergartner. The district provides these trees every year as a donation and looks forward to teaching the kids about their tree and how to care for it!

The NSWCD revived their newsletter for two fiscal years now and continued to mail out over 300 each quarter. It holds information on water conservation tips, soil conservation, an update from NRCS, bird conservancy articles, dates of events and meetings, a fun recipe, and information on products that the district has for sale for the community! It has been a great way to send out more tree forms and draw in the community on conserving resources by using the NSWCD as a resource! The district prints and mails out the newsletters and has had several new constituents email us to be added to the list!

Not only did the newsletter spread information about our district activities but it also led local producers to our website! The NSWCD maintained their new website: [www.northeasternswcd.com](http://www.northeasternswcd.com) for the last two years and has everything from the Open Meetings Act and the Board Members to the tree sales and our meeting minutes and more! We have had several people sign up for our newsletter via our new web page and it is kept up to date!

The NSWCD has a Facebook page that has been a great place to advertise our dripline supplies, workshops, annual Producers meeting, tree sales and one extra place to let the public know if our office is open! Information and updates about upcoming events, informative sessions, supplies for purchase, and conservation tips are now being posted for the public and messages concerning any of those topics are being answered! We had so many people see our Facebook ads on our tree sales that we couldn't keep up with them and still had people wanting trees after we had sold out!

The district also has students participate in judging livestock at the county fair in three different classes. The district hosted the Annual Plant ID contest at last year's fair in Clayton, NM. The board and district clerk look forward to the opportunity of educating the local youth on identifying grasses, weeds, and native species as well as providing information about each item in the contest! The district will once again host the contest at the upcoming fair in August of 2024! To not only reward the winners but to also spread awareness of the district's presence in the community, the belt buckles given out for both Jr. and Sr. divisions have been handed out every year as top prizes! For the year of 2022 and moving forward the buckles now bear small writing in the corners stating that they have been sponsored by the NSWCD!

### **REGULAR MEETING DATES:**

The regular meeting of the Northeastern Soil & Water Conservation District is the second Monday of each month at 10:00 am at the USDA Office Building at 20 North Second Street, Clayton, New Mexico. These meetings are held in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. The Open Meetings Act is published in the Local newspaper every year as necessary and is posted year around on the district's website and in our quarterly newsletter.