RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

2425 Porter Street, Suite 19
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MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 12, 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 August 12, 2026.** The meeting was conducted in person at the Resource Conservation District Office, 2425 Porter Street Suite 19, Soquel 95073, and virtually via Zoom, Meeting ID: 708-386-048.

Directors Present:	Kelley Bell Don Croll Robert Ketley Howard Liebenberg Mike Manfre, Vice President John Ricker
Directors Absent:	Jim McKenna, President
Associate Directors Present:	Adria Arko (via Zoom) Emily Steffenhagen
RCD Staff Present:	Lisa Lurie, Executive Director Lily Ruderman, Administrative Assistant
NRCS Present:	Drew Mather, NRCS
Others Present:	Michael Miller (via Zoom)

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30PM, with a quorum present; Mike Manfre chaired the meeting. The roll call was taken, and a quorum was confirmed. Kelley Bell present; Don Croll present; Robert Ketley present; Howard Liebenberg present; Mike Manfre present; John Ricker present. Jim McKenna absent. Remote participants confirmed clear audio and visual connection.

2. INTRODUCTIONS & WELCOME

Mike Manfre welcomed everyone to the hybrid meeting. Board Secretary Lily Ruderman introduced Associate Director Emily Steffenhagen, appointed by the Board at the July meeting of the RCD Board of Directors.

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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), gave the NRCS report covering the period from July 9, 2026, to August 12, 2026. He began with staffing and agency updates, including a description of the recently announced NRCS Organizational Realignment. The Organizational Realignment was presented to NRCS California employees by Carlos Suarez, NRCS California State Conservationist, on Wednesday August 5, 2026. The details of the realignment are preliminary and internal to NRCS at this time. The Capitola/Soquel LPO will be an office that remains as part of this realignment. Drew also shared that Evelyn Avalos, CSUMB Agricultural Plant & Soil Sciences student, has completed her summer internship as a project Earth Team volunteer in the Capitola/Soquel LPO and the Salinas offices. Updates were provided for NRCS programs including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

5. CONSENT AGENDA

The Board considered the consent agenda. The consent agenda items included the July 8, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes, and review of the Authorized Signatories for Expenditures. The July 2026 Vendor Expenditures were deferred to the next meeting and will be included with the agenda for September 9, 2026. Robert Ketley moved approval of the consent agenda, and John Ricker seconded the motion. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Don Croll, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, and John Ricker.

6. ACTION ITEMS

6.1. Review and consider approval of Resolution 2026-05 approving an application for block grant funds from the California Department of Food and Agriculture State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program

Mike Manfre introduced Item 6.1 and Executive Director Lisa Lurie described the Resolution. The RCD is currently managing a regional block grant through the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program. This application is to continue the program – which funds projects like irrigation system improvements for eligible farmers and prioritizes socially disadvantaged growers. The current grant has funded 35 projects across Santa Cruz, San Mateo, Monterey, and San Benito Counties in partnership with our neighboring RCDs. The next round is scheduled to start in 2027, and the RCDSCC will again be the regional block grant lead. Lisa shared what was learned in the first round and described equitable distribution of funding based on the percentage of implementation for each participating district. Members of the Board asked questions and Lisa answered. John Ricker moved approval of Resolution 2026-05, and Kelley Bell seconded. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Don Croll, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, and John Ricker.

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6.2. Review and consider Staff Recommendation for 1080.9.4 exemption to informal procurement and entering into agreement with Applied River Sciences for lower Scott Creek Restoration Project

Lisa Lurie introduced the staff recommendation for a procurement policy exemption to continue planning and design work with Applied River Science (ARS) on the lower Scott Creek Restoration Project. The RCD selected ARS to work on the project via informal procurement process during the previous phase of the project in 2023. This new contract will continue that work through 65% designs. As this new contract is close to the threshold for informal bidding under our procurement policy, it is being brought before the Board for review and exemption approval for continuity and compatibility. This contract is funded by the Non-Flow Conservation Fund (NFCF) through the City of Santa Cruz.

Board members inquired about funding for future stages of the work, and about how this project relates to the Scott Creek Coastal Resiliency Project, since they are in adjacent locations. Lisa answered by describing a vision for watershed scale restoration and climate resilience for Scott Creek, with contiguous upstream work creating restored, high-quality habitat and improved floodplain function~~,~~ feeding into a restored estuary and resilient transportation corridor. She explained that the lower Scott Creek Restoration and the Scott Creek Coastal Resiliency are two separate projects, but the funding story and strategies are being built in a way that's coordinated. After discussion, Robert Ketley moved approval, and Don Croll seconded. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Don Croll, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, and John Ricker.

6.3. Review and consider approval of Staff Recommendation to enter into a construction contract for UCSC Forest Health Phase 1 Demonstration Site

Mike Manfre introduced the item, and Lisa asked the Board to consider approval of the staff recommendation memo to enter into a construction contract for the UCSC Forest Health Phase 1 Demonstration Site. The RCD is partnering with UCSC on implementing a forest health and fuels mitigation plan, as described in their project specific analysis (PSA). With funding through a CalFire Forest Health grant, implementation is set to begin. This first stage of work is aimed at creating a demonstration site. The bid walk for the project was attended by eleven contractors, and the RCD received six bids. The lowest responsive, responsible bidder was Community Tree Service. The Board expressed the importance of this work for the community, and the value of the partnership between the RCD and the University. Lisa shared that she sees this as an opportunity to demonstrate the value of this work and include an educational component. John Ricker moved approval, and Kelley Bell seconded. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Don Croll, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, and John Ricker.

6.4. Review and consider approval of Staff Recommendation to enter into a construction contract for Trabing Road Restoration Phase 2

Lisa introduced the staff recommendation, and shared that this project will take place on property owned by the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County. The construction contract will be for four acres of invasive species removal and other site preparation, funded by the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB). Trabing Road is Santa Cruz Long Toed Salamander (SCLTS) habitat, and future work planned on

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the Trabing property includes installation of a SCLTS breeding pond on the site. Staff recommend entering into a construction contract with the lowest responsive and responsible bidder following a two-part procurement process (Request for Contractor Prequalifications followed by formal bid solicitation from prequalified contractors). Don Croll moved approval, and Howard Liebenberg seconded. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Don Croll, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, and John Ricker.

6.5. Review and consider approval of Staff Recommendation to amend CSA with Sherwood Design Engineering for Phase II of the Waddell Creek Restoration and Trail Rehabilitation Project
Lisa Lurie described to the Board that this staff recommendation is to extend the consultant services agreement with Sherwood Design Engineering (Sherwood) to complete Phase II of the Waddell Creek Restoration and Trail Rehabilitation. This project is for engineering designs for the lower portion of the Skyline to Sea Trail in Big Basin State Park, in partnership with California State Parks. Engineering firm Sherwood was selected via formal procurement process, and this recommendation is to exercise the bid option to move into the next phase of the project, with significant expansion of the scope of work. Board members asked questions about the project, and Lisa answered. John Ricker moved approval, and Kelley Bell seconded. The ayes included Kelley Bell, Don Croll, Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, and John Ricker.

7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

7.1. Executive Director's Report

Lisa Lurie gave the Executive Director's report, with several updates to share. This is peak contracting season, with a number of bid processes underway and construction projects scheduled to start. Hiring and onboarding are also underway, with three positions recently filled. Lisa gave a brief introduction on each of the new hires, including their background and qualifications, and the roles they will be taking on at the RCD.

A Request for Proposals has gone out for a consultant to complete a Communications Plan, and a selection will be made with the aim to have someone on board to start work on that plan in September. Lisa requested volunteers for an Ad Hoc Committee to provide feedback and guidance, and Kelley Bell, Robert Ketley, and Adria Arko offered to assist with this.

The first annual report to the Measure Q Citizens Oversight Advisory Board (COAB) has been submitted, and Lisa will present to the COAB on October 14, 2026. Lisa shared that she feels proud of what was accomplished by the RCD in year one of Measure Q. The Office of Response, Recovery, and Resilience (OR3) is wrapping up with other entities receiving Measure Q funding, and they will present the full picture to the public once that is complete.

Lisa also shared a legislative update on SB 949, a bill aimed at designating the Santa Cruz Mountains a Resource of Statewide Significance. While the RCD has not been involved with this

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bill directly, we are tracking its progress in legislature and its potential implications. Board members engaged in discussion with Lisa regarding SB 949 before she concluded her report.

7.2. Board Secretary Report

Board Secretary Lily Ruderman opened a discussion with members of the Board to select an alternate meeting date for the November 2026 RCD Board Tour and meeting, since the regularly scheduled meeting coincides with the Veteran's Day holiday.

7.3. Director/Associate Director Reports

There were none given.

8. CALENDAR DATES

August 13, 2026 – Santa Cruz County Invasive Shothole Borer (ISHB) Monitoring, Identification, and Mitigation-Outreach Training for Arborists, Tree Professionals, Foresters
August 27, 2026 – San Vicente-Waddell Coastal Resilience Project Community Workshop
November 17-19, 2026 – CARCD 81st Annual Conference – Conserving California: Local Solutions, Shared Future

9. COMMUNICATIONS

9.1. "Mountain Watch: Preparing for the 2026 'Super El Niño'" San Lorenzo Valley Post, July 2026

10. ADJOURN

The next regular meeting of the RCD Board will be hybrid **September 9, 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 7:58PM.

(LR:MM)

James J. McKenna