

UPPER SALINAS – LAS TABLAS RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES – JANUARY 23, 2020

TEMPLETON, CA

- I. Call to Order. Treasurer Mary Bianchi called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm and determined a quorum was present. Directors present: Margy Lindquist, Mike Bonnheim, Tom Mora, George Kendall, Mary Bianchi. Susan Cochrane (from 4:08), Randy Heinzen (from 4:12). Staff present: Devin Best. Others Present: Hilary Phillips (NRCS), Royce Larsen (UCCE/Associate Director).
- II. Additions/Changes to the Agenda. None.
- III. Public Comment. Royce Larsen reported that there is potential grant funding for work to control listed invasive weeds in the SLO county Weed Management Area (WMA). WMA is now holding quarterly meetings (Andrew Johnson is co-chair). CDFA is the potential funding source, work can be performed on both public and private land. WMA is encouraging participation by farmers/ranchers. Devin Best can coordinate interested landowners in getting involved with WMA and/or applying for project funding.
- IV. RCD Reports.
 - a. Board Updates. Mike Bonnheim announced completion of the Phase 2 burn of his CA Forest Management Project. This is a formal oak woodlands management plan with CEQA approval and significant forester involvement. Phase 3 will be application of herbicide to control toyon. Grazing would follow.
 - b. Margy Lindquist oath of office. New board member Margy Lindquist and Secretary George Kendall read their respective parts of the oath to formalize M. Lindquist's board position effective 1/23/2020.
 - c. Executive Director's Report. Executive Director Devin Best summarized the ED's report distributed prior to the meeting. Highlights include: 1) Gerhardt project permits all appear to be progressing; 2) funding for the IPC/Carpinteria saltmarsh work continues to be sought; 3) Healthy Soils projects are nearing completion; 4) Santa Rosa Creek Streamflow project's TAC will soon focus on conceptual designs for projects to enhance streamflow.
 - d. Estate Vineyards Property Update. D. Best summarized the status of the RCD's discussions with Estate Vineyards (Justin) as described in the Extended ED's Report handout. D. Best and Maria Kelley (Justin's public relations coordinator) met with county and Cal Fire staff in Sept. 2019 about possible limitations on use of the property. Subsequently M. Kelley asked for the RCD to provide a land management proposal. The RCD's proposal included a property manager and support and would cost \$119,000 per year. There have been several personnel changes within the Justin organization, and D. Best expects further discussions with a possible response to the proposal in about 6 months.

- e. Santa Rosa Creek Streamflow Update. D. Best summarized the status per the Extended ED's Report. All field assessments and surveys have been completed, including geology, groundwater-surface water model, soil boring, and instream flow baseline. Technical Advisory Committee has been formed. Conceptual project designs are now in progress with 60% designs due in April, 100% designs due in June and permits due August 2020.
- f. Mid-Year Financial Review. D. Best summarized the "Mid-term Year Budget Review and Projections" report included in the meeting packet. The RCD's contractual agreements have increased significantly during FY 2019/2020, largely due to the Coastal Conservancy funding of the Regional Forest & Fire Prevention project. Other potential projects (Adelaida Hydrology Study, Carbon Farm Hub, Caltrans, Justin) could reasonably add significant additional work. Analysis of staff time and billable hours shows the current RCD staff is at capacity, and the RCD cannot now easily take on more work. In addition the 300 square feet of office space for existing staff is making for cramped working conditions. D. Best asked about the possibility of adding 1 – 2 staff positions and acquiring more office space. Retention of current staff is a priority, and D. Best mentioned the range of retirement plans that other RCDs have and that a plan should be considered for US-LT RCD. There was general discussion about these topics. M. Bianchi commented on the difficulty of balancing grant income/projects with a growing organization. Hilary Phillips commented the entire office (NRCS, FSA and RCD) is crowded and that more staff is expected to be hired. There was discussion of where D. Best could look for more office space (w/l office, w/l office complex, elsewhere in or near Templeton). Need for staff is shown by high percentage of billable hours and the "soft deferral" of small project requests from the public. There was discussion about the value to the RCD's mission of the 2 WSP positions. R. Heinzen suggested retirement plan options be discussed in detail and put to a vote in February. Overall there was general board support for finding additional space, and D. Best agreed to report back with options in February. There was no clear consensus on adding staff at this time.
- V. Consent Agenda. S. Cochrane asked for comments on the December Meeting Minutes. None. She asked for questions on the December Treasurer's Report. None. Tom Mora moved for approval of the December Minutes and Treasurer's Report. Mike Bonnheim seconded. Unanimous approval (less R. Heinzen – departed).
- VI. Other Agency, Director and Association Reports. NRCS. Hilary Phillips reported that the NRCS has hired an Agricultural Engineer to replace Dale Grop. The NRCS will shortly start interviewing for a Range Conservationist.
- VII. Board Action Items. Board position elections. D. Best reported that Chuck Pritchard had agreed to stand for Vice Chair. The full slate of candidates is Chair: Susan Cochrane; Vice Chair: Chuck Pritchard; Secretary: George Kendall; Treasurer: Mary Bianchi. Tom Mora moved to accept the slate of candidates. Margy Lindquist seconded. Unanimous.
- VIII. Agenda Setting. D. Best will report on office space options and possible contractors for temporary staff work. D. Best will present possible retirement plan options for approval.
- IX. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 pm. Next meeting is February 27 at 4:00 pm.