

**DRAFT Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors
April 19, 2012
Location: RCD Office**

Directors present: Rich Allen, Jim Reynolds, TJ Glauthier, Neal Kramer

Staff present: RCD – Kellyx Nelson, Renee Moldovan, Chelsea Moller, Shannon Thomas
NRCS – Jim Howard

Guests: Victor Rabinovich

1 Call to Order

- Allen called the meeting to order at 6:34 pm

2 Introduction of Guests and Staff

3 Public Comment

- No public comment.

4 Approval of Agenda

- Reynolds moved to approve the Agenda, Glauthier second. Agenda unanimously approved.

5 Consent Agenda

- Reynolds moved to approve the Consent Agenda, Glauthier seconded. Consent Agenda unanimously approved.

6 Discussion Items

6.1 Executive Director Report – Kellyx Nelson

- We are hosting the Regional Meeting of Central Coast RCDs at Harley Farms goat dairy. Attendees will include representatives from Central Coast RCDs, Department of Conservation, CARCD, and others. Nelson invited the Board to attend the meeting. Topics for the meeting will include:
 - CARCD is working with the Bridgespan Group, a non-profit strategy group, and Sustainable Conservation to pilot an effort in the central coast to build capacity among RCDs. Sustainable Conservation is interested in helping to build capacity across RCDs as a foundation for potential future statewide coordinated permitting.
 - ✓ ***ACTION ITEM:*** Glauthier asked Nelson to find out who the funder is for the capacity building pilot project.
 - Another issue that will be addressed during this meeting is the fact that the RCD/NRCS relationship is at risk of becoming watered down. RCDs need to make sure we keep this at the forefront so that relationship is strengthened.

- RCDs' Farm Bill Letter (Attachment A)
 - NRCS has been increasingly restricted in its ability to provide conservation technical assistance. Central Coast RCDs sent a letter to Senator Feinstein to request that Farm Bill dollars are not cut only in the technical assistance program.
- National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) letter
 - NACD sent appropriation request letters to give strong support for conservation technical assistance programs.
 - Nelson asked the Board if they can take a role in helping with this cause. She requested that someone on the Board draft a letter or make some calls.
 - Glauthier offered to help out with a letter.
 - Reynolds offered to help with a phone call.
 - ✓ ***ACTION ITEM:*** Nelson will follow up with the Board members on this issue.
- Budget/Cash Flow
 - Problems with State Water Resources Control Board funding – At least \$120,000-150,000 is being held up by the Water Board. This has caused serious cash flow issues for us. 5 invoices on 2 different projects have had problems. One was delayed for 4 months because they lost it, after which they initially rejected the second invoice because they hadn't processed the first. Another was challenged, but they never informed us until we contacted them to check the status of payment after several months. For one of our invoices they are withholding \$26,000 from a current invoice because they changed their mind about something they approved and paid 4 years ago. There are many more examples and this is an ongoing issue.
 - We have a new volunteer who is helping us improve aspects of our fiscal management. He has been creating a suite of spreadsheets that integrate our grant funds, workload, and budget. He has a Master's degree in accounting, used to work for Anderson consulting, recently worked as a forensic accountant expert witness, and is doing this work entirely pro bono. He noted that the for-profit sector sees substantial correlation between profitability and reduced delay in payments. He suggested that we send past due notices to the Water Board.
 - We have held a phone call with the Water Board to establish better communication. They have requested that we call two weeks after submitting invoices in order to check the status.
 - Staff is working with the County to explore the possibility of a bridge loan with 0% or low interest to help us when we experience cash flow issues. However, it could cost us additional money to be part of their accounting.
- Pescadero Municipal Advisory Council (PMAC) Special Meeting
 - PMAC has called a special meeting to be held next Tuesday, April 24, 2012 to discuss flooding in Pescadero, including the RCD grant. Nelson invited all the Board members
- California Association of RCDs Meeting

- This meeting will be in San Diego in November. It is always the week before Thanksgiving. Nelson asked the Board members to start planning now to attend and to block that Wednesday through Friday in their calendars.
- Livestock & Land Program (L&L)
 - The RCD held a workshop at Pie Ranch last weekend which was well received. The speaker talked about “equi-centric” management and discussed ways to best manage equine operations.
- Cuesta La Honda Guild Sustainable Garden Project
 - This project is moving forward steadily, and we will soon start developing rainwater harvesting designs and site specific native plant recommendations.
- Fisheries Restoration Grant Program 2012
 - The RCD applied for a grant for \$325,230 to implement high priority rural road improvement projects at 4 sites in 2 watersheds. Although the effort was staff intensive (200 hours of staff time), it provided an opportunity to develop tools to improve our Rural Roads Program project management, track work that has been done in the program, and answer difficult project planning questions. These tools will greatly reduce the amount of time it will take us to prepare proposals in the future, as well as streamlining the road assessment and design process.
- Environmental Protection Agency grant
 - The RCD submitted two pre-proposals under the recent EPA funding solicitation. One was for the Bonde Weir Fish Passage project on San Francisquito Creek and the other was in partnership with Ecology Action and other RCDs for a block grant for the Livestock & Land program. Bonde Weir was invited back for a full proposal. L&L was not.
- County agreement
 - We have completed entering into an agreement with the County for \$10,000 to represent the County in the Bay Area Integrated Water Management Plan (IRWMP) and to assist Supervisor Horsley in planning a workshop on access to agricultural land in San Mateo County.
- Action Items from March 2012 Board Meeting
 - Pillar Point Harbor – Per request from the last Board meeting, staff investigated why the universal and host specific markers didn’t “add up.”
 - ✓ One was on log scale and the other was not.
 - ✓ It is not a pure quantification. It is the result of probability model. For a given sample you may get a range of concentrations.
 - ✓ We are also doing the phylochip. The lead researcher was able to get the analysis below market rate.
 - Routing of Deer Creek
 - ✓ Staff has not found anything out about this yet

6.2 Grant to Address Flooding in the Pescadero Marsh – Kellyx Nelson

- Kellyx corrected an earlier mistake: funds can be used for implementation.
- Department of Water Resources might consider restricting the scope to look only at dredging. They prefer that if we want to change the scope, we wait until after the contract is executed and then make an amendment.
- We have not yet received a scope of work from community members advocating for dredging, which Kramer asked for during a previous meeting.
- We will be in a position soon to talk about whether or not we want to enter into contract for this. This is part of what we will discuss at the PMAC meeting this Tuesday.

6.3 Board Director Review of Board Meeting Distribution List

- Nelson distributed the list to Board Directors and told them they can provide their feedback in the way that is easiest for them.

6.4 Central Coast RCDs' Farm Bill Letter to Senator Feinstein (Attachment A)

- This was covered in the Executive Director Report.

7 Adjourn

- Allen adjourned at 7:32 pm

Central Coast Resource Conservation Districts

San Mateo County
Monterey County

Santa Cruz County
Upper Salinas-Las Tablas

Loma Prieta
Cachuma

Ventura

Coastal San Luis

March 29, 2012

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
US Senate

Dear Senator Feinstein,

In your capacity on the Senate Ag Appropriations Subcommittee, the Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) of the Central Coast of California respectfully urge you to: 1) protect funding for technical assistance to farmers in the upcoming farm bill, 2) ensure that farm bill cuts are uniform rather than targeting conservation programs; and 3) bear in mind the indispensable role that Conservation Districts have played for more than seventy years in preserving the natural resources on which United States agriculture depends. One means to enhance availability of 'Conservation Technical Assistance' (CTA) could be to increase the percentage of funds within each program (EQIP, WHIP, etc.) that can be directed towards CTA support instead of cost-share. NRCS and Resource Conservation Districts are able to leverage CTA. This could help keep other non-program dedicated CTA from being pulled away from serving non-program conservation needs. Without CTA, program funding is limited on how effective it can be to leverage and deliver high priority conservation solutions.

Technical assistance that provides personnel for development of conservation plans is a low cost way to ensure that conservation practices are installed on farmland creating effective conservation for little input. Farmers generally install conservation practices voluntarily donating large amounts of time and money to conservation. We have found it more cost-effective to provide much needed CTA rather than have to always provide program-driven planning and implementation assistance. Without CTA assistance these practices are not installed appropriately or at all. Providing minimal input brings about large returns. CTA is highly effective at leveraging resources, adoption of conservation practices and better utilization of program level funding.

We support the EQIP program as the base conservation assistance program for producers. The EQIP program requires matching dollars by local landowner dollars which provides the bases for economic growth in rural America as small contractors install most of the conservation practices. We support the consolidation of programs where possible to gain efficiency of program operations.

Through their unique and historic partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), America's 3,000 Conservation Districts implement farm, ranch and forestland conservation practices across the nation to protect soil productivity, water quality and quantity, air quality and wildlife habitat.

Today, many Conservation Districts have evolved into thriving and sophisticated purveyors of locally based conservation services in their own right. Nevertheless, the historic relationship with NRCS continues to be a hallmark function of Conservation Districts. NRCS draws on our inherent tie to local land managers in order to tailor Farm Bill programs to the particular needs of the community. The regular operations of District Boards cultivate informed landowners who become intimately familiar with programs such as EQIP and can provide meaningful input to NRCS staff about the most effective methods for delivering services. By virtue of that same familiarity with NRCS, Districts

that employ staff are frequently able to leverage Farm Bill programs in order to develop a suite of complementary programs tailored to address gaps in conservation needs identified on local agricultural lands. RCDs have had to find innovative approaches to meet resource needs of the community that are not covered by the current Farm Bill funding. Continued support and additional support for innovation through contribution agreements, Conservation Innovation Grants and the like will be necessary to continue to provide much needed services to our counties.

The viability of agriculture and our natural resources rely on the decisions that are made today. Please support conservation (in particular technical assistance) in the Farm Bill and continue to support the longstanding alliance between NRCS and Conservation Districts throughout the country.

Sincerely,



Paul Robins
Executive Director, RCD of Monterey County
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On behalf of my RCD and:

Karen Christensen, RCD of Santa Cruz County
Kellyx Nelson, San Mateo County RCD
Susan Meyer, Loma Prieta RCD (Santa Clara County)
Laura Edwards, Upper Salinas-Las Tablas RCD (San Luis Obispo County)
Anne Coates, Cachuma RCD (Santa Barbara County)

Cc:

K. Christensen
K. Nelson
S. Meyer
L. Edwards
A. Coates
Karen Buhr, CA Association of RCDs