

**MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 8, 2023 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 **6:30PM on February 8, 2023**, the meeting was conducted virtually per AB 361 and Executive Order N-35-20 via Zoom, Meeting ID: 708-386-048.

Directors Present: Mike Eaton  
Robert Ketley  
Howard Liebenberg  
Jim McKenna, President  
John Ricker (entered late)

Directors Absent: Kelley Bell

Associate Directors Present: Mike Manfre, Vice President  
Vasiliki Vasil  
Kathryn Tobisch

RCD Staff Present: Tangi Chapman, Recorder  
Lisa Lurie, Executive Director

NRCS Staff Present: Drew Mather, District Conservationist

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30PM, with a quorum present. Jim McKenna chaired the meeting. Roll was called and connectivity confirmed; Kelley Bell absent; Mike Eaton present; Robert Ketley present; Howard Liebenberg present; Mike Manfre absent; Jim McKenna present; John Ricker absent.

**2. INTRODUCTIONS & WELCOME**

Jim McKenna welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Tangi Chapman read an email received on February 8, 2023 regarding Agenda item 6.1 Fall Creek Truck Trail Forest Health Project from concerned constituent, see attached.

**4. NRCS REPORT**

Drew Mather gave a brief oral report. He said that NRCS staff have been busy with storm response requests. NRCS has contracted with Rich Casale to help with site visits; over 150 requests from landowners and 30 agriculture related requests. Drew is waiting for details regarding the FSA emergency program for agriculture. He added that on February 13, the Emergency Conservation Program will be rolled out. Additionally, he has had a request from Congressmember Zoe Lofgren for potential projects in Santa Cruz County. Drew asked if there are some projects that he could suggest that highlight the joint efforts of NRCS and RCD. He will coordinate with RCD once he gets more information. Finally, he shared that the deadline for EQP applications to get ranked is the end of the month. There are nearly twenty applications so far; projects include forest health and livestock management.

**5. CONSENT AGENDA**

The Board reviewed the consent agenda items, including the January 11, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes and notification of nominations to the SDRMA Board of Directors. Robert Ketley moved approval of the consent agenda



items. The ayes included Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, and Jim McKenna. There were none opposed; the motion passed unanimously.

(John Ricker joined meeting at 7:07PM)

## **6. ACTION ITEMS**

### **6.1. Review and consider approval of Staff Recommendation Memo for procurement of construction services for the Fall Creek Truck Trail Forest Health Project**

Howard Liebenberg commented on the importance of managing the forest, he noted that on his own property where he had a significant rodent problem, after he limbed his trees he observed hawks and other wildlife foraging and his rodent problem decreased significantly. Lisa Lurie gave an overview of the Fall Creek Truck Trail Forest Health project. She expressed gratitude that a member of the public commented on this project, it shows that people are interested and care about what the RCD and other Agencies are doing in the name of conservation. Lisa shared that the goal of this project is to improve forest health functions and reduce the likelihood of catastrophic wildfire. Together with State Parks the Forest Health team has taken a holistic approach; they have identified opportunities to remove dead, dying and hazardous trees balanced with keeping important standing dead and habitat trees. The memo before the Board outlines the procurement process followed and suggests contracting with the lowest responsible bidder. Angie Richmond shared details of the project. The project covers 62 Acres on the Henry Cowell State Park Fall Creek Truck Trail. Treatments will seek to mimic fire through mastication of materials up to a certain point and limbing trees up to 10 feet. The team has flagged shrubs and small trees for retention, removal of dead tanoaks. Dead trees will be hand felled and burn piles will be created. Logs over a certain size will be lopped and scattered. Between 50-60 large snags have been identified to keep due to their potential as habitat.

The Board discussed the merits of the project and encouraged a thoughtful response to the email from the concerned citizen. Vasiliki Vasil pointed out that pre development, the Santa Cruz mountains burned regularly and the forest was much less dense. In the absence of fire, we must emulate fire. Additionally, the project has been thoughtfully designed with technical advisors and Forest Professionals. Robert Ketley suggested an informative video on how these projects are approached, similar to the recently created chipping videos. Howard Liebenberg suggested that removal of trees should be close to the ground, additionally he suggested covering the stumps with duff and dirt. Angie said that the Forestry consultant suggested cutting trees 12" or less as this is safer for the tree feller. Angie confirmed that the Forest Health team will be onsite during the project. Mike Eaton moved approval of procurement of construction services for the Fall Creek Truck Trail Forest Health Project per the Staff Recommendation Memo presented. Robert Ketley seconded the motion. The ayes included Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. There were none opposed; the motion passed unanimously.

### **6.2. Review and consider approval of updates to the Organizational Chart**

Lisa Lurie presented the Board with the updated Draft of the Organizational Chart. She added positions that were vacant to the chart, including a Watershed Program Specialist and an Agriculture Program Specialist. She made the Communications/Conservation Program Specialist directly overseen by both the Watershed Program Manager and the Executive Director since Communications Specialist works directly with the Executive Director. Additionally, she is working on a functional Organizational Chart per the Board's recommendation, she shared a draft of the chart and said that the leadership team is making final tweaks now. The Board liked this supplemental chart. After discussion, John Ricker moved approval of the Organizational Chart.



Mike Eaton seconded the motion. The ayes included Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. There were none opposed; the motion passed unanimously.

**6.3. Review and consider approval of a Cost-of-Living Adjustment for RCD Staff starting pay period 04**

Lisa presented the Board with the Bureau of Labor and statistics Consumer Price Index for the previous year. According to the document, the CPI rose 4.9% for the San Francisco Bay Area, of which Santa Cruz County is included. She explained that the billable rates have 4.5% Cost-of-Living Adjustment increase built into them. Arianne Rettinger included in the packet a table of the current rates and what a 4.5% and 4.9% COLA would look like. Lisa and Ari are comfortable with either option and would like guidance if the Board would recommend adjusting the percentage built in to budgets. After discussion, John Ricker moved to apply a 4.9% COLA to staff wages starting Pay Period 04 and to increase the budgeted COLA to 5%. Mike Eaton seconded the motion. The ayes included Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. There were none opposed; the motion passed unanimously. The Board expressed their appreciation of staff and the need to keep up with the cost-of-living to keep talented staff.

**7. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**7.1. Returning to In Person Meetings; State of Emergency sunsets February 28, 2023**

Tangi Chapman shared that starting in March the Board will be having hybrid meetings. The in-person component will require a quorum of the Board to be physically present; Board members may attend remotely so long as there is a quorum (four) in person and they cannot make the in-person meeting. Additionally, the regular meetings will be held at the City of Capitola Community Room.

**7.2. Memorial planning for Director Roberta Smith**

Mike Eaton has not received any updates regarding the garden dedication. He believes that there will be room for a plaque at the site and will advocate for that. Lisa said that scheduling the Blue Circle continues to be a challenge for staff given the added workload of the storm response. There is talk of an April date, but nothing is set in stone.

**7.3. Executive Director Report**

Lisa shared highlights from the Executive Director report. She said that it is an exciting time with grant applications being funded and new grants being written. She reported that Cameron MacDonald has been working storm response logistics with Angie Gruys. Rich Casale has been attending the majority of the site visits along with an RCD rotating staff person. Lisa has been trying to get all staff to shadow a site visit with Rich at least once. She reported that Summit Road Fuel Load Reduction project is 80% complete; Fall Creek Truck Trail bids will open next month and Last Chance Road Forest Health project should be starting in the coming weeks weather permitting. Additionally, she reported that the Ag Team has been working hard to provide post storm disaster relief. The RCD participated in a California Alliance of Family Farmers event along with NRCS, the Farm Bureau, UC Cooperative extension and others to provide immediate assistance to local farmers. Lisa gave a shout out to the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County and donors to the Storm Response Fund who have granted \$35,000 to the RCD to support the storm recovery efforts.



Finally, she shared that the RCD will be floating a new position in the coming weeks to get more boots on the ground.

#### **7.4. Director/Associate Director Reports**

Jim McKenna shared that he had a log jam on his property along Valencia Creek. He has lost much of his bank to erosion. He said that the county came out to look at the site, but there is no money to help remove the logs that are creating the problem. His utility lines are dangling 70 feet over the cliff and has estimates that it will take 16 weeks before he will be able to get any assistance.

Howard Liebenberg reported that he visited a log jam, 80 by 200 feet, along Olive Springs Road. The jam has created an island upstream. He asked about how other projects the RCD has completed have fared through the storms. John Ricker reported that Olson Ford had quite a bit of wood behind the culverts, but the logs were strategically cut and worked their way through the system without causing any damage. Lisa said that she has heard positive feedback regarding the East Branch Soquel and Zayante Creek Large Wood projects.

Vasiliki reported that she went on a site visit with Rich Casale and Cameron MacDonald. She said they were very affirming, and people were very appreciative. Rich is a great resource and is providing an important service to the community.

#### **8. CALENDAR DATES**

- March 16, 2023 from 4:00 to 8:00 Climate Change and Community Action event, Cabrillo College (Sacha Lozano will present, RCD will table)
- March 18, 2023 from 9:00AM to 12:00PM State of the San Lorenzo River Symposium (Lisa Lurie will moderate, RCD will table)

#### **9. ADJOURN**

**The next regular meeting of the RCD Board will be held at the City of Capitola Council Chambers and via Zoom on March 8, 2023, at 6:30PM. John Ricker moved to adjourn. Mike Eaton seconded the motion. The ayes included Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. There were none opposed; the meeting was adjourned.**

(TC:MM)