



744 La Guardia Street, Building A, Salinas, CA 93905

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## September 17, 2020— MEETING MINUTES—Approved 10/15/2020

Regular Board Meeting, Thursday, September 17, 2020, 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

Directors Present: R. King, J. Doud, B. Plemmons, J. Clarke, B. Jefferson, J. Gularte, B. Lipe, M. Ritter (Associate)

Directors Absent: I. Mendoza (Associate)

Others Present: P. Robins (RCDMC), M. Barker (RCDMC), M. Errea (RCDMC), D. Mather (NRCS), A. Carter (RCDMC), Marisol Mendez, Stephanie McMurtrie

Recorders: M. Barker, P. Robins

*Because of shelter-in-place orders for the COVID-19 outbreak, the meeting was held by Zoom conference.*

Open Session: Director Jefferson called the meeting to Order at 10:02 am

Public Comment: Marisol Mendez and Stephanie McMurtrie, both members of the public, introduced themselves to the group.

### Consent Items

- *Approval of Draft Meeting Agenda*
- *Approval of Minutes from the August 27, 2020 Regular Board Meeting*
- *Accept Staff Activities Report for August 2020.*

Director King moved to approve the Draft Meeting Agenda and August Meeting Minutes. Director Plemmons seconded the motion, and all voted to approve.

Director Lipe moved to approve Staff Activities Report. Director Doud seconded the motion, and all voted to approve.

### Reports

*NRCS Report:* Soil Scientist Drew Mather covered for District Conservationist (DC) Erika Boyland who is out on a 90-day detail in Florida effective September 13<sup>th</sup>. Engineer Desi Ramirez will be overseeing the post-fire recovery efforts and EWP-related work in Boyland's absence. The DC from the Hollister Field Office, James Booth, will be covering other aspects of management for the Salinas field office, and the DC from Livermore Alyson Aquino will be covering contracts. Mather shared that the current fiscal year has been a record year for NRCS with almost \$1.5 million in federal dollars for 17 EQIP contracts.

NRCS is utilizing "all hands-on deck" to respond to the need for assistance after recent fires. Mather shared that he has attended several post-fire recovery site visits recently and has observed first-hand the devastating effects of the wildfires. There have been a total of 170 landowners that have signed up for post-fire recovery assistance in the region. Mather shared that several areas of Santa Cruz County have been especially hard-hit by the fires

including Bonny Doon, Ben Lomond and Boulder Creek.

*Executive Director Report:* Paul Robins shared that RCDMC Forest Health Coordinator Jamie Tuitele-Lewis and Engineer Adrienne Carter are assisting NRCS with post-fire recovery efforts. Robins explained that the process for NRCS post-fire recovery assistance requires that a local sponsor (in the past, this has been the County of Monterey) serve as the venue for receiving EWP funds to assist potentially-impacted landowners. The local sponsor must provide a match of 25% with NRCS providing 75% of the cost. NRCS is in the process of establishing a list of site visits that will occur in the immediate future. Adrienne Carter shared that she already attended one site visit in Monterey County, but in general, the Salinas Field Office is waiting for the County's damage assessment report and request to USDA before more post-fire recovery site visits can occur.

*Directors' Updates:* Director Plemmons stated that the agenda has not yet been released for the CARCD Annual Conference that will be held remotely in November. He also shared that CARCD is also looking for event sponsors and RCDs associated with sponsors will receive discounts on their registration fee.

Old or Standing Business

P. Robins / Directors

No items pulled from the Consent Agenda.

*Monthly Financial Statements:* M. Errea presented the financial statements regarding Accounts Receivable, Payables and Bank balances for the period ending September 17, 2020. The accrual account balance on September 17, 2020 was \$174,132.20 with \$496,446.75 in the Chase Bank and County Treasury accounts (taking into account checks to be signed at the meeting), \$799,348 in liabilities, and \$477,033.25 due to the RCD as receivables from various grants and outstanding invoices. For comparison, the Accrual accounting balance for District Funds stood at \$201,274.78 on August 27, 2020.

*Expenses:* Errea presented the list of detailed expenses to be paid on September 17, including bi-weekly salary through September 13, one-time and recurring miscellaneous expenses, and reimbursement for expenses incurred during the months of August and September, totaling \$82,883.98. She also requested approval for payment of three additional checks to project partners for whom the corresponding grant reimbursement had arrived after she'd prepared the original checklist, as they'd been waiting a long time. The additional checks were for \$6,994.38 to the CA Marin Sanctuary Foundation, \$72,852.94 to the San Jose State Univ Research Foundation, and \$2,167.50 to the Upper Salinas Las Tablas RCD.

Director Gularte moved to approve the September financial statements and the August and September expenses along with the additional checks as presented. Director Doud seconded the motion, and all voted to approve.

RCDMC Finance Manager Maggie Errea shared that RCDMC will shifting from QuickBooks Desktop to QuickBooks Online to give RCDMC staff and Board members easier access to project financial information for project reporting and tracking purposes. Robins and Errea are still deciding what level of access each staff member will have that will not compromise financial controls or confidential employee information. In response to Director Lipe's recommendation that a policy should be established for the new QuickBooks Online system regarding these changes, Robins proposed drafting an update to the current RCDMC financial policy to be reviewed by the finance committee prior to the next Board Meeting.

*Review of New or Revised Independent Contractor Agreements:*

The following two new contracts were presented and discussed:

- Waterways Consulting, ICA 2020-04 for an amount NTE \$79,132 for design development of a new fish passage improvement project (low-water crossing replacement with a free-span

bridge) on Cachagua Creek, as funded by the Sept 1, 2020 State Coastal Conservancy agreement 20-002: For the project located on Cachagua Creek just downstream of the confluence with Boronda Creek, the contractor will work with subconsulting geotechnical and structural engineering firms (CMAG and Streeter Group, respectively) to develop 90% complete design plans and provide assistance with applications for project permitting and CDFW Fisheries Restoration Grant Program implementation grant funding in 2021. The design development process will involve reviews with the landowners and technical experts at the conceptual, 35% and 65% complete phases. The work period is September 1, 2020 – October 1, 2021.

- ICA 2020-05 for NTE \$50,000 with CSUMB's 'Return of the Natives' program to prepare and conduct native plant revegetation test plots in several locations where we've treated arundo along the Salinas River, as funded through 2016 Wildlife Conservation Board grant agreement #WC-1567MM: The agreement will include 1) Production of 3000 native and pollinator plants (or plant points) and propagation for out-planting in the 20-21 season; 2) RON staff availability for seed collection and seed procurement and planting oversight; and 3) procurement of native seeds for RCD seed trials on the site. The work period is October 1, 2020 – January 31, 2021.

All directors affirmed that they had no relationships with either contracting entity. Director Lipe moved to approve the new Independent Contractor Agreements as presented. Director Clarke seconded and all voted to approve.

*Strategy for preparation for an RCDMC Strategic Plan Update:*

Robins shared a document with the group that the Executive Committee with assistance from Kathleen Robins developed to guide the strategic plan update planning for 2020-2021. The proposal is for the plan review to be spread out over several meetings via Zoom with a couple intensive sessions in January or February. Prior to each fall board meeting, both Board and Staff will be asked to respond to questions related to the strategic plan with responses to inform discussion at each associated board meeting. Prior to the intensive planning sessions in winter, the responses will be condensed into an informational document for participants.

*Biennial Conflict of Interest Code Revision:* Every two years the Conflict of Interest code must be updated according to the Political Reform Act of 1974, Fair Political Practices Commission guidelines, and California Code of Regulations Section 18730 of title 2. Robin summarized that the only updates that have been made to the RCDMC Conflict of Interest Code are that the items in the footnotes are structured in a slightly different way.

Director King moved to approve the revised Conflict of Interest code as presented. Director Gularte seconded and all voted to approve.

New Business

Directors/ Staff

*Post-Fire recovery assistance:* Robins reminded the board that after the Soberanes Fire in 2016, some members of the public expressed frustration with how the USDA Emergency Watershed Protection Program was rolled out to assist landowners with wildland fire damage. In an effort to better serve the needs of the community during the current wildfire recovery effort, NRCS and RCDMC have made efforts to provide information up-front to better guide expectations for several USDA post-fire recovery assistance programs. Stephanie McMurtrie (a member of the public sitting in on the meeting), asked how she can better share resources to help her neighboring landowners contact NRCS to get post-fire recovery assistance. Robins told McMurtrie that he will follow up with her via email to

provide the best contact information and a summary of other resources.

Robins stated that RCDMC and NRCS are getting 1 to 2 inquiries from private landowners per day inquiring about funding available to producers and ranchers. The rangeland funding is for available for ranchers that have fire-damaged structures and livestock while the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) funding is available to landowners who have property that is could be threatened by winter erosion exacerbated by wildfire impacts.

*Approval for entry into agreements with MCWRA for two Integrated Regional Water Management projects: Farm Nutrient Management and Water Quality Assistance Program (\$315,063.00) and Salinas River Multi-Benefit Stream Maintenance and Habitat Stewardship Program (partnership with River Management Unit Association—up to \$320,425):* Robins introduced the two agreements to the Board, noting that they are still in draft form, although the actual work proposed was established months prior. Director Lipe requested that these approvals be made after the revised agreements are finalized and presented to the board at a future meeting.

*Staff presentation: Fall streambank stabilization project progress (A. Carter):* RCDMC Engineer Adrienne Carter gave a PowerPoint presentation about the fee-for-service bank stabilization and vegetation maintenance project adjacent to a cannabis greenhouse operation south of Salinas. The project originally came to RCDMC as a referral from Lenhardt Engineering. The project involves stabilizing an eroded bank on an agricultural drainage channel, installing a vegetated swale, and removing vegetation from two sections of the channel that were causing erosion and flooding during heavy rains.

Announcements

Directors/ Robins

*2020 RCDMC Speak-Off Contest:* The contest will be held after the next board meeting at 12:30pm. The topic is *“How should Resource Conservation Districts serve and engage the entire community in conservation work?”*

12:00 P.M. Meeting Adjourned

Next Regular RCD meeting:

Date: Thursday, October 15, 10am  
Location: Meeting will be held by Zoom conference