



*"To protect, enhance, and support Butte County natural resources and agriculture by working with willing landowners and citizens through education, land management, and on-the-ground projects."*

150 Chuck Yeager Way, Ste. A, Oroville, CA 95965 \* (530) 693-3173 \* bcrd@carcd.org

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **Minutes**

**Date: Thursday, May 16, 2024**

**Time: 9:00 AM**

**Location: Klamath Conference Room  
202 Mira Loma Drive, Oroville, CA 95965**

### **Or Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88974119154?pwd=V01CaUpYVEw3VFpNQS84YkFSSmJkQT09>

**Meeting ID: 889 7411 9154**

**Passcode: 575904**

**Join via phone +1 408 638 0968**

- 1. CALL TO ORDER** – Dave Lee, President
  
- 2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS – 9:01 am.** Chair Dave Lee, Director Samantha Lewis, Treasurer Colleen Hatfield; District Manager Thad Walker; staff Dallas Koller, Faith Churchill, and Wolfy Rougle; District Conservationist Dan Taverner
  
- 3. REVISIONS TO AGENDA** (only emergency situations requiring the need to take immediate actions may be added as action items pursuant to Gov. code 549954.2(b))
  
- 4. PUBLIC COMMENT (on non-action items) - None**

*(1) (3 min. limit per speaker/topic, 15 minutes/person/meeting total) (2) Public comment is encouraged. Any member of the public may address the Board with any comment related to the Resource Conservation District's areas of concern.*

*However, no action can be taken by the Board on such items at this current meeting. The Board may direct staff to agendaize such items for consideration at a future meeting. (3) \*Please note that all action items will have time set aside for public comment prior to the vote occurring. After a motion*

*is made and seconded by two BCRCB Directors, the Chair will first ask for any further discussion from the Directors and Associate Directors and then Chair will open up the item for brief public comment limited to 2 minutes/person. After the public comment period closes a vote will be held.*

## 5. CONSENT AGENDA:

- a) Review and approval of the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on 4/18/2024 – Samantha moved to accept the consent agenda, Colleen seconded, motion passed unanimously

## 6. ACTION ITEMS – Dave Lee, President

- a) Review and approval of Financials/ Accounts Payable- Colleen Hatfield – Why the plumbing bill? – Because we installed a new sink in the shop (a new installation, not a repair).

In April we had more money going out than coming in but that's not surprising; we have plenty of outstanding invoices to funders (i.e., accounts receivable) to offset expenses. – Samantha moved to accept the current financial statements, Colleen seconded; motion passed unanimously.

**2024-25 Draft Budget:** Our budget has grown from \$3 million annually to \$5 million, precipitating the need for us to add a dedicated financial manager position (a.k.a. business manager) at about 30 hrs/week, someone who would not work on conservation projects. This would be in place of our current situation of a very part-time bookkeeper, a super active volunteer treasurer, plus a district manager who also works half-time on conservation projects.

Looking out toward this time next year, the “hiring need” tab shows a stark drop-off in available staff hours in spring 2025; this looks concerning, but the same drop-off seems to be predicted every year and always ends up being averted by grants that are awarded in the meantime. Samantha suggested looking back at recent budget years and performing a comprehensive **budget-to-actual for billable staff hours** so the board can analyze past trends.

Reserves: Bookkeeper Cheryl performed a deeper analysis of quarterly operating costs and concluded that our reserves target (representing 3 months of operating expenses) stands at about \$150,000. Cheryl suggests putting in \$45,000 a year, which would help us meet our target in a little less than 3 years. Samantha suggested we could add more than that (since we can always transfer money back to general accounts at any time), and we should move the reserves account to a different institution so we can take advantage of higher savings interest rates at other banks than Mechanics. **For next month:** the budget will be revised to show a higher reserves amount and Colleen will research higher-yielding deposit options.

- b) Review of Changes to BCRC D Policies and Procedures Section 1 updates -David Lee and Andrew Sohnrey – Dave moved to approve the changes. Samantha suggested that in the future the board be presented with a red-lined version (after all questions/comments in the working document are resolved). Then upon Board review, the Board motion could direct staff to accept all changes and upload the revised version to our website/Drive. Colleen seconded Dave's motion and motion passed unanimously. Dave asked Samantha to take on section 2 of the P&Ps? Samantha agreed.
- c) Review Financial Manager Position Description -Thad Walker – Dave wasn't sure we could find someone with the range of qualifications the position description asks for (i.e., the financial acumen combined with HR skills, etc). Samantha stated it's attractive that the position calls for 30 hrs/week with 2 days/week remote, and also suggested it's better to start with the full wish list and see who applies, rather than start with lower standards than what we want. Samantha suggested we remove the “in a special district” from the “three+ years of financial management,” since we would likely seriously consider someone who had 3+ years of financial experience in a business. Colleen added we could condense many items into simpler ones (e.g. condense all HR items into “manage human resources/personnel”). Of course we can always add that experience in a special district/natural resources is preferred but not required.
- d) Colby Mountain Recreation Project -CEQA Negative Declaration and Notice of Determination for the Colby Mountain Recreation Project - Wolfy Rouble/ Thad Walker – CEQA recommends that when a NEPA document has already been developed and signed for a project, the subsequent CEQA document should base itself on the NEPA document and should only analyze the resource elements (if any) which the NEPA document did not analyze

to an extent that satisfies CEQA. This was the strategy we used in developing this ND.

Samantha moved to approve the CEQA ND and sign the NOD; Colleen seconded; motion passed unanimously.

- e) Agreement with Sub-Terra Heritage Resource Investigations, Greg White for Crane Valley Meadow Restoration, archeological survey, and report - Faith Churchill – Dr. White holds a Ph.D. in anthropology and teaches at CSU-Chico. Colleen moved to accept the agreement, Samantha seconded, motion passed unanimously.
- f) Agreement with Vestra, Wendy Johnston for Crane Valley Meadow Restoration, wildlife biological evaluation and assessment - Faith Churchill – Vestra will write the reports for both CEQA and NEPA on our behalf; we have worked with them on Butte Creek House and it was a good experience; and they had the lowest bid. Colleen moved to accept the agreement, Samantha seconded, motion passed unanimously.
- g) Agreement with Far Western Anthropological Research Group for SFLAP Round 2: Feather Falls archeological survey and report - Wolfy Rougle – This marks the first time we will try out a unique system of having a professional archaeologist team up with the cultural resources technicians from a local Tribe to perform the heritage surveys for CEQA. We have seen a couple of dismaying examples in the past where a professional archaeologist missed Tribal cultural resources, resulting in delays and frustration after the Tribal cultural monitors were brought on-site (to monitor implementation) and discovered the missed resources. We think this system will avoid problems like that. Far Western and Mooretown have had a good working relationship for almost 4 years now, and now cross-train each others' staff. Colleen moved to accept the agreement, Samantha seconded, motion passed unanimously.
- h) Agreement with Mooretown Rancheria for SFLAP Round 2: Feather Falls cultural monitoring - Wolfy Rougle. See item (g) above. Colleen moved to accept the agreement, Samantha seconded, motion passed unanimously.
- i) Agreement with PG&E for Poe Reach Trail Planning-Thad Walker – BCRC D initially did a feasibility study on this trail for PG&E, since during the FERC relicensing process, a partner submitted this trail project as a recreation amenity that PG&E should fund. Now the project is entering the serious planning and design phase. PG&E has turned to BCRC D for this phase since we did the feasibility study. This will be a fee-for-service project. Samantha moved to accept the agreement, Colleen seconded, motion passed unanimously. Samantha noted first responders are likely to appreciate the improved canyon access.
- j) Agreement with Howler Group INC for Poe Reach Trail Planning-Thad Walker – Howler Group, a highly specialized trail engineering firm, helped us review and refine our proposal and will be the planning/engineering contractor for this project. Colleen moved to accept the agreement, Samantha seconded, motion passed unanimously.
- k) Agreement with Plumas Corporation for the completion of requirements for Storm Water Construction General Permit and Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan for Butte Creek House -Thad Walker - This is needed for the implementation phase of this meadow restoration project. Per our 401 permit, due to the size of this project, we will need to develop a “SWPPP” (pronounced “swepp,” Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan). Our experience with Plumas Corps in the past has been good and they are highly qualified in this type of plan development. Samantha moved to accept the agreement, Colleen seconded, motion passed unanimously.
- l) Next Board of Directors Meeting Thursday, June 20, 2024, at 9:00 AM, Location: Klamath Conference Room 202 Mira Loma Drive, Oroville, CA

## **7. RCD PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS -STAFF REPORTS**

- a) Project Updates

- At the Sac Valley Regional Meeting of RCDs yesterday hosted by BCRCD (thanks to Sierra Nevada Brewery for donating the Big Room space and part of the cost of food), there was a lot of discussion about state funding; some RCDs were even not able to attend due to budget-related travel restrictions; CAL FIRE will have a pause on any future grants for a little while. The C2P2 agreement with NRCS, UCANR, CARCD and RCDs makes it easier to collaborate across agencies. The soil hub coordinator, Margot, presented on her work so far. She will be writing several block grants for soil health projects on behalf of the Sac Valley region of RCDs. BCRCD continues to pursue an almond TA RCPP. Special thanks to Board member Andrew Sohnrey for donating the most popular of all the raffle items: a gift basket from his farm store.

#### PARTNERS' REPORTS (5-minute limit per group)

- a) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) – Dan shared that Toastmasters meets in the very same Mira Loma building weekly; last month, Toastmasters had FFA members give speeches. It made him reflect that this would be a great group of young people to get involved in our Speak-Off contest this year.

The NRCS Area Engineer position just flew this morning, and one of the Field Offices where the position would be hosted is Oroville. The pay scale for federal employees based in Butte County was recently raised to be equivalent to that in Sacramento County, which should help recruit and retain employees. In addition to Garrett the new forester, NRCS now has a CSU-Chico intern plus an incoming Soil Conservationist (filling Owen's old role). NRCS FO-Oroville now has more staff than they've ever had! They also have more vehicles than ever, so Dan is looking into asking for improved parking lot security. Dan asked that Carrie Wendt of Point Blue, who uses a desk in the Oroville office once every 1-2 weeks, be able to spend that day in the Chico BCRCD office instead, so that Oroville desk can be used by a 40-hr-per-week worker. BCRCD will think about it.

Chico Soil Survey office is probably going to close. Andrew Conlin just retired. The soils survey office and equipment might move to the Oroville FO?? Dan asked, What are BCRCD's plans for "The Well" (the storage container)? – Thad responded, We are planning to keep it there and utilize it as storage space, esp for South County projects. While there is a little spare space in that container, Thad suggested Soils Survey may want to get their own Conex if they have a lot of equipment.

More soil health funding is coming and Dan suggested BCRCD consider dedicating a staff person to carbon farm planning. He offered to assist by taking that person along to trainings etc. Thad stated that when a stable funding stream for carbon farm planning becomes available, that's what BCRCD will do. Dan continues to pursue a biochar initiative whereby biochar would be produced in the foothills, applied in the valley, and NRCS would pay both landowners for their participation. Dan also sees opportunity for the RCD in obtaining and making available (for rent) hard-to-get farm equipment, such as a biochar burner, no-till drill, or high-accuracy nutrient applicator for rice. Samantha stated that renting this type of equipment to growers fits very well with our educational component. Of course, the right funding source needs to be identified and equipment always needs to be maintained!

NRCS currently has an enhancement with CSP that would pay \$5,000/ac to make biochar in the foothills. There's a lot involved though – air quality, trucking costs, etc. Ideal applications for biochar are 1) where burning (e.g. orchard piles) is happening anyway, biochar is better for both air and soil; and 2) when applied to dryland and/or marginal farms, it can dramatically increase water-holding capacity.

- b) Butte County departments  
c) Community groups

### 8. BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORTS

- a) Butte County RCD Directors and Associate Directors are welcome to report

### 9. ADJOURNMENT – 10:53 am

advance of meetings. If you would like to be added to, or removed from, the email list, please notify the Butte County RCD at (530) 534-0112, ext. 122 or by email to: [bcrd@carcd.org](mailto:bcrd@carcd.org). The BCRC D also publicly posts notice and agenda of meetings 72 hours in advance of meetings at the Butte County RCD office located at 150 Chuck Yeager Way, Suite A, Oroville, CA. **Reasonable Accommodations:** In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Butte County RCD Manager at (530) 534-0112, ext. 122.

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