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RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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MINUTES OF THE MAY 11, 2022 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 May 11, 2022,** the meeting was conducted virtually per AB 361 and Executive Order N-35-20 via Zoom, Meeting ID: 708-386-048.

Directors Present:	Kelley Bell
	Mike Eaton
	Robert Ketley
	Howard Liebenberg
	Mike Manfre, Vice President
	Jim McKenna, President
	John Ricker
Associate Director Present:	Vasiliki Vasil
	Kathryn Tobisch
RCD Staff Present:	Tangi Chapman, Recorder
	Lisa Lurie, Executive Director
	Arianne Rettinger, Director of Finance
NRCS Staff Present:	Drew Mather, District Conservationist

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30PM, with a quorum present. Mike Manfre chaired the meeting until Jim McKenna arrived. Roll was called and connectivity confirmed; Kelley Bell present; Mike Eaton present; Robert Ketley present; Howard Liebenberg present; Mike Manfre present; Jim McKenna absent at time of roll call, entered the meeting during the NRCS Report; John Ricker present.

2. INTRODUCTIONS & WELCOME

Mike Manfre welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

4. NRCS REPORT

Drew Mather reported that he has assumed the role of District Conservationist for the Capitola office, replacing Whitney Haraguchi who left at the end of 2021. Currently NRCS has 11 applications for financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, 7 cropland, three forestland, one animal feeding operation and two cropland biochar projects. Drew along with Lisa Lurie, Erin McCarthy and Jim Howard attended a meeting in March with the NRCS State Office leads for the Regional Conservation Planning Partnership. Drew highlighted that the EQIP Cover Crop Initiative may be reopened to growers in the coming months. The Capitola office had a grower apply for the Conservation Stewardship Program and if awarded will be the first in Santa Cruz County. See attached for full NRCS report.

(Jim McKenna entered the meeting)

5. CONSENT AGENDA

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The Board reviewed the consent agenda items, including the April 13, 2022, Minutes and Resolution RCDSCC 2022-09 to extend remote meetings per AB 361 for an additional 30 days. John Ricker moved approval of the consent agenda items. Kelli Bell seconded the motion. The vote was by roll call; the ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Mike Manfre Howard Liebenberg, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

6. ACTION ITEMS

6.1. Review and Discuss the Quarter 4 2021 Financials

The Board reviewed the fourth quarter financials provided by Arianne Rettinger the Districts new Director of Finance. The document provides the details of grant expenditures of all active grants as of 12/31/21 including Start and end Dates, the percentage of time remaining on the grant/fund, the contracted amount, expended to date, amount received to date, the remaining amount and the percent completion in terms of dollars. Ari also shared that the quarterly profit and loss statement for Q4 2021. John Ricker moved approval of the Fourth Quarter 2021 Financial. Mike Eaton seconded the motion. The vote was by roll call vote; the ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

6.2. Consider approval of Resolution RCDSCC 2022-10 to enter into grant agreement with Cal Fire for the Lockhart Shaded Fuel Break

Lisa presented the Board with a Resolution to enter into agreement with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection for the Lockhart Shaded Fuel Break. This grant will tie into the Graham Hill Shaded Fuel Break that the RCD has been implemented over the past several years. The Lockhart effort has been in discussion and development since 2019, and now there are resources to implement the project. Lisa shared a map of the proposed sites which include roughly 5.5 miles and treating 95 acres from Graham Hill Road on the southern boundary of Morgan Sandhills Preserve and extend along the ridgetop to the west of the Lockhart Gulch drainage and tie into Weston Road to the north. She shared that the award is for $970,000 to coordinate, permit, and implement the project. Lisa also said that some of the projects will be done in sensitive sandhills habitat and that the District has been working closely with the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County and Jodi McGraw to develop tools and protocols to guide activities in sensitive habitat. After discussion, Robert Ketley moved to approve Resolution RCDSCC 2022-10 to enter into grant agreement and designate the Executive Director or designee to negotiate the agreement. Mike Manfre seconded the motion. The vote was by roll call vote; the ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

6.3. Consider approval of procurement and contracting for the Branciforte Flood Control Channel Feasibility Assessment

Lisa presented the Board with a memo regarding procurement for services with a consultant contractor, Environmental Science Associates, to complete a feasibility study for improved fish passage in the Branciforte Creek Flood Control Channel. Lisa explained that development for this project has been approved and funded through the Integrated Watershed Restoration Program with the Coastal Conservancy. This project continues the effort by the District and others to remove barriers to fish passage along this tributary of the San Lorenzo River. Lisa explained that the contract with ESA is under the $100,000 procurement threshold for board approval. However, because it may need to be augmented to complete the assessment, she felt it was important to bring the contract before the Board. Additionally, she shared that ESA has a deep understanding of the project with unique and specialized skills and experience as well as that ESA is currently working under contract with the City of Santa Cruz to complete the

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necessary hydrologic analysis required for FEMA certification of the San Lorenzo River Flood Control Project. After discussion, John Ricker moved approval to authorize the Executive Director, or designee, to negotiate a consultant services agreement with Environmental Science Associates for completion of a Feasibility Study for improved fish passage in the Branciforte Flood Control Channel. Kelley Bell seconded the motion. The vote was by roll call vote; the ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

6.4. Consider support for AB 1902 amending Division 9 of the Public Resources Code

Lisa presented the Board with an FAQ sheet for the proposed AB 1902 amendments to Division 9 of the Public Resources Code. Lisa said that the guiding code for Resource Conservations Districts in the state of California have not been revised since the 1950's. In the 70 years since there have been many changes to both the needs and the structure of RCDs. She said that our state organization, California Association of Resource Conservation Districts has been working with Pacific Policy Group to work with legislators to strengthen and update the code to meet the needs of the 21st century. This effort to update the code began in 2019 but was sidelined due to COVID. In recent months there has been an effort to move the process forward and CARCD has recommended RCDs around the state review the new language with their Board of Directors and send a letter of support of the revisions. Lisa presented some of the highlights from the proposed AB1902 bill making its way through the state legislature. After review and discussion, Mike Eaton made a motion to support AB 1902 amending Division 9 of the Public Resources Code. Howard Liebenberg seconded the motion. The vote was by roll call vote; the ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

7.1. Discussion regarding when to return to in person or hybrid board meetings

The Board discussed the benefits to meeting in person and discussed that in light of another COVID surge. Most felt that if the opportunity is available to continue zoom meetings, the Board was in support. There was general concern voiced regarding the tight quarters in the Districtss conference room, with comfortable capacity at around 5 to 6 people, and that the District will need to find a larger room to hold regular meetings once in person meetings resume.

7.2. Memorial planning for Director Roberta Smith

Vasiliki Vasil reported on a meeting she had with Mike Eaton, Kathryn Tobisch and the principal at Bonny Doon Elementary School to look at a potential site for a memorial plaque. All agreed that the site would be excellent and that integrating with science and especially women in science would have an educational component that would be fitting of Roberta. The group will continue to meet and discuss coordination, and timing with the school. Vasiliki asked if there was a budget for this effort. She said she would come up with some ideas and cost and report back in June.

7.3. Executive Director Report

Lisa gave highlights from her Executive Director report. She reported on efforts by the Ag Team to assess the benefits of soil carbon amendments at a large organic operation. The team was busy with field work. Members also attended the quarterly meet up with the Ag Commissioner, which has been a helpful connection. Lisa reported that she will be attending and speaking at a Salmon in the Santa Cruz Mountains

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event at the Seymour Center on May 19th. Additionally, there have been many grants coming to fruition and there is a massive effort through the United States Department of Agriculture regarding building climate markets for climate adapted agriculture.

A job has been posted for an Ag Program Specialist and interviews will be starting in the next few weeks. Arianne Rettinger has been updating staff projections and it is possible that the District will need to hire an additional Program Specialist/Assistant to support the growing forest health program.

7.4. Director/Associate Director Reports

Mike Eaton reported that he ran into a Bureau of Land Management fish monitoring crew on the San Vicente Creek and they were speechless about the number of steelhead and coho fry they were finding.

Kelley Bell reported that she has taken a job as FishWise, an organization based in Santa Cruz. Their mission is to inform global seafood markets about sustainable practices for the fishing industry. She will be working on the social responsibility offerings and helping companies grow their sustainability standards.

8. ADJOURN

The next meeting of the RCD Board will be June 8, 2022, at 6:30PM via Zoom. Robert Ketley moved to adjourn. John Ricker seconded the motion. The vote was by roll call vote; the ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

DocuSigned by:
Jim McKenna
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(TC:JM)