RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

2425 Porter Street, Suite 19
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MINUTES OF THE JUNE 10, 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 **6:33PM on June 10, 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 Robert Ketley Howard Liebenberg Jim McKenna, President John Ricker (via Zoom)
Directors Absent:	Don Croll Mike Manfre
RCD Staff Present:	Lisa Lurie, Executive Director Arianne Rettinger, Director of Finance (via Zoom) Daniel Nylen, Watershed Restoration Program Manager Bridget Lowry, Watershed Restoration Project Manager Lily Ruderman, Administrative Assistant
Others Present:	Richelle Noroyan, Public Affairs Coordinator Central Coastal Network California Special Districts Association Emily Steffenhagen, Swanton Pacific Ranch (via Zoom)

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:33PM, with a quorum present; Jim McKenna chaired the meeting. The roll call was taken, and a quorum was confirmed. Kelley Bell present; Robert Ketley present; Howard Liebenberg present; Jim McKenna present. John Ricker 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. Don Croll absent, Mike Manfre absent. Remote participants confirmed clear audio and visual connection.

2. INTRODUCTIONS & WELCOME

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

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3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were none given.

4. NRCS REPORT

Drew Mather, NRCS District Conservationist (DC) with the Capitola/Soquel Local Partnership Office (LPO), was absent; no report was provided.

5. STAFF PRESENTATION

5.1. State of Salmon and Recovery Efforts in the Santa Cruz Mountains – Daniel Nylen, RCD Watershed Restoration Program Manager, and Bridget Lowry, Project Manager

Daniel Nylen and Bridget Lowry presented to the Board on Coho Salmon and Steelhead in Santa Cruz County, and the work of the Watershed Restoration Team to assist recovery efforts for these species. Central Coast California (CCC) Coho are endangered, and CCC Steelhead are threatened, with the consensus being that population levels for both species are critically low. Destruction of habitat is the main limiting factor, and specific examples include impaired stream and estuary habitats, lack of stream habitat and lack of instream water flow. Recommended actions include restoring or creating habitat, retaining and actively inputting large wood into streams, and completing fish passage improvements.

Staff focused their presentation on RCD work over the past five years on recovery efforts including streamwood enhancement, floodplain restoration, and dam removal. In 2021 the Lower Mill Creek Dam Removal was successfully completed; following the completion of that project Coho were documented in Mill Creek downstream of the dam site for the first time ever, and Steelhead were documented upstream of the dam site for the first time in over one hundred years. Another recent project was the Aptos and San Vicente Creek Large Woody Debris (LWD) project implemented in 2025. LWD projects mimic natural processes adding wood to streams in areas where there is a need to thin dense forest growth. Adding woody debris to the stream improves fish habitat, and removing overstocked trees and leaving larger redwoods in stands increases climate resilience.

The presentation concluded with a discussion of current and future projects, including the Old City of Santa Cruz Dam Removal on Branciforte Creek, scheduled to start construction in mid-August this year. The RCD is also working on long term planning and resiliency projects like the Scott Creek Coastal Resiliency Project. The RCD is partnering with Caltrans on this project, which aims for combined benefits to both the ecosystem and the bridge infrastructure. Coastal Resilience Planning is also taking place for San Vicente and Waddell Creek. All three are unique waterways but share similarities in how the Highway 1 corridor has constrained the estuaries. Finally, the Branciforte Creek Flood Control Channel Fish Passage Project aims to redesign the flood control channel to replicate conditions fish need while maintaining flood mitigation capacity. Board members discussed projects and shared ideas with the presenters and RCD staff present.

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*Ari Rettinger joined at 7:00pm
*Daniel Nylen left at 7:09pm
*Bridget Lowry left at 7:22pm

5.2. Update on CSDA Membership Benefits – Richelle Noroyan, Public Affairs Coordinator – Central Coastal Network, California Special Districts Association

Jim McKenna welcomed Richelle Noroyan, who introduced herself and gave a brief overview of the California Special Districts Association (CSDA). Since 1969, CSDA has been a voice for special districts in California. Richelle Noroyan represents the Coastal Network, which is one of six networks and twenty-nine chapters that comprise CSDA. Richelle's presentation included details on member benefits and services provided by CSDA. She concluded her presentation with legislative updates, describing bills currently supported or opposed by CSDA.

*Richelle Noroyan left at 7:55pm

6. CONSENT AGENDA

The Board considered the consent agenda. The consent agenda items included the May 13, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes, and the May 2026 Vendor Expenditures. Robert Ketley moved approval of the consent agenda, and Howard Liebenberg seconded the motion. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, and Jim McKenna. John Ricker absent for vote.

7. ACTION ITEMS

7.1. Review and consider approval of FY 26-27 Draft Budget

Jim McKenna introduced the FY 26-27 Draft Budget, and Executive Director Lisa Lurie acknowledged Director of Finance Ari Rettinger for her work preparing the budget, and Board Member John Ricker for his assistance reviewing the document. Ari Rettinger then presented details of the Draft Budget for the 26-27 Fiscal Year to the Board, pointing out areas of interest including shifts in revenue, increases in certain areas compared with last year, and changes due to the addition of Measure Q funding. After discussion, Robert Ketley moved approval, and Howard Liebenberg seconded. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, and Jim McKenna. John Ricker absent for vote.

*Ari Rettinger left at 8:10pm

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

8.1. Executive Director's Report

Lisa Lurie gave the Executive Director's report, which included updates on events, recruitment, and permitting considerations. Lisa began with a quick report on the presentation about the RCD and the Recharge Net Metering Program (ReNeM) which she gave at the webinar "Turning the Tide on Drought Financing: Lessons From the Field", hosted by United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Global Water Partnership, The Nature Conservancy, and the Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) Initiative. This event brought together international case

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studies for innovative financing for drought resiliency and provided an opportunity to hear stories about drought resilience work from around the world.

Recruitment is in process for three positions at the RCD, with a strong pool of qualified applicants. Additionally, three projects will be going out to bid soon, including the Old City of Santa Cruz Dam Removal project that was described by Daniel Nylen and Bridget Lowry in their presentation.

The RCD has been receiving requests from partner organizations to serve as the CEQA lead on projects. Lisa gave an overview of our involvement in the CEQA process for different types of projects, including those where the RCD is the project implementation lead, and projects that fall within our Public Works Plan. Lisa also said she intends to further discuss this topic with the Board in the future. The Board asked questions and Lisa answered before concluding her report.

8.2. Board Secretary Report

Board Secretary Lily Ruderman provided a follow up about meeting dates in July and August and confirmed that the Board will hold meetings on July 8, 2026, and August 12, 2026.

8.3. Director/Associate Director Reports

Howard Liebenberg gave a Director's Report expressing concerns about tree work being done by contractors hired by utility companies in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

9. CALENDAR DATES

10. COMMUNICATIONS

10.1. Executive Summary of RCD 2026-2030 Strategic Plan

11. ADJOURN

The next regular meeting of the RCD Board will be hybrid July 8, 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. Kelley Bell seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:42PM.

(LR:JM)

James J. McKenna