RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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# MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 10, 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 **6:30PM on September 10, 2025.** The meeting was conducted in person at the Capitola Library Community Room, 2005 Wharf Road, Capitola, 95010 and virtually via Zoom, Meeting ID: 708-386-048.

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| Directors Present: | Kelley Bell<br>Mike Eaton<br>Robert Ketley<br>Howard Liebenberg<br>Mike Manfre, Vice President<br>Jim McKenna, President<br>John Ricker |
| Directors Absent: | None |
| RCD Staff Present: | Lisa Lurie, Executive Director<br>Ari Rettinger, Director of Finance - via Zoom<br>Lily Ruderman, Administrative Assistant |
| Others Present: | Kathryn Tobisch, Associate Director - via Zoom<br>Adria Arko |

## 1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30PM, with a quorum present; Jim McKenna chaired the meeting. The roll was called; Kelley Bell present; Mike Eaton present; Robert Ketley present; Howard Liebenberg present; Mike Manfre present; Jim McKenna present; John Ricker present. Item 6.3, approval of Final FY 25-26 Budget, moved up on the agenda and was discussed prior to item 6.1 Resolution RCDSCC 2025-07.

## 2. INTRODUCTIONS & WELCOME

Jim McKenna welcomed everyone to the hybrid meeting.

## 3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were none given.

## 4. NRCS REPORT

District Conservationist Drew Mather gave the NRCS report, covering August 14, 2025, to September 10, 2025.

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Staffing Updates:

- **Alanna Burhans, Area Business Tools Coordinator**, stationed in the NRCS Salinas service center, continues to assist the Capitola Local Partnership Office (LPO) with business tools needs and is currently staffing the Half Moon Bay LPO two days a week.
- **Rich Casale, Agriculture Conservation Experienced Services (ACES) Contractor**, continues to provide all NRCS offices in our area and outside our area, as well as RCD's, with his expertise in erosion control and wildfire preparedness.
- **Jackie Charboneau** is now the **Area Biologist**, still stationed at the NRCS Livermore LPO and continuing to assist the Capitola LPO with biological reviews.
- **Drew Mather, District Conservationist (DC)**, is now the acting DC for the Vacaville Field Office and the Half Moon Bay LPO, servicing Santa Cruz County with day-to-day operations, technical and financial assistance field visits, and Solano, San Mateo, and San Francisco Counties with the same.
- **Desi Ramirez, Area 2 Engineer** continues to assist the Capitola LPO with our ***Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP) project sites.*** Desi, with the last remaining Area Engineer located in Fresno, Dave Krietemeyer, have developed an engineering requesting system for all NRCS field offices in the State of California to utilize. Its rollout is set for next week.

Drew Mather also shared technical and financial assistance updates, including Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) updates. Drew, along with the Area Agronomist, provided assistance to a former Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) contract holder with an apple orchard who reached out for compost and cover crop recommendations. All EWPP projects are underway and scheduled to be completed by October 15, except one which had a change in contractor and will be completed next year. All pre-approved EQIP and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applications have been turned into contracts for FY25. Drew concluded with the moment of the month, featuring pollinator-friendly NRCS honeybee seed mix, and discussion ensued.

## 5. CONSENT AGENDA

The Board considered the consent agenda. The consent agenda items included the August 13, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes, the August 20, 2025, Strategic Planning Retreat Minutes, the August 2025 Vendor Expenditures, and the Final Audit for Fiscal Year 23-24. John Ricker moved approval of the Consent Agenda Items. Howard Liebenberg seconded the motion. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

*(Adria Arko joined the meeting in person at 6:40pm)*

## 6. ACTION ITEMS

### 6.1. Review and consider approval of Resolution RCDSCC 2025-07 Santa Cruz County 401(k) Plan Termination

Executive Director Lisa Lurie described this motion as the final administrative step officially closing out the RCD's 401(k) retirement plan. This resolution is a formal action terminating the plan, effective on the date of the meeting. Lisa gave a summary of the measures taken to transition to the new 457(b) plan. Board members and Lisa discussed the process. John Ricker moved approval, Mike Eaton

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seconded. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

**6.2. Review and consider co-sponsoring, with Tehama and San Mateo RCD's, a joint resolution to CARCD on "Prioritization of Full Cost Recovery for Resource Conservation Districts"**

Lisa Lurie shared background on this joint resolution. Created in preparation for the annual CARCD Conference, the purpose of the resolution is to direct CARCD to prioritize supporting full cost recovery for Resource Conservation Districts. Related to the language in California Proposition 4 regarding funding of indirect costs and full cost recovery, this provides consistent guidance for CARCD about the needs of RCDs and the importance of full cost recovery. The Board members offered feedback on the wording of the resolution, wanting to ensure clarity and understanding of the language. Lisa highlighted the final sentence in the document as a concise summary of the key points of the resolution. Following discussion, Robert Ketley moved approval. Kelley Bell seconded the motion. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

**6.3. Review and consider approval of Final FY 25-26 Budget**

Director of Finance Arianne Rettinger introduced the budget and shared details about changes between the draft and final versions. Arianne also addressed the topic of the development of a reserve policy. Following there was discussion between Ari, Lisa, and the Board. John Ricker requested a change be made and a footnote removed for clarity. On the condition that the footnote be deleted, John Ricker moved approval. Howard Liebenberg 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.

*(Associate Director Kathryn Tobisch joined via Zoom at 6:50pm)*

**6.4. Review and consider approval of staff recommendation of an exemption to the informal bid process for Camara Environmental Consulting, per section 1080.8.3 and 1080.8.4 of the Procurement Policy and approve entering into contract for Fiscal Year 2025-2026**

Lisa Lurie described this staff recommendation bringing Camara Environmental Consulting's (CEC) contract to the Board. While no individual project which CEC is working on goes over the spending limit for Board approval, the combined total for various projects does. This year, in addition to continuing work on permitting and project advising, other priorities for CEC's work will be focusing on mentorship and legacy knowledge. Kelley Bell moved approval. John Ricker seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

**6.5. Nominate a delegate Board member to attend the 2025 CARCD conference held November 18–20th in Sacramento and CARCD Business Meeting on November 18th**

Board President Jim McKenna introduced this opportunity for a Board member to attend the CARCD conference, and Lisa Lurie added details about the conference and business meeting. Lisa also shared

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that staff members from RCD Santa Cruz will be giving presentations at the event. After discussion, Jim McKenna volunteered to be the delegate. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

### 6.6. Review and select candidates for the SDRMA Election

Jim McKenna introduced the voting for the SDRMA election. Board members discussed the merits of the various candidates, with John Ricker and Mike Manfre each giving their recommendations. After coming to an agreement on candidate selections for the vote, John Ricker moved approval. Howard Liebenberg seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

## 7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

### 7.1. Strategic Planning – Board Engagement and Recruitment

Jim McKenna raised the question before the Board whether there were any comments on the Strategic Planning Meeting held in August. Board members gave feedback, and all agreed it was an excellent opportunity for RCD staff and Board members to interact and engage with each other. Multiple Board members spoke about how impressed they were by the capabilities and knowledge of RCD team members.

Lisa Lurie then transitioned the conversation into a discussion about Board engagement and recruitment. Board members discussed suitable candidates for the Board, and whether there is a particular profile we are seeking for potential future Board members. Board members and Lisa all concurred that we would like to reach a broader demographic. Various Board members also gave suggestions about methods of outreach, partner agencies to look at as examples of Board recruitment, and topics which might increase interest in the RCD Board. Jim McKenna and Robert Ketley also spoke on the potential pipeline from Associate Director to Director. Howard Liebenberg emphasized the importance of representation; making sure we have Board members bringing in different aspects of the work we do. Robert Ketley spoke on how to increase communication with the public and reach out to the community for suggestions. Lisa agreed with the Board's views on this topic and further emphasized her commitment to outreach for leadership recruitment. Mike Eaton and Kelley Bell offered to continue this discussion with Lisa at a later date and offer their insights.

In a related discussion topic regarding Associate Directors, Lisa Lurie shared that Adria Arko is interested in becoming an Associate Director. Lisa thanked Adria for her interest and for attending the meeting. Lisa added that this was an opportunity for the RCD to revisit the Associate Director Policy, and to think about how we can bolster the role of Associate Directors.

### 7.2. Executive Director's Report

The phrase "One chapter ends, and another begins" opened Lisa Lurie's Executive Director's report for the month of September, highlighting the tremendous changes which have occurred surrounding the RCD's office location in recent months. Following a fire in an adjacent part of the building complex, a two-week notice was given for our organization to vacate the premises.

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Thankfully the RCD has found a temporary location. After hearing the news regarding the new office space, Board members asked questions about the details and Lisa answered.

Lisa then moved on to share funding and project updates. The Community Wildfire Defense Grant, a Federal Grant which was awarded but the contracting process had been frozen, is in motion again, but still awaiting final signature from the UDSA. This funding applies to the RCD's popular chipping program, as well as Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) inspections, and HIZ brush clearing projects. Additionally, the CalFire funded Lockhart Shaded Fuel Break Forest Health project is underway. In Watershed Restoration updates, work at San Vicente is wrapping up and the Aptos Large Woody Debris project will begin shortly after.

The final topic of the report was the new regional Special Districts Association chapter being created for Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties. The regional formation meeting will be held Thursday, September 18, 2025. Lisa shared that she sees great value in the founding of this regional chapter, and that there is a lot to be gained by speaking together about the unique role of Special Districts in the community.

**7.3. Discuss and Schedule a Date for the November Board Tour**

This was a discussion with Board members about the date for the RCD's annual November Board Tour, with consideration for the Veterans Day Holiday which falls the day before the typically scheduled date for the tour. Alternate dates were considered.

**7.4. Director/Associate Director Reports**

There were none given.

**8. CALENDAR DATES**

September 30, 2025 – Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network 10th Anniversary Celebration
October 11, 2025 – Central Coast Good Fire Fair
October 18 and 19, 2025 – Esperanza Farms Organic Farming Festival / Dia De Esperanza

**9. COMMUNICATIONS**

9.1. LAFCO Service Review (https://santacruzlafco.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/RCD-MSR-Adopted-Version.pdf)
Lisa and members of the Board discussed the service review.

**10. ADJOURN**

The next regular meeting of the RCD Board will be hybrid October 8, 2025, at 6:30PM, at **Capitola Library Community Room 2005 Wharf Rd, Capitola, CA 95010** and via Zoom meetings: https://zoom.us/, Meeting ID: 708-386-048, Meeting PW: 599600. Howard Liebenberg moved to adjourn. Kelley Bell seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:58PM.

**(LR:JM)**

James J. McKenna