

**DRAFT Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors  
December 15, 2022  
via Zoom teleconference**

Directors: Barbara Kossy, Adrienne Etherton, Steve Stielstra, Michelle Weil, Rudy Espinoza-Murray

Associate Directors: John Keener, John Wade

RCD staff: Kellyx Nelson, Lau Hodges, Amy Kaeser, Timothy Federal, David Cowman, Stephanie MacDonald, Eddie Sanchez, Dylan Skybrook (Manager of the Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network)

NRCS staff: Jim Howard

**1. Call to Order**

Kossy called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

**2. Declaration of Emergency Continuing Teleconferencing (subject to AB 361)**

Kossy stated the next two meetings would be held over Zoom.

**3. Approval of Agenda**

**ACTION:** Weil moved to approve the agenda, Etherton seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**4. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**5. Introductions of Guests and Staff**

There were no introductions needed.

**6. Consent Agenda**

**ACTION:** Etherton moved to approve the consent agenda, Weil seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**7. Regular Agenda**

**7.1. Appreciation for the Resource Conservation District from the Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network (SCMSN) presented by Dylan Skybrook, Network Manager.**

- Skybrook shared a framed recognition to the board and explained that SCMSN is fiscally sponsored by the RCD to support a network that includes 20+ members and 20+ funders across a region within and beyond RCD boundaries; RCD is a trusted and nimble entity. He expressed his deepest thanks for both housing and supporting the SCMSN.
- Nelson noted the RCD's board leads with vision as opposed to risk aversion and they were really willing to find a way to home the SCMSN; she expanded to say the RCD's Board thinks nimbly and not limited by boundaries, a view more inline with the future of conservation.

- Kossy noted it was that type of collaboration that motivated her to get involved with the RCD.
- Kaeser thanked the Board for allowing staff to not be confined by the RCD's boundaries but to do conservation at a landscape level.
- Stielstra noted while speaking about the SCMSN at the recent California Association of RCDs Conference people were highly impressed. He asked Skybrook why there weren't more networks like SCMSN. Skybrook responded that there were quite a few networks around the state; Nelson suggested that she and Skybrook present at a future meeting on their work with the California Landscape Stewardship Network focused on systems change.
- Etherton shared her appreciation and enthusiasm to be on a Board which enabled this type of collaboration. She hoped it was a model that could be replicated elsewhere.
- Keener asked why the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and San Francisco Public Utilities Commission weren't members. Skybrook explained that they had both been members of the Peninsula Working Group that was folded into SCMSN and, while they chose not to become full members, they participated on committees.
- Kossy thanked Skybrook for honoring the Board and for reminding them of the RCD and SCMSN's special relationship.

## **7.2 Board will consider approval of 19 qualified firms as eligible for contracts to provide professional services to support integrated watershed restoration.**

- Discussion included vendors' skills in watershed restoration; excitement at being able to streamline the process; how long this took staff to prepare (approximately 25 hours); that contractors would not be locked into current rates over the 5 year period and would be invited to submit cost proposals as appropriate; that firms on the approved list could then be selected without a separate project-specific bid process; and that inclusion on this list does not guarantee work.
- Stielstra stated he would be recusing himself (he had business affiliations on the list) but offered kudos to the staff for their quality work and being forward thinking; the upfront work will save time on the back end.
- **ACTION:** Etherton moved to approve the 19 qualified firms as eligible, Weil seconded. Motion passed unanimously; Stielstra recused, and Espinoza-Murray had stepped away)

## **7.3 NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) report and discussion**

- Howard reflected on the origins of the NRCS and RCD partnership and the extent of partnership activities going on. He noted the NRCS formed in 1935 as the Soil Conservation Service after the Dust Bowl. In the 1939 local partnership offices (RCDs) formed once it was realized local partners would be paramount....and the San Mateo RCD was the first in California! Howard noted that NRCS has evolved but the Half Moon Bay office has transcended what can come from partnerships.
- Nelson noted that she and Howard endeavor to ensure that no constituent would need to know how to navigate our separate bureaucracies to get help.

She said that Howard “leaves his ego at the door” and always finds a way to support the RCD; be it with funding, technical assistance, or his ability to mentor staff on his vast knowledge of local watersheds.

- Nelson gave a quick overview of the NRCS in San Mateo County:
  - NRCS staff are assigned to this county because RCD board advocated to USDA for a full time District Conservationist and an engineer to serve our constituents;
  - NRCS can provide resources like soil conservationists, biologists and agricultural engineers;
  - Howard has mentored RCD staff on practices like integrated pest management, habitat enhancement, water storage development and conservation, wildlife friendly farming, soil health, and carbon farming;
  - After the CZU Fire NRCS put money into an agreement to aid San Mateo, Santa Cruz and Santa Clara counties which enabled the RCD to deploy a team to help with fire recovery efforts.
- Howard explained that the NRCS puts money on the table and the local partnership offices work together to layout who will perform what roles; the RCD's nimbleness is very helpful to the NRCS.
- Howard said that money would be coming from the Inflation Reduction Act; however, he was unsure how much. It was expected to continue funding programs already in place. The 2023 projection was that output would increase 3 times and in 2024 it would increase 17 times!
- Howard appreciated the locally led conservation language in the new Memorandum of Understanding.

#### **7.4 Executive Director's report**

- Introduced Eddie Sanchez, a new Project Manager on Forest Health and Fire Resiliency Team. Sanchez will be working on the 19-mile fuel break in La Honda.
- The RCD co-hosted a tour of Quarry Park Fuel Load Reduction Project on December 17, 2022.
- #scoopthepoop and #give\_a\_sh\*\* – the RCD's water quality social media campaign.
- Asked the Board to forward the annual donor appeal campaign to five people.
- Difficult keeping the board up-to-date on all of the 100+ projects; in 2023 Adria Arko, soon to be the RCDs Director of Advancement) and the new Engagement Officer would be finding a more effective way to do so.
- RCD submitted for approximately \$75K in reimbursement from County for relief from COVID expenses
- Fiscal Year 2024 budget process would be kicking off in January.
- Staff will bring the 401K allocation request to the Board in January.
- Staff is working to address and update the RCD's Procurement Policy.
- Staff annual performance reviews also start in January.
- RCD Year in Review and a presentation on our work in climate and agriculture planned for January [UPDATE: this was postponed to February due to resource

allocation to January storms]; Kossy asked for the information ahead of time and Nelson offered to email her a blurb.

- Working on a 15-year impact report.
- Three big projects just kicking off were: the San Bruno Vegetation Projects, the Loma Mar Pipeline Replacements, and the Butano State Parks Fish Passage.
- Etherton asked if San Bruno Mountain updates would be sent Nelson said she forwards them on. Kaeser noted the project was 47 acres of butterfly habitat restoration; reducing undesirable scrub, treatment of non-native species and planting of host and nectar plants.

#### **7.5 Directors' connections and reports**

- Etherton provided the prompt: what is something you are thankful for/something the RCD has done for you? What are you looking forward to in 2023? Or any nature related holiday tradition. Directors each reflected on the prompt.

### **8. Adjourn Meeting**

Kossy adjourned the meeting at 6:02p.m.