RESOURCE
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

820 Bay Avenue, Suite 136
Capitola, California 95010
tel 831.464.2950
www.rcdsantacruz.org

MINUTES OF THE JULY 10, 2024 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 on July 10, 2024,** the meeting was conducted in person at the District Office 820 Bay Ave Suite 136, Capitola, 95010 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:	Kathryn Tobisch (Zoom)
RCD Staff Present:	Tangi Chapman, Recorder
	Lisa Lurie, Executive Director
NRCS Present:	Drew Mather, District Conservationist
Others Present:	Bob Derber

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:32PM, with a quorum present. Jim McKenna chaired the meeting. Roll was called; 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 circulated the NRCS activity report. He gave updates on NRCS staffing; Jeff Kelly, Area Forester, is available to help with site visits in our area due to hiring freeze at United States Forest Service; Alanna Burhans has completed four weeks of her Leadership Development Program at the Fresno Area Office; Josue Flores and another Earth Team Volunteer have been attending site visits with both NRCS and RCD. Drew said that the Emergency Watershed Protection Program projects continue to move toward implementation, with total federal funding approvals to date of nearly $3 million. He said that the remaining Regional Conservation Partnership Program project will begin next week and should be wrapped up by the end of the year. Drew shared that he attended a Pride Demonstration and listened to a talk that was both uplifting and eye opening, particularly that the speaker has to worry about safety when speaking at and attending Pride events. Drew mentioned that

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he received word from the State Office that there is a Cooperative Agreement Award available for $75,000 that he is working on with the RCD. Finally, he shared pictures from the Cal Poly Swanton Pacific Ranch Prescribed Goat Grazing training held on June 25.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

The Board considered the Consent Agenda. The consent agenda items included the June 12, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes, June 2024 Vendor Expenditures, Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Quarter 3 Financials and copies of the 2023 Annual Statements of Water Diversion and Use from the City of Santa Cruz for the Forbearance of Water in the Pogonip Creek and Redwood Creek Systems for Fisheries Enhancement in the San Lorenzo River Lagoon. Lisa Lurie reminded the Board that the RCD will annually receive the Annual Statements of Water Diversion from the City of Santa Cruz. The city received a grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board to install a water control structure to alleviate catastrophic breaching of the lagoon and must dedicate instream flows into the San Lorenzo River and tributaries as part of that agreement. John Ricker moved approval of the Consent Agenda Items. 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.

6. ACTION ITEMS

6.1. Review and consider approval of Staff Recommendation to enter a contract with the lowest bidder per 1080.7.2 of the Procurement Policy for the Amber Ridge Loop Sediment Reduction Project

Lisa presented the Board with the Staff Recommendation Memo for the Amber Ridge Loop Sediment Reduction project. The project will be paid for with funding from the Regional Water Management Foundation, the State Water Resources Control Board and from the County of Santa Cruz. Lisa shared that the project went out to bid last year and bids came in over budget, all bids were rejected and the project was rescoped and additional funding was secured from the County. Additional permits were also required with the rescoped project. Given the cost estimate of $165,000 to $210,000, the informal procurement procedures were followed. There were two contractors present at the mandatory bid walk. The bid opening happened yesterday and again bids came in over budget. At this time, Angie may negotiate a lower bid or send it out to bid again. This will be decided in the coming days. The project will upgrade ditch relief culverts, replace a failed stream crossing culvert and install eight reverse grade dips. In the 2007 Watershed Assessments the project was identified as a medium priority, but the engineer estimates that it is now a medium to high priority due to further erosion. The Board discussed the project and there was some knowledge of the history of the area. The Technical Advisory Committee did a site visit several years ago to identify the site. The road is built in a very steep unstable landscape, the 319(h) grant is a non-regulatory avenue to work with landowners to make improvements that will lead to reducing sediment into local rivers. The Board requested that Angie give a report on the Roads Program. After discussion, Mike Eaton moved to approve entering into contract with the lowest responsible bidder that is within budget including contingencies for the Amber Ridge Loop Sediment Reduction Project. Kelley Bell seconded the motion. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike

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Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

6.2. Review and consider approval of Staff Recommendation Memo to enter into contract with the lowest responsible bidder per 1080.7.1.3 of the Watsonville Slough Farms Sediment Basin

Lisa shared history of the Watsonville Slough Farms Land Trust of Santa Cruz County property. The Land Trust in partnership with the RCD have been working to restore functioning of the Middle Watsonville Slough wetland. The project before the Board is aimed at reducing sediment into the wetland by installing a sediment basin in the upland area of the property where there is erosion and runoff from agricultural fields. The project should result in water quality improvements to the listed impaired waterway and support the function of the downstream wetland restoration project. Lisa shared that the Landowner will take on the maintenance of the project. Bids for the project were received and opened on July 1, 2024 with an apparent low bid of $198,008 from South Bay Grading. The project will be funded through a Department of Water Resources grant administered by the Regional Water Management Foundation with implementation this summer and fall. After discussion, Mike Eaton moved to approve the Staff Recommendation Memo to contract with the lowest responsible bidder, South Bay Grading, per 1080.7.1.3 of the Procurement Policy. Mike Manfre 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. Strategy Session – Project Durability

Lisa initiated a discussion about project durability and requested Board input asking the question, "How should we approach project durability and what is this District willing to take on or pass along to collaborating landowners in terms of project maintenance over the long term?" She said that it has been 5 years since the In-Lieu-Fee program was adopted but it has been difficult to establish credit prices due to a lack of clarity and agreement with USFWS on the assumptions around long term project durability. Fundamentally the question is how do we define long-term durability - as in perpetuity or some other duration (such as 20 years as it is more commonly defined in project specific mitigation agreements that the RCD is involved in) with projects expected to become self sustaining. In perpetuity would require the creation of endowments to sustain maintenance and adaptive management into the unknown future. Lisa is hoping to get a gut check from the Board on what we as an agency would be willing to commit to to assist in these discussions. Feedback from the Board included being clear on what the RCD can commit to, and that commitments into perpetuity could constrain our agency and not allow for adaptation to changes like climate change. The Board discussed the funding mechanism for long-term maintenance. Mike Eaton suggested the Center of Natural Lands Management, who has developed metrics for conservation easements called Property Analysis Record and suggested that they may have some insight into determining the costs for long-term management and how to set-up endowments for maintenance if needed. The Board

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felt strongly about factoring acts of god and unforeseeable circumstance that would need to be accounted for and suggested the importance of being conservative.

Lisa also brought up projects outside of the ILFP program where the maintenance is passed on to the landowner/property manager. This is done via the Landowner Agreement for the project. The RCD generally only records on the deed if it is required by the funding agency. This can create a challenge if the property is sold and continued monitoring and or Landowner maintenance is required. For many projects, the RCD is engaging with landowners, and it can be a heavy lift for many to maintain projects over time. It may be that the RCD can secure funding for maintenance, but ultimately it is the property owners' responsibility for ongoing stewardship. The Board discussed how maintenance needs, complexity, and sharing of obligations can be unique for each case and that it is important to maintain flexibility. The Board suggested perhaps following up with property owners to check in on maintenance obligations at some regular interval to stay in contact with the landowner and to understand ongoing needs for support.

7.2. Ad hoc Policy Committee Report

Lisa reported that the approved employee handbook will be rolled out at the next staff meeting and the Workplace Violence Prevention Program was introduced at the last staff meeting. The compensation and benefit study continues to move forward gathering information regarding comparable organizations and positions. A leadership meeting is scheduled for August 15th and then Lisa will convene the ad hoc Policy Committee after that with the goal of presenting findings to the Board at the September Board meeting.

7.3. Executive Director's Report

Lisa shared her gratitude for Tangi Chapman's service to the RCD. She just had her 22nd anniversary, and her position was reclassified as Operations Manager. She then gave funding updates. There will be a statewide Climate Bond on the November ballot which complements the local measure that will also be on the ballot and would provide funding for state agencies supporting conservation and climate resilience work. Lisa is keeping a close eye on the state budget and the next infusion of state funding priorities. She shared that Mike Eaton has given his feedback regarding the local measure talking points and Kelley Bell will be providing feedback as well, which Lisa aims to distribute next month to RCD staff and board. Lisa wanted to share that the RCD received a private donation for the chipping program for $10,000. This was a pleasant surprise; the donor was very impressed with Matt Abernathy and grateful for the chipping program.

Lisa shared that a future discussion item and staff presentation will be around prescribed fire. The need is increasing to get more organizations capable of implementing prescribed fire as a treatment protocol. In developing projects, the District needs to be sure that all "ducks are in a row" including permitting and liability concerns. Lisa will have staff give a presentation in August or September.

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Steve "Slim" Butler one of the RCD's longtime Associate Directors retirement party was held at Loch Lomond. The event was well attended and there was so much gratitude for all of Slim's work.

7.4. Director/Associate Director Reports

Robert Ketley reported that he was surprised to realize that he has been on the Board since 2014. Additionally, Robert reported that he noticed large beetles around Lake Almanor.

Howard Liebenberg and John Ricker attended the Soquel Demonstration Forest Tour. The event was well attended, interesting and informative. The land managers have done a great job of managing for multiple uses including timber, recreation and land stewardship.

8. CALENDAR DATES

July 26, 2024 Firewise Event at Roaring Camp, Felton
December 10-12, 2024 CARCD Conference, Double Tree Inn Sacramento

9. ADJOURN

The next regular meeting of the RCD Board will be held at the at the District Office, 820 Bay Avenue, Suite 136, Capitola and via Zoom on August 14, 2024, at 6:30PM. John Ricker moved to adjourn. Mike Eaton seconded the motion. All were in favor, the meeting adjourned at 8:51PM.

(TC:JM)

James J. McKenna

AGENDA

Final Audit Report 2024-08-29

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