



Santa Cruz County Resource Conservation District

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MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING OF THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The regular Meeting of the Santa Cruz County Resource Conservation District (SCCRCD) Board of Directors was called to order at **6:45PM May 9, 2007**, at the Resource Conservation District Office, 820 Bay Avenue, Suite 128, Capitola, California.

Directors Present: Sheryl Bailey
Howard Liebenberg
Jim McKenna, President
John Ricker
Roberta Smith

Directors Absent: Tom Lukens
Mike Manfre, Vice President

RCD Staff Present: Tangi Chapman, Recorder
Karen Christensen, Executive Director
Sharon Corkrean, Director of Finance
Lea Haratani, Communication Specialist

WELCOME - INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting opened at 6:45PM with a quorum present.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

There were no oral communications.

MINUTES

The Board reviewed the April 18, 2007 meeting minutes. John Ricker moved to accept the April 18, 2007 meeting minutes as written. Howard Liebenberg seconded the motion. John Ricker, Howard Liebenberg, Roberta Smith and Jim McKenna were in favor, Sheryl Bailey abstained. The motion carried.

BUDGET & FINANCE

Expenditures

General Expenditures – The General Expenditures for April 2007 were circulated for review. Roberta Smith noted that there was a typographical error in the word “communication.” John Ricker moved to accept the April 2007 General Expenditures with the correction in the spelling of communication. Sheryl Bailey seconded the motion. All were in favor. Sharon suggested and the Board agreed that the Budget will be sent prior to the Board Meeting (along with the minutes and agenda) for review and comment. The Budget would be placed on the agenda as a consent item for approval.

Transfers

No transfers were discussed.

ACTION ITEMS

Program Discussion Items

Food Safety and Water Quality – Karen reported that she and Lea Haratani attended a Food Safety conference in San Luis Obispo April 23-25. The Conference provided an excellent forum to present the science and research that has been done and also to identify the gaps in understanding. As a result, Karen, Lea and Arianne Rettinger have discussed the need to further investigate the issue of food safety and how it will affect water quality and the ability of the District to implement conservation practices in the agricultural arena. Then Lea gave the Board a power point presentation. She began the presentation with an overview of the issue, starting with the recent outbreak of *E. coli* 0157:H7 in spinach which was implicated in over 2,000 illnesses and several deaths. This strain of *E. coli* was first recorded in 1982 and has been difficult to trace. Lea explained that

E. coli 0157:H7 begins in animals and can spread to humans; the bacteria can be absorbed into the tissue of plants where they cannot be washed off; the bacteria are killed by cooking or pasteurization. Cattle pigs and wildlife have been documented to carry the bacteria. Karen pointed out that it is unknown how virulent, how long it lasts, or how the bacteria are translocated. With this gap in knowledge, it was pointed out at the conference that the current push in the food safety arena has been market driven and not science based. The issue reported by Lea affects public safety and our local economy. With recommendations of 800 foot bare ground strips around the perimeter of a farm, small farmers will be disproportionately impacted. Lea further explained that many farmers are fearful that they will not be able to sell their product if their conservation projects are seen to be harboring pathogens. Karen gave an example of a field trip to a local cooperators farm. This farmer has spent the last 10 years implementing conservation practices to improve water quality. On the site there is a small riparian buffer with vegetation and standing water. When an Ocean Mist representative was asked what they saw was the issue at the site, he pointed out that the standing water provided frog habitat, and that there would be animals present to pass pathogens onto the fields. Lea underscored the complexity of this issue and pointed out that not only are there market pressures, but that insurance companies are also getting into the issue. Several more examples of the problem were given. Karen suggested that the NRCS should be brought in to work on this issue. Lea reported that Western Growers have created GAP guidelines for growers of lettuce and leafy vegetables. She further indicated that 99% of growers have signed on to this agreement. The GAP guidelines consist of 20 different practices. Lea then discussed the next step, suggesting that there is always risk involved in food production and there needs to be a discussion of what risk is acceptable and then to market that risk. There needs to be more research that will then provide science-based solutions to the issue rather than market-driven solutions. In summation, Lea suggested that the District will need to continue to track and stay informed of the latest findings in order to continue to meet both the needs of growers and soil and water conservation. John informed the Board that the County is in the process of purchasing equipment that can test for *E. coli*.

REPORTS

Staff Reports

Karen gave kudos to Angela Stuart regarding her recent public relations blitz for the Organic Materials Exchange website. Several articles in local papers have been written regarding the program. Sheryl Bailey asked what was happening with the Arana Gulch project. Karen explained that the Regional Water Quality Control Board will be issuing money from the state, and that the City and the County of Santa Cruz would be deciding on their contributions. If they decide not to fund the project, then there are Proposition 50 funds available as back-up. Karen updated the Board regarding the Permit Coordination Program. Currently a regional permit with the Army Corp of Engineers has been issued and received by the NRCS. The permit must be signed within 60 days or the permit will be lost. Kelli Camara and Rich Casale are currently working on getting the necessary signatures. The Board suggested writing a letter in support of signing the permit paperwork. Karen reported that 17 projects are scheduled to go through the Permit Coordination Program this construction season.

Directors/Associate Director Reports

No Director reports were given.

NRCS Reports

Rich circulated a quarterly report for January through March 2007 for review. He also shared an email correspondence with Mary Walter of the Farm Bureau regarding their Food for Thought quote in the *Between the Furrows* newsletter.

Calendar Dates

No Calendar dates were discussed.

ADJOURN

Adjournment

Sheryl Bailey moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:14PM. John Ricker seconded the motion. All were in favor. The next Board Meeting will be on June 13, 2007 at 6:30PM at the Capitola Office, 820 Bay Avenue, Suite 128, in Capitola.

Jim McKenna
Director, Board of Directors

(TC:JM)