

Upper Salinas – Las Tablas Resource Conservation District

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Templeton, Ca

March 24, 2022

- I. Call to Order. Director Mike Broadhurst called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm and determined that a quorum was present. Directors attending: Mike Broadhurst, Mike Bonnheim (phone), George Kendall, Tom Mora, Mary Bianchi (phone), Randy Heinzen (phone) and Associate Director Royce Larsen. Staff present: Executive Director Devin Best, NRCS District Conservationist Hilary Phillips. Members of the public present: Dolores Howard, D. J. Funk. Dolores Howard introduced herself as a local small farm owner interested in restoration and conservation issues. D. J. Funk introduced himself as a former Executive Director of the US-LT RCD. Both had responded to notification of board vacancies.
- II. Additions/Changes to the Agenda. None.
- III. Public Comment. Royce Larsen described the U. S. Drought Monitor and his recent effort to get SLO County changed from D1 to D2 (more severe). This is important because it impacts how various federal programs are administered locally. He will work further with Cal Poly and other interested people to improve drought monitoring metrics.
- IV. RCD Reports.
 - a. Board Updates. None.
 - b. Executive Director Report. D. Best summarized the key parts of the ED report distributed with the board packet. Work on the Gerhardt Project Repair will likely be deferred until FY 2023/2024 due to SLO County budgeting. D. Best explained the Sustainable Farming Initiative (SFI) as a streamlining process for developing and funding carbon farm and other projects. SLO County Solid Waste Dept. has requested the US-LT and Coastal RCDs to submit a scope of work plan to fund the initial SFI. There was board discussion of wood chip and compost use. Spencer Gordon accepted a job offer for Conservation Technician and will start work May 2. He has experience with CA State Parks, including fire/fuel management. The Coastal Conservancy Forest and Fire Capacity grant application was not funded, possibly because our proposal was not sufficiently focused on a small geographic area. We will discuss this disappointment with other RCDs.
 - c. Alternative Review Program (ARP). D. Best handed out the revised ARP Policy, which was updated by him and Amy Smart. There was brief board discussion – ag ponds are excluded. Adoption of the policy will be considered at the April board meeting.
 - d. Conservationist of the Year Award. D. Best discussed the award and mentioned one potential candidate. This will be discussed further at the April board meeting.

- e. Board Member Bylaws. D. Best led a general discussion of the need for bylaw review. This will be discussed further at the April board meeting.
- V. Consent Agenda.
- a. Minutes. Mike Broadhurst asked for comments/changes to the February meeting minutes. No changes.
 - b. Treasurer's Report. M. Bianchi reviewed the February Treasurer's report. D. Best described an issue with tax withholding which will be corrected in future budgets. Tom Mora moved approval of the Consent Agenda. M. Bianchi seconded. Approved unanimously.
- VI. Other Agency, Director and Association Reports.
- a. NRCS Report. H. Phillips reported that EQIP funding may be reduced this year but that CSP funding looks good. FSA Director Jeff Flood may set up quarterly coordination meetings with SLO County Ag Dept., Farm Bureau, UCCE and other such organizations. H. Phillips discussed NRCS need for additional office space, including part of the former RCD space.
- VII. Board Action Items.
- a. Ad hoc finance subcommittee formation. D. Best summarized the FY 2022/2023 budget process and asked for volunteers to assist him and Erin White to review the proposed budget. M. Bianchi and G. Kendall volunteered.
 - b. Approval of Executive Committee recommendations for personnel and financial review. M. Bianchi reviewed the recommendations made in closed session on March 16, 2022 regarding 1) Locating all staff in the Atascadero office; 2) Use of consultant Amy Stork's report to improve management, supervision, etc. ; 3) Offering mediation to RCD principal staff; 4) Completing the review of the Personnel Handbook; 5) A thorough look into project financial status; and 6) Standardized project tracking spreadsheets. There was significant discussion about office space(NRCS and FSA need more space), communication and synergy, and the time needed to accomplish the different recommendations. M. Bianchi moved to accept all the recommendations with an August 1, 2022 deadline for office consolidation and a June 1, 2023 deadline for completion of the other recommendations. There would also be quarterly updates provided by the ED. Tom Mora seconded. Passed unanimously.
- VIII. Agenda Setting. ARP Policy, Conservationist of the Year, Bylaw Review, Possible site to Covell Ranch.
- IX. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 5:49 pm. Next board meeting will be April 28.