RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 12, 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 **6:32PM on November 12, 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.

Directors Present:	Robert Ketley Howard Liebenberg Mike Manfre, Vice President Jim McKenna, President John Ricker, via Zoom for medical reasons
Directors Absent:	Kelley Bell Mike Eaton
RCD Staff Present:	Lisa Lurie, Executive Director Lily Ruderman, Administrative Assistant
Others Present:	Adria Arko, Associate Director Donna Meyers, Conservation Collaborative

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:32PM, with a quorum present; Jim McKenna chaired the meeting. The roll was called; Robert Ketley present; Howard Liebenberg present; Mike Manfre present, Jim McKenna present; John Ricker present via Zoom. Kelley Bell absent; Mike Eaton absent.

2. INTRODUCTIONS & WELCOME

Jim McKenna welcomed everyone to the hybrid meeting. Directors and RCD staff also welcomed Donna Meyers, and introductions were made.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were none given.

4. NRCS REPORT

Due to the ongoing Federal government shutdown, NRCS offices have been closed, and staff furloughed. Drew Mather was not present to give the NRCS report. RCD Executive Director Lisa Lurie

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conveyed a message that the closure is ending with NRCS re-opening their offices November 13, 2025. Drew will be back in the office tomorrow.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

The Board considered the consent agenda. The consent agenda items included the October 8, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes, and the October 2025 Vendor Expenditures. Robert Ketley moved approval of the Consent Agenda Items. Jim McKenna seconded the motion. The ayes included Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker.

6. PRESENTATION

6.1 Regional Durable Funding Initiative – Donna Meyers of Conservation Collaborative

Lisa Lurie made opening remarks, introducing Donna Meyers' presentation on the tri-county durable funding initiative. Donna Meyers then spoke via Zoom, briefing the Board about the initiative.

This regional durable funding initiative comes from work done across three counties, Santa Cruz, San Benito, and Monterey. Across these three counties, there's a lack of long term stewardship funding available. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) began the process of developing the initiative to address this funding shortfall. They convened a set of practitioners and held public meetings. A small group, including Lisa Lurie, then continued to work with TPL, with stewardship as their primary focus. Donna Meyers joined the effort as a consultant six months ago.

The underlying concept for this initiative is to create a regional entity to secure and allocate long term stewardship funding, which could benefit large scale landscape features critical to conservation work, like wildlife corridors and watersheds, as well as working lands, agricultural lands, and parks. The proposal TPL has created is based around and inspired by an authority that was formed in the San Francisco Bay Area in 2008, the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority. Since their creation, the SF Bay Restoration Authority has identified and began implementation on 193 projects; they have strong fundraising capabilities and are entirely focused on the restoration and stewardship aspect. TPL brought that concept to the partners in the Monterey Bay area. Assemblymember Gail Pellerin has taken this concept on as a legislative priority for 2026. The Assemblymember and TPL, alongside the group they have convened, are collectively writing legislation which mirrors the concept of the SF Bay Restoration Authority, for Santa Cruz, San Benito, and Monterey Counties. Assemblymember Gail Pellerin is the lead author, and the intent is to submit the initiative in 2026 for the next legislative session.

Following the presentation, Board members asked questions and Donna responded. She highlighted that there will be a role for RCDs to participate in the projects which could be come out of this initiative. Donna and Lisa both emphasized the much-needed resources this could provide, particularly in the form of continued investment. Durable long term funding allows for projects to be maintained over time. While state funding often has line items for specific conservancies or regions, there is currently no way to bring that funding to local projects because we don't have that kind of regional

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entity for the Monterey Bay Area. This initiative represents a new way of generating funding for stewardship in the region. No funds would be taken from existing programs, this would be an entirely new tool in the toolbox, and it fits well into the fabric of existing work. The regional entity would support, not duplicate or compete with existing agencies. Lisa closed out by saying that this would be revisited as the process moves forward, when there is something more to consider or to decide on.

Matt Abernathy and Hudson Northrup joined the meeting at 6:58pm

7. ACTION ITEMS

7.1. Discuss and consider approval of the RCDSCC 2026-2030 Strategic Plan

Jim McKenna introduced the next item, the RCD's 2026-2030 Strategic Plan. Lisa then presented the Strategic Plan to all present. She began by describing how this is a high-level document, with broad themes outlining the RCD's mission, vision, and values, and describes our organizational goals and strategies for the next five years. The Strategic Plan is structured with five pillars: healthy lands, clean and abundant water, thriving wildlife, resilient safe communities, and organizational excellence. This document sets the framework, and RCD staff will take these themes to finer detail with annual work planning. Board members recommended the appendix be included in the final document. Following confirmation that the appendix be added, Robert Ketley moved approval, and Mike Manfre seconded. The ayes included Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker.

7.2. Discuss and consider approval of Resolution RCDSCC 2025-08 to approve the Project Specific Analysis and supporting documents and authorize submission of a Notice of Impending Development for the Coastal Santa Cruz Mountains Project

Lisa Lurie described Resolution RCDSCC 2025-08, and introduced Matt Abernathy, RCD Forest Health Program Manager and Hudson Northrup, California State Parks Environmental Scientist. Hudson Northrup gave a brief summary of his work with State Parks in Santa Cruz and San Mateo Counties. Then the proposed Resolution was described as a permitting document for planned forest restoration work which the RCD will be doing in collaboration with State Parks and other landowners. Following the establishment of the RCD's Forest Health and Fire Resilience Public Works Plan (PWP) in 2021 which was designed to programmatically permit forest health and wildfire resilience projects in the Coastal Zone in Santa Cruz County, State Parks developed a Forest Management Strategy (FMS), which also aims to promote forest health and protect resources in the Coastal Zone of Santa Cruz County. The Coastal Santa Cruz Mountains Forest Health Initiative covers 11,974 acres in total, including land owned by State Parks, Save the Redwoods League, and Sempervirens Fund. The RCD worked with State Parks on preparing a Project Specific Analysis and supporting documents for this project to comply with both the California Vegetation Treatment Program Programmatic EIR and the PWP. Proposed treatment activities include manual treatments, pile burning, mechanical treatments, broadcast burning, and targeted herbicide application. Before and after photos showing the results of mechanical treatment in Butano State Park and prescribed burning in Henry Cowell State Park were shown as part of the presentation. Following approval of this Resolution by the Board of Directors, the Notice of Impending Development will be brought to the Coastal Commission for review in February 2026. Board members asked questions about the project and Matt and Hudson answered. There was

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discussion of pending legal decisions that could influence whether or not the Coastal Commission would allow treatment within chaparral or coastal sage scrub vegetation communities. Staff recommended that the Board move to approve the resolution, with the caveat that if, prior to the RCD submitting the NOID, the Coastal Commission provides written approval of treatment within chaparral or coastal sage scrub, references to those exclusions will be removed from the NOID. Following discussion, Robert Ketley moved approval of the Resolution with this caveat. Howard Liebenberg seconded the motion. The ayes included Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. All were in favor, the motion passed.

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

8.1. Review and discuss CARCD Resolutions and provide guidance to the delegate

Lisa Lurie introduced the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) Resolutions and summarized some of what will be voted on at the upcoming CARCD Conference. Lisa proposed that the Board follow the CARCD policy committee's recommendations as a guide for voting. There was discussion on various resolutions and on how the delegate from the RCD of Santa Cruz County (RCDSCC) should vote. Jim McKenna, who will be the delegate for the RCDSCC Board of Directors at the conference this year, described the history of the CARCD conferences in his experience.

8.2. Discuss and provide guidance to the delegate on proposed changes to CARCD bylaws

Lisa Lurie described the process of reviewing the bylaws with regard for what affects the RCD of Santa Cruz County and gave background on how the voting takes place. Each region represented by the CARCD elects a chair and a vice chair. Their role is to make sure the two regional meetings are scheduled each year. The regional representative serves on the CARCD Board; our area's regional representative is Steve Stielstra, Director for San Mateo RCD. Each district selects a Director as their delegate, for RCDSCC that is Jim McKenna. Lastly, each district needs to elect a regional delegate who represents the district at the regional meeting. For now that is Jim McKenna, if the bylaws are amended to allow staff to fulfill this role Lisa Lurie could herself fill that role. Lisa then gave a summary of the main takeaways from the bylaws, describing these new bylaws which will be voted on at the upcoming CARCD meeting, and stating that if approved, they will go into effect January 1st.

8.3. Executive Director's Report

The Executive Director's report was given by Lisa Lurie. Topics included chipping program funding, and preparations for annual work planning. The Executive Director's report also included hiring updates. The RCD will have a job opening for a Watershed Restoration Project Manager, with the hiring process beginning in December of this year and interviews planned for January of 2026. Lisa also spoke about ongoing discussions around the prospect of bringing on a community resilience coordinator, and Board members contributed their thoughts on the value that position could provide.

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8.4. Director/Associate Director Reports

In response to the presentation on the Coastal Santa Cruz Mountains Project earlier in the meeting, there was discussion by members of the Board regarding fire prevention, insurance issues, the role of the firesafe council and benefits of participation, and how the RCD can show what we're doing to keep the community safe.

9. CALENDAR DATES

November 13, 2025 – RCD Board Tour – POSTPONED – This event was postponed due to weather, with the possibility of rescheduling in the Spring
November 18-20, 2025 – CARCD Conference, Sacramento

10. COMMUNICATIONS

11. ADJOURN

The next regular meeting of the RCD Board will be hybrid January 14, 2026, at 6:30PM, **location to be determined,** and via Zoom meetings: https://zoom.us/, Meeting ID: 708-386-048, Meeting PW: 599600. Mike Manfre moved to adjourn. Robert Ketley seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:51PM.

James J. McKenna

(LR:JM)