



DRAFT Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors
Thursday, August 21, 2025
4:00 – 6:00 pm
Location: 80 Stone Pine Road, Suite 100, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019 and via Zoom

Directors: Barbara Kossy, Michelle Weil, Steve Stielstra (Absent: Troy Guy; On Leave: Adrienne Etherton)

Associate Directors: Helen Wolter, John Wade (virtual) (Absent: Denise Phillips, Zahra Kassam)

RCD staff: Kellyx Nelson (virtual), Lau Hodges, Kati McHugh, Eliza Milio, Barb Kipreos, John Martinez, Lindsay Edelmann (virtual), Clarissa Maciel (virtual)

NRCS staff: Allen Curry (virtual), Drew Mather (virtual)

Guests: Virginia Chang Kiraly (San Mateo County Harbor Commissioner, LAFCo Board member), Cassandra Matter (Sup. Mueller's Office; virtual), Cindy (Sierra Club volunteer; virtual)

1. Call to Order

Kossy called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

2. Approval of Agenda

Item 6.3 (USDA NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) report) was moved above 6.2 to accommodate NRCS staff availability.

ACTION: Weil motioned to approve agenda as amended, Stielstra seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Introduction of Guests and Staff

All in attendance introduced themselves.

4. Public Comment

Chang Kiraly presented her candidacy for the SDRMA (Special Districts Risk Management Authority) and requested the RCD's support as an agenda item in the September meeting. She shared her experience and values regarding cost-effective insurance for public agencies and her financial background in risk management. She requested the RCD's vote in the upcoming election, with a voting deadline of September 22. Nelson explained that the RCD is a member of SDRMA, which is the RCD's insurer.

5. Consent Agenda

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

6. Regular Agenda

6.3. USDA NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) Report

- Curry and Mather provided updates on NRCS staffing, continuity planning, and local project support. Nelson and board members discussed the importance of maintaining a consistent NRCS presence and point of contact.
- Mather is now the acting Agriculture District Conservationist for San Mateo County.
- He is serving multiple counties and will have limited availability in San Mateo County. Another NRCS staff member will maintain a regular presence at the office.
- Discussion included the importance of maintaining continuity in NRCS staffing, concerns about frequent personnel changes causing loss of institutional knowledge; that daily in-office NRCS presence was not necessary for the RCD
- Mather provided staffing updates, noting recent personnel changes and temporary appointments, including in the area forester, biologist, and conservationist roles. He highlighted continued support from additional NRCS specialists, including engineering, agronomy, range management, and program administration, despite an ongoing federal hiring freeze.
- Mather mentioned a recently funded large-scale forestry project and noted upcoming coordination on engineering and biological specifications.

6.1. Presentation and discussion about advancing carbon farming at scale in San Mateo County

- Eliza Milio, the RCD's agricultural stewardship program manager, described some challenges and opportunities related to scaling carbon farming (low-tech, nature-based practices that work with natural systems to improve soil health and sequester carbon).
 - Technical Expertise: Success depends on selecting appropriate species and practices for specific microclimates and ensuring long-term maintenance
 - Public Land Barriers: Bureaucratic hurdles and risk aversion among public landowners can make implementation difficult.
 - Long-Term Stewardship: Practices that require ongoing care, may deter participation due to time and resource commitments
 - Funding Limitations: State and federal programs often require upfront costs and reimbursements, which can be prohibitive for farmers
 - Equipment Access: Specialized tools are sometimes needed, and the RCD is exploring shared equipment models

- Discussion included what the RCD does (technical assistance, conservation planning, helping producers access resources, implementation projects, engaging with policy); the benefits of carbon farming; terminology, outreach, and stakeholder engagement; farmers' interests in carbon farming; the RCD's work with the County to develop a carbon farming fund; the role of Farm Bill; directors' interests in site visits; and land ownership dynamics.

6.2. Executive Director's Report

Nelson provided the following updates:

- Pescadero Marsh restoration of North Marsh North Pond complex: final phase of restoration completed, marking the conclusion of decades of planned estuary restoration work
- La Honda Shaded Fuel Break: completed except for portions on Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD) property
- Little Butano Creek Fish Passage: removal of barrier underway
- San Gregorio Large Woody Debris: habitat enhancement project involving large wood installation at Repetto's Farm in San Gregorio begun, and a second phase on MROSD's Apple Orchard property will start soon
- Wavecrest Fuel Reduction Pilot: fuel reduction and monarch habitat protection will begin soon, anticipated public interest due to its location and being beloved
- Forest Health Regional Prioritization Plan (RPP): for forest health and fuel load reduction across San Mateo, Santa Cruz, and Santa Clara counties; generated significant attention; advances numerous projects
- First Flush: volunteer training on September 10; asked board members to help recruit volunteers and promote the community science event
- **Nelson reminded directors to read and share the RCD's newsletter, noting its value as a public engagement tool. She asked directors to check spam filters if they hadn't received the latest edition.**
- Intention to submit a contingent offer for the property at 0 Pescadero Road, pending board approval at the September meeting. The offer would allow for due diligence and hazard assessments prior to finalizing the purchase.
- She reported a minor injury sustained by a contractor using a chainsaw at a project site. She used the incident to highlight the physical risks faced by laborers and emphasized the importance of recognizing their contributions. She referenced the RCD's Nature Hero Award and the Ecological Workforce Initiative, which aims to train contractors in conservation values and safety.
- Nelson described a recent tour for MROSD staff of RCD's restoration work in the Pescadero watershed. The tour showcased process-based restoration.
- Nelson closed with a reflection on the importance of helping staff stay connected to their passion for conservation amid the administrative and logistical demands of their work. She emphasized the need to support staff in maintaining their sense of purpose and connection to nature.

6.4. Directors' connection and reports

- Stielstra reported on the upcoming regional RCD membership meeting, reconfirmed for October 23 in San Luis Obispo, and shared observations from the Pescadero Arts and Fun Festival, including community engagement and feedback on local projects.
- Weil reported on her participation at the Pescadero Arts and Fun Festival (PAFF), noting interactions with attendees and feedback on outreach materials. She reported updates on the RCD website redesign, which was nearing completion.
- Kossy reported on personal reflections related to generational perspective and expressed appreciation for the RCD's role in connecting people and fostering collaboration.

7. Adjourn Meeting

- Meeting adjourned at 6:02 p.m.
- The next Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors will be September 18, 2025.

DRAFT