Minutes of January 15th 2026 LCRCD Board Meeting

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Randy Krag of the LCRCD Board of Directors, called the meeting to order at ___1:03____ p.m., Jing Wang will take the Minutes.

Directors Present: Randy Krag, Kate Schmidt-Hopper, Shula Shoup, Merry Jo Velasquez, Harry Lyons, Steve Campbell, Joseph Sullivan

Directors Absent: None

Others Present:
In Person: Jing Wang (Bookkeeper), Erica Lundquist (NRCS District Conservationist), Julia Sullivan (Executive Director), Megan McCluer-Lopez (Finance Manager), Noah Cornell (Soil and Water Specialist)

Virtually: John Vandervort (Conservation Program Manager)

1. **INTRODUCTIONS** and consideration of extra items not appearing on the posted agenda.
   - No one proposed any additional items

2. **PUBLIC INPUT** - Anyone may speak for three minutes on a subject not on the agenda; no action will be taken by the Board.
   - Since no public attendees were present and no one present had input, there was no public comment.

3. **BOARD REVIEW AND UPDATES**

3.1 UPDATE on staff activities - Julia Sullivan, Executive Director
- Julia updated the Board on her communication with Supervisor Pyska regarding the current status of services the RCD provides to the RRA. Supervisor Pyska expressed support and appreciation for RCD's continuing assistance for another year.
- The Clearlake Oaks project is underway. A recent meeting with partner organizations and members of the POA Board took place which addressed some community concerns. Julia and team are building a comprehensive outreach strategy for the project.
- Julia gave an update on the Kuhlanapo Wetland Restoration Project, the RCD will contract with FlowWest to update the restoration plan to address Water Board comments, incorporate changes for the spontaneous breach and resubmit permit applications. (With LACO revising the project to account for the breach.)
- Julia announced the retirement of RCD Watershed Program manager Greg Dills, with a retirement date of February 6, 2026, and read a formal retirement letter from Greg to the Board. A retirement party for Greg is scheduled for February 11th, 2026.

3.2 ROLL CALL on ongoing projects with Board Host
- Randy Krag - no update
- Harry Lyons

- Harry is working with Shula and Kate on "Field day in the Creek". Once a date is set, Harry, Kate, and Shula will handle insurance, presenters and other logistics for the event.

- Kate Schmidt-Hopper
    - Kate gave an update on transportation problems for the Field day in the Creek event, that due to Middletown Unified School District budget problems, the district no longer provides transportation for field trips. Which can significantly impact turnout.
    - Julia suggested that the RCD might be able to help with transportation costs, she will review the RCD's workshop budgets to see how the RCD can support youth engagement.
    - Kate also reported that RCD Associate Director Tony Blyleven is running into issues regarding the Trout-in-the-Classroom project, where Fish & Wildlife staff are insisting all trout be released in Lake Mendocino, not in local streams.
- Shula Shoup - no update
- Merry Jo Velasquez
    - Merry Jo gave an update on "Kids in the Creek". Merry Jo is experiencing communication problems with the U.S. Forest Service to coordinate the event. She is currently organizing different organizations to present at different aspects of the event. Merry Jo also shared that it'll be ideal to hold the event in April.
- Steve Campbell - no update
- Joseph Sullivan - no update

3.3 UPDATE on NRCS activities – Erica Lundquist

- Erica gave an update on the current ongoings at NRCS:
    - The NRCS is currently focused on planning and assisting existing clients.
    - NRCS is processing applications for the coming fiscal year; the application deadline is January 15th, 2026.
    - The forestry team recently attended field training with Mary Mayeda, NRCS Area Forester (Ukiah), to learn how to certify tree planting.
    - Erica described a recent appearance of mountain lions activities, and how it connects to ongoing conversations about field safety protocols.

3.4 UPDATE from President and Directors

- Randy Krag
    - Randy shared a Tribal Agricultural Fellowship opportunity he saw in the Farm Bureau newsletter. (To be discussed in item 7.2 Tribal Agriculture Fellowship)
- Harry Lyons - no update
- Kate Schmidt-Hopper - no update
- Shula Shoup - no update
- Merry Jo Velasquez - no update
- Steve Campbell
    - Steve reported on a company called KOLOMA, who is looking to work on natural hydrogen farming in the south Lake County area.
    - The Board discussed pursuing hydrogen for power as a source of clean energy, and potential long-term economic/energy development for Lake County.
- Joseph Sullivan - no update

3.5 UPDATE from Strategic Planning Committee

- Randy introduces the item but noted an overlap with a later agenda item.
- A decision was made by the Board to delay discussion until item 4.5, adoption of LCRCD strategic direction 2026–2030.

4. ACTION – Includes discussion.

4.1 VOTE on approval of December 2025 meeting minutes
Discussion: No discussion.

Motion to Approve: Merry Jo Velasquez
Seconded: Joseph Sullivan
Ayes: Randy Krag, Harry Lyons, Kate Schmidt-Hopper, Shula Shoup, Steve Campbell,
Nays: none
Absent: none
Abstained: none
Result: Passed

4.2 VOTE on acceptance of November 2025 financial report
Discussion:

- Merry Jo inquired about the holding status on a bill from Vision Gardens, Julia stated that the issue is currently being addressed by the RCD's legal counsel and will be subject of the closed session.
- Harry inquired about the $6,500 bill from LJS Leadership Solutions. Megan explained that the bill was funded under a previous CFSC-County Coordinator grant and the expense was allocated to the prior fiscal year. Final workshop and report were completed November 2025.
- At Kate's inquiry, Megan and Jing gave an explanation on the 23.80 Professional & Specialized - Projects expense account, and a large open balance on a NACD-TA24 Q3 2025 invoice.

Motion to Approve: Merry Jo Velasquez
Seconded: Steve Campbell
Ayes: Randy Krag, Harry Lyons, Kate Schmidt-Hopper, Shula Shoup, Joseph Sullivan
Nays:. none
Absent: none
Abstained: none
Result: Passed

4.3 CARCD ballot and election material (possible action)
Discussion:

- Harry took the lead on this item and explained that he had emailed the ballot and materials to all RCD Board directors. The ballot, which is due in March, is long and complicated, and Harry proposed tabling the item until next month's meeting.

No vote. Tabled until next Board meeting.

4.4 VOTE on approval of pursuing "Community Project" funding for proposed project(s)
Discussion:

- Julia introduced an opportunity to seek federal "Community Project Funding" (earmarks) through Congressman Thompson's office and other elected officials.
- The RCD has been in contact with two federal lobbying/consulting partners (Kiley & Associates; Mike Lane & Jayson Braude) who have worked closely with CARCD and several other RCDs.

- The consultants proposed a 5-month contract for $5,000 total to explore funding opportunities, with a focus on two specific project concepts:
    - o Project A – Prescribed Grazing + Cultural Burning Pilot (Robinson Rancheria & Chaos Sheep)
        - ▪ RCD Soil and Water Specialist Noah Cornell was invited to provide further detail and comment on the rarity of this funding opportunity.
    - o Project B – Defensible Space & Fuels Work in Clear Lake / North Shore
        - ▪ Essentially a rebid of a previous CAL FIRE Wildfire Prevention Grant proposal that was not funded.
- Julia gave a comparison of cost/benefit of consultants against typical grant writing costs, which the Board acknowledged will commit less staff time than a traditional grant writing process.
- The Board discussed earmark politics in general.
- Julia shared that she has confirmed with legal counsel that hiring lobbyists for these purposes is common and permissible. No grant funds can be used, and general operations spending should not exceed $5,000 a calendar quarter.

Motion to Approve: Joseph Sullivan
Seconded: Kate Schmidt-Hopper
Ayes: Randy Krag, Harry Lyons, Shula Shoup, Merry Jo Velasquez, Steve Campbell
Nays:. none
Absent: none
Abstained: none
Result: Passed

4.5 VOTE on adoption of "Lake County Resource Conservation District Strategic Direction: 2026-2030"

Discussion:

- o Julia, on behalf of the Strategic Planning Committee, presented the final strategic plan and recommended its adoption following two rounds of review and feedback from the RCD Board and staff.
- o Julia reviewed two new elements in the final revision, a refined purpose statement, and a set of guiding principles that were distilled from the survey responses and feedback Amy Stork (Strategic Planning Facilitator) collected.
- o Julia then outlined the next steps in the strategic planning process; It will be staff's responsibility to determine how to implement each strategy, and staff will work with Amy over the next month, leading up to a Strategic plan implementation workshop on February 11, 2026.

Motion to Approve: Kate Schmidt-Hopper
Seconded: Joseph Sullivan
Ayes: Randy Krag, Harry Lyons, Shula Shoup, Merry Jo Velasquez, Steve Campbell
Nays:. none
Absent: none
Abstained: none
Result: Passed

5. DISCUSSION – Does not include action.

5.1 Important strategic decisions/directions, how to use the document moving forward, and Board role in advancing the strategy

- Julia invited reflections from the Board regarding the adopted strategic plan. At Amy Stork's suggestion, each RCD Board director named words, concepts, or goals from the plan that felt especially important to them.
  - Randy Krag - Community
  - Harry Lyons – Forward Thinking
  - Kate Schmidt-Hopper – Collaborative & Resilience
  - Shula Shoup - Collaboration & Open-mindedness
  - Merry Jo Velasquez - Engagement
  - Steve Campbell - Forward Thinking
  - Joseph Sullivan – Partners & Partnership
- Julia proposed embedding the strategic plan in the monthly staff reports, and that each activity or project reported by staff should be linked to one or more strategies in the strategic plan.
- Kate raised the question of the Board's own role in advancing the strategic plan, and asked that each Board Director should reflect on the strategic plan and ask: "How, as a Board member, will I help advance this strategy?" and "What can I do personally, or what can we do as a Board, to further specific goals?" Then bring those ideas back as an agenda item next month for discussion.

5.2 Mid-year budget adjustment

- After reviewing the year-to-date financials, Megan reported that there are only small variances and minor new line items, such as interest on the truck loan (a new expense line totaling only a few hundred dollars). There are no significant changes that would warrant a formal budget amendment. Therefore, staff recommended not making a mid-year budget adjustment.

5.3 Committee(s) formation

- The Board discussed how the Board should structure its committees going forward, particularly the Finance Committee and the Executive Director (ED) review committee, and how this intersects with Brown Act requirements.
- Megan explained that based on the recent ethics/Brown Act training, there is an important distinction between standing committees and ad hoc committees.
- The Board discussed, but did not create or re-form any committees during this agenda item. The consensus was to obtain legal guidance first on the Brown Act implications. Then the Board will return at a future meeting to decide how to structure the Finance and Executive Director (ED) review Committees.

5.4 Debrief trainings: Ethics AB 1234 Compliance, Sexual Harassment Prevention for Supervisors

- The Board briefly reflected on the required trainings which Board and staff members recently attended.
- Julia noted that like most special districts, the RCD has no separate HR department, so she is both ED and HR and direct supervisor to most employees, making it critical to have clear reporting channels if staff are uncomfortable raising issues directly with her.

6. **CLOSED SESSION**

CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – ANTICIPATED LITIGATION

Initiation of litigation pursuant to paragraph (4) of subdivision (d) of Section 54956.9: 1 case.

- *The RCD Board of Directors entered a closed session at 3:00PM, and exited at 3:20PM, no action was taken.*

7. DISCUSSION – Does not include action.

7.1 Transitioning to a new insurance carrier

- The district is transitioning its insurance to SDRMA (Special District Risk Management Authority). The RCD finance team confirmed that it is responsible for completing and submitting all paperwork.

7.2 Tribal Agriculture Fellowship

- Randy brought up the Tribal Agriculture Fellowship, a program that provides funding/support for Native American students pursuing technical education and training in: Agriculture, Food systems, Natural resource management.
- The Board discussed how the RCD could help make local tribal students aware of this opportunity and possibly support applications.

7.3 Proposition 4 in C major

- Harry performed a humorous song titled "Proposition 4 in C Major" at the prior request of other Board members.

7.4 February 11, 2026 gathering

- The Board and staff confirmed plans for a February 11, 2026 gathering to celebrate Greg Dills' retirement. The gathering will take place after a staff workshop already scheduled for that day.

8. AGENDA ITEM REQUESTS

- CARCD ballot and resolutions (follow-up to Item 4.3)
  - Harry to present recommendations, and the Board to discuss and vote on how RCD will respond to each resolution.
- Discussion item on Board role in advancing the Strategic Plan (follow-up to Item 5.1)
- Committee structure and Brown Act compliance (follow-up to Item 5.3)
  - After getting guidance from legal counsel, bring back an item to clarify which committees must be standing/Brown Act-compliant, and to re-form the Finance Committee and the Executive Director Review Committee.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to Adjourn: Harry Lyons
Seconded: Shula Shoup
Ayes: Randy Krag, Kate Schmidt-Hopper, Merry Jo Velasquez, Steve Campbell, Joseph Sullivan
Nays: none
Absent: none
Abstained: none
Result: Adjourned

The meeting was adjourned at ___4:02_____ p.m.