RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

2425 Porter Street, Suite 19
Soquel, CA 95073
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www.rcdsantacruz.org

MINUTES OF THE JULY 8, 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 July 8, 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 Mike Manfre Jim McKenna, President John Ricker (via Zoom)
Directors Absent:	Don Croll
RCD Staff Present:	Lisa Lurie, Executive Director (via Zoom) Lily Ruderman, Administrative Assistant
NRCS Present:	Drew Mather, NRCS (via Zoom)
Others Present:	Emily Steffenhagen, Swanton Pacific Ranch (via Zoom)

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:31PM, 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; Mike Manfre 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. Remote participants confirmed clear audio and visual connection.

2. INTRODUCTIONS & WELCOME

Jim McKenna welcomed everyone to the hybrid meeting.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were none given.

4. NRCS REPORT

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Drew Mather, NRCS District Conservationist (DC) with the Capitola/Soquel Local Partnership Office (LPO), gave the NRCS report covering the period from June 11, 2026, to July 8, 2026. He began with staffing and agency updates. Evelyn Avalos, CSUMB Agricultural Plant & Soil Sciences student, has started a summer internship as a project Earth Team volunteer in the Capitola/Soquel LPO and the Salinas office. Evelyn has a background in agriculture, and is helping with projects happening in Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Mateo Counties. Newly appointed NRCS Chief Colton Buckley is the new Chief as of the Agency based in Washington DC, as of May 18, 2026. Drew also shared that several NRCS staff members from various offices have been assisting the Capitola/Soquel LPO with the large number of applications received this year, moving them into the contract, or "obligated" phase.

A final Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP) project in South Santa Cruz County is underway and expected to be completed in late August 2026.

NRCS has a new motto, "Keeping Working Lands in Working Hands", along with other changes to the Mission Statement and Vision Statement for the Agency.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

The Board considered the consent agenda. The consent agenda items included the June 10, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes, the June 2026 Vendor Expenditures, the Fiscal Year 25-26 Q3 Financials, and the Final Audit for Fiscal Year 24-25. Robert Ketley moved approval of the consent agenda, and Mike Manfre seconded the motion. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, and Jim McKenna. John Ricker absent for vote.

6. ACTION ITEMS

6.1. Consider appointment of Emily Steffenhagen as an Associate Director of the RCD Board of Directors

Jim McKenna introduced the item and asked the Board to consider appointment of Emily Steffenhagen as an Associate Director. Emily is a graduate of California Polytechnic State University, and an employee at Swanton Pacific Ranch where she participates in stewardship of working lands, collaborative resource management, cultivating partnerships, and supporting students. Kelley Bell moved approval, and Howard Liebenberg seconded. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, and Jim McKenna. John Ricker absent for vote.

6.2. Consider and approve revisions to 1080 Procurement Policy

Lisa Lurie described updates to the Procurement Policy and shared an outline comparing the previous version of the policy to the updated version. She talked through the revisions, giving background reasoning for bringing the Procurement Policy up to date and aligning it with current thresholds for Federal and State funding. After discussion, Robert Ketley moved approval, and Kelley Bell seconded. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, and Jim McKenna. John Ricker absent for vote.

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6.3. Review and consider approval of Staff Recommendation to enter into contract with Seamair Construction Inc. for the Old City of Santa Cruz Dam Removal Project

Jim McKenna introduced the staff memo and Lisa Lurie shared details of the project and the formal bid process which resulted in the selection of Seamair Construction for this project. Jim McKenna asked when work would start and Lisa responded that it is scheduled to begin in August. Howard Liebenberg moved approval, and Robert Ketley seconded. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, and Jim McKenna. John Ricker absent for vote.

6.4. Review and consider approval of Staff Recommendation to enter into a construction contract for the Brothers Ranch Project

Jim McKenna introduced the staff memo for the Brothers Ranch Project. Lisa Lurie described that this staff memo recommends entering into a construction contract with the lowest responsive, responsible bidder for the project following the formal bidding procedure. Lisa also reported out that sealed bids were opened on July 7, 2026 (after the posting of the board meeting materials but prior to this meeting), 4 bids were received and the lowest responsive, responsible bidder was Monterey Bay Engineering. The Brothers Ranch Project started as a Managed Aquafer Recharge (MAR) project and has evolved into a multi-benefit project which incorporates both MAR and habitat improvement benefits. Board members asked questions about the location, including the number of acres, hydrologic connectivity, and history as agricultural land, and Lisa answered. Robert Ketley moved approval, and Kelley Bell seconded. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, and Jim McKenna. John Ricker absent for vote.

7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

7.1. Executive Director's Report

Lisa Lurie gave the Executive Director's report, with updates on current projects, staff recruitment, and grant opportunities. Lisa began by sharing that we have a number of projects starting, including an invasive species removal project on Trabing Road, as well as the construction projects that went before the Board as part of this meeting agenda.

Two Forest Health positions at the RCD have recently been filled, with new team members scheduled to join our staff in the coming weeks. A third role, for the Water Resources Project Manager, is still in the recruitment phase.

There are currently several grant proposals in progress, with potential funding sources including Proposition 4, the CDFA SWEEP Block Grant program, and a USDA Conservation Innovation Grant program, among others. The RCD has secured a Measure Q Competitive Grant and will be the recipient of funding for a local cost share pilot program aimed at increasing wildfire resilience. That program is in development and will be implemented over the next two years.

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Board members engaged in discussion with Lisa regarding the hiring process before she concluded her report.

7.2. Director/Associate Director Reports

Robert Ketley gave a brief Director's report, complementing staff members on the scope of the work being done currently, and commending Lisa Lurie for the direction she has taken the organization in as Executive Director.

Kelley Bell asked a question regarding upcoming recruitment and Lisa Lurie answered.

8. CALENDAR DATES

9. COMMUNICATIONS

9.1. "Pinto Lake: Scout Helps Build Advisory Sign" Santa Cruz Sentinel, June 7, 2026

10. ADJOURN

The next regular meeting of the RCD Board will be hybrid **August 12, 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. Mike Manfre moved to adjourn. Howard Liebenberg seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:38PM.

(LR:JM)

R. michael manfre