

SCP Annual Meeting, March 22, 2025, 4 pm  
Richland Community Center and Zoom

Attending: Marcia Carlson presiding

Board Members: Marcia Carlson, Jane Furchgott, Linda Gentes, Stein Goering, José Marroquin (via Zoom), Marilyn Rinehart, Linda Stadler, Aaron Wunnicke.

Guests in person: Barb Duerksen, Chelsea Wunnicke, Mike Wunnicke, Andrea Kaiser, Paige Huber. Guests via Zoom: Jack Gribble, Laura Berger

Welcome and Introductions - Marcia Carlson, President

Approval of minutes from 2024 Annual meeting - Marilyn Rinehart, Secretary - Jane moved, Stein seconded to approve. Motion carried.

President's Report - José thanked the Board and donors for their support in 2024. A major challenge in 2024 was the change in Nicaraguan government regulatory requirements and procedures. José was there in May and June to work with Alma in acquiring a Foreign Agent License from the Ministry of the Interior. To continue our work, we will deal with increased government fees and paperwork.

The situation in Nicaragua continues to be difficult since the 2018 revolt. More than 5000 NGOs have been expelled and their assets confiscated. A new law requires that they work in partnership with a Nicaraguan entity. More than 300 politicians, journalists, and activists have experienced human rights abuses, have been stripped of their citizenship, and/or have been expelled. Daniel Ortega and his wife are co-presidents, and their terms of office have been extended. The GDP is less than the previous year and Nicaragua continues to be the second poorest country in Central America after Haiti. The loss of USAID support will have huge effects on individuals and communities.

Treasurer's Annual Report - Stein Goering, Treasurer - Total Income: \$59,049.92 (\$37,680.44 in donations and \$21,000 in grants) Total Expenses: \$81,666.25 (mainly projects and coordinator salary) Endowment Fund: \$57,882 Net Assets: \$ 83,822. 96.4 % of total expenses go toward our work in Nicaragua. Money for projects was moved from the Long Term Savings account, which is made up of bequests and large gifts. Linda Stadler moved, Linda Gentes seconded, to approve. Motion carried.

Nominations and election for new board members and officers - Jane nominated José Maroquin, President; Marcia Carlson, Vice President; Marilyn Rinehart, Secretary; Stein Goering, Treasurer. Continuing Board Members are Gina Auel, Jane Furchgott, Linda Gentes, Linda Stadler, Aaron Wunnicke. No other nominations were offered. Marilyn moved, Linda Stadler seconded, that this slate be approved. Motion carried.

**The business portion of the meeting was then adjourned.**

Slide Show and Committee Reports - Additional guests include Deb Schwarze, David and Maggie May, John Fergus, Barbara Morford, Marge Ferstl, Steve and Sandy Burns, Laurel Lee, Malke Singer, Bill Bewick, Ervin and Hellen Ramirez.

Health - Linda Stadler - Environmental health continues to be a major focus. With input and physical labor from community members, families received latrines, water filters, well, well tops, and pumps. Medical teams went to all five communities to train 12 health promoters and provide vaccinations and emergency rescue training. Funding for medications which are not provided by the Ministry of Health was used to buy those meds and make them available in local health centers. Construction materials and cleaning supplies were funded so that community members could continue their involvement.

Education - Marilyn Rinehart - In 2024 we supported 210 students and 13 teachers in K-6 in the 5 villages. These are all 1-2 room schools. Preschool and elementary students receive packets of school supplies like notebooks, pencils, rulers, protractors, colors and other art supplies. We are grateful to Bader Philanthropies and the Richland Area Retired Teachers Association for funding these packets. We supplemented the school lunches provided by the

government with locally purchased meat and vegetables. Parents help to provide and serve the food at each school. Also we are grateful to Laurel Lee for working with Alma to deliver art supplies to the schools and to connect children in Nicaragua with the Forest School at the Kickapoo Reserve. A special project in 2024 was to assist the community of Escalante in getting a water system for the 32 students and 2 teachers there.

Scholarships - Marilyn Rinehart - We had 45 scholarship students at the high school level last year and 15 post-secondary scholarship students. All of these students are expected to participate in community service projects around the school grounds. The post-secondary students are in programs for anything from nursing and medicine to food engineering to English and Social or Natural Sciences to Fashion Design. We thank the Bader Foundation for a large part of the funding for these projects, along with others who have donated funds over the years to sustain the focus on education.

Agriculture - Aaron Wunnicke - According to Alma's 2024 project evaluation, the number of producers and money spent exceeded what was planned. The underestimate of producer demand as well as rising cost of materials created a strain on the budget. \$5720 was budgeted to provide bono productivo for 200 producers, but \$7500 was spent to benefit 250 producers. \$800 budgeted for 13 producers to participate in reforestation project. but \$1000 was spent for 18 producers. During community assemblies, producers requested continuation of bonos productivos. Crops from previous year were mostly consumed for food and there was not sufficient amounts saved for seed. Harvests throughout the year yielded mixed results. Abundant rainfall increased yields but also created disease issues. In August heavy rains caused rivers to flood and washed away many of the recently planted tree seedlings. In November rain prevented tree planting activity. Alma reports that at community meetings farmers express much gratitude for bonos productivos.

Environment - Jane Furchgott - TURTLES - Chacocente Wildlife Refuge is known for its sea turtle arribada beach, one of nine remaining in the world. Every year thousands of olive ridley turtles come up to lay their eggs in mass nestings, called arribadas. The numbers were very low in the late 2024 season, for reasons still not known. Mostly solitary nestings, with not more than several hundred turtles at a time. The hatching was very good, however. The SCP helped the 15 community rangers employed by MARENA, Nicaragua's DNR, who guard the beach and take data on the nesting turtles, with field supplies such as field clipboards, flashlights, and rubber boots. These rangers also helped Alma Susana with Environmental Education. In 2024 the Chacocente elementary schools had 12 workshops focused on protection and conservation of Natural Resources. All the children got to visit the arribada beach and help release baby turtles. There was also a Turtle Festival where kids got to color and learn about the sea turtles. Scholarship students competed in a contest to make art from recycled materials.

BIRDS - The MoSI station, SCP's migratory bird monitoring and banding project, has been active for 6 years. Its purpose is to collect data to help scientists learn what our nesting birds are doing in Latin America during the northern winter. The station had four sessions in 2024 (One was canceled due to the flooding in November.)

Head bander Oscar Bermudez has trained the first woman on the MoSI team. The local people on the team are getting adept at taking birds out of the mist nets, measuring, ageing, and banding the birds they catch. Two teenagers are also being trained. The team now has a uniform -- T-shirts with the station's symbol, a Wood Thrush, a bird that nests in Wisconsin and is common in Chacocente in the winter. The MoSI team members also help Alma Susana with bird education in the schools. Last year 10 classes were given, along with the popular bird walks led by the team members. Kids learn to identify, appreciate and protect the wild birds.

Alcaldia - Throughout our history we've always been supportive of and supported by the mayor's office, or Alcaldia, of the municipality of Santa Teresa. Every year we fund a small project requested by the mayor. Mayor Jamileth Fonseca asked our help for supplies used by the municipal sanitation workers. The SCP contributes to buy some of these garbageman's needs, such as leather gloves and tools. With the bureaucratic changes of the last year, we were fortunate to be able to work with Mayor Jamileth to keep our project legal.

Women Entrepreneurs - In 2024 the SCP funded its 6th village for the Women's Entrepreneurship Project, small grants given to help start or expand women's businesses. Any woman in the village of Escalante who wanted to apply and had a good plan for her business could request funding. 13 people applied and \$5,000 was split among them with little about \$400 per person. Some of their businesses are fast food and drink, chicken and hog raising, grocery store, bakery, pastries, and sewing. In the previous villages. Almost all the women are continuing their businesses.

**The meeting concluded with a Zoom conversation featuring coordinator Alma Susanna Chavez.**

The meeting was adjourned for a Potluck Dinner, followed with dance music provided by Ocooch Klezmerettes. Approximately 60 people enjoyed this part of the event.