RESOURCE
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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MINUTES OF THE MAY 10, 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 **6:31PM on May 10, 2023,** the meeting was conducted in person at the City of Capitola Community Room and virtually 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 Directors Present:	Vasiliki Vasil
	Kathryn Tobisch (Zoom)
RCD Staff Present:	Tangi Chapman, Recorder
	Lisa Lurie, Executive Director
NRCS Staff Present:	Drew Mather, District Conservationist
Others Present:	Lauren Stupes, Student

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:31PM, with a quorum present. Jim McKenna chaired the meeting. Roll was called and connectivity confirmed; Kelley Bell present, Mike Eaton present; Robert Ketley present; Howard Liebenberg present; Mike Manfre present; Jim McKenna present; John Ricker present.

2. INTRODUCTIONS & WELCOME

Jim McKenna welcomed everyone to the hybrid meeting.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were none given.

4. NRCS REPORT

Drew Mather gave highlights of the busy month. He shared that Rich Casale has been to 228 post storm site visits. Of those there is one project that is currently in the process for getting funded through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program; the City of Santa Cruz may be the project sponsor. The last EWP project to be funded in Santa Cruz County was in the mid-1990's. He said that Environmental Quality Incentive Program applications will be ranked starting Friday, May 12; among the applicants there are 7 forestry applications and one for nutrient management on a horse facility. Additionally, a project under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program is moving towards implementation. This is a large stormwater management project lead by the RCD in collaboration with NRCS and Monterey RCD. He shared that the Adjusted Gross Income Waiver process is cumbersome and his office continues to navigate the process. NRCS has received one application for the Conservation Stewardship Program and with two others potentially interested in the program, there has been an increase in interest in the program and the commitment is 5-10 years to the landowner. Drew said that he continues to wait for the new vehicles that were promised last year; the existing Chevy Malibu is about out of service. Drew also attended a disaster relief event held for Pajaro River flood victims; there were about 20 in attendance. The Board questioned why the EWP program is so difficult to get funded. Drew shared that though

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he is not an expert, the sticking points are 1) finding an agency to sponsor willing to take on the liability and 2) economic defensibility of structures. Drew said he would put together a one-page sheet on the program and the road map to get funded.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

The John Ricker requested the Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy be pulled from the consent agenda to Action Item 6.3. Howard Liebenberg made a motion to approve the remaining consent agenda item with one correction to the minutes that included removing (Zoom) after Vasiliki Vasil's name. Kelley Bell seconded the motion. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre and Jim McKenna; there were none opposed; John Ricker abstained. The motion passed.

6. ACTION ITEMS

6.1. Consider approval of staff recommendation to enter into contract with CalPoly Corporation for restoration planning along Lower Scott Creek at Swanton Pacific Ranch per Procurement Policy 1080.8.1 subaward exception to competitive procurement

Lisa Lurie shared that the RCD has received a newly approved grant to conduct large scale planning on Lower Scotts Creek. The Swanton Pacific Ranch owned by Cal Poly Corporation was written into the grant as a sub awardee and the agreement will be supporting grad students who will be conducting pre-project monitoring, modeling, and supporting project planning and design. Lisa shared that the memo is before the Board today since the subaward is for $129,000.00 requiring Board approval. This project dovetails with the Scott Creek Coastal Resilience bridge replacement and lagoon restoration project. Mike Eaton made a motion to approve staff recommendation to enter into agreement with Cal Poly Corporation for restoration planning along Lower Scott Creek at Swanton Pacific Ranch. John Ricker seconded the motion. 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 2023-03 to apply for grant funds from the California Department of Conservation Climate Smart Lands Management Program

Lisa presented the Board with Resolution RCDSCC 2023-03. She shared that this is a new grant program with the Department of Conservation, like the Watershed Coordinator program of the past. This grant allows for capacity building and project planning in a block grant structure. The District reached out to neighboring North Central Coast RCDs with RCD Santa Cruz as the lead agency. San Mateo, Loma Prieta, San Benito, and Monterey County RCDs are included in the block grant with shared interest in building and sharing capacity to better serve land managers in implementing climate smart management practices. This collaborative grant will work to build capacity in neighboring smaller RCDs with a 30-50% funded person in each district office dedicated to this effort with the goal of the higher capacity RCDs helping to build up the capacity of those Districts in need. If awarded, the grant will likely start January 1, 2024 and has a very broad scope and can be spent on soil health, habitat enhancement with a focus on disadvantaged growers. After discussion, John Ricker moved approval of Resolution RCDSCC 2023-03. Robert Ketley seconded the motion. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

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6.3. Acknowledging completion of the Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy and encouraging its widespread use

Lisa Lurie was proud to share the Santa Cruz County RCIS document with the Board. The effort was co-led by the RCD and the Regional Transportation Commission and is a mechanism created by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for advance mitigation to get high value local conservation priorities funded. The objective was to also think more broadly to direct and generate additional investments to advance conservation priorities across the county. The process of developing the RCIS engaged a broad technical advisory committee as well as stakeholder advisors. The document has been approved by CDFW and represents several years of work and collaboration. The result being a tool for partners to identify and advance opportunities for collaboration on priority projects. John Ricker made a motion that the Board acknowledge the completion of the Santa Cruz County RCIS and encourage the use of the valuable tool. Robert Ketley seconded the motion. 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. Executive Director Report

Lisa gave a verbal Executive Director Report. She reported that the spring chipping program has tripled the participation from last year with around 750 households participating. Additional funds have been secured so that in addition to the spring chipping there will also still be a fall chipping program, including funds from the County Board of Supervisors, Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County and the Fire Safe Santa Cruz County (through a CalFire Fire Prevention grant). She shared that the RCD will be meeting with partners to debrief on lessons learned from the many site visits that were completed due to the winter storms. The RCD and others will be participating in the Governor's Forest and Fire Resiliency Task Force meeting at the Coconut Grove the next two days. Additionally, staff will be hosting an event at the Happy Valley Conference Center on taking care of streams. Lisa asked for participation to the RCD Area meeting planned in Templeton for next week. She has also been asked to help form a local California Special District Association chapter to work with area special districts and making sure our voice and concerns are heard. Lisa discussed a number of innovative funding opportunities including one from the Moore Foundation for a no to low-cost loan as well as one from the City of Santa Cruz to create conservation fund through their Habitat Conservation Plan for the incidental take of Coho Salmon resulting from water system operations. Additionally, there is talk of exploring an open space measure that would invest in parks, sustaining agriculture and working lands as well as restoring wildlife resources. It was suggested that Lisa reach out to Sierra Ryan at the county. Mike Eaton expressed concern with the lack of foresight to include operational funding when purchasing land for protection/open space, and encouraged inclusion of these costs in the strategy for a local funding measure. Lisa discussed the impacts of diverting staff attention to emergency response on workload and project schedules. Lisa requested feedback from the Board regarding expanding into another suite. She explained that many staff continue to work from home at least some of the time, given the new hires, the current office space is at capacity on some days, over capacity on rare occasions. The Board suggested that jumping into another suite might not be the best option at this time, but encouraged staff to decide based on assessment of needs. Finally, she shared

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that she has been working with the leadership team on performance reviews and annual planning and suggested feedback from the Board regarding her annual workplan and performance reviews. Lisa will develop her annual workplan. The Board suggested a closed session in the future to review this and give a performance review.

7.2. Director/Associate Director Reports

Howard Liebenberg shared that since the fire he has been unable to keep up with the broom that has sprouted on his burned property and this year it is in full bloom. He is concerned that with the 80 years the seeds are viable in the seedbank that the next few years could be disastrous with all the woody growth. Drew said that it is possible for landowners to qualify for a forest management plan; and area forester would complete and would list practices that can address the invasive species. The Weed Management Area may have a role to play with this issue as well.

Vasiliki Vasil said that she was on a Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary site and saw an announcement for a program to address end-of-life solutions for agriculture plastics and was wondering of any local initiatives regarding this issue. Drew said that it is on the radar for NRCS and trying to find ways to incentivize the reduction of plastic use.

Lauren Stupes expressed her interest in community outreach for pulling broom. Lisa shared that there is a volunteer group called the Brush Brigade that is working on helping landowners create defensible space and clearing of vegetation.

8. CALENDAR DATES

- May 11, 2023 Central Coast Regional Meeting of Governor's Wildfire Resilience Taskforce at the Coconut Grove
- May 12, 2023 Field Tours for Governor's Wildfire Resilience Taskforce at Fall Creek Truck Trail and other sites
- May 16, 2023 Area RCD Meeting in Templeton (Lisa Lurie will attend, staff and board members are also invited to attend)

9. ADJOURN

The next regular meeting of the RCD Board will be held at the at the City of Capitola Community Room and via Zoom on June 14, 2023, at 6:30PM. Lisa requested and the Board agreed to move the July meeting to July 19th due to a scheduling conflict. John Ricker moved to adjourn. Howard Liebenberg seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion to adjourn.

(TC:JM) James J. McKenna