RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 8, 2025 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 January 8, 2025,** the meeting was conducted in person at the City of Capitola Community Room, 420 Capitola Avenue, Capitola, 95010 and virtually via Zoom, Meeting ID: 708-386-048.

Directors Present:	Kelley Bell
	Mike Eaton (Zoom)
	Robert Ketley
	Jim McKenna, President
	John Ricker
Directors Absent:	Howard Liebenberg
	Mike Manfre, Vice President
RCD Staff Present:	Tangi Chapman, Recorder
	Dan Hermstad, Program Specialist
	Lisa Lurie, Executive Director
	Lily Ruderman, Administrative Assistant
NRCS Present:	Drew Mather, District Conservationist

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:31PM, with a quorum present; Jim McKenna chaired the meeting. Mike Eaton joined the meeting via Zoom due to illness. The roll was called; Kelley Bell present; Mike Eaton present via Zoom; Robert Ketley present; Howard Liebenberg absent; Mike Manfre absent; Jim McKenna present; John Ricker present.

2. INTRODUCTIONS & WELCOME

Jim McKenna welcomed everyone to the hybrid meeting. Lisa Lurie introduced Lily Ruderman, the RCD's newly hired Administrative Assistant, to the meeting and introductions were made by all present.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were none given.

4. NRCS REPORT

Drew Mather shared highlights from the past couple of months beginning with staffing updates:

- Liam McDougal – Earth Team Volunteer completed his internship last month and will be graduating from California Polytechnic San Luis Obispo.
- Jackie Chaboneau – Acting Biologist and Bay-Delta Ecologist stationed in Livermore continues to assist the Capitola Field Office with Emergency Watershed Protection (EWPP) permitting issues and biological reviews for the County of Santa Cruz. Additionally, she has agreed to

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assist in reviewing the biological practices in the RCD's Partners in Restoration Permit Coordination program.

- Jennifer Nowark – Program Support Specialist has been selected to work from the Capitola Field Office, though it is unclear if she will be assisting with the office directly or if another PSS will be selected. The current PSS Natalie Thoryk will be retiring in two weeks.
- Rich Casale – Agriculture Conservation Experienced Services (ACES) contractor continues to be available to Capitola Local Partnership Office (LPO) for erosion control and post fire site visits.
- Ramon Salazar – District Conservationist has been newly selected to serve the Salinas Field Office.
- Michael Castro is the new Executive Director of the Farm Services Agency in Salinas and will be serving Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Mateo Counties.

Lastly, Drew shared that he will begin interviews for a new Soil Conservationist to fill the vacancy from Alana Burhans. This position will serve the Capitola and Half Moon Bay LPOs.

Drew next gave updates on the technical and financial assistance programs. His office has received several requests for the Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops (MASC), a Farm Service Agency program. All inquiries have been directed to Michael Castro the new FSA Executive Director. Drew said that there is approximately $2,000,000.00 available through this program. The Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP) continues to progress, additional funds requested by the County of Santa Cruz have been approved, though Drew said that additional consultation with National Oceanic Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) is still required. Additionally, Drew said that though funding after January 31, 2025, is uncertain for Inflation Reduction Act funding through the Climate Smart Practices program, they are still taking applications and he encourages farmers to apply, this includes forestry practices. The Regional Conservation Planning Partnership grant with the RCD has been completed and the final report has been accepted. Congratulations to all that worked on this regional effort. Drew informed the Board that NRCS, RCD of Santa Cruz County and ACES contractor Rich Casale, received joint leadership award at the California Association of Resource Conservation District (CARCD) annual Conference. Lastly, he updated the Board on the vehicles, currently there are three vehicles available, though the Ford Maverick is currently on loan from another office.

5. STAFF PRESENTATION – Recharge Net Metering, Dan Hermstad

Dan Hermstad gave a PowerPoint presentation to the Board on the Recharge Net Metering Program the District has been developing in partnership with University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC), and the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency (PV Water). He shared that the success of the program in the Pajaro Valley has garnered interest from the Nature Conservancy's Nature for Water initiative. They are excited about the results of the program and are working with the team to develop a sustainable business plan to bring the program to scale in the Pajaro Valley and to support further development of the program in other areas of the state with willing partners. The RCD has been overseeing much of the Managed Aquafer Recharge (MAR) site assessment work, and Andy Fisher and his team at UCSC have been conducting monitoring and certifying of infiltration benefit.

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Dan explained that the overall goal of the ReNeM program is to return 1,000-acre feet of water into the groundwater basin per year. This would be accomplished by identifying and installing an estimated 10 recharge basin sites in the Pajaro. Dan suggested that 10 may not be needed since some sites may recharge more than others. The incentive for farmers comes from getting water rebates for implementing the projects on their land that are intended to offset maintenance costs for the systems. The Board asked questions regarding the program and discussed considerations such as converting dry well sites for recharge. Additionally, farms that experience frequent flooding may be targeted as recharge sites. The District is looking for novel ways to help the community and PV Water to meet the Groundwater Sustainability Agencies' goals. The Board thanked Dan for his presentation and work on this effort.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

The Board considered the consent agenda. The consent agenda items included revisions to the approved Minutes of October 9, 2024, the November 13, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes, the November 13, 2024, Board Tour Minutes, October 2024 Vendor Expenditures, November 2024 Vendor Expenditures, and December 2024 Vendor Expenditures, and Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Quarter 1 financials. Robert Ketley moved approval of the Consent Agenda Items. John Ricker seconded the motion. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Jim McKenna and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

7. ACTION ITEMS

7.1. Review and approve the North Rispin Property Checklist

Lisa shared the North Rispin Property Checklist with the Board. Conditions of the property are similar to previous years, with several active encampments, and general litter throughout the property. It was noted that some previous trails appear to be grown over with vegetation. There were no structures built except for temporary shelters in the form of tents and tarps. After discussion, Robert Ketley moved approval of the North Rispin Property Checklist. John Ricker seconded the motion. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Jim McKenna and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

7.2. Review and consider approval of Resolution 2025-01 to enter into agreement with the State Coastal Conservancy, enter into subaward agreements under this grant agreement and designate a representative to negotiate and sign the agreement, and any amendments thereto, for the Integrated Watershed Restoration Program Phase 7

Lisa presented the Board with Resolution RCDSCC 2025-01 to enter into agreement with the Coastal Conservancy and subaward agreements with RCDs Monterey County and San Mateo, as well as to designate a representative to negotiate and sign the agreement and any amendments for Phase 7 of the Integrated Watershed Restoration Program (IWRP). Lisa shared that initially the proposal was not funded due to state budget cuts. However, the Coastal Commission recently reached out to see if the RCD was still interested in pursuing a scaled back grant. The funding for this grant is from the state general funds and the District will administer subaward agreements to San Mateo RCD ($255,600.00) and RCD Monterey County ($279,836.00). Further, Lisa said that this funding will move the planning phase of several projects forward. These projects include 65%

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designs for 1.5 miles of restoration work at Scott Creek, Branciforte city dam removal designs and permits and landowner outreach for San Lorenzo Valley fish passage barrier removals. The grant ends in 2027, but may be extended if additional time is required. John Ricker moved approval of Resolution RCDSCC 2025-01. The motion was seconded by Kelley Bell. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Jim McKenna and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

7.3. Review and consider approval of Staff Recommendation Memo to enter into contract with Jodi McGraw Consulting for the Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park Sandhills Management Plan and General Conservation Plan per 1080.6.1.2 of the Procurement Policy

Lisa presented the Board with the Staff Recommendation Memo to enter into contract with Jodi McGraw consulting for developing a Sandhills Management plan and General Conservation Plan for Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park. She highlighted that staff followed 1080.6.1.2 of the Procurement Policy and solicited Requests for Qualification from three firms with known experience completing conservation planning and/or implementation activities in sensitive Santa Cruz Sandhills habitat. Two statements of qualification were received, Jodi McGraw Consulting was chosen based on the depth and length of experience and expertise working directly on Santa Cruz Sandhills habitat. The proposed contract is for a not to exceed amount of $193,734.00 and Lisa noted that funding for the plans is from illegal cannabis cultivation penalties administered by State Parks. After discussion, John Ricker moved approval of the Staff Recommendation to enter into contract with Jodi McGraw Consulting for the Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park Sandhills Management Plan and General Conservation Plan. Robert Ketley seconded the motion. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Jim McKenna and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

8.1. Policy Review/Updates

Lisa thanked the ad hoc Policy Committee for their help last year with updates to the Employee Handbook and Compensation and Benefit Study and Implementation. She requested that in the coming year, the Board form ad hoc committees to review, update and or develop the following policies: Reserve Policy, Telework Policy, Procurement Policy, Records Retention Policy and any legal updates to the Employee Handbook. John Ricker and Robert Ketley said they would be willing to work on the Reserve Policy Committee, Kelley Bell could help with the Telework Policy and legal updates to the Employee Handbook. Mike Eaton and Jim McKenna would be willing to work on Procurement Policy Updates and a Records Retention Policy.

8.2. Executive Director's Report

Lisa gave a warm welcome to Lily Ruderman who will be working on administrative support for the District. Additionally, Lisa shared that internal recruitment is under way for a Forest Health Program Manager with applications closing today. The Local Agency Formation Committee will be conducting the District's 5-year service review. The Board suggested that LAFCo consider approving annexation of the cities which currently are only under the Districts sphere of influence. Lisa will be leading efforts this year to complete the 5-year strategic plan. This effort will begin

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with checking in with the community and strategic partners. Lisa anticipates completion by this summer. Additionally, the District will be involved in the multi-jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan being developed by the Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience.

Lisa gave updates on funding proposals. The Forest Health Team have submitted a large grant that will include some 860 acres and included projects at Pogonip, UC Santa Cruz, Cal Poly Swanton Pacific Ranch and Soquel Demonstration Forest. The Agriculture Team has submitted a Specialty Crop Block Grant proposal for the development of low-till management tools. Additionally, the Wildlife Conservation Board is soliciting applications, and a concept proposal has been submitted for restoration planning at the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County's Trabing Property for amphibian restoration. Lastly, Lisa shared that she will be attending a meeting regarding the process for launching Measure Q funding. Efforts are underway to conduct outreach to community members who would be interested in participating in the advisory committee. John Ricker shared that he had been approached with this opportunity.

8.3. Director/Associate Director Reports

Jim McKenna gave a shout out to staff for arranging the Holiday Party. Additionally, Jim shared that he attended the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts Annual Conference in Sacramento. The RCD received a partnership award from the Natural Resources Conservation Service which underscored the collaborative relationship between RCD Santa Cruz County and the Local NRCS office. He also shared that he attended the Business meeting, where it was decided to table the resolutions and allow the updating of the bylaws to take place. Lastly, Jim has crossed paths with folks from Digital Nest who work with local high schools to give training in videography.

9. CALENDAR DATES

January 17, 2025 – Tour of San Lorenzo Valley Sediment Reduction Projects
January 27, 2025 – Rural Roads Workshop and Tour at Boulder Creek Recreation Department

10. COMMUNICATIONS

10.1. County Board of Supervisors RCD Board appointment approvals
10.2. LAFCO Letter regarding upcoming vacancy for the regular and alternate seats

11. ADJOURN

The next regular meeting of the RCD Board will be hybrid February 12, 2025, at 6:30PM at **City of Capitola Community Room 420 Capitola Ave, Capitola, 95010** and via Zoom meetings: https://zoom.us/, Meeting ID: 708-386-048, Meeting PW: 599600. Mike Eaton moved to adjourn. Kelley Bell seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:17PM.

(TC:JM)

James J. McKenna