RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

2425 Porter Street, Suite 19
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MINUTES OF THE MARCH 11, 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 **6:31PM on March 11, 2026.** The meeting was conducted in person at the Resource Conservation District Office, 2425 Porter St Suite 19, Soquel 95073, and virtually via Zoom, Meeting ID: 708-386-048.

Directors Present:	Kelley Bell (via Zoom) Robert Ketley Howard Liebenberg Mike Manfre, Vice President Jim McKenna, President
Directors Absent:	John Ricker
RCD Staff Present:	Lisa Lurie, Executive Director Matt Abernathy, Program Manager Lily Ruderman, Administrative Assistant
Others Present:	Erika Carpenter, Project Manager UC Santa Cruz Oxo Slayer, Principle Planner UC Santa Cruz
Others Present Via Zoom:	Drew Mather, NRCS Heather Blair, Ascent Lily Bostrom, Ascent Hanna Weinberger, Ascent Steve Auten, Auten Resource Consulting Adria Arko, RCD Associate Director

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:31PM, 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. Kelley Bell present, but ineligible to vote due to exceeding the maximum number of allowable remote appearances for the year, as required by the Brown Act two meeting limit under AB 2449/2302. John Ricker absent.

Adria Arko joined via Zoom at 6:35pm

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2. INTRODUCTIONS & WELCOME

Jim McKenna welcomed everyone to the hybrid meeting. Those present in person and on Zoom introduced themselves.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were none given.

4. NRCS REPORT

Drew Mather gave the NRCS report via Zoom for the period from February 12, 2026, to March 11, 2026. He shared that NRCS has received over forty applications for various programs including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) for both offices that Drew is managing currently, Capitola/Soquel and Half Moon Bay. NRCS staff are in the process of ranking those applications prior to the upcoming deadline. He thanked those who have been supporting them with that effort, including fellow NRCS offices and RCD Forest Health Team staff. Drew also gave updates on the Regenerative Pilot Program. There has been a lot of interest in this new program for crop land, range land, forested land, and animal feeding operations. He added that two large hedgerow projects were completed over the last month and concluded by mentioning that he attended the first in a series of Conservation Planning Trainings being hosted by RCDSCC.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

The Board considered the consent agenda. The consent agenda items included the revised January 14, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes, the February 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes, and the February 2026 Vendor Expenditures. Jim McKenna introduced the consent agenda. Board Secretary Lily Ruderman shared that Mike Eaton's Letter of Resignation was added to the January minutes. With no further discussion, the Board proceeded to vote on the consent agenda. Robert Ketley moved approval, and Mike Manfre seconded the motion. The ayes included Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, and Jim McKenna. Kelley Bell absent for vote.

6. ACTION ITEMS

6.1. Discuss and consider approval of Resolution 2026-02 UCSC Wildfire Vegetation Treatment Project PSA and Addendum, with a brief presentation provided by RCD staff and partners

Jim McKenna introduced the resolution and then handed it over to the presenters. RCD Forest Health Program Manager Matt Abernathy opened the presentation and thanked the team from the University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC) for joining. He described the Public Works Plan (PWP), California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP), and Notice of Impending Development (NOID) processes, and the way those pieces are developed and approved when planning Forest Health and fire resilience projects in the coastal zone. He also outlined the roles and responsibilities the RCD and UCSC will have for this project. Matt then handed it over to Erika Carpenter from UCSC to provide more project specific details.

Erika Carpenter began by describing the UC Santa Cruz Wildfire Vegetation Management Plan (WVMP), including how the initial planning process got started, and the broad efforts in both outreach

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and planning that went into developing this. The overall objective of the project is to steward natural resources in a manner that aligns with campus values of biodiversity, resiliency, sustainability, and traditional ecological knowledge. Specific goals include establishing ecosystem and campus community resilience to wildfire, restoring degraded habitats, and protecting sensitive ecosystems. Erika also pointed out the importance of carrying out this vegetation management plan, describing the accumulation of fuels on the UCSC campus, and emphasizing that in 2020, the CZU Wildfire came within about a mile of the campus.

Hanna Weinberger from Ascent spoke next, followed by Lily Bostrom from Ascent. They presented information about vegetation communities, proposed treatments, and compliance with restrictions around the Coastal Zone and chaparral habitats. Erika Carpenter then closed out the presentation. The Board followed with questions. Jim McKenna asked about habitat types, and Erika answered with details about field work done to prepare the plan. Board members inquired about the project timeline, and Erika responded. The WVMP goes to the Coastal Commission to determine consistency with the PWP in mid-May, and if approved, work could start this summer with the first treatment being a demo project. Jim McKenna expressed that he felt the RCD and UCSC share mutual goals and can learn from each other, and Erika added that UCSC staff appreciates the opportunity to work with the RCD. Lisa Lurie then gave closing remarks about the PWP and CalVTP process.

Following discussion, Robert Ketley moved approval, and Howard Liebenberg seconded. The ayes included Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, and Jim McKenna. Kelley Bell absent for vote.

6.2. Review and consider approval of Staff Memo Recommending 1080.8.4 Procurement Policy Exemption to enter into contract with Auten Resource Consulting for Registered Professional Forester Services pertaining to the 2025 CalFire Forest Health Grant

Lisa Lurie introduced the procurement staff memo, and described that the 2025 CalFire Forest Health Grant has a number of projects within it, including projects where the RCD and our partners have been working with Auten Resource Consulting (ARC) on the project prescriptions and development stages. This staff memo recommends entering into a new contract with ARC to assist with project design, field layout, operational supervision, and oversight by a Registered Professional Forester on projects funded by the 2025 CalFire Forest Health Grant. The request is to approve an exemption to the informal bid process for this contract under Section 1080.8.4 of the procurement policy, allowing for the continuation of existing work. Matt Abernathy added that in this instance, ARC has existing contractual relationships with our partners on these projects, having worked with them to develop project areas and prescriptions. The intent is to enter into this new contract with ARC due to his familiarity with the projects, to continue existing work. Robert Ketley moved approval, and Mike Manfre seconded the motion. The ayes included Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, and Jim McKenna. Kelley Bell absent for vote.

7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

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7.1. Executive Director's Report

Lisa Lurie gave the Executive Director's report, which included local and state updates and upcoming events. She started by informing the Board that the Santa Cruz County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP) was approved by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and is now undergoing the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approval process. The County of Santa Cruz hosted a meeting to update all jurisdictions on the progress of the Plan. Since the RCD is a participating agency, the MJHMP will go to the RCD Board for approval at a future meeting. Lisa continued with an update on Assembly Bill 1584, the Monterey Bay Area Stewardship Authority, which was recently published in draft form and is out for revision and will be heard by committees in April. Lisa concluded by sharing that our RCD will be hosting the next Area RCD meeting on April 30th, 2026. Lisa and the Board then discussed the details of this event before she completed her report.

7.2. Director/Associate Director Reports

Jim McKenna gave a Director's report regarding agricultural practices in our local area, emphasizing that farmers in Santa Cruz County and Monterey County are not as dependent on the use of petroleum-based fertilizers as farmers in other areas may be. With fertilizer prices in the news, there was discussion that our region could be less impacted because of the use of compost and implementation of more sustainable agricultural practices.

8. CALENDAR DATES

March 18, 2026 – National Agriculture Day Spring Luncheon
March 30, 2026 – CSDA Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties First Chapter Meeting
April 11, 2026 – State of the San Lorenzo River Symposium
April 30, 2026 – Area RCD Meeting hosted by RCDSCC

9. COMMUNICATIONS

9.1. CSDA Board of Directors Call for Nominations – Seat C

10. ADJOURN

The next regular meeting of the RCD Board will be hybrid April 15, 2026, at 6:30PM, **Resource Conservation District Office, 2425 Porter St Suite 19, Soquel 95073,** and via Zoom meetings: https://zoom.us/, Meeting ID: 708-386-048, Meeting PW: 599600. Robert Ketley moved to adjourn. Howard Liebenberg seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:50PM.

(LR:JM)

James J. McKenna