

December 21, 2022

# The Conejos County Messenger

## HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER

Published Quarterly on April 1, July 1, Oct. 1, and Jan. 1







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## Commissioners Honor Ms. Sharleen Farmer with Conejos County Volunteer of the Year Award



At the December 22 Special Board of County Commissioners meeting, the Board presented Ms. Sharleen Farmer with a gift basket in appreciation for the volunteer work she has performed throughout the 2022 calendar year and did mention the award did overlap into previous years, 2020 and 2021.

Ms. Farmer was a regular Citizens for a Better Conejos County Committee member since the committee's organization in the 2020 year. She

worked long hours with committee projects in working toward a Conejos County retail sales tax. Sharleen wanted to continue the committee and she has worked hard in updating the Facebook page she created, posting the county's quarterly newsletter and other county and community news. This current year Ms. Farmer volunteered to work on redistricting county commissioner districts as a member of the Commission. She is involved with the off road vehicles code, a committee of citizens that volunteered to work on the regulations and will be meeting in 2023 to present the Board a code to approve, and she regularly attends board meetings and budget hearings.

We thank Sharleen for all of the volunteer work and time she has done since moving to Conejos County from the Denver metro area.



Honoring Conejos County Public Health Personal Care Providers at  
the this year's Christmas Lunch



Appreciating Conejos County Employees at the year's Christmas Party





Connie Ricci, Human Resources Director; Rodney King, County  
Emergency Manager; Tressesa Martinez, County Administrator,  
Commissioners Baroz, Garcia, Jarvies

**GATHERING OUR COMMUNITIES IN CHRIST**  
**COMMUNITY CONCERT**  
**DECEMBER 4 2022**



La Jara and Manassa Elementary 4th and 5th Grade Choirs  
Director: Anna Gearhardt



The Baroz Family



**GATHERING OUR COMMUNITIES IN CHRIST**  
**COMMUNITY CONCERT, DECEMBER 4 2022**



Communities in Christ Choir

Don Larsen, Director: Pianists Debbie Vance and Brenda Smith



The Crowd Singing "Joy to the World"  
and "Feliz Navidad"

## REDISTRICTING COMMISSIONER DISTRICTS



After every census the county commissioners of each county in the state of Colorado are required to review the populations within each commissioner district. If the review finds that there is a 5% or greater deviation between the most populous and the least populous commissioner district, then the commissioners must convene a Commission and begin the work to reapportion the populations within each district to be as equal as possible.

The commissioners have convened a Commission that is presenting two options/maps (options 1 and 2) for the Board of County Commissioners to eventually adopt one of the two maps.

The two maps are posted on the new Conejos County website:

[conejoscounty.colorado.gov](https://conejoscounty.colorado.gov) Both maps are also posted for inspection in the south hallway of the Courthouse, in the hallway leading to the County Clerk's Office.

The Commission is requesting county residents study both maps carefully. After reviewing both maps, one can comment using the link provided and it would help the commissioners if your comment would contain the map you prefer and the reason/s. Written comments, public hearing testimony and commission planning meetings will be the driving force on which of the maps the commissioners adopt. The commissioners have until September 30, 2023 to complete the redistricting of the commissioner districts.

| CONEJOS COUNTY POPULATION |       |
|---------------------------|-------|
| 2010 Census               | 8,256 |
| 2020 Census               | 7,461 |
| Difference                | -795  |

The following table enables residents to review the current commissioner district populations after the 2020 census and the proposed populations that meet the 5% or less deviation regulation.

| COMMISSIONER DISTRICT POPULATION |                   |                  |                  |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                                  | Current Districts | Option 1 (Map 1) | Option 2 (Map 2) |
| Commissioner District 1          | 2,277             | 2,481            | 2,481            |
| Commissioner District 2          | 2,507             | 2,501            | 2,446            |
| Commissioner District 3          | 2,677             | 2,479            | 2,534            |

Options 1 and 2 Maps: The significant proposed change to commissioner districts in both maps is the Town of Romeo is divided by Colorado State Highway 142. The maps indicate the residents of Romeo that live on the south side of Colorado State Highway 142 would now be in Commissioner District 1 and the residents of Romeo that live on the north side of Colorado State Highway 142 would remain in Commissioner District 2.

The Board of County Commissioners have scheduled a public hearing on January 24, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at the Conejos County Courthouse in the commissioner's board meeting room. Citizens will have an opportunity to appear in person and comment on the map they believe best suits the interest of the county. All website comments will be read at the public hearing and must be considered equally as those communicated in person.

The last time Commissioner Districts were reapportioned was in 2010.

The Board of County Commissioners sincerely “Thanks” businesses for making the changes to your point of sale, collecting and submitting retail sales taxes! Tax revenues were sent back to the county by the Colorado Dept. of Revenue beginning in March, 2022; except for the use tax which is collected locally by the Land Use Office. At year end or early 2023,, the county will receive the 2022 January and February retail sales tax revenue. The following graphs indicate retail sales tax revenues submitted to the county as of this writing.

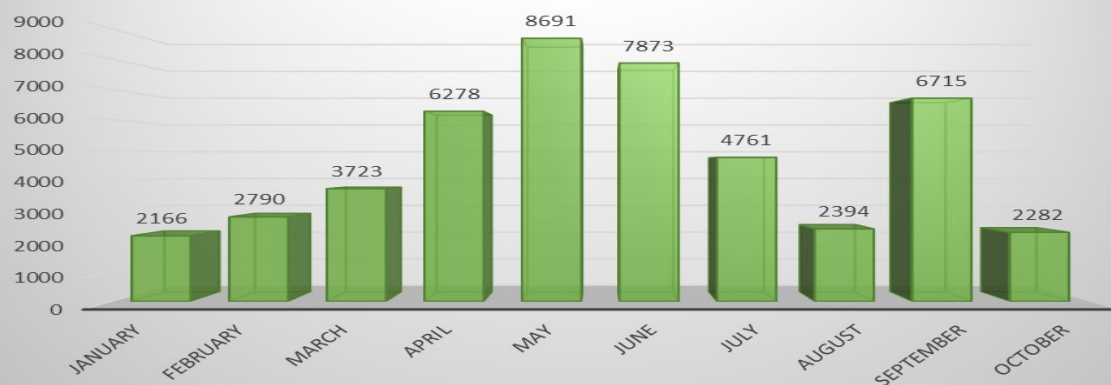
### 2022 RETAIL SALES TAX REVENUE



### 2022 MOTOR VEHICLE USE TAX REVENUE



### 2022 BUILDING USE TAX REVENUE







This holiday season we are grateful for the time we are able to spend with our family, friends, and co-workers. We would like to acknowledge the community work that was recently completed by our Conejos County Mentoring program which is led by staff member Andrew Jarvies.



Youth in the Conejos County Mentoring/Works Program recently put together a *Thanksgiving Basket Giveaway* for those in need.

The youth organized a food drive where they asked for donations from local community members and ultimately were able to fill 5 baskets with canned goods, boxed food items and a frozen turkey, a complete Thanksgiving meal for 5 different families in Conejos County.

The youth worked on communication skills as they had to talk to random people, explain what their project goal was, and ask for donations. All 17 youth in the group participated and engaged with customers outside Safeway in Alamosa. Many of the youth commented on how surprised they were by the generosity of people in their local community and their willingness to support their project.



After learning about the *Thanksgiving Basket Giveaway*, one individual went inside Safeway and came out with a full shopping cart, filled with groceries and delivered it to the youth, waiting outside. A few of the people that donated also contributed bags of candy and donuts to the youth in the county program.

The youth later worked together to organize the food and place it into the 5 baskets to be donated to families before Thanksgiving Day.

## Virtual Visit!

Do you need information regarding your public assistance case but can't make it to the office?



Email [Kristina.Juarez@state.co.us](mailto:Kristina.Juarez@state.co.us) to schedule an appointment

**Want to Make a Difference in Our Community?**  
**Come Join Our Team!**  
**We have openings in Eligibility and Child Support**  
[www.conejoscounty.colorado.gov](http://www.conejoscounty.colorado.gov)

**Do you suspect child abuse or neglect?**



Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline  
 1-844-CO-4-KIDS (1-844-264-5437)



## Merry Christmas 2022 & Happy New Year 2023!



Greetings from the Conejos County Treasurer's Office!

Here's an update to begin the new year of 2023. Our office will be mailing out tax notices on or about January 13<sup>th</sup>. If you do not receive yours by the end of January, you are welcome to call us and we will verify the mailing address we have for you.

First half tax payments are due by February 28, 2023 and second half tax payments are due by June 15, 2023. Full payments are due by April 30, 2023.

Your cancelled check will be your receipt unless you request a receipt and send us a self-addressed stamped envelope with your payment. Please note you can either mail your payment to: PO Box 97, Conejos, CO 81129, or pay online at: [conejoscounty.colorado.gov](https://conejoscounty.colorado.gov) (Please note this is our new County Website Address!) or call our office to make a payment over the phone. Please be aware there is a small convenience fee for debit cards, credit cards and e-checks.

If you have specific questions regarding the Senior Property Tax Exemption please contact the County Assessor's Office at (719) 376-5585. For questions on the Disabled Veterans' Exemption or Disabled Veteran Surviving Spouse Exemption please contact the Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs at (303) 914-5832.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact our office us at (719) 376-5919 and we will be glad to help. Thank you.

Mack M. Crowther, Conejos County Treasurer/Public Trustee

## Conejos County Public Health Department



*Back Row: Jessica Juarez, AnnaRae Smith, Ben Gonzales, Joni Turner and Austin Chavez.  
Front Row: Samantha Escobedo, Jurice Montoya and Denise Jiron. Not pictured: Natalie Chavez.*

**Happy Holidays! We here at Public Health hope the season is treating you well.**

Winter is officially starting and we are already full swing into the season for respiratory illness. RSV, Influenza, COVID 19, Strep and other illnesses are prevalent right now so remember to take precautions with hand washing, staying home when sick and seeking medical attention. Children in particular are seeing high illness this season. We encourage everyone to keep up to date on all of their vaccines. If you are not sure if you need a vaccine, we can review your record with you. Give us a call for a record review or immunization appointment!

Our Personal Care Provider program is also here to provide assistance to those who need a little extra help at home. Our PCP program is taking referrals to assist in the areas of personal care and homemaker duties. This is a Medicaid funded program aimed at keeping our Elderly, Blind and/or Disabled community members in their homes, living as independently as possible. Please call us today for more information on how to get you or a loved one enrolled in these services.

**Lastly, we want to thank all of you for your support and collaboration during 2022 and wish you and yours a Happy New Year!**





The Sheriff's Office has been busy the last year responding to all types of calls, to the tune of 6556 calls for service. Everything from fires, medical assists and break-ins to threats toward our public schools. Our Deputies have responded to every call promptly and professionally. Detailed investigation and hard work have resulted in several arrests, including the apprehension of individuals stealing Catalytic Converters in the area. Investigations are continuing and more arrests are expected.

Since we are talking about thefts and break-ins, it is important to remember to lock the doors on our homes and vehicles. The

Holiday season is looked at by some as a prime opportunity to cash in. As people are busily purchasing gifts for one another and placing them under the Christmas Tree, the Grinches of the County are preparing to steal them. Please help us out by locking doors, concealing belongings and placing valuables in a safe location. Most thieves are looking for a quick grab and go and having things locked up or in a place that will take time to get to, may keep it from being stolen.

We are currently working with the Mayor of Antonito and several other communities in the County to employ a neighborhood watch program. This idea has been used all over the Country and has proven its self in combating crime. The old saying "If you see something, say something" is the trademark of the Neighborhood Watch Program. Sheriff Crowther has made it well known to the staff that we are here to serve the public, and public servants we are. Our numbers are small but our citizens should know that when we are called upon, we will respond to assist them. We are diligently working with the community, to build trust and confidence in the Sheriff's Office. By working together, in programs like Neighborhood Watch and others we can make a difference and have the environment, where we all want to live and raise our children.

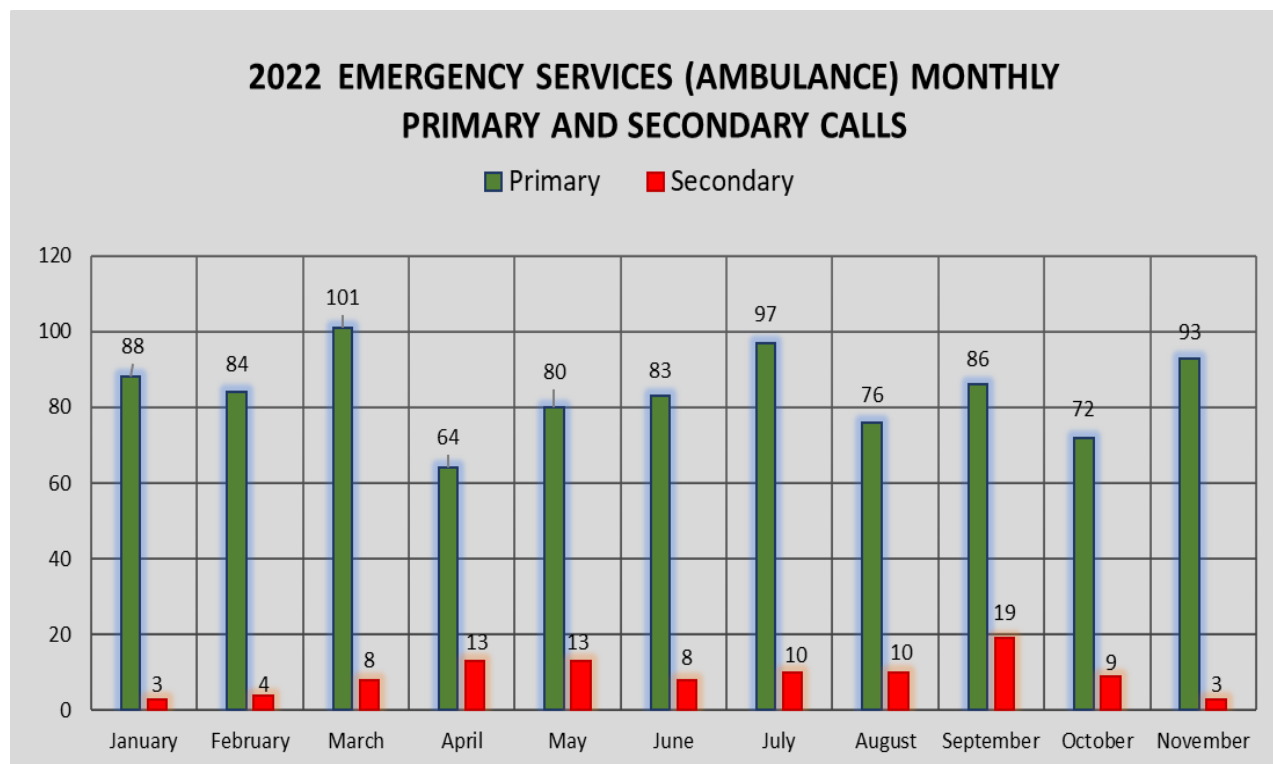
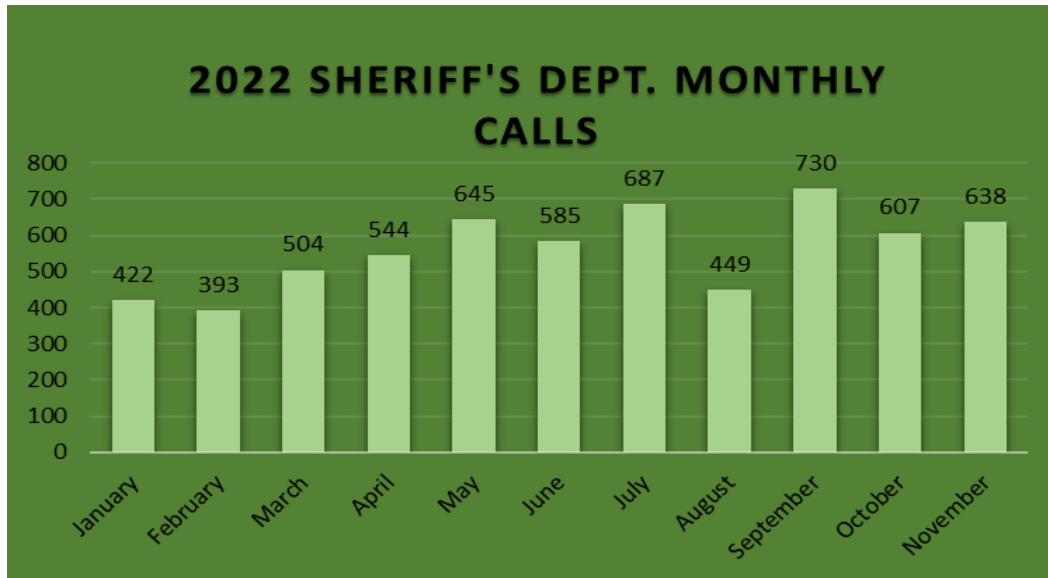
We here at the Conejos County Sheriff's Office would like to wish everyone a happy and safe Holiday Season. May the County and every one of our residents be blessed, protected and watched over throughout the New Year. This is our wish and our prayer.

Sheriff Garth Crowther



SHERIFF'S OFFICE STAFF (This picture is not inclusive of all staff employees.)

# 2022 Sheriff and Ambulance Monthly Calls





**Greetings to all the Residents of Conejos County and Interested parties, the Conejos County Office of Emergency Management wishes everyone a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!**

It is amazing to see the Responders of the SLV work together for the benefit of all.



The Colorado Aspen Fire on Dec 2, 5:44 (first Picture) to later that afternoon (\$400,000 loss.) There were multiple fire departments that responded. Devin Haynie and Cody Sullivan (Incident Commander) from DFPC - San Luis Valley and their crews assisted the Alamosa, Rio Grande and Conejos County Fire Departments. The Conejos County Sheriff's Department and Emergency Manager also were present and assisted as needed. Rocky Southway sent a large front end loader to assist.

We have had 2 major fires in Conejos County this year and the cooperation and response from all agencies is what makes the Valley a great place to live! The Menkhaven Fire this past June lasted 8 days and cost \$1,400,000. There were many fire departments that responded to this fire with the Romeo Fire Department staying the entire 8 days, under the control and direction of the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) Devin Haynie, Incident Commander.

### **NOTICE OF PUBLIC WORKSHOP REGARDING THE DRAFT OF THE SAN LUIS VALLEY HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE**

January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023 9:00-10:00 am

Virtual meeting link: <https://zoom.us/j/2703146874> or call in 253-215-8782 or 669-900-6833 and use Meeting ID 270 314 6874

The San Luis Valley Region and its six participating counties (Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande, and Saguache) are in the final stages of a planning effort to assess risks from natural, human-health, and human-caused hazards and to identify ways to reduce those risks. A planning process that began in February 2022 has resulted in a draft update to each county's existing Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) in one cohesive, regional plan. A HMP is required under the Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 to be eligible to receive certain federal disaster assistance and grants for hazard mitigation projects. A virtual public workshop will be held to introduce the draft plan, its hazards and highlights of the mitigation strategy and will include a presentation followed by a question-and-answer period. The plan will also be made available for public review and comment in January. Following the public workshop and comment period the Plan will be submitted for final approvals and ultimately adoption by all involved jurisdictions.

Rodney King, Conejos County Emergency Manager

## Road and Bridget Department Fourth Quarter Report:

Our road and bridge department has spent the last quarter finishing up maintenance on snow plows and other snow removal equipment including a lawn mower with a snow blade attached to it. We topped off our red rock and salt supply to make sure we have enough to get us through the icy months. We were able to send six crew members to a Winter Snow and Ice training in Longmont this late fall and our crew members were able to see some of the latest snow removal equipment and also learn new and better ways to remove snow and better ways to deal with icy roads.

Winter tends to slow us down in the road and bridge department but we have had some great warm weather and we have taken advantage of these warm days. We replaced two wood wall and deck bridges with concrete and steel bridges that will last for many years and not require the constant maintenance and expense that these old style wood bridges required. The bridges that were replaced are located at County Road M and County Road 15 and the second is located at County Road S and County Road 19.

As you all know late fall and winter bring cold and winds, and on a few days our crew was out removing blown over trees and debris from our roads throughout the county.

Other than grading roads and trying to keep up with our regular road, bridge and culvert maintenance we have been and we will be crushing class six road base material at our Romeo gravel pit. We will continue to crush through the winter months and once the seasons allow we will place the processed material until it is exhausted on our higher traveled roads. This is a new process and will take a few years to get this accomplished.

Thank you from Conejos County Road and Bridge and have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Don Martinez, Office phone, 719-376-5654, ext. 4 or cell phone, 719-589-7761.



# LAND USE OFFICE

## Access Permits



An access is any point of entry/exit to a property. If your entry/exit point is adjacent to a county road, a permit is required per Conejos County Land Use Code Article 14. It should be safe and in conformance with applicable standards. An application can be found by contacting the Land Use Office or the Road & Bridge Department.

Driveway easements (also called access points) should be no less than 30 feet in width. The Road & Bridge Department will perform a site inspection to determine safety, placement and/or the need for a culvert.

Access points from state highways, forest service roads and BLM roads will need to apply with the appropriate agencies.

## RV'S & CAMPING



### DID YOU KNOW?

The use of recreational vehicles for storage, as an accessory structure, or as a dwelling for any purpose other than temporary dwelling for travel, recreation or vacation use is prohibited. The use of a recreational vehicle or a tent is prohibited within a residential district. (i.e., Subdivisions)





