



East Merced Resource Conservation District (RCD)
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, July 19, 2023
In-person, Call in, and Zoom meeting
East Merced RCD - admin@eastmercedrcd.org

REGULAR RCD Board Meeting 3:00 PM - Called to order at 3:04 PM

In Person: Shirish Shah, Lynn Sullivan, Reyn Akiona, Jean Okuye, Trevor Hutton, Maria Cortes, Ursula Stock, Pa Yang, Trina Walley, Chanin Peridia - ESRCD office manager, Laura Westerfeld -Loan Manager from Farm Services Agency, Sared Yim- NRCS Soil Conservationist

Zoom Attendees: Emma Adest, Sean Murray, Maria Cortes

Absent: Michael Bliss

Welcome and Introductions: Maria Cortes- summer Intern, Laura Westerfeld – Farm Service Agency (FSA)

Public Comments: Open to address items on agenda

Oral communications:

Introductions:

Laura Westerfeld works with farmers with very limited resources, and it is difficult to get grant information out to them and NRCS is understaffed. FSA used to do partnering programs, working with water districts, and RCDs' and internal coordination is needed to continue this. Merced has 5 RCDs but EMRCD and Grasslands are the only active ones. CCI has created position to hire coordinator to help revive or connect inactive RCDs.

Testimony Corrections and/or additions to the Agenda: (ACTION)

Reyn would like to add a closed session to the back end of the agenda - 2050.4.1 Consider the appointment, promotion or job performance of employees.

Statement for the minutes: Reyn is fully in belief that EMRCD board/staff/everyone has sincere intention, supports ag values of the region and supports safe and diverse work environment for staff, and encourages taking actions/verbiage that expresses this well to partners.

MSC Motion to accept the Testimony Corrections to the Agenda MSC: (Jean/Reyn) Passes Unanimously

1. Consent Agenda (ACTION) 5 min Stock
 - a. June 21, 2023 minutes approval and signature
 - b. Treasury Report for June 2023 Stock
 - i. Cash Balance as of June 30 is \$39,720.83 (includes \$40,000 loan).
 - ii. Income total year-to-date (as of June 30- will change when county posts accruals) - \$321,360.68 which includes CARCD loan of \$40,000.00
 - iii. Expenses total year-to-date (as of June 30) \$264,598.85
 - iv. Net income year-to-date (as of June 30): \$56,777.83
 - v. Accounts receivable not tracked by county: \$11,505.62
 - vi. Line of Credit - \$0 (of \$30,000 available - 0 money borrowed)
 - vii. 4 year grant summary review Murray

MSC Motion to accept the Treasury Report and minutes MSC: (Reyn/Lynn) Passes Unanimously

2. Written and Oral Updates from Partners and Projects - 3 minute each, except guest speaker
 - a. Region 9 report Akiona
 - i. Presentations from RCD partner organizations: Carbon Cycle Institute, the Climate Beneficial Fiber

Partnership/Fibershed, NRCS, CARCD, the CA Department of Conservation, the Ag. and Industrial Science department of West Hills College Coalinga, Bar 21 dairy owner partnered with Bloom Energy, on funding and collaboration opportunities for RCDs. Election of Reyn as Region 9 President, Matt Hurley as Treasurer, and Matt Angel as Secretary. The Vice President position remains unfilled.

ii. Ursula suggests assigning the RCD's of region 9 to specific years in advance for Region 9 meetings. They are to be coordinated and lead by boards of all Region 9 RCD's in rotation. No one seems to step up to the plate on their own, making for last minute work to pull this off.

b. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Representative Sared Yim

i. NRCS representative – Sared, the new soil conservationist, introduced himself and reported working on batch 2 apps, funded 6 CSP, 3 NAQI, and 105 active applications.

c. Sustainable Groundwater Agencies (SGA) Representative Okuye

i. Emails from Breanna from Farm Bureau, 3 agencies in area. Jean was unable to attend last meeting.

ii. Merced and East Turlock GSAs were approved for an MLRP program, plan for a wildlife corridor. Requirements through the MLRP program require at least a 10 year durable benefit.

d. East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District (ESRCD) Walley

i. Application for GrizzlyCorps fellow is awarded, and a person has accepted the position (position requires a full-time manager to oversee them now), starting in Sept. The description includes attendance at SGA meetings and reporting out to EMRCD, East Stan. RCD, and Madera-Chowchilla RCDs.

ii. Irrigation Evaluations are going well, Kevin of Madera/Chowchilla RCD is managing the scheduling this year.

e. John Vollmar - Vernal Pool Project update Vollmar

i. No report.

f. Manager's Report

i. Reminder of approved postponement of August meeting to 23rd (from 16th) Have to post the meeting reschedule at the same time as you would normally send out, post 72 hours in advance in person and online, then send out the agenda for the rescheduled meeting.

i. Converting SAMS login to Ursula (federal payment system) is in process

ii. DM position posting - discussion to follow and then Ursula can post it.

iii. Purchased 2 months Adobe pro for Maria.

iv. Vacation coverage update - covering items for Ursula's vacation. Payroll issue outstanding which Ursula will resolve with Trevor and Reyn.

iv. Borrowed Software: EMRCD is "borrowing" space on T sheets program belonging to East Stanislaus for tiem keeping and reporting purposes. They are near capacity. EMRCD is currently used up ESRCD's T sheets and will need to buy their own program or help upgrade ESRCDs. Ursula plans to reach out to other organizations to get recommendations of other affordable software. T sheets is \$20 a month plus \$8 for additional users.

g. Trevor Hutton, Irrigation Specialist

Hutton

i. Reported on Conservation Planner II, an NRCS course. It was 5 days covering a variety of NRCS topics with good instruction. The focus was on 9-step Conservation Planning process and methodology. Hands on learning included a mock CSPs on 9,000 acre delta property that's a working farm and migratory bird habitat. AKA Staten Island farm run by TNC with corn, potatoes, alfalfa with riparian rights on the property.

ii. WETA training Part II, by ITRC out of Cal Poly, West of Coalinga - 2.5 days. Good connector event for Trevor. With his with several years of experience,(with EMRCD and prior), Trevor knew a lot of this already. The course fee was free for this second half. WETA grant pays for his time.

h. Maria Cortez -Introduced summer intern for WETA grant. She started at end of May, through August 18th and is a senior at UC Merced majoring in Environmental Science.

i. Maria reported on Cal Poly (ITRC) course she attended in June, Irrigation Training and Research Center part 1 training. It was 3 days, 50% lecture and 50% hands-on. She got to see all kinds of water systems, including filter designs and a farm that shows pump stations and other irrigation systems. Glad to have participated in a few WETA evals prior to Cal Ploy training,

because she was familiar with the terminology. This work is new to her.

3. Financial and Project Review

a. Transactions and Invoices for approval of payment (**ACTION**)

Stock

- i. Elite Card, prepaid per consent in Jan. 2023, \$24.00, includes Google Suite @\$24,
- ii. CalChoice Administrators, health insurance July, \$556.70. The new rate increase is not until October.
- iii. Consulting fee of \$35/hour @ 2.5 hours for Raini Patteson - file organization. Total of \$87.50.
- iv. Discussion regarding payment to Sean Murray for 2022-23 financial reporting. The amount of \$750 proposed, and a clarification was made a annual fee of less than \$600 avoids tax reporting. Reyn requests a formal invoice for next month's board meeting, with a 1 page report to show level of work.

MSC Motion to approve paying invoices listed in items A. 1, 2, 3 MSC: (Reyn/Shirish), Passes Unanimously

b. Budget for 23-24 (**ACTION**)

Stock/Murray

- i. Review of Pro Forma budget
 - a. Sean went over the pro forma budget, projecting a net income of \$27,111 using new staff wages.
 - b. Sean showed scenario with a FT DM, within the current budget. In this scenario, ERMCD would have to borrow \$15,000 from the line of credit, which can be repaid in a few months if everything goes according to plan.
 - c. David Farnsworth is willing to look at completed bookkeeping work of budget for a fee
 - d. Board asked Ursula to verify line of credit requirements with the county.
 - e. Reyn requests copy of the CARCD loan agreement to review the terms.
- ii. Review of projected needs
 - i. QB time keeping software subscription, or another option
- iii. Review and recommendation for wage increases.
 - i. Brief discussion, postponed to closed session
- iv. Review of salaried rate to hire FT DM.
 - i. \$55,000 to 85,000 (hourly rate of \$26.44 -\$40.87)

MSC Motion to approve 23-24 Pro Forma Budget under current staffing condition without approving changes in wages MSC: (Reyn/Jean), Passes Unanimously

c. Annual Plan 23-24

Stock

- i. Changes to Annual Plan regarding staffing, new bookkeeper@ 4k/half a year, aim for conservation planner, one more summer WETA inter at set wage, increasing TA capacity to meet grant needs (close to full docket, but there are some options), need for social media manager, TA training - recommendation to keep sending interns to ITRC evaluations training, DM training.
- ii. Projects and Programs - partnerships, trying to find funding for kayak use, certification of instructors and funding programs for school educational programs, Annual farmer work group meeting did not happen last year, fall is the best time to host this. NRCS wants local leaders to host this but EMRCD does not have an agreement with NRCS to fund the wage/time input.
- iii. Outreach - aim to develop a questionnaire to poll successes and failures with grant programs, 1-on-1 farmer outreach including language options, website and social media, funding to table at events, getting volunteers including attendance at non-farmer events to find volunteers. Signage for the office.
- iv. Revisit mission statement, develop/implement programs promoting conservation priorities, collaboration with research institutions, opportunities for participation in conservation programs including credit courses.
- v. Suggestion of asking board members to update the annual plan.

MSC Motion to approve 23-24 annual plan MSC: (Shirish//Reyn), Passes Unanimously

- d. CARCD Loan- projected payoff date Stock
 - i. \$34,000 is due on Dec 31, 2023. Projections look good for payment. Notation that the board agreed to wait on paying off the line of credit for as long as possible in the year. Line of credit payment comes out of the interfund cash account.
- e. EPA Invoice for submission through wire transfer and payment.
 - i. No invoice. Only one invoice left for \$5,977.00, EMRCD will gain \$500 from this last invoice due at the end of year.
- f. WCB VP Invoice for submission for payment. Grant completes 3/15/2024
 - i. WCB \$4,851.00 (EMRCD bills WCB). Submitted last month, awaiting payment
 - ii. Vollmar \$4,890.00 (EMRCD pays Vollmar) approved last month.

(No Action Needed)

- g. CDFA SWEEP Grant - Update Stock
 - i. CDFA says the remaining money must be used on people previously served in the grant.
Not sure how to move forward here.
 - ii. Trina says new SWEEP application is posted.
- h. RCPP AFT (USDA-NRCS) grant Stock
 - i. EMRCD submitted invoice #4 For the amount of \$4431.19
- i. WETA (Mobile Irrigation Lab begun in July 2022) **(ACTION)**
 - i. Invoice for 2nd quarter is in progress, to be submitted this week
 - ii. Permission to pay subcontractors, EastStan & Madera/Chowchilla prior to the next meeting once cash arrives
 - iii. Ursula gave review of grant status

MSC Motion and to approve payment of the WETA subcontractors once our invoice has been received

- j. MID Water Trailer Stock
 - ii. Retention update. (Work done by Jean voluntarily)
- k. WCB/CARCD CFP & Habitat Implementation Block Grant
 - i. Grant has started, no billing yet. Will begin billing in the next round.
 - ii. Made contact with Rich and Tanya Gemperly, landowners. ERMCD will be doing this part of grant with ESRCD
 - iii. Help with section 3 of the monarch pollinator habitat on public lands. We need a public land location.

(No Action Needed)

- 4. Bookkeeping and Audit Updates **(ACTION)** Stock/Walley
 - a. Trina introduced Chanin, bookkeeper
 - a. Trina introduced Chanin, East Stanislaus new office manager and bookkeeper. She will work for ERMCD on QB and has decades of quickbooks. Chanin gave a quick review of her experience: human resource management with organization as her strength.
 - b. Pending Grant Applications
 - i. RAC IRWMP outreach \$30,000 is close to being signed
 - c. Pending Contracts with Partners **(ACTION)**
 - i. Approve Grizzly Corps Fellow @ 24% time (\$5000) for Sept 23 through July 24 based on water
 - a. Attend SIGMA meetings, help with Evals?
 - ii. CDFA Cons Planning agreement With ESRCD and MCRCD (increased to \$5500 per grant)
 - iii. MLRP Grants - awarded but no action. EMRCD's scope of work and budget is undefined
with Merced Subbasin and East Turlock GSA's- Ursula needs help

- iv. USDA NAQI Agreement for fall intern - will have to submit by mid-September to get in the system. Send template agreement to board for them to suggest actions.
- v. ESRCD agreement to contract Chanin, bookkeeper was presented. **The funding needs to be \$4000 for 6 months.**

MSC Motion to accept contract for bookkeeper with amendment to cost amount MSC: (Jean//Reyn), Passes Unanimously

MSC Motion to accept contract with ESRCD for CDFA Conservation Agriculture Planning grant MSC: (Reyn/Jean), Passes Unanimously

5. Requirements of the Board 10 min **(ACTION)**

- a. Approve up to 30 hour work week for manager in August **(ACTION)**
- b. Reminder of postponement of August meeting to 23rd (from 16th) **(ACTION)**
- c. Review and consideration of correspondence Stock
 - i. National Association of Conservation Districts - **Reyn volunteered to donate \$2** to join.
 - ii. Approval of County Contract for services, Emma to change POC to Reyn and re-send contract.
 - iii. Certificate of Coverage for 23-24 GRSMA (liability and workers comp)
 - iv. CA Association of Special Districts organization - wait to join or pay a nominal amount. **Ursula volunteering \$2**

MSC Motion to accept contract with County with amendment to POC to Reyn MSC (Jean//Reyn), Passes Unanimously

MSC Motion to approve up to a 30-hour work week for the General Manager MSC: (Reyn/Shirish), Passes Unanimously

5. Adjournment at 5:45 p.m.

Summary of Closed Session held on July 19

A closed session was held from 5:55 to 6:15 p.m. in the board room of 2926 G Street, Merced Ca.

Present were board members: Reyn Akiona, Jean Okuye, Shirish Shaw and Lynn Sullivan and DM, Ursula Stock


The purpose of the session was pay increases for DM, Ursula Stock and Irrigation Specialist, Trevor Hutton.

A discussion was held regarding wage rates, cost of living increase and comparable local wage rates and EMRCD affordability. Further discussion included a future incremental pay increase for Trevor (\$26.50) once he has completed the three approved plans needed to gain Conservation Planner status. This will provide EMRCD a new level of capability in technical assistance useful in several of our grants. EMRCD currently pays East Stanislaus for conservation planner signoffs.

The new DM rate is \$30.54 and the new Irrigation Specialist rate is \$25.00. Both are hourly rates.

MSC Motion to accept payrate increases: (Reyn/Shirish), Passes Unanimously

NEXT MEETING: August 23, 2023, 3:00 pm - 5:00 p.m.

Board Signature:  _____ **Date:** 9/6/23 _____

Name: Reyn Akiona **Title:** Board President