RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

820 Bay Avenue, Suite 136
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www.rcdsantacruz.org

MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 14, 2026 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 January 14, 2026.** The meeting was conducted in person at the Resource Conservation District Interim Office, 2425 Porter St Suite 19, Soquel 95073, and virtually via Zoom, Meeting ID: 708-386-048.

Directors Present:	Kelley Bell (via Zoom for medical reasons) Mike Eaton Robert Ketley Howard Liebenberg Mike Manfre, Vice President Jim McKenna, President John Ricker
RCD Staff Present:	Lisa Lurie, Executive Director Laurel Bard, Project Manager Angela Vasconcellos, Project Manager Lily Ruderman, Administrative Assistant
Others Present:	Adria Arko, Associate Director Drew Mather, NRCS Hannah Travers, Land Trust Santa Cruz County Don Croll, Professor: Institute of Marine Sciences, UCSC Marco Lisac, Lisac General Engineering

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 via Zoom; 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. Members of the public present introduced themselves to the Board and those present. The Board welcomed Don Croll, a faculty member at the University of California Santa Cruz. A welcome was also given to Marco Lisac with Lisac General Engineering, who attended the meeting to learn more about the RCD's work and local projects.

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3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Marco Lisac spoke about his experience with land clearing, fire safety, culverts, and road repair projects, as well as his interest in the work of the RCD.

4. NRCS REPORT

Drew Mather gave the NRCS report. Drew began by introducing himself and describing the NRCS to those present. He then summarized activities for his agency for the month, emphasizing that deadlines are coming up for applications for various NRCS programs. He also shared a recent site visit with an applicant doing cover crop and hedgerow work. NRCS has a new regenerative agriculture program, called the Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP), focused on soil health and soil management systems. This will be a five-year program geared toward landowners. There has been a lot of excitement around the RPP, and Drew expressed that the program would be a good opportunity for synergy between NRCS and the RCD around soil testing. Board and staff members asked questions about the RPP and Drew answered.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

The Board considered the consent agenda. The consent agenda items included the November 12, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes, the December 17, 2025, Special Meeting Minutes, November 2025 Vendor Expenditures, December 2025 Vendor Expenditures, and the FY 25-26 Q1 Quarterly Financials. John Ricker moved approval of the Consent Agenda Items. Mike Eaton seconded the motion. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker.

6. PRESENTATION

6.1 Igniting Collaboration to Restore the Santa Cruz Sandhills – Laurel Bard and Angie Vasconcellos RCD Forest Health Project Managers, and Hannah Travers Land Trust Santa Cruz County

A presentation was given on a multi-benefit restorative fire project conducted by the RCD and Land Trust Santa Cruz County (LTSCC) in the Santa Cruz Sandhills habitat in the Fall of 2024 and Spring of 2025. The project utilized brush clearing and burn piles to remove downed and dead fuels and improve habitat for sensitive species. Work was conducted in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), increasing fire resiliency for residents of the area. The presentation described accomplishments of the project, as well as problem solving strategies used to overcome obstacles.

Successful partnerships and community outreach were important aspects of the project. The Central Coast Prescribed Burn Association (CCPBA) brought their valuable expertise with prescribed fire. Community outreach for the project was highly successful, due to early and transparent communication with the public. Challenges included infrastructure concerns, access to water, and a narrow window of time to conduct burn piles. The presenters emphasized the importance of regional capacity building to expand and formalize a prescribed fire mutual aid network among agencies and volunteers. Lessons learned from this project can be applied to future WUI projects and prescribed fire in sensitive habitat.

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Questions were asked and the presenters answered. Members of the Board commended the work performed and the collaborative effort between the RCD and LTSCC.

7. ACTION ITEMS

7.1. Consider and approve revisions to 0131 RCD Drug Free Workplace Policy

Jim McKenna introduced the item, and Lisa explained that this is an edit to clarify the text of Policy 0131 and make it compliant with specific grant required language. Robert Ketley moved approval, and John Ricker seconded. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker.

7.2. Review and approve the North Rispin Property Checklist

Monitoring of the North Rispin property easement is conducted annually by the RCD for the City of Capitola. The inspection was conducted on December 11, 2025 by three RCD staff members, Angie Gruys, Tangi Chapman, and Lily Ruderman. Findings were that the conditions of the property remain the same, with trash, trails, and one or more encampments present. The RCD continues to recommend that invasive plant species removal be conducted on the North Rispin parcels. Board members discussed management practices for the property. Mike Eaton moved approval, and 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.

7.3. Review and consider Staff Recommendation Memo to amend contract with Environmental Science Associates for continuation of the Scott Creek Coastal Resiliency Project

Lisa introduced the Staff Recommendation and described that this continues coastal resiliency work funded through the State Coastal Conservancy removing the ageing bridge at Scott Creek and extending the length of the bridge to improve ecosystem function and resilience of the transportation infrastructure to climate change. Environmental Science Associates (ESA) has been working on the ecological restoration aspect of this project integrating the ecological restoration with the bridge design, and completing coastal hazard studies. The scope of this phase of the project includes funding for the RCD and our consultants to contribute to the bridge design and provide biological support to Caltrans. With this contract amendment, ESA will continue their work, assisting Caltrans in completing the Natural Environment Study (Biological Resource Evaluation) and in developing the draft environmental document for the project. Lisa added that there is a lot of momentum for this project, and described some of the efforts underway. The Board asked questions and Lisa answered. John Ricker moved approval, and Mike Manfre seconded the motion. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Mike Eaton, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker.

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

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8.1. RCD Measure Q Investment Priorities 2026-2027

Lisa Lurie gave a presentation previewing the allocation of Measure Q funds by the RCD. As one of the recipients of revenue from Measure Q, the RCD will be implementing eligible projects for public benefit. Eligible projects under Measure Q fall in the themes of water resources management, wildfire risk reduction and forest health, wildlife and habitat protection, parks, recreation, public access and equity, working lands protection, and coastal protection and adaptation. Strategic planning and work planning conducted by RCD leadership and staff have identified key priorities for the allocation of funds. These include core services and program specific projects which will have a significant impact, as well as other areas. These priorities have been selected using an approach that looks across all the RCD's programs with a lens of community engagement and resilience.

The Board engaged in discussion and made suggestions – both for use of Measure Q funding and for reporting the metrics of work performed under Measure Q. Lisa concluded by sharing that once finalized, the Investment Priorities would be brought back to the Board for approval.

8.2. Schedule Executive Director Annual Review

The Board discussed Lisa Lurie's annual review, and Directors volunteered to be part of the two-person committee conducting her evaluation. Plans were made for the review process, and a closed session will be held at the next meeting if needed.

8.3. 2026 Policy Review and Updates

Lisa outlined policies prioritized for updating this year, including the reserve policy, and the Associate Director policy. Board members opted to assist with specific policies, as part of ad-hoc committees.

8.4. Recognizing Director Eaton for service to the District

Jim McKenna expressed appreciation on behalf of himself and the other Board members for Mike Eaton's contributions as a Director. The Board concurred and added that Director Eaton had represented the North Coast region and emphasized the importance of that perspective. Mike Eaton responded and offered to continue to serve as an Associate Director in the future, and to contribute to an Associate Director policy for retired Board members and prospective new Board members.

8.5. Executive Director's Report

The Executive Director's report was given by Lisa Lurie, encompassing topics including funding updates and future projects. Key points included funding secured by the Nature Conservancy to support the Recharge Net Metering Program (ReNeM), as well as upcoming work in partnership with a private landowner on a strategic shaded fuel break in Corralitos, and habitat restoration for the Long Toed Salamander in partnership with the Land Trust and the Wildlife Conservation Board. The RCD's Annual Report went out in December, detailing accomplishments completed in 2025,

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and it is available on our website. Another highlight was the RCD's Ag Team facilitating a pollinator planting at a local elementary school.

8.6. Director/Associate Director Reports

Director Howard Liebenberg revisited the topic of invasive acacia on Graham Hill Road, adjacent to an area where the RCD had previously done an acacia removal project. Lisa responded that we would like to continue to maintain or even extend work in this location if possible. Concerns were shared that the new growth may be in an area nearby; not addressed by the project.

9. CALENDAR DATES

January 27, 2026 – San Vicente-Waddell Coastal Resilience Community Workshop hosted by RCDSCC, SCCRTC, and Caltrans San Vicente-Waddell Coastal Resilience (SANV-WA) : https://www.sccrtc.org/funding-planning/environmental-planning/sanv-wa/
January 30, 2026 – Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network Science and Stewardship Symposium Science & Stewardship Symposium website : https://www.scmsn.net/symposium
January 31, 2026 – Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History Founder's Day

10. COMMUNICATIONS

10.1. CARCD Ballot and Election Materials, to be acted on at the February RCDSCC Board Meeting
10.2 RCD Annual Report Annual_Report_2025_Final_Spread.pdf : https://www.rcdsantacruz.org/images/annual-reports/Annual_Report_2025_Final_Spread.pdf
10.3 Santa Cruz Sentinel Article https://www.santacruzsentinel.com/2025/12/11/santa-cruz-rethinks-water-use-to-conserve-coho-salmon-save-steelhead/
10.4 Michael Eaton Letter of Resignation

11. ADJOURN

The next regular meeting of the RCD Board will be hybrid February 11, 2026, at 6:30PM, **Resource Conservation District Interim Office, 2425 Porter St Suite 19, Soquel 95073,** and via Zoom meetings: https://zoom.us/, Meeting ID: 708-386-048, Meeting PW: 599600. John Ricker moved to adjourn. Mike Manfre seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:42PM.

(LR:JM)

James J. McKenna