



Taos Soil & Water Conservation District

FYE 2021 Report of Accomplishments



Des Montes Ditch grade control/diversion structure – Arroyo Seco, NM

Mission

To serve the citizens and landowners of Taos County by promoting the wise use of land, water and natural resources and to provide technical, financial and educational assistance in order to meet the conservation needs of the local populace.

Taos SWCD Board of Supervisors and Staff operate all conservation programs under the principles of transparency, integrity and accountability. We believe that this is essential in order to maintain public trust. Taos Soil & Water Conservation District respectfully submits this summary report for review and comment.

Program Summary

Land Use & Technical review

- Taos SWCD was created to provide guidance on local conservation issues and encourage participation in conservation activities set forth in the Standard State Soil Conservation Districts Law (1937). The District Land Use Plan is intended to ensure federal, state and local consistency with District priorities.
- Taos SWCD staff provided official testimony and review of the Camino Fiesta subdivision to the Taos planning and zoning commission. This collaboration is made possible via MOU with the Town of Taos.
- Taos Soil & Water Conservation District advocates responsible and sustainable development standards for the community and assists governmental entities, developers and individuals in the task of minimizing the impact of development on the surrounding environment.

Acequia Program

- Taos SWCD completed **25** *Acequia* projects (2 group & 23 individual) assisting **152** landowners and benefiting **372** irrigated acres.
- Taos SWCD also provided professional engineering support to five acequia associations. This technical assistance benefited **377** landowners and **1,712** irrigated acres in Taos County.

Water Program

- The District continued to work with the NM Office of the State Engineer to monitor ground water levels in the Sunshine Valley.

Collaborative Conservation Projects

- Taos SWCD, in partnership with NMACD and BLM, hired additional employees to further wildlife habitat, range improvement, and fire safety objectives on public and private lands in Taos County.
- Taos SWCD, in partnership with NMACD and BLM, procured the installation of a Casing Advance livestock well near Ute Mountain. The well benefits both wildlife and local livestock permittees. Permittee access to water was restricted when this land transitioned into the Rio Grande National Heritage Area.

Animal Damage Program

- Verified financial losses from wildlife damage to field crops, livestock, rangelands, pasture, structures, ornamental trees, fruit trees, recreational facilities and irrigation ditches averages approximately **\$6 million** per year.
 - The amount of land affected (Federal, State and deeded) by animal damage problems within Taos County averages **173,000** acres per year.
 - Taos SWCD provided cost-share assistance to **60** local cooperators which benefitted **691** private acres.
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Forest Health Program

- Taos SWCD completed **17** Forest Health Program projects assisting **16** landowners and benefiting **216.5** woodland acres.
 - The District continued to participate in the Taos County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) collaborative.
 - Taos SWCD participated as a statutorily created entity in the Carson Forest revision process.
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Education & Outreach

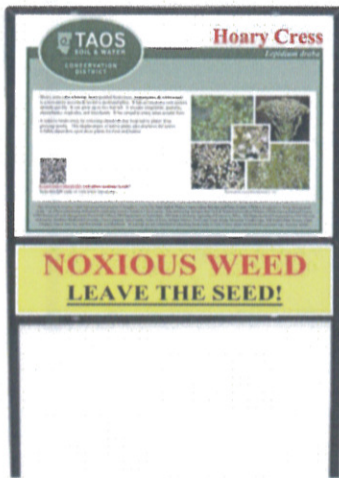
- Rio Lucero Watershed Restoration project: Taos SWCD, in partnership with Rocky Mountain Youth Corps and the Cerro Negro Forest Council, hired 6 student forest monitors during the summer/fall of 2020. The positions were offered to youth 16 years or older who were interested in pursuing careers in field science and natural resource conservation. The student monitors began an assessment of ecological changes resulting from forest thinning treatments on a **191-acre** watershed restoration project in Taos County.
 - The District sponsored **2** teams from Taos County to compete in both the Taos Regional Envirothon and NM Envirothon competitions. This was the **14th** year that the District has assisted Taos County youth in participating in the world's largest environmental stewardship education program.
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Soil Health

- Taos SWCD received grant funds from NMDA to promote soil health within Taos County. The grant consisted of staff training monies as well as soil sampling funds. 94 soil samples were analyzed from agriculture cooperators located throughout Taos County. Samples were tested for routine soil parameters as well as organic matter and microbiology. Taos SWCD staff then conducted an outreach event to interpret test results for landowners.

Noxious & Invasive Species Program

- The District sponsored the newly formed Taos County CWMA and multiple educational events including the second annual noxious and invasive species lecture and tour, a recording of which was posted to the District website.
- The District built web pages for twelve of Taos' worst noxious weed offenders and partnered with Dr. Leslie Beck of NMSU to record short, species-specific webinars which were posted on each individual noxious weed webpage.



- The District produced heavy-duty noxious weed educational signs. The signs include a QR code that brings the scanner to the District's weed specific website for a short pre-recorded webinar and more information. In partnership with BLM, Carson National Forest, Town of Taos, Taos Land Trust, and Sunset Park, the signs will rotate to various locations along trailheads, in campgrounds, and in walking parks around Taos County.
- The District coordinated a volunteer event ("Purge the Spurge" to eradicate the dangerous Myrtle spurge infestation located at the Senior Citizen's Center in Taos.

Range Improvements

- Taos SWCD completed **2** Rangeland Improvement conservation projects benefiting **3** private landowners and **251** acres.

Federal & State Funding

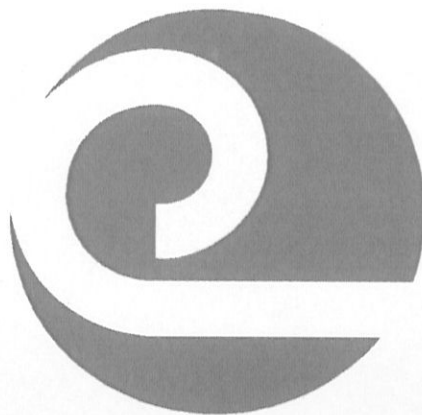
- Taos SWCD received approximately \$35K from State sources.
- Taos SWCD received approximately \$123K from Federal sources.
- State and Federal funds account for approximately **12%** of the District's operating revenues.

Local Funding

- The Taos SWCD Mill Levy accounts for approximately **88%** of District operating revenues.
- FY 2020-21 expenditures total approximately \$1.2 million dollars.

- The 2020-21 operating year resulted in **54** completed conservation cost-share projects. Overall, District cost-share programs assisted **549** landowners and benefitted **2,551** acres in Taos County.
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Taos Soil & Water Conservation District
Established 1941



“Assuring our future through conservation”

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