

**DRAFT Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors
Thursday, July 20, 2023**

4:00 – 6:00 pm

**Location: 80 Stone Pine Road, Suite 100, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019
and via Zoom at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89675733636>**

Directors: Adrienne Etherton (chairing), Michelle Weil, Steve Stielstra, Barbara Kossy (remote)

Associate Directors: none present

RCD staff: Kellyx Nelson, Lau Hodges, Jarrad Fisher, David Cowman, Joe Issel, Timothy Federal, Stephanie MacDonald

NRCS staff: Jim Howard

Guests: Cassandra Matter (Aide to Supervisor Ray Mueller), Zahra Kassam (The Mushroom Farm), Cert Munselle, Cameron Dale, Ron Sturgeon, Robert Schultz

1. Call to Order

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

2. Approval of Agenda

- Nelson requested item 6.1 be moved until 5:30p.
- **ACTION:** Stielstra moved to approve the agenda as amended, Weil seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Introductions of Guests and Staff

All in attendance introduced themselves.

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

5. Consent Agenda

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

6. Regular Agenda

6.2 Board will consider approval of revised mileage policy.

- Nelson noted the current policy was approved in 2015 and needed updating to improve clarity and consistency in how it is interpreted. This need has come into particular focus with the increase in working remotely.
- Stielstra asked why the RCD uses the Internal Revenue Services (IRS) mileage reimbursement rate versus the General Services Administration's rate. Nelson explained that funders typically expect or require the IRS rate.
- Kossy asked if there were any liabilities from the previous version of the policy? Or if the past policy was a liability? Nelson did not believe there were any liabilities but if there were the new policy provides clarity.
- Stielstra asked if the new policy had been run past counsel or the RCD's accountant. Nelson explained it had not and that there was no intended

change in the terms of the policy. The update endeavors to clarify the policy already in place, including providing a number of examples.

- **ACTION:** Stielstra moved to approve the revised mileage policy, Weil seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

6.3 USDA NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) report

- NRCS is approaching the sunset of the 2023 program year and is busy obligating money through the Farm Bill and trying to get everything buttoned up before the end the fiscal year.
- The Inflation Reduction Act is expected to increase NRCS funding; the agency is planning to staff up.
- NRCS had 27 interns in California for the summer; Thomas Duffy was Howard's forestry intern for the summer. Howard thanked the RCD staff for helping provide a meaningful and educational experience. Howard noted the intern program was one of the ways NRCS fast tracks employees into the work force.
- Howard is excited to be working with the RCD on a regenerative grazing program.
- Noah Katz, RCD Water Quality Program Manager, is working with NRCS on the National Water Quality Initiative Program to finish a Pescadero/Butano watershed assessment. The hope is to convert that assessment into a program and fund some RCD sediment and stream health programs.

6.4 Executive Director's report

- Project and Program Snapshots
 - Mindego Creek Fish Passage Project- going to construction in August, completed October. Will open 5 miles of habitat.
 - Quiroste Valley vegetation management- continues in September. Working with contractor rather than the Native Stewards while they are rebuilding. Still using tribal-led designs.
 - Pescadero Creek County Park Habitat Enhancement- instream habitat restoration in September
 - Pescadero Creek County Park Forest Health Project- We are entering a design phase for a project to focus on treating areas along the road and trail infrastructure throughout the park.
 - Butano Ridge Shaded Fuel Break - We have begun outreach to plan a shaded fuel break along a road system that spans nearly two dozen landowners along roughly 7 miles of road in the Pescadero area.
 - Jones Gulch Forest Health - We're planning to work with YMCA Camp Jones Gulch and Sempervirens fund to develop a forest health project for the property, deriving from their recently completed stewardship plan and conservation easement on the property.
 - Butano State Park water conservation project is nearly complete. All water lines, fixtures and the new 100k water tank have been installed! The only

remaining pieces are painting the tank and testing the tank. this will be completed in September of this year.

- Neighborhood Chipper Program- has served over 400 homes so far this year. Some events still set to occur on bayside, La Honda, South Skyline area.
- Quarry Park Shaded Fuel Break- Final phase of fuel break work set to begin August 1st. Working with Co Parks to line up additional fuel reduction work in Quarry Park along western boundary.
- La Honda Shaded Fuel Break- Creating a 19-mile fuel break around the community of La Honda to improve community protection from wildfire. CEQA process on track to be completed by end of 2023, with implementation set to begin in Spring 2024. Continuing to meet with landowners, and will be scheduling a meeting with the greater La Honda community this fall at the fire house
- Butano State Park Forest Health- Approx 60 acres of forest health treatments completed so far. Work is set to continue through the fall as long as weather permits.
- Backfield Floodplain Project- Construction is well underway. The contractor is on schedule to complete the project in September of this year. Phase 2 of the project (pond) will start next summer.
- Sam McDonald County Park water conservation- helping the park improve their water distribution system.
- DWR approved 5.45 million dollars in funding to:
 - design, plan, and secure permits for carbon farm plans
 - repair and enhance a pond at Johnston Ranch at the south end of Half Moon Bay
 - improve a pond, improve habitat, and improve soil health at Potrero Nuevo Farm on Tunitas Creek Road south of Half Moon Bay
 - improve water distribution at San Mateo County Memorial Park
- Loma Mar Pipeline Replacement Project- has stalled again due to unreliable contractor who keeps missing deadlines and not prioritizing this project. If they push it too far back they may risk additional delays due to weather and ultimately risk not completing the work before the funding agreement runs out. We have had multiple concerns about this contractor over more than one project. Steve Stielstra asked if this called for a Special Meeting. Nelson thought the issue did not yet meet the requirements for a special meeting, but that the issue might be agendized for the next Regular Meeting.
- Cutting Green Tape
 - Working on a summit that will be held at Asilomar convening all of the regions in the state from CDFW and Regional Water Quality Control boards to help advance efficient permitting of environmentally beneficial restoration projects.
- Events

- Tour with Senator Becker (Aug 7) coordinated by California Climate and Ag Network.
- Pescadero Arts and Fun Festival (August 19-20): Nelson asked directors to volunteer for RCD table. We will hand out impact reports, have watershed model, and hand out drinking water testing kits with instructions in English and Spanish.
- Donor tour (August 27)
- Happy Hour at Hop Dogma on August 23rd, 24th, or 30th. Directors indicated they could come on the 30th.
- Community Forum about creek management in Pescadero at Harley Farms- October 3 or 4
- Harley Farms Celebration- potentially October 13 or 14
- RCD Conservation Planner training at TomKat Ranch (October 16-19)
- Roundup on Roundup: Take 2 (November or December)
- 15 Year Impact Report Release and meetings (August through December)
- Director Day in the District was considered for August 17 but now looking to spring
- Administration
 - \$200K County operating support was not included in the County budget. Directors expressed concern. Stielstra asked about a feedback loop on this. Nelson said she would let them know.
 - Recently we have updated our personnel manual, procurement policy, and now mileage policy and have been developing or updating a number of internal SOPs. We are now turning our attention to developing a salary schedule to improve transparency about salaries for different positions on staff and how those decisions are made. We've been doing homework to benchmark comparable positions and incorporate equity practices into our thinking. We had one meeting with Adrienne Etherton as the board's personnel committee, are doing more homework and will be coming back to meet with her again.
 - Working with staff to develop program strategies and communications documents.
 - Developing our advancement program. This is new to us.
 - 15 Year Impact Report in final stages, then annual reports.
 - Our strategic plan goes through 2024. Will need to update it in the upcoming calendar year.
 - Will be hiring administrative assistant who reports to Lau and increases our administrative capacity.
 - Still need to write up the narrative for the approved budget.
- Board matters
 - Adria and Nelson met with each member of the board except John Keener and John Wade (*request for John and John to please reply to Adria*)

- Nelson reported the following highlights:
 - This is a learning board- people who really like the opportunity to learn.
 - You like being part of an organization that is doing something, really getting it done.
 - There is more comfort with the idea of participating in fundraising than we expected, you just need tools and support.
 - We learned a lot about your networks and are beginning to think about how to connect the RCD to those networks.
 - There is a lot of interest in getting into the field and seeing projects (have been challenges with scheduling that but let's figure out how to do this).
 - The board has a great appreciation for staff and the team.
 - You all derive a lot of purpose and value from serving the community.
- Putting together communications packet/ talking points to help share the 15 year impact report.
- Board vacancy- Nelson will be meeting with Supervisors Pine and Mueller to kick off the process.
- Funding updates
 - Awarded Coastal Conservancy Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program grant in partnership with RCD Santa Cruz County (\$1.2mil between both RCDs)
 - Secured funding for workforce development focused on Registered Professional Forester certification and prescribed fire and forest related technical assistance through CARCD grant w/ CAL FIRE
 - Secured funding to support forest and fire related technical assistance through CARCD agreement with NRCS.
 - DWR funding approved - \$5.16 million for coastal resilience/watershed restoration.

6.5 Directors' connections and reports

- Stielstra reported:
 - He had been thinking about the work the RCD did with the logjams in Pescadero after the 2023 storms and floods and he was interested to see how that work had progressed.
 - He had met with the Wildlands Conservancy's management team. They had just acquired their first properties in Utah and Oregon and were actively looking to acquire more.
- Weil reported:
 - She was looking forward to getting out in the field more; her family was headed on a two week road trip to Washington and back.
 - Her work with NatureEye was getting ready to launch drone tours all over the world with half of the revenue going to local partners.

- Kossy was on Salt Spring Island in Canada and was looking forward to getting home and attending the RCD's fall events. She introduced Zahra Kassam, whom she had invited to the meeting. Kassam said she was "blown away by the RCD's expertise and care."
- Etherton reported:
 - Brisbane hosted a habitat restoration event with Nature Watch.
 - She was excited about an upcoming family road trip to Santa Fe via several national parks.

6.1 Board will consider Certification of Exemption from Grading Permit for reservoir rehabilitation and maintenance at Pescadero Creek Vineyards.

- Nelson provided background about the RCD's role in certifying exemptions to grading permits. Historically NRCS would supply the engineer with technical assistance and sign off on the permit; now the applicant must demonstrate the project meets NRCS standards with their own engineer or experts. She explained that staff were not making a recommendation but the applicant's engineer is; bringing it before the board gives it a public platform.
- Fisher explained this exemption was for an agricultural reservoir and he had been working with the applicant on the designs.
- Issel stated the proposed approach was consistent with how the RCD would build a pond.
- Weil asked if the 4.17 acres were part of the pond. Fisher responded that it was for the pond footprint as well as the land to place the spoils and staging.
- Stielstra asked if there was a restoration, monitoring or compliance component. Fisher responded that RCD staff would have regular communications with the contractor and there was a closeout process with both RCD and NRCS staff.
- Etherton noted it was a robust process and asked what the incentives were for the exemption. Nelson explained that exemptions cost less. Schultz stated this was the quicker option and they wanted to get the pond online before the rains return.
- Weil asked how the RCD would be compensated. Nelson explained there was a fee structure, but it should be revised and updated.
- Etherton asked if San Mateo County had the authority to reject an exemption; Nelson noted it was not clearly spelled out. San Mateo County has asked clarifying questions but never overturned one.
- Weil asked if other counties do this; Nelson was not sure.
- **ACTION:** Weil moved to certify the grading exemption, Kossy seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Adjourn Meeting

Etherton adjourned the meeting at 5:45 p.m.