



DRAFT Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors

Thursday, June 18, 2026

4:00 – 6:00 pm

Location: 80 Stone Pine Road, Suite 100, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019 and via Zoom

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

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

RCD staff: Kellyx Nelson, Grace Allen, Barb Kipreos, Joe Issel, Ainé Javier, Eliza Milio, Amy Kaeser, Clarissa Maciel, Kristy Doerr, Caileen Viehweg (virtual), Jarrad Fisher (virtual), Clifton Herrmann (virtual), Lindsay Edelman (virtual)

NRCS staff: Drew Mather

Guests: David Cosgrave (Senior Legislative Aide, San Mateo County Supervisor Mueller's Office), Michael Miller

1. Call to Order

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

2. Approval of Agenda

- Item 5.1 (May 21, 2026 Draft Regular Meeting Minutes) and 5.2 (June 2, 2026 Draft Special Meeting Minutes) were removed from the agenda and will be brought back at a future regular meeting.
- **ACTION:** Kossy motioned to approve agenda as amended, Weil seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Introduction of Guests and Staff

All in attendance introduced themselves.

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

5. Consent Agenda

- Directors discussed the Coastside News article: that it gave the RCD useful public visibility and addressed a topic that people notice because it is important; whether the headline was ambiguous and could be read to mean First Flush caused bacteria levels to increase; and that the headline was attention-grabbing and might encourage people to read the article.
- **ACTION:** Guy moved to approve the consent agenda. Weil seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

6. Regular Agenda

6.1. Board will discuss update to the San Mateo County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

- Nelson explained that after the August 2020 fires, the RCD was not eligible for FEMA reimbursement because we were not an affected landowner or agency with recognized responsibilities. We joined the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) for the jurisdictional connection to become eligible in the future. It is currently being updated and will come to this board for adoption later this year. This agenda item ensures a public opportunity for comment.
- Discussion included how the LHMP is an opportunity to demonstrate that restoring ecosystems and watersheds can provide significant hazard mitigation benefits; where to review the existing LHMP; how the RCD's projects have to fit into the document's established format; appreciation that the RCD was included; understanding the FEMA reimbursement benefit; questions about cost estimates in non-RCD sections- the number might reflect only one agency's share or serve as a placeholder rather than a total damage estimate; how sea level rise and disaster-related impacts may be addressed through different programs; how the plan addresses evacuation in terms of infrastructure rather than operational plans because the LHMP is defined by federal requirements; and an appreciation that the discussion helped clarify what to look for when the item returns to the agenda for Board adoption.
- Nelson noted that FEMA eligibility would make it easier for the RCD to allocate resources during future disasters when reimbursement is uncertain, citing past response work such as Old Haul Road and assistance with road repairs after cleanup.

6.2. Board will consider approval of Fiscal Year 2027 Draft Financial Budget

- Nelson presented the FY27 draft financial budget; noted that the RCD is entering the fiscal year in a strong financial position with about \$1.8 million in operating reserves, sufficient to sustain operations for about six months; emphasized ongoing uncertainty due to transitions in state and federal funding.
- Nelson described the zero-based budgeting approach, explaining that each year staff build a budget from scratch using individual project funding estimates, with program revenues largely covering pass-through project costs and personnel expenses of roughly \$4 million forming the core operating budget.
- Nelson explained reliance on grants creates a volatile funding model with very limited unrestricted revenue; property tax income represents less than one percent of the budget and does not cover core operational requirements, resulting in heavy dependence on complex billing practices tied to specific grants that creates administrative strain and staff burden, requiring detailed time tracking across multiple projects and limiting the RCD's ability to respond flexibly to community needs, while also constraining capacity for administrative, compliance, and organizational functions.
- Discussion included:

- Efforts to secure more stable or unrestricted funding for RCDs- State legislation is being considered but may prioritize more severely underfunded districts, local options such as ballot initiatives or expanded County support may be more viable but are challenging due to low public awareness and competing demands.
- The County has continued support by renewing our longstanding agreement, which is very helpful, but it has shifted to more restricted, task-based reimbursements rather than flexible unrestricted support.
- Unrestricted funding limitations are inconsistent with standard business practices and create inequities, suggesting the Board consider advocacy actions such as position letters.
- Appreciation that the budget document was clear and accessible, and the presentation helped clarify the structure and context of the budget.
- **ACTION:** Guy moved to approve the FY27 draft financial. Weil seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

6.3. Executive Director's Report

- Discussion included:
 - State budget remains uncertain, with Proposition 4 funding—expected to support much of the RCD's future work—not yet fully implemented and unlikely to be clarified until mid August due to differences between the legislative and executive branches.
 - Cap and invest funding has been redirected with uncertainty for programs that typically rely on those funds, including forest health, fire mitigation, and agricultural stewardship.
 - Interest earnings from reserves are becoming a meaningful contribution, and Nelson said this should be incorporated more clearly into financial reporting.
 - Appreciation for multiple layers of financial oversight and governance, with annual public audits that provide transparency and accountability while also helping protect against both actual issues and negative perceptions.
 - Strong financial controls act as an insurance policy against potential disruption
 - Maintaining public trust is as important as preventing actual financial issues.
- RCD is entering a major construction period for multiple projects and may invite Board members to visit sites on short notice as opportunities arise.

6.4. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) report

- NRCS has new national leadership with Colton Buckley appointed as chief following Bettencourt's resignation, along with updated branding and priorities that are more agriculture focused, particularly on cropland and rangeland, while remaining conservation oriented overall.

- A national reorganization is underway to shift staff from headquarters to regional hubs, but Mather does not expect significant changes to how programs operate in California.
- Mather was asked whether there was a shift away from conservation. He said there is no indication of that at this time.
- Additional staff support is being brought in from other offices to help meet contract obligations.
- NRCS continues to implement the regenerative pilot program funded at \$700 million, which has supported projects in San Mateo County, and that current program activity includes multiple EQIP and CSP applications in various stages of approval and contracting. Recent activity includes payment for a large compost and cover crop project and several preapproved conservation stewardship projects involving practices such as cover cropping, mulching, hedgerows, and windbreaks.
- Vehicle usage is meeting required thresholds and that liability coverage for use by RCD staff has been clarified through the NRCS Earth Team program, allowing continued shared use tied to NRCS objectives.
- When noted that current online information indicates no immediate policy changes to NRCS programs or funding, Mather said the situation remains new and evolving, with states likely to shape implementation over time and updates such as revisions to the Conservation Innovation Grant program emerging.

6.5. Directors' connection and reports

- Kossy recommended the NACD "Conservation Clips" newsletter as a useful resource for understanding conservation district activities nationwide, noting it provides a mix of grassroots stories and policy updates that help contextualize environmental work and the role of the RCD. She also said she has been engaging locally through native plant education, including informal outreach in her neighborhood, maintaining a California invasive plant online community on Facebook, and offering tours of her native plant garden to encourage small scale environmental awareness.
- Guy shared that he observed approximately 30 juvenile coho salmon during a recent marsh survey, describing it as a significant and meaningful milestone given long-term restoration efforts and the species' prior absence from the watershed.
- Phillips reported positive health news, stating that a recent PET scan showed complete metabolic remission after five treatments, with further treatment ongoing.
- Weil said she has been participating in Spotlight Stewardship tours, including site visits to river restoration work and a lumber mill and demonstration forest, which provided insight into restoration techniques and land management practices.
- Stielstra reported ongoing involvement with CARCD governance and legislative discussions, noting continued focus on unrestricted funding challenges and upcoming actions including a budget vote, annual conference planning, and a regional meeting. He also observed a significant CAL FIRE presence in another region and noted increased pollinator activity in his yard associated with native and volunteer plants.

6.6. Board will consider approval of Resolution 2026-2: Honoring Twenty Years of Service and Leadership by Kellyx Nelson

- Stielstra introduced and read Resolution 2026-2 recognizing Nelson's twenty years of service and leadership. He highlighted key elements of the resolution including the scale of funding leveraged by the RCD, Nelson's steady leadership and emphasis on deep listening, and significant programmatic achievements such as advancing regulatory innovation and completing the first forest health public works plan in the state. Directors weighed in with their appreciation of Nelson's leadership and contributions.
- **ACTION:** Weil moved to approve Resolution 2026-2: Honoring Twenty Years of Service and Leadership by Kellyx Nelson. Kossy seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Adjourn Meeting

- Meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.
- The next Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors will be DATE.