



**DRAFT Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors  
Thursday, October 16, 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, Troy Guy (On leave: Adrienne Etherton)

Associate Directors: Denise Phillips, John Wade, Zahra Kassam (Zoom)

RCD staff: Kellyx Nelson, Lau Hodges, Kati McHugh, Joe Issel (Zoom), Doug Millar (Zoom)

NRCS staff: none present due to federal government shutdown

Guests (all virtual): Ryan Firestone, Amy Bono (UC Elkus Ranch), TJ Carter and Jack Steinmann (SMC Dept of Sustainability), Vicki Sherman (Redwood City Department of Public Works)

**1. Call to Order**

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

**2. Approval of Agenda**

**3. Convene Closed Session**

**3.1. Conference with Real Property Negotiator Pursuant to California Government Code §54956.8**

Property Under Negotiation: 0 Pescadero Creek Road, Pescadero, California 94060

Agency Negotiator: Kellyx Nelson, Executive Director

Under Negotiation: Purchase of land

**4. Adjourn Closed Session**

**5. (4:30 p.m.) Convene Open Session and Report on Closed Session**

Kossy reconvened the open session at 4:30 p.m. and reported that no action was taken during the closed session.

**6. Introduction of Guests and Staff**

All in attendance introduced themselves.

**7. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

## 8. Consent Agenda

- **ACTION:** Weil moved to approve the consent agenda. Guy seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

## 9. Regular Agenda

### 9.1. **Presentation about the compost broker program that is a partnership with San Mateo County, cities within the county, and local farms. Presenter: Doug Millar, RCD Conservation Technical Advisor.**

- Millar presented the attached PowerPoint giving an overview of the Compost Broker Program, a partnership among the RCD, San Mateo County, participating cities, and local farms intended to streamline compost sourcing and distribution in response to SB 1383. SB 1383 created new organic waste diversion and procurement requirements. The broker model helps jurisdictions meet those mandates while supporting local agriculture.
- AB 2346 is an amendment to SB 1383 that allows the purchase of equipment and infrastructure to count towards mandates. This may help address the shortage of compost facilities. San Mateo RCD implemented the first AB 2346 project in the state at UC Elkus Ranch using an aerated static pile system.
- Discussion included: how this program fits into a broader network of collaborating and innovating with County departments; scaling compost brokering to other RCDs; compost quality oversight; regional collaborative opportunities; the high administrative workload of the program; the RCD's decades of history with composting programs, e.g. with equestrian operations; and how market incentives and procurement requirements for lowest cost can result in low quality compost with plastics being spread on the land.
- Steinmann appreciated the partnership, acknowledged the administrative complexity, described the program as an effective solution for meeting SB 1383 and broader climate goals, commended the RCD for building an impactful model, recognized Millar's day-to-day efforts and thanked the RCD for its leadership.
- Bono appreciated the aerated static pile (ASP) system that was installed at UC Elkus Ranch for improving compost quality, addressing years of struggles to manage animal waste and plant material due to the lack of access to commercial compost services. She said the new system supports both operations and their educational program to teach children about the importance of waste diversion. She noted that the ranch is launching a new pilot field trip this fall called "Soil Stewards," which will focus on the compost bunker system.

## **9.2. Board will consider resolutions up for vote at the upcoming annual conference of the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts.**

- Nelson explained that the California Association of RCDs (CARCD) is a 501(c)(3) membership organization whose members bring forward resolutions at the annual November conference to guide the association's work.
- Stielstra was confirmed as the designated delegate.
- There was discussion of each proposed resolution to prepare Stielstra for negotiations and consideration at the conference. No vote was taken on any position, as resolutions may be amended at the conference.
- Discussions included strengthening statewide governance of CARCD; the importance of consistent application of bylaws to maintain accountability and trust; a sense of hostility, mistrust, and document demands in some of the proposed resolutions that seem to come from the same impulse as public hostility towards government; a general lack of support for CARCD being obligated to Brown Act requirements; feasibility of some of the proposals and questions about whether people understood CARCD's 501(c)(3) status; a pattern of vague insinuation in some of the proposed resolutions from districts with longstanding grievances that are not representative of most RCDs; the redundancy of some of the resolutions with the status quo; member versus non-member access to CARCD privileges; support for the cost recovery resolution
- Stielstra shared his perspective and insights as a member of the CARCD board and notes that many of the governance topics raised in the resolutions are already being addressed in detail by CARCD. He also reflected on the role of CARCD regions as he is learning the responsibilities of a regional chair. He expressed concern about the potential disruption caused by contentious governance changes and noted that clarifying the role and purpose of the regions may help support more effective communication and coordination statewide.

## **9.3. Executive Director's Report**

- Current implementation season has been very busy, with numerous projects completed or nearly completed in the Forest Health and Fire Program, including work at Wavecrest, Mori Point in Pacifica, the 19-mile fuel break around La Honda, and Butano State Park, with many additional projects in planning.
- Fish can now pass through at the Little Butano Creek fish passage site (the chute), and additional instream habitat enhancement at Little Butano Creek near the Girl Scout camp, at Dave Repetto's farm in San Gregorio, and at MROSD properties.
- Water for Farms, Fish, and People program has advanced water storage projects, including tanks at Portola Redwoods State Park
- She shared photos from the recent First Flush monitoring event.
- Approximately 30 people were trained for First Flush but only seven volunteers participated, requiring staff and her family to backfill field teams. She hopes to increase volunteer participation in future years through earlier recruitment and improved retention. Discussion included how outreach is conducted, youth participation, and follow up with no-show volunteers.

- Nelson then shared photos from a recent visit to the chute project to highlight implementation crews, explaining that as part of the RCD's diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) plan, staff are working to recognize laborers as conservation heroes by awarding Nature Champion plaques to workers nominated by staff.
- Kossy commented that it was meaningful to meet the workers operating the machinery and doing the on-the-ground work and said it felt good to thank them directly.
- In response to a question about whether future awards would focus only on large projects, Nelson said the Nature Champion recognition is intentionally open-ended: staff can nominate any worker or crew they feel should be recognized, on large or small projects, and the RCD can adjust the informal "rules" as needed.
- She emphasized that this worker recognition is a direct implementation of the Board-adopted DEIJ plan and noted that staff continue to bring amendments as they identify improvements.
- She reported that she has been participating in a community-based fundraising cohort focused on reframing annual appeals so that donors are treated as partners rather than saviors, and said the RCD is incorporating lessons about how "white environmentalism" has historically shaped both conservation and philanthropy into proposed updates to the DEIJ plan and the annual appeal.
- She shared that she asked Phillips to "buddy up" with her on the annual appeal due to the absence of development staff, and thanked her for agreeing to support the effort.
- Phillips commented that fundraising can be reframed as offering people an opportunity to make their world better rather than begging, noting that it is difficult to ask for money but that "if you don't ask, the answer is always no."
- She provided an update on Director Etherton, who faces a long recovery but is doing well overall after a very tough surgery, with additional surgery ahead.
- Nelson reported that the two-year impact report has been drafted after approximately 60 hours of her time and has been sent to a graphic designer for layout; she hopes to have printed copies ready for the annual appeal and to share at the CARCD conference.
- She then described ongoing challenges with the RCD's business model, noting that the organization has roughly a \$20 million annual budget and about 100 active billing codes and grants but only 2.5 administrative staff and no dedicated development or grant-writing staff, while funders increasingly restrict overhead and indirect costs and the County has withdrawn operating support.
- She described cumulative strain from numerous "paper cuts," including permitting burdens, increased labor and contracting compliance, expanding funder and requirements and restrictions, and the emotional burden staff carry when navigating partner risk aversion, and said that although she loves her job and has served nearly 20 years, she wants the Board to understand how difficult it has become.
- She reiterated that securing unrestricted funding is key to relieving pressure and linked this need to full cost recovery.
- Stielstra expressed strong appreciation for RCD staff, calling them one of the most admired teams he has worked with and reiterating his standing offer to assist however possible, including joining meetings with County supervisors, emphasizing the

importance of restoring and increasing unrestricted operating support in a comparatively wealthy county.

- Nelson replied that prior County operating support had “taken the edge off” and that its removal has restored financial pressure on staff capacity.
- Phillips encouraged Board members to participate in the year-end appeal, noting that 100 percent giving by voting and associate directors sends a powerful message of support to staff and to other donors and funders and highlighted that such contributions provide unrestricted funding. She highlighted end of year giving.

#### **9.4. Directors’ connection and reports**

- Kossy reported that she was deeply moved to visit the chute project site, shake workers’ hands, and thank them personally, and she reflected on a recent ocean fishing trip where catching, killing, and eating fish gave her a profound awareness of the food chain, the tension between harm and nourishment, and her appreciation that the RCD’s work helps make that relationship more honorable.
- Phillips noted her local connection through serving on the HEAL Project board, adding that she is enjoying the steep learning curve and her service on the RCD board.
- Stielstra reported that he is working through some administrative issues with the bank account, appreciated the fish passage field trip, and outlined upcoming CARCD obligations, including a regional Central Coast meeting in San Luis Obispo and a CARCD Board of Directors meeting on Zoom and at the annual conference, noting that he serves as regional chair and is still clarifying how to best define and optimize the role of regions and board-to-board communication across a large, busy network of RCDs.
- Weil reported that she missed the recent website meeting because she was returning from work travel, shared that she has spoken with Hodges about using low-cost software to streamline expense reporting and reduce administrative workload, and added that she is taking her children camping at Costanoa for the first time, hoping it will be the start of more camping and backpacking as they get older.
- Wade reported that he did not have much to add.
- Guy volunteered to help with fish relocation at the Chute site, is eager to see the project and the steelhead using it, and would like to see more of that kind of work.
- On behalf of Kassam, McHugh read a message that Kassam submitted before leaving the Zoom meeting, which stated that it was good to see everyone and hear about the great work, and that she is happy to donate and support however she can.
- Nelson reported that there will be a community tour of the North Marsh Restoration Project on November 2, likely mid-morning.
- The group discussed the November meeting conflicting with the CARCD conference and decided to cancel the November meeting.

#### **Adjourn Meeting**

- Meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.
- The next Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors will be December 18, 2025.



# Compost Broker Program

October 2025

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This work funded by San Mateo County Jurisdictions.  
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# Where do organic materials go when not composted?

Right here in the atmosphere, as methane, which is 24 times worse than carbon dioxide



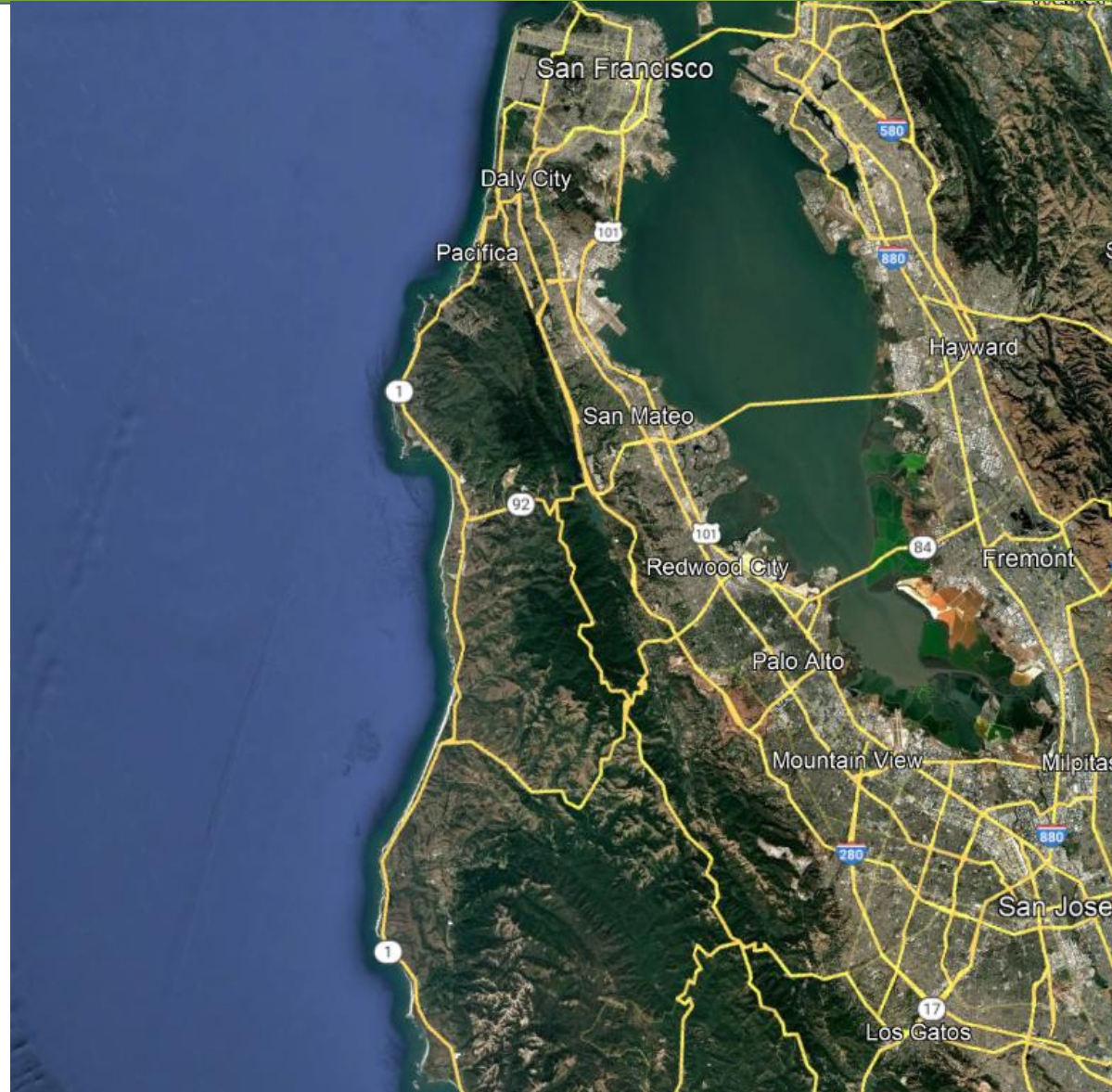
# SB 1383: jumpstarting the compost economy

- CA cities and counties must divert organics from landfills



# Bayside has cities, Coastside has farms

- SMC Sustainability Department
- 20 jurisdictions
- In the fourth year of program



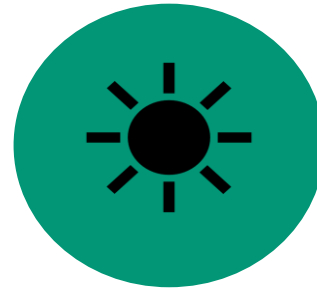
# Why add compost to the land?



SOIL HEALTH AND  
STRUCTURE



IMPROVES WATER  
HOLDING  
CAPACITY



INCREASES  
PHOTOSYNTHESIS;  
DRAWING CARBON  
DIOXIDE DOWN  
FROM THE  
ATMOSPHERE



ADDS ORGANIC  
MATTER WHICH  
ACTS LIKE GLUE,  
PREVENTING  
EROSION



# Compost makes happy farmers!



# Why RCDs

## Natural Fit

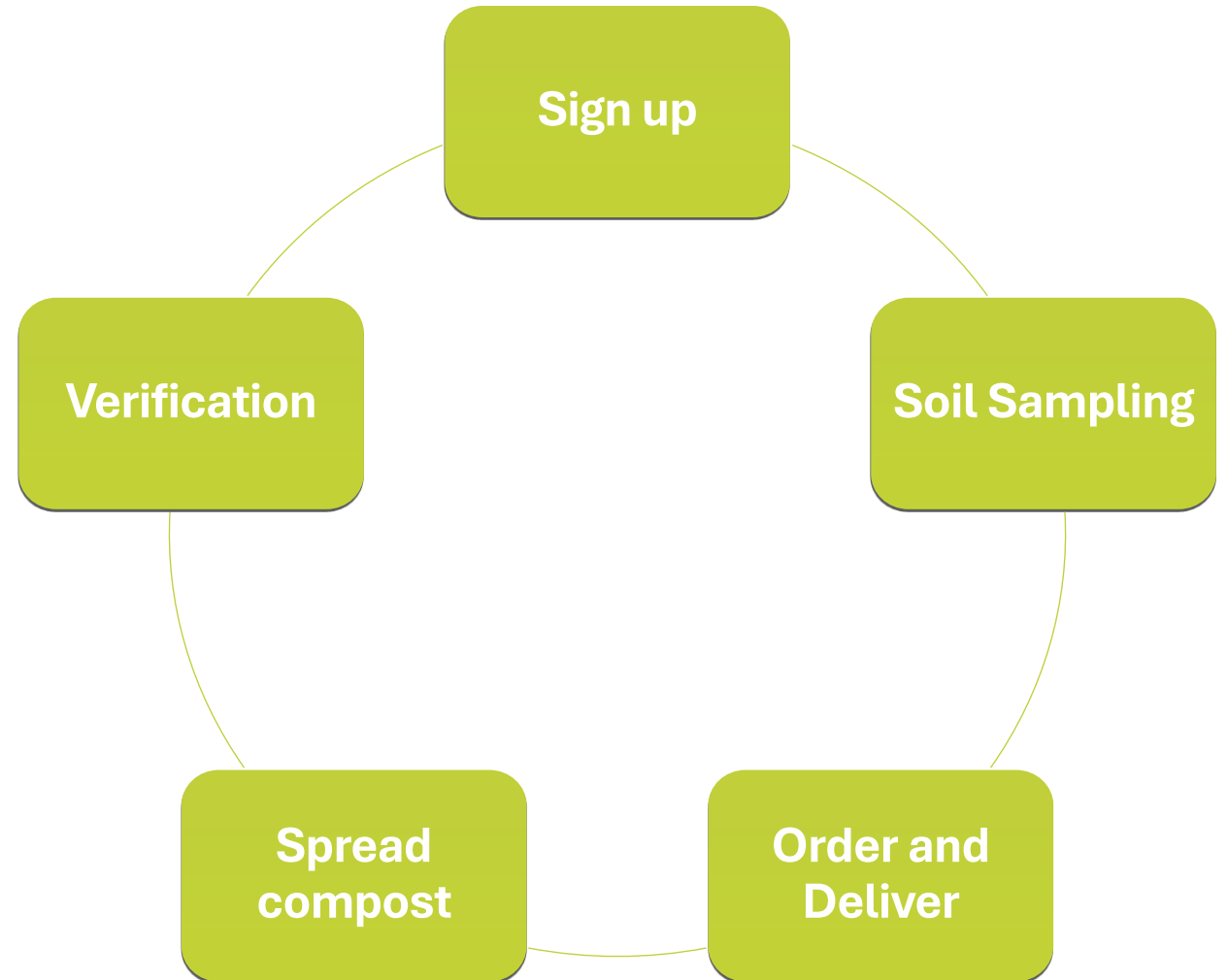
Work on public  
and private  
lands

Agency created by  
the state to deliver  
conservation

Trusted because  
we are non  
regulatory



# How the program works



# Compost quality



# Farms



# Rangeland



AB2346



# Amplifying Impact

- Leveraging other RCD programs
- Leveraging other funding
- Scaling up to other RCDs



Compost is the word of the day



Let's spread the word!