

Tsaile – Wheatfields Farm Board and Water Users Joint Meeting
Wheatfields Chapter House, Wheatfields, AZ
Wednesday, April 29, 2015

AGENDA

I. ORDER OF BUSINESS

- a. Meeting call to order
- b. Roll call
- c. Invocation
- d. Adopt agenda
- e. Reading Last Meeting Minutes, April 29, 2015
- f. Announcements:
 - Title: Chapter Planning Meeting
 - Time: 9am
 - Date: Friday, May 1, 2015
 - Location: Wheatfields Chapter House

 - Title: Grazing Meeting
 - Time: 9am
 - Date: Monday, May 4, 2015
 - Location: Wheatfields Chapter House

II. OLD BUSINESS

- a. Conservation Plan
 - Provide updates on assignments
 - Create a deadline for all to be completed
- b. Region Water Plan
 - To invite Brown & Caldwell to Joint Farm Board and WU meeting

III. NEW BUSSINESS

- a. Land User Permit- Transfer, Relinquish, Probate, etc.
 1. None at this time
- b. Request funding for at least 2 Water Masters
- c. Release water for Lower Wheatfields

IV. Reports

- A. Farm Board
- B. Water User

V. CONCLUSION

- A. Identify next agenda items
- B. Schedule next meeting date
- C. Adjournment

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MINUTES

I. ORDER OF BUSINESS

- a. Meeting called to order at 5:15pm
- b. Roll call
Farm Board: Lorena Eldridge, Lucinda Davis, and Dorthea Litson were all present.
Water User: Aaron Begay and Kathy John absent; Dorthea Litson present.
- c. Invocation conducted by Teresa Chee
- d. Adopt agenda
Agenda read by Dorthea Litson. No amendments or questions.
Action: The agenda accepted as read
Motioned by Dorthea Litson
Seconded: Teresa Chee
Voting: 6 yes; 0 no; 1 abstained *Motion Carried*
- e. Reading Last Meeting Minutes, April 9, 2015
Dorthea read the last meeting minutes from April 9, 2015. She explained she was not present at the meeting.
No questions, comments, or amendments.
Action: The reading of last meeting minutes was accepted as read.
Motioned by Teresa Chee
Seconded by Joanne Benally
Voting: 6 yes; 0 no; 1 abstained *Motion Carried*
- f. Announcements:
Title: Chapter Planning Meeting
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Title: Grazing Meeting
Time: 9am
Date: Monday, May 4, 2015
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Additional announcements were as follow:
Title: Community Land Use Planning Meeting
Time: 9am
Date: Sunday, May 3rd, 2015
Location: Wheatfields Chapter House
Focus: The meeting is focused on mapping.

Title: Community Land Use Planning Meeting
Time:
Date: Sunday, May 17, 2015
Location: Wheatfields Chapter House
Focus: Regular scheduled meeting.

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II. OLD BUSINESS

a. Conservation Plan

- Provide updates on assignments
- Create a deadline for all to be completed

Lorena explained to the people that the Farm Board had a meeting with BIA and NRCS in January 2015. At that meeting, BIA explained that a conservation plan is required of all farmers to attach to any changing they are requesting in regards to their farmland's Land Use Permit. However, currently, creating a conservation plan by farmers is very difficult for them and hinders the process of moving their paper work. They (staff from BIA) suggested for the Tsaile – Wheatfields Farm Board to create a conservation plan for all farmland for Tsaile, Upper and Lower Wheatfields. The Farm Board agreed to create a conservation plan for all areas and have the farmers use that to when submitting any changes to their paperwork.

As result, the Farm Board received conservation planning formats from BIA, Navajo Nation, Department of Agriculture, and NRCS. They reviewed all of the formats and created one document that they can follow and meets all the requirements specified by each. The Farm Board members made assignments among each other to complete the conservation plan. The assignments were as follow:

- Lorena is responsible for creating the history
- Lucinda is responsible for resources inventory
- Dorthea is responsible for soil description and maps

Each member provided an update on their assigned work:

- Lorena reported that she has NOT worked on her assignment. She will need to work with some people that may know the history of Upper Wheatfields and Tsaile farmlands establishment. She has enough information for Lower Wheatfields.
- Lucinda reported that she has NOT put all of the resource inventory together.
- Dorthea reported she downloaded the soil information for the Tsaile and Upper Wheatfields from the NRCS website. She has not put the written information together.

Action: Schedule a meeting to particularly talk only about the conservation plan. The meeting is scheduled for Sunday, May 17, 2015 at 1pm after the CLUPS meeting.

b. Region Water Plan

- To invite Brown & Caldwell to Joint Farm Board and WU meeting

Lucinda reported the following on the Region Water Plan:

- The Navajo Nation Council Delegate allocated funding in amount of 8.6 million dollars to do five regional water studies across the Navajo Nation
- The five (5) regions were as follow: Tuba City, Nazlini to Many Farms, Monument Valley, UT to Rough Rock, Sweetwater to Tsaile; and one in New Mexico.
- Engineers were hired to conduct the study to determine amount of underground water and surface water. The Engineering firm is Brown and Caldwell.
- Currently, the engineers are conducting the study for Tsaile – Wheatfields – Blackrock communities. The work is to be completed by June 6, 2015.
- The reason for the Water Study was due to the Water Right issue. The outside people claim that the Navajo people are not using their water.
- As a result, the studies are happening and short term and long term solution are be developed in a recommendation format. Currently, the Engineers are requesting to see when they can return to provide update information about the work they have completed.

Questions, comments, or suggestions:

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Lorena asked, “How is the resolution part of this regional water project?”

Lucinda clarified that the resolution presented at the recent Chapter Meeting is not a part of the Regional Water Study, but all the listed items identified in the resolution evolved from the completed water study.

Dorthea encouraged the people to be involve in this project. Water pertains to all of us within the community. The people needs to be inform of the study, so please attend meeting.

Action: Request to schedule a meeting with Engineers from Brown and Caldwell and Water Management Branch on Thursday, May 14, 2015 at 9am Wheatfields Chapter House.

Motioned by Teresa Chee

Seconded by Dorthea Litson

Voting: 22 yes; 0 no; 1 abstained

Motion Carried

III. NEW BUSSINESS

- a. Land User Permit- Transfer, Relinquish, Probate, etc.
 2. None at this time

Action: No action

- b. Request funding for at least 2 Water Masters

Lorena explained that to the people for the past several years the Farm Board has been working with the Chapter to allocated funding for two seasonal positions, Water Master. This year were are requesting for two positions again.

Dorthea explained the requested of funding amount:

Start date to be on May 11, 2015 and ending October 1, 2015

The calculation is (21weeks x 7 days per week x 8 hrs per day x \$10.00 per hr) = \$23,520

Lorena stated that a resolution will be written before May 1, 2015, so it can be submitted to the Chapter Planning meeting.

Questions, comments, and suggestions:

Noel Bikeddy: How can two people work every day for 21 weeks? Will they have time off work?

Dorthea replied to Noel’s questions. She commented, “Yes, it really is a 7 days a week type of job, but we normally calculate the figures as an 8 hrs per day work, due to uncertain circumstances. However, the job is really for 4hrs to 6 hrs a day job; meaning water masters might work 2 hrs or 3 hrs in the morning and another 2 or 3hrs in the evening to ensure the water is being used.” In addition, about needing some time off work; the Water Masters in the past have been very good about which week they want days off from work, so the other can cover for them.

Freddie Yazzie: He commented, “Make sure whoever are hired CAN work, and that they can do a nice reliable and quality work.”

Action: Request funding from the chapter in amount of \$23,520 to support (2 -Two) Water Master Position.

Advertisement will take place for at least two weeks.

Motioned by Lucinda Davis

Seconded by Noel Bikeddy

Voting: 24 yes; 0 no; 4 abstained

Motion Carried

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c. Release water for Lower Wheatfields

Lorena explained that the Farm Board and Water User work closely with Navajo Nation Safety of Dams annually to release water from Wheatfields Lake. The initial plans were to release water on May 1st, 2015 if there were at least 2 farmers ready to irrigate. However, the farmers are not ready. Many have said they will be ready in the middle of May.

Action: The Farm Board member will email or write a letter to Safety of Dams, Navajo Nation Department of Water Resource, to request for water to be release on Tuesday, May 12, 2015.

Motioned by Teresa Chee

Seconded by Tony Yazzie

Voting: 14 yes; 0 no; 4 abstained

Motion Carried

IV. Reports

A. Farm Board

B. Water User

No reports were given by either Farm Board or Water User, but there were many concerns and questions that Farmers had about the Annual Operation and Maintenance Fee.

The following were comments, questions, and concerns:

Ben Curley: “I have not paid my Operation and Maintenance fee, because there is no water that is going to my fields. The pipe is broken and leaking.” In addition, he requested several things from the Farm Board and those request are not met to date. The following are his request again:

- Pipe line needs to be fixed
- Gated pipes for irrigation
- Land Leveling
- Cements need repair

Lorena explained the following:

1. Main Line:

The Upper Wheatfields underground irrigation pipe established in 1982 to 1986

- Indian Health Services put in the drinking waterline (that was when the pipe was broken)
- Navajo Nation paid for the fixing the irrigation waterline
- Chapter paid Anthony Wheeler to fix the pipe line
- Farm Board work with chapter to pay for pipe to be replaced; and work with farmer Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy and Angie Wilson to replace the irrigation pipe and fix the problem.

Pipe line has been fixed about 3 times, but is unsure about the total cost of the repair.

2. Irrigation Pipe - That can be rented from the Farm Board and Water User

3. Land Leveling: - That can be rented from the Farm Board and Water User

4. Cement are too old – Encourage to get together with all farmers in the area so the funding can be submitted.

5. Annual Operation and Maintenance Fee

Farmers can pay monthly until they catch up in their payment

Late fee is \$10.00 a month; and that is what's bring up the Farmers' payment.

Encourage the farmers to pay their O&M fee immediately to avoid the \$10.00 late charges.

Lucinda suggested that all of the farmers in Upper Wheatfields area need to come together to seek for funding. The farmers area Margie Begay, Zita Hobbs Begay, Ben Curley, Leroy Buck, and herself.

Angie Carroll: She has a concern about her Operation & Maintenance fee. She indicated that she does not always look a mail closely. This last bill she received is a concern to her. “Why pay for O&M fee by the acreage if I don't use all portion of my field? There is no irrigation water for my field, so why does she have to pay? I also did my own research with Many Farm's Farm Board and Shiprock Farm Board, and they both indicated that the farmer pays

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only at the time when the water is released. Finally, I want to know why others farmers are paying \$1.50 an acre and others are paying \$3.00 per acres, and she suggested to keep the money collected from the Operation and Maintenance Fee with the designated farmland that the farmers come from and use it only within that Farmland area.”

Harley Chee: He commented that he is aware that his interest rate are accumulating. His concern or issue is prairie dog, deer, and bin weed.

Tony Yazzie: He commented that he experience not paying for his bill once upon a time, but he had to pay in full amount. He suggested to do away with interest for the Operation & Maintenance Fee.

Dorthea explained the following to all:

1. She explained, when she came into office as Farm Board in April 2009, the first project she completed was repairing the leakage on the main irrigation pipe line that Mr. Ben Curley is talking about. She worked with the chapters to purchase the pipe, and also worked very closely with Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Wilson to fix the problem. The cost of the pipe was \$ 1,212.30 and Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Wilson purchased \$1,172.22 worth of equipment, materials and supplies (out of their own pocket), so the total amount of the cost was \$ 2,384.52
2. She read the language that was written on the Land Use Permit and translated the language in Navajo. Each farmers signed their Land Use Permit to say that they will pay if there is ever an Operation and Maintenance fee put in place.
3. She explained the history of how this Operation and Maintenance fee established between the Farm Board and Farmers through several meetings. When we first started, we decided to pilot the project where all farmers pay \$1.50 per acres. The following year the board members reviewed the data with the farmers, and they decided to increase the cost to \$3.00 per acres due to the rising cost of materials and supplies. In addition, policy and procedures were developed. The procedure were as follow:
Invoice all farmers at \$3.00 per acres on April 19th, and request for farmers to pay on April 30 and give them a 10 days grace period, and if the farmer DOES NOT pay then add a \$10 late charge. If the farmer continues not to pay then they will continue to receive invoice on the 19th of the month and have them pay on the 30th and give them a 10 days grace period until they can pay the full amount on their bill.
4. She shared that \$6,000 plus were used to repair Tsaile and Upper Wheatfields Irrigation

V. CONCLUSION

- A. Identify next agenda items
Never covered the next meeting item
- B. Scheduled next meeting date to May 13, 2015 at 5pm.

- C. Adjournment
Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm
Action: Meeting adjournment accepted.
Motioned by Teresa Chee
Seconded by Lucinda Davis
Voting: 14 yes; 0 no; 1 abstained

Motion Carried