

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Richard C. Brody  
President

Steven Rosentsweig  
Vice President

Nancy Helsley  
Treasurer

Beth Burnam  
Director

Laurie Price  
Director

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER**  
Clark Stevens

## REGULAR BOARD MEETING

### EIGHT-HUNDRED FIFTY-FIFTH MEETING

**Tuesday August 27, 2024—5:00 P.M.**

Location: RCD District Office, 4505 Las Virgenes Road, Suite 215, Calabasas

The meeting can also be accessed remotely via Zoom. Members of the public are able to watch/listen to the meeting and provide comment at appropriate times by selecting this link:

<https://rcdsmm-org.zoom.us/j/83062285194?pwd=UG5hVlF4Z3NBRjNHR2RyWjNBclY2UT09>.

You may also join the meeting by dialing the following phone number: (669) 900-6833 and entering the meeting ID and passcode: **Meeting ID: 830 6228 5194 Meeting Passcode: 370601**

## AGENDA

Information about, and copies of, supporting materials for agenda items are available for public review at the RCDSMM office at (818) 597-8627. A fee may be charged for copies.

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS
3. PUBLIC COMMENTS  
This is the time set aside for those wishing to address the Board on matters which fall under the Board's jurisdiction. If the matter you address is not on the agenda, Directors may not discuss or take action on comments made here except to put the matter on the agenda, at their discretion, for a future Board meeting. If the matter you address is already on the agenda, the Board will consider your comments when making their decision. Each commenter will have a time limit of three minutes.
4. USDA/NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE REPORT:  
Summary of NRCS programs and activities by District Conservationists.
5. MINUTES: Approval of minutes for meeting on July 22, 2024.
6. FINANCIAL REPORTING: Presentation of expense & other reports, through June 2024 (not included in emailed packet). This item may include a related discussion on budgeting and staff billing rates. \*This will be limited to 15 min.\*

## 7. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS:

- A. Draft of “Board Roles and Responsibilities”/“What is an RCD?”
- B. Staff Reports for June 2024:
  - i. Summary of general fund vs. billed hours
  - i. Clark Stevens, Executive Officer/Principal Architect
  - ii. Dan Cooper, Deputy Executive Officer/Principal Conservation Biologist
  - iii. Rosi Dagit, Principal Conservation Biologist
  - iv. Marilyn Brody French, Education & Engagement Director
  - v. Shelly Backlar, Community Resilience Coordinator

## 8. REGULAR CALENDAR

- B. Update by Personnel Committee on District Manager position.
- C. Approvals
  - i. Authorizing the RCD to reestablish the “Education Issue Committee” under CARCD.
- D. Report on Reserve Fund replenishment (*verbal*)

## 9. DIRECTORS’ COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

## 10. ADJOURNMENT

## 11. CLOSED SESSION

- a. Public Employment: District Manager hiring (Government Code Section 54957)

*Persons with disabilities may contact the Deputy Executive Officer at 818/597-8627 x101 at least 24 hours before the scheduled meeting to request receipt of an agenda in an alternative format or to request disability-related accommodations, including auxiliary aids or services, in order to participate in the public meeting. Later requests will be accommodated to the extent feasible.*

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Richard C. Brody  
President

Steven Rosentsweig  
Vice President

Nancy Helsley  
Treasurer

Beth Burnam  
Director

Laurie Price  
Director

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER**  
Clark Stevens

## REGULAR BOARD MEETING

EIGHT-HUNDRED FIFTY-FOURTH MEETING

**Monday July 22, 2024—6:00 P.M.**

## DRAFT MINUTES

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** the meeting was called to order by President R.C. Brody at 6:00 p.m. A quorum was established with Directors Nancy Helsley, Laurie Price, and Steve Rosentsweig in attendance. Director Beth Burnam joined virtually. Also in attendance were Associate Directors Dennis Washburn and Deborah Klein-Lopez. Office Manager/HR Specialist Lisa Rand was also present, and Executive Officer Clark Stevens, Deputy Executive Director Dan Cooper, Community Resilience Coordinator Shelly Backlar and Education Director Marilyn Brody-French joined virtually.
2. **CLOSED SESSION:** the meeting immediately went to a brief closed session (6:00-6:03), and then resumed regular session.
3. **INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS:** Glenn Bailey (former Director) joined virtually, as did Brooks Engelhardt, NRCS District Conservationist, and Jamie Quarfeld, NRCS Soil Conservationist, for their respective agencies. We were also joined by Cindy Solovei (virtually) and Rich Wilson of Agility, a financial consulting firm.
4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None
5. **USDA/NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE REPORT:** Mr. Engelhardt mentioned that they will have a new NRCS agreement with RCDSMM in the fall or spring. Ms. Quarfeld mentioned that they have several slide decks for virtual talks on urban agriculture, and that they are planning an urban agriculture conference and that Shelly and Clark will be invited to attend.
6. **MINUTES:** Approval of minutes for Board meeting of June 24, 2024. The Board reviewed the minutes and voted to approve them as presented. \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_; **approved 4-0.**
7. **FINANCIAL REPORTING:** Presentation of expense & other reports, through June 2024. The Board was presented with an organizational budget for 2024-2025, and Mr.

Brody made a motion to discuss the budget. The Board asked about posting the budget to the RCDSMM website, which staff will investigate. The Board also discussed developing a reserve policy (last updated 2017), which staff also agreed to investigate and to develop a revised policy. The financial report was “received and filed” (**Mr. Brody**). The 2024-25 budget was approved (**Ms. Helsley/Mr. Rosentsweig; approved 4:0**).

## 8. REGULAR CALENDAR

A. A report was made by the Personnel Committee on change in Executive Officer position, which would be eliminated (along with the Deputy Executive Officer position) once a new District Manager is hired later in the year. This update was “received and filed” (**Mr. Brody**).

### B. Approvals

- i. Authorizing the RCD to enter into a Cooperative Agreement with Caltrans District 7 and initiate the PID process (**Ms. Price/Mr. Rosentsweig; approved 4:0**).
- ii. Authorizing the RCD to enter into a grant agreement with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) in the amount of \$1,151,67.56 (**Ms. Price/Mr. Rosentsweig; approved 4:0**).
- iii. Authorizing an ~\$8.1 million contract (fully-funded) with Moffatt & Nichol for ongoing Topanga Lagoon work (**Ms. Price/Mr. Rosentsweig; approved 4:0**).

C. A report on Reserve Fund replenishment, and the Board noted that the reserve fund should be replenished soon, under the recently-approved budget. This update was “received and filed” (**Mr. Brody**).

## 9. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS:

- A. The new bank account was announced.
- B. Staff Reports were presented for May 2024.

## 10. DIRECTORS’ COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Ms. Price announced that she and Ms. Helsley will be attending a special meeting for CARCD in December in Sacramento. The Board agreed that RCDSMM should still remain part of CARCD

11. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 7:33 p.m. (**Ms. Helsley/Ms. Price; 4:0**).

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_

Dan Cooper, Deputy Executive Officer

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
R.C. Brody, President, Board of Directors

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE  
RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT of THE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS**

REQUESTING RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF STANDING COMMITTEES

EDUCATION ISSUE COMMITTEE

**WHEREAS**, Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) are authorized by Division 9 of the Public Resources Codes, under section 9419 (a-d) to develop educational programs for youth and adults; and

**WHEREAS**, the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) Bylaws, Article 1. General Provisions, Section 3. Purposes, the Association has the purposes for which it is authorized under Division 9 of the Public Resources Code of the State of California. As such, the Association is instrumental to member Districts in carrying out conservation of the natural resources and soil and water policies of the State of California, insofar as those functions have been delegated to the Districts by statute; and

**WHEREAS**, up until 2018, CARCD listed *Education* as one of their issue-based committees in Article VIII, Section 1, Committees (2015); and

**WHEREAS**, RCDs throughout the state want a committee to work on conservation education programs, including but not limited to, *the Envirothon program, the annual Speak-Off contest, the California Naturalist, Climate Stewards programs*, and grants to support the mission of RCDs for public conservation education.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Directors of the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains directs the following actions:

- a. The CARCD Policy Committee direct the Bylaws Ad Hoc Committee to add *Education* as an issue committee to the proposed bylaws currently being revised;
- b. Following the 2018 Bylaws, Article X Resolution, Sections 1-5 for consideration of this resolution at the 2024 Annual Business Meeting.

**PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED** this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2024.

By: \_\_\_\_\_, President

ATTEST:

By: \_\_\_\_\_, Secretary to the Board

# **ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RCDSMM BOARD MEMBERS**

DRAFT 8/21/24

## **REQUIREMENTS**

Board Members need to meet ONE of the following requirements:

- Own land in the district
- Have served as an associate director for two years

A registered voter who is not a district resident can become a director if a resident landowner appoints them as their agent and submits a statement assigning the director candidate for the purpose of serving on the RCD board.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

- No director can have any financial or service interests in the district.
- Directors receive no compensation for their work as a Director; however, Directors can be reimbursed for expenses necessary to their service.
- Directors may not be an employee of the district at the same time.

## **SPECIAL DISTRICT BOARD MEMBER HANDBOOK EXCERPTS**

### **Additional details provided and explained in the SPECIAL DISTRICT BOARD MEMBER HANDBOOK**

Below are the core components of effective special district governance: a competency-based group of individual citizens coming together as an effective team to accomplish the specific responsibilities that only governing boards can do on behalf of their community.

As a board, members exhibit the following characteristics:

- Recognize that the board, not the individual board member, governs the special district—the authority of any one board member rests only with the board as a whole.
- Heed caution when someone attempts to impose their own agenda on the district rather than working to build support for an institutional agenda.
- Appreciate that *how* a board member governs is as important as *what* a board member does—that manners make a difference.
- Establish trust, and treat everyone with the same respect with which the board member expects others to treat them.
- Respect A diversity of perspectives and styles.
- Operate in a transparent fashion, while always keeping confidential information confidential.

The specific responsibilities of the board are clustered into five areas:

1. Setting the direction for the district;
2. Establishing and supporting the policies and structure of the district;
3. Overseeing the financial resources necessary to fund the district;
4. Guiding employee relations, including the hiring and supervising of the Executive Officer or District Manager who, in turn, operates the district and hires/manages its staff; and
5. Serving as community leaders who communicate effectively on behalf of the district.

As a team, the board should exhibit the following characteristics:

- Recognize all board members as equally legitimate—no matter how different opinions or personalities may be;
- Acknowledge that conflicts and differences are inevitable, not necessarily “bad”, and must be faced and analyzed;
- Focus on solutions;
- Treat staff, community members, and colleagues with dignity and respect.
- Exhibit creative thinking;
- Know how to handle failure as well as success;
- Encourage risk taking;
- Create a climate of support for excellence; and
- Accept collective responsibility for the conduct and effectiveness of the board.

Effective board members maintain the following priorities:

- Serve the public;
- Support the staff as they carry out direction of the board;
- Respect fellow board members; and
- Seek consensus.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

California Resource Conservation District Director’s Handbook

<https://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlr/RCD/Documents/DirectorsHandbookWEBSITELargePageVersion.pdf>

Special District Board Member Handbook

<https://www.csda.net/learn/board-member-resources>



# **What is an RCD?**

A Resource Conservation District is a “special district” organized under the State Public Resources Code.

It is authorized and directed to promote and provide conservation education, to conduct research, and to advise and assist other public agencies and private individuals in the areas of land-use planning, soil and water conservation, wildlife habitat enhancement and restoration, control of exotic plant species, and watershed restoration.

## **A RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT IS NOT A RULE-MAKING, REGULATORY AGENCY!**

It can, however, advise such agencies and act as an intermediary between them and individuals. Certain federal benefits are available to counties and cities only through these special districts. Resource Conservation Districts can lease or own land, publish the results of their research, contract to perform restoration projects and educational programs and, if needed, operate facilities for the enhancement and conservation of our natural resources.

## **WHO GOVERNS THE RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF THE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS?**

The District is governed by a board of five non-salaried directors appointed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the Ventura County Board of Supervisor within the District. They are assisted by Associate Directors and Resource Associates: scientists, educators, and community leaders who have volunteered to assist the District in its work, serve on committees, represent the District on request of the Board, and participate in meetings. Board of Directors' meetings are public and can provide a forum for current conservation issues.

## **HOW IS THE DISTRICT FINANCED?**

The District is financed through a minimal property assessment. Other revenues include grants from public agencies or private foundations, contracts for education, research, and restoration services, and from donations. All donations are tax-deductible.

## **WHO DOES THE DISTRICT WORK WITH?**

The District works closely with the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Park Service, California Department of Conservation, California State Parks, Los

Angeles County, the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board and many other local, state and national organizations to carry out the District's responsibilities for providing leadership to identify local resource conservation needs, advocate for effective solutions, and work with appropriate parties on implementation.

**WHO WORKS AT THE DISTRICT?**

Scientists and consultants are employed to enhance the District's role as a consulting agency to planners in other units of government and as a contractor for natural resource study and restoration projects. Professional educators are employed by the District to assist school administrators and faculty to develop resource conservation curricula and to conduct education programs with schools, youth groups, non-profit organizations, and government agencies. The District also employs a staff of administrative and clerical personnel.

31 July 2024

From: Rosi Dagit

## **BOARD REPORT FOR July 2024**

### **1. Topanga Turtle Project Funded by RCD Turtle donations 3064 (.5 hours)**

Coordinated site visit to document water level conditions, test the water delivery system and have Luke, Isaac and Alyssa bury the pipe to the greatest extent possible. Pond still pretty full!

### **2. WSP Mentoring (10.25 hours GF)**

Conducted interviews for next WSP member. Assisted in final performance review for Luke and coordinated with Alyssa, Marilyn and Isaac regarding completing all required paperwork.

### **3. School Programs 5000 (0 Hrs. contract)**

Provided organizational support for July Malibu program with the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth.

### **4. Topanga Lagoon Restoration Planning 3226 (1.75 hrs)**

Prepared monthly report. Worked on revised schedule and invoicing. Supervised water quality testing. Coordinated work on grant proposal with Jamie and Kara.

### **5. Topanga Lagoon Visitor Serving Planning 3237 (0 hrs)**

No direct action this month. We are billing down this contract and should be only charging for website work going forward.

### **6. CDFW CEQA Grant 3238 (30.75 hrs)**

Prepared monthly report. Multiple coordination meetings with consultants, Caltrans, DBH and project team. Coordinated file and invoice management. Worked on response to comments for FEIR. Worked on figures and coordinating team comments.

### **7. WCB Topanga Lagoon Grant 3247 Part 1 (17 hrs)**

Prepared monthly report and invoice. Coordinated with MN and Caltrans regarding project report, design, and landowner agreement. Project Team coordination calls. Executed cost estimate contract and provided info. Coordinated tribal engagement event for August. Assisted with outreach for 5 Aug FEIR meeting.

### **8. CDFW Malibu Snorkel Survey 3244 (0.5 hrs)**

Supervised 23-24 July survey, data entry and management. No steelhead found.

### **10. CDFW Genetic Conservation Plan CDFW (8.25hrs)**

Prepared monthly report. Worked with CDFW and submitted a grant scope amendment to use remaining funds to purchase holding tanks for steelhead rescues. Work paused until amendment is executed.

### **11. WCB Oak Restoration 3248 (Task 1 0 hrs)**

No action this month.

### **12. Topanga Elementary School Oak Violation Contract 3246 (Task 1: 0 hrs; Task 2: 0 hrs; Task 3: 0 hrs, Task 4: 0 hrs)**

No action this month. We are still waiting to hear back from Regional Planning.

**13. Crayfish 3245 CDPR (1.25 hrs)**

Reviewed scope of work and coordinated revision of budget.

**14. WCB Topanga Lagoon Grant 3251 Part 2 (.5 hrs)**

Submitted budget shift request to more accurately reflect project needs.

**15. Topanga Snorkel 3252 CDPR (0.5 hrs)**

Set up new contract and coordinated snorkeling 15-18 July. Numbers still high and the creek is looking great! Few crayfish!

**1009 NEW PROJECT DEVELOPMENT (3.5 hrs)**

Assisted CDPR with review of pending contract scope and budget for invasive aquatic removal project that will be administered by RCD.

**Other projects- (GF time)**

Reviewed overall RCD budget and continuing financial problems with Clark, Rich, and Lisa

Reviewed contract letter offers to Bio Team staff

Participated in meetings regarding hiring of new District Manager

**Administrative Duties (GF hours)**

- Responded to calls and emails.
- Met with leadership team
- Worked with Rich, Lisa to straighten out invoice issues.
- RCD staff meetings
- Met with Bio team to coordinate schedules and other grants, projects
- Reviewed biology staff timesheets
- Provided detailed work schedule and directions for bio team

Holiday – 0 hours

Vacation Leave –0 hours

Sick Leave- 6 hours

Total GF hours billed= 48.75 (27% of total hours)

Total Billable hours = 126.75

1 July 2024

**From:** Daniel S. Cooper

## **BOARD REPORT June 2024**

### **General Fund (1005; 69 hrs)**

*As Deputy Executive Officer:*

- Attended kick-off event at Lake Balboa for City's "Vision Plan" for Sepulveda Basin (6/17).
- Worked with EO and Lisa Rand to develop agenda for RCD Board meeting (6/22).
- Attended monthly DEI committee meeting (6/11)
- Supervised staff (Bella Isles, Isaac Yelchin, Danielle Picciano).
- Weekly calls with EO regarding administrative issues.
- Responded to misc. calls and emails.

*As Principal Conservation Biologist:*

- Continued working with Rosi Dagit/Alyssa Morgan on oak seedling paper based on Trippet Ranch restoration.
- Met with Debbie Sharpton to discuss new project advising on Seminole Hot Springs restoration effort.
- Urban Nature Research Center meetings (date). Coordinated by Greg Pauly (Curator, Herpetology).
- Represented RCDSMM at (Santa Monica Mountains) Environmental Review Board ("ERB") meeting for Los Angeles Co. Dept. of Regional Planning (date).

### **"4000" Projects (individual clients to conduct assessments/comment on resources, biological reports, etc.) (58.5 hrs)**

- Statements of Habitat/Biological reports for private residences in the SMM/Sphere of Influence.
- Nesting bird surveys.
- Worked with Manzanita School (Topanga) to develop non-native Arundo removal proposal.
- Developing land bank for eastern Santa Monica Mountains with local residents, focusing on California Walnut Woodland, mountain lion connectivity, and riparian resources.
- Working with Northeast L.A. residents and MRCA to development management plan for Elephant Hill open space.

### **Misc. (e.g., talks, media)**

- (related; not billed): Continued part-time Lecturer position in the Dept. of Biological Sciences at CSULB (teaching Ornithology Fall/Spring), and in the IoES program at UCLA (mentoring senior practicum students, Winter).
- Continued to lead "Los Angeles Raptor Study", funded through Friends of Griffith Park, now in its 8<sup>th</sup> year.

Sick days: 20 hours  
Vacation days: 20 hrs  
Holidays: 8 hrs

General Fund vs. Billed Work: 61.5%:38.5%