



**MINUTES OF THE MAY 12, 2021 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 6:34PM on May 12, 2021 at Zoom Meeting ID: 708-386-048.

Directors Present: Kelley Bell
Robert Ketley
Howard Liebenberg
Jim McKenna, President
Mike Manfre, Vice President
John Ricker

RCD Staff Present: Matt Abernathy, Forest Health Program Specialist
Tangi Chapman, Recorder
Lisa Lurie, Executive Director

Member of the Public: Linda Wenger

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:34PM, with a quorum present. Jim McKenna chaired the meeting. Roll was called and connectivity confirmed; Kelley Bell present; Robert Ketley present; Howard Liebenberg was not present at time of roll call; Mike Manfre present; Jim McKenna present; John Ricker present.

2. INTRODUCTIONS & WELCOME

Jim McKenna welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments made.

4. NRCS REPORT

Lisa Lurie gave highlights from Whit Haraguchi’s NRCS Report. The White House estimates that federal offices will reopen 100% by September or October, currently field offices are allowed 50% capacity with telework encouraged. NRCS is working with Wendy Rash, State Water Quality Specialist on a groundwater recharge pilot project. The state will piggy-back with the current Stormwater Management RCPP and support the use of interim groundwater recharge practices. The state offices are looking to fund two GWR pilot projects, one in Santa Cruz and another in Modesto. Drew Mather and Matt Abernathy have done multiple visits to properties for potential for forest management plans.

(Howard Liebenberg entered the Zoom room)

5. CONSENT AGENDA

The Board reviewed the consent agenda items which included the April Expenditures and Minutes. Kelley Bell moved to approve the consent agenda items. Robert Ketley seconded the motion. The vote was called, ayes included Kelley Bell, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna and John Ricker. There were none opposed. The motion passed unanimously.

6. ACTION ITEMS



6.1. Review and consider approval of updates to the 1080 Procurement Policy.

Lisa Lurie presented the Board with a process for increasing transparency and communication with regards to contracts that need Board approval. This new process provides a mechanism for staff to bring information regarding contracts over \$100,000 to the Board for final approval. She shared the memo template with the Board which will summarize the intent and scope of the project, the procurement methods that were used and any exemptions to the procurement should that be the case. The update to the procurement policy formalizes this process. John Ricker moved to approve updates to the 1080 Procurement Policy as presented. Mike Manfre seconded the motion. The ayes include Kelley Bell, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna, Jim McKenna. All were in favor of the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

(Matt Abernathy entered the meeting)

6.2. Consider approval of Resolution RCDSCC 2021-04 to enter into agreement with California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and designate a representative to negotiate and sign the agreement and any amendments for the Santa Cruz County Hazardous Fuel Reduction and Summit Road Shaded Fuel Break.

Lisa introduced Matt Abernathy to the Board Meeting. Matt is our Forest Health Program Specialist. Lisa shared that the resolution before the Board is to apply for a fire prevention grant for chipping and a shaded fuel break on Summit Road. Matt shared that a shaded fuel break creates a break in vegetation between the ground and the first branches of a tree, thus reducing the likelihood that a ground fire will climb into the trees and become a dangerous crown fire. The Board asked questions about other shaded fuel breaks and how they fared in the CZU lightning fire. John Ricker asked about the Empire Grade fuel break. Matt said that it was initially successful, until the winds shifted and the fire burned around the other side of the break. Robert Ketley made a motion to approve Resolution RCDSCC 2021-04 as presented. John Ricker seconded the motion. In further discussion, Lisa stated that the first year of the grant will be going thru the CEQA process with implementation in the fall of 2022. The ayes include Kelley Bell, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna and John Ricker. All were in favor of the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6.3. Consider approval of Resolution RCDSCC 2021-05 to certify the approval of the grant application to the State for the Forest Health Grant Programs as provided through California Climate Investments.

Lisa shared Resolution RCDSCC 2021-05 with the Board. The Resolution is regarding a proposed direct award from CalFIRE for Forest Health. The District currently has a Forest Health grant in progress, CalFIRE reached out directly to the District for a possible direct award as they had additional funding. The District created a suite of Forest Health projects about two years ago when applying for the first round of Forest Health grants, RCD staff went back to the list and they evaluated those projects that were not funded previously, but would now fit. From this list they pulled the fuels management of Fall Creek Truck Trail and the Aptos Buzzards Lagoon Truck Trail and a vegetation management planning project on University of California Santa Cruz property. Two other projects were identified by CalFire and other technical advisors and include Sandhills Property owned by the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County and a post-fire recovery project on property owned by the San Lorenzo Valley Water District. The grant will focus on carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas reduction and the proposal is for roughly \$3,000,000 over a four-year period. John Ricker was concerned about the language in the resolution that seems to assume we have the money. Lisa shared that unlike most grants, the District will get advance payments that will



use to pay expenses as they are incurred. John Ricker moved to approve Resolution RCDSCC 2021-05. Mike Manfre seconded the motion. The ayes include Kelley Bell, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna and John Ricker. All were in favor of the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

7.1. Update on RCD's Forest Health and Wildfire Resiliency Program

Matt Abernathy shared his background with the Board. He was hired last summer as the Forest Health Program Specialist, shortly after being hired, the CZU Lightning Complex Fire started. He said that the work has been exciting and fast paced. He has been working with NRCS through an agreement RCD Monterey, helping to identify landowners who would benefit from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding for Forest Management Plans. Matt estimated that with current and anticipated grants over 1,200 acres will be treated with fuels reduction or fire prevention treatments. Last year's fire, he noted, has definitely motivated people to actively manage their properties and the District is in an excellent position to help. Matt continues to talk with NRCS on the funding of future projects. There has been increased interest in the chipping program; many homeowners and neighborhoods are interested in the Firewise USA certification. There are currently 12 Firewise neighborhoods and 7 in the application process. He continues to engage with the community and with the Central Coast Regional Prioritization Group.

7.2. Executive Directors Report

Lisa Lurie shared her Executive Director report with the Board. She let the Board know that long-time Board member Robert Smith, passed-away last week. She will be in contact with Swanton Pacific Ranch on collaborating a honorarium for her contribution to conservation, education and community on the central coast, and will let the Board know what develops.

The 2021 Chipping Program is up and running, currently there are 300 signed up with potential to serve 900. Lisa reported that the public hearing for the programmatic permitting process for forest health and fire resiliency will be held at the June Board meeting. She requested all board members read the public draft of the Santa Cruz County Forest Health and Fire Resilience Public Works Plan before the June meeting. The PWP provides a planning framework to efficiently review and authorize vegetation management projects within the program area over the next ten years using principles, strategies and best management practices that align fire prevention with the protection of coastal resources. She pointed out that this has been a collaborative effort with the District, San Mateo RCD, State Parks, CALFIRE, Coastal Commission and planning department staffs in San Mateo and Santa Cruz Counties. Upon approval the District has two projects in the pipeline for permitting and implementation this year.

Lisa was pleased to inform the Board that the Regional Water Quality Control Board approved Ag Order 4.0 on April 15 with the suggestions put forth by technical advisory partners including RCD UCCE, NRCS, and Sustainable Conservation. The recommendation was to incentivize the use of cover crop and other soil health building practices for their role in reducing nitrate leaching.

7.3. Director/Associate Directors Report



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Jim McKenna shared a news report in the paper that due to PG&E's responsibility for some of the recent fires, they had to create a fund to mitigate the damage caused to life and property. He was shocked by the attorney's fees to work out the details of the deal.

Kelley Bell had a call with Mike Eaton, prospective Board member. She said that he is very enthusiastic about the work of the District. He has lots of experience in conservation and is very sharp. Additionally, she said that he is sensitive to the need for increased diversity on the Board and suggested that he would be happy to serve in an interim capacity as the RCD builds more relationships with diverse leaders. John Ricker said that he is scheduling a meeting with him next week.

8. ADJOURN

The next meeting of the RCD Board will be June 9, 2021 at 6:30PM via Zoom. Robert Ketley moved to adjourn at 7:42PM. Kelley Bell seconded the motion. Ayes included Kelli Bell, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna and John Ricker. The meeting was adjourned.

(TC:JM)

DocuSigned by:

Jim McKenna

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