



**MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 10, 2016 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING OF THE
RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY**

The Regular Meeting of the Resource Conservation District (RCD) of Santa Cruz County Board of Directors was called to order at **6:32PM, February 10, 2016** at the District Office, 820 Bay Avenue, Suite 136, Capitola, CA

95010

Directors Present:	Gordon Claassen Howard Liebenberg Robert Ketley Mike Manfre, Vice President Jim McKenna, President John Ricker
Directors Absent:	Roberta Smith
Associate Directors Present:	Kathryn Tobisch
RCD Staff Present:	Chris Coburn, Executive Director Tangi Chapman, Recorder
NRCS Present:	Rich Casale, District Conservationist
Public:	Stuart Davis

WELCOME - INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting opened at 6:32PM; Jim McKenna chaired the meeting. Chris Coburn reported that because of work to prepare for the annual audit, the January Expenditures would be reviewed at the March Board of Director's meeting along with February's expenditures.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Stuart Davis shared with the Board his interest in biochar production. He gave a brief overview of the benefits and applicability to our local agriculture. Chris Coburn mentioned that the Marin RCD has been using biochar as part of the Marin Carbon Project and that several state programs, including a "Healthy Soils" program, are being funded at the state level. There is increasing recognition of the benefits of storing carbon in soils – the Board discussed the benefits to both the soil and carbon sequestration and increasing water holding capacity in the soil. Mr. Davis also shared that the Permaculture Voices 3 Conference will be held in San Diego March 2-5, 2016, with many of the leaders in permaculture and agroecology field giving talks.

(Robert Ketley entered 6:40PM)

REPORTS

NRCS Report

In addition to a written report, Rich Casale provided an update of NRCS activities for January. He shared that Dan Little the NRCS Engineer has announced that he accepted the engineering post in Santa Maria and will be leaving the NRCS's Capitola office. Rich informed the Board that there are currently 300 NRCS positions in California, and that of those 300 positions, there are approximately 75 vacancies. He shared that Chris Coburn sent a letter to Carlos Suarez the State Conservationist regarding the issue and Rich received a response from Mr. Suarez. In the letter, Mr. Suarez explained that the agency has recently undergone an 'administrative transformation', which he characterized as one of the biggest undertakings that the Agency has launched. Mr. Suarez stated that all levels of the

agency have been impacted by staff attrition and the backlog of recruitment requests, but they are doing everything they can to accelerate hiring. Rich noted that NRCS has regionalized its hiring process, and the adjustment to that system is taking some time, but NRCS is working on filling positions as quickly as possible. Rich explained that NRCS and RCD have jointly requested an USDA intern to help with the workload – Rich has not heard a response to that request. Rich stated that one approach to meeting service demand from NRCS could be accomplished through certified technical providers. However, Rich stated that it is unclear just how effective that approach can be. NRCS currently has three volunteer UCSC interns who have agreed to stay on for two quarters. The interns have been helping the RCD staff as well. Rich spoke at EcoFarm conference that was held recently at the Asilomar Conference Center. Rich reported that over 200 people attended his hoop house talk. Rich will be conducting a tour at Crystal Mountain Winery in conjunction with the Coastal Watershed Council highlighting NRCS programs and agriculture in our local watersheds. This event will be held on March 26, 2016.

MINUTES

The Board reviewed the January 13, 2016 meeting minutes. John Ricker moved approval of the January 13, 2016 meeting minutes with a minor change in the minute heading where the date of the meeting had been omitted. Gordon Claassen seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion. The motion carried.

BUDGET & FINANCE

FY 2015-2016 Expenditures – The January Expenditures will be reviewed at the next Board meeting.

ACTION ITEMS

Administrative Service Agreement 401(k) – Tangi Chapman presented the Board with the Formal Record of Action regarding the Administrative Service Agreement between the District and Alliance Benefit Group, the third party administrator of the 401(k) retirement plan. After discussion, Mike Manfre moved approval of the Formal Record of Action. John Ricker seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion. The motion carried.

Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) – Chris Coburn presented the Board with the Consumer Price Index for the San Francisco Bay Area for 2015. The CPI for 2015 is calculated at 3.2%. Chris shared that the COLA increase in would translate to approximately \$16,000 increase in the personnel budget. He noted that each time a budget is built for a grant we anticipate an annual COLA increase along with the potential for annual 2.5% merit increases (whether or not they actually occur). This ‘billable rate model’ was the result of lessons learned from last year’s Department of Finance Audit and staff’s work on the Cost Allocation Plan. However, not all of the existing grant agreements, particularly those entered into before last year, have these adjustments reflected in rates. The Board discussed the Cost Allocation Plan and how that ties into the billable rates and personnel costs. After discussion, Robert Ketley moved approval of the COLA at 3.2%. John Ricker seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion. The motion passes.

(Kathryn entered at 7:18PM)

Staff Reports

Chris Coburn shared with the Board that the District has been preliminarily recommended by the Wildlife Conservation Board to fund the Soquel Creek Streamflow Enhancement Program. This project seeks to conduct a hydrologic analysis and determine options for improving summer / fall streamflow while increasing water supply reliability for landowners diverting from the creek. The belief is that this can be accomplished by creating winter water storage and that diversions could then be rested in the summer / fall to keep water in the stream. Chris believes that if successful, the project could serve as a model for similarly impacted streams elsewhere in the County. Chris is wrapping up efforts with the Nature Conservancy regarding the Pajaro Compass; the effort seeks to increase the pace and scale of watershed conservation in agriculture. He reported that the last stakeholder meeting coming up in the next month and that the focus has been on conservation of working lands.

Chris continues to work with stakeholders as part of the loosely-termed open space project. The group has been focused on defining the needs related to parks and open space along with potential revenue and governance options. Chris reported that both the County's Conservation Blueprint and the Ecosystem Services Report are informing this work. Chris expects that the County Parks Director will provide the Board of Supervisors a report on this effort in March.

Chris informed the Board that the District has been working with UCSC on a concept of water recharge net metering – a project being called ReNeM (recharge net metering). The concept for this project is similar to energy net metering, whereby residents who have solar panels on their home are compensated when the panels supply energy back to the grid. The idea is the same for recharge – i.e. landowners could be compensated for documented groundwater recharge through some sort of incentive program. Chris explained that Andy Fisher from UCSC presented the idea to PVWMA's Board. They were very interested. Chris said that this concept compliments the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALCP) funded project that RCD staff are working on with a number of partners, including the County and Community Water Dialogue Stakeholders. Kelli Camara and Andy Fisher have been working on identifying additional sites for the Managed Aquifer Recharge program.

Chris reported that Lisa Lurie is currently on maternity leave and will be back on July 5, 2016. The District has hired Stacie Ruffoni and Sooni Gillet as limited-term contract employees to assist staff in Lisa's absence. Mike Manfre asked about the letter from the Landowner that was included in this month's Board packet. Chris explained that this letter was written by the landowner with whom the RCD implemented the restoration on Soquel Creek last year. Mike thought that the quote will go into the PIR annual report as well as the Facebook page.

Director Reports

Howard Liebenberg reported on a project in Pescadero where an entity is seeking to tear down a dilapidated barn and replace it with a new one. A permit from CalFire is required to do this, but in order to get a permit the landowner is required to rebuild the road to a 20 ton rating. This requirement may make the project cost prohibitive, and in Director Liebenberg's opinion, was excessive.

CALENDAR DATES

- March 2-5, 2016 Permaculture Voices 3 Conference in San Diego
- March 9, 2016 RCD Board Meeting
- March 19, 2016 Karen Christensen Memorial (send board reminder).
- March 26, 2016 NRCS Tour of Winery

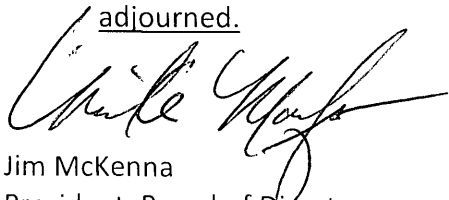
WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

There were no written communications.

NEXT MEETING

Date/ Agenda Items

The next meeting will be on March 9, 2016. Gordon Claassen moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:01PM. Howard Liebenberg seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion. The meeting was adjourned.



Jim McKenna
President, Board of Directors
(TC:JM)