



**DRAFT Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors
Thursday May 16, 2024
4:00 – 6:00 pm**

Location: 80 Stone Pine Road, Suite 100, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019 and via Zoom

Directors: Barbara Kossy, Adrienne Etherton, Michelle Weil, Steve Stielstra

Associate Directors: John Wade

RCD staff: Lau Hodges, Kellyx Nelson, Cesar Aguilar, Amy Kaeser, David Cowman, Timothy Federal, Eliza Millio, Christina Kelleher, Joe Issel

NRCS staff: Jim Howard

Guests: Caleb Griffin (NACD); Vanessa Lamascus, Krystle Reneer (Brush Hog); Virginia Chang Kiraly (LAFCo, Harbor Commission)

1. Call to Order

Kossy called the meeting at 4:02 pm.

2. Approval of Agenda

ACTION: Weil approved the agenda. Etherton seconded.

3. Introduction of Guests and Staff

All in attendance introduced themselves.

4. Public Comment

Kiraly introduced herself and offered to answer any questions or concerns about LAFCo. She said she is a big proponent of special districts. She said LAFCo. is the Local Agency Formation Commission which is a state mandated commission. Every county has one. Her job is to make sure that if there are any changes in the sphere of influence of any special districts or if there are questions about special districts, Kiraly is there to advocate or at least give that perspective.

5. Consent Agenda

- **ACTION:** Weil moved to approve the agenda with the removal of 5.2 the March minutes. Kossy seconded.
- John Wade introduced himself.

6. Regular Agenda

6.1. Updated on the La Honda Fuel Break Project by Timothy Federal, Forest Health and Fire Resiliency Program Manager

- Federal presented **the attached PowerPoint.**
- Kossy said it is remarkable and fantastic to have the participation of 23 private landowners and all those agencies. It is a major accomplishment. She said this is where the RCD really shines and it is a superpower that we can work with so many landowners and have them benefit.



- Stielstra asked if there are any highlights of learning between these projects.
- Federal replied that there is a lot of synergy with their team right now and that the biggest takeaway that they have been focusing on lately is the importance of working outside of a single ownership of land. They find projects that line up on neighboring properties and working to advance the work at a landscape scale, but not forgetting that there are neighbors' or smaller landowners as well.
- Stielstra praised the team for being smart and how collaborating really makes them shine.
- Nelson added to Kossy's point that is what conservation districts were created to be able to do. RCDs are an entity created by the State to work across public and private land to address local priorities. It speaks to what our purpose is and what our value proposition is.
- Nelson underscored the value of outreach and community engagement. She has never seen a project fail because it was an engineering challenge. The most challenging part is addressing people's needs, risk aversions, preferences and politics. Typical funding is tied to a capital project or implementation but funding is required to build the relationships, design projects or work through concerns. People assume conservation landowners will be more likely to do these projects than private landowners. Sometimes doing work on private land can be easier even though these are amazing conservation partners and we do so much with them. It's very nuanced.
- Weil stated that she loves to hear about these projects and seeing how we have built up this expertise to navigate those challenges and how to work with people to create more awareness.

6.2. Presentation about National Association of Conservation Districts by Caleb Griffin, NACD Pacific Region Representative

- Griffin expressed appreciation for people who make conservation happen at the local level and presented **the attached PowerPoint.**
- National Association of Conservation Districts is the national body that represents the 3000 plus conservation districts throughout the United States and their many partner territories and commonwealths as well. That includes the freely associated states.
- Griffin encouraged anyone to reach out directly if there's ever anything he can assist with.
- Nelson noted his focus on grants and that even more significant for us is having a voice in DC. What the CARCD does for us in the state is what the NACD does for us nationally.
- Nelson noted that the NRCS and the USDA are not made at the California level, but the national level. Which is why it is important to be strategically positioned at a national level.
- Nelson asked if Kossy called in to the NACD meeting in San Diego.



- Kossy stated that it was not a well-run meeting since they only had 1 owl for 60 people.
- Griffin ends with letting everyone to not hesitate to reach out. Especially on the advocacy front if you are working local or state advocacy effort. If things align with the interest of the broader conservation districts.

6.3. Executive director report

- Nelson told those present that Ryan Charland, our very beloved accountant, passed away. He was important to some staff and was cared for very much. It is a time where there is a lot of grief.
- Nelson says that this would be the time where we would bring the quarterly financials and are also currently in the middle of an audit and our annual budget.
- Nelson said that we are scrambling to find a new accountant and we feel very very sad.
 - Our website got hacked and it prevented us from noticing the board meeting as intended. It was a huge help that Hodges worked on her day off and Kipreos helped a lot. It is a perfect example of the RCD having people wear many hats.
 - The county renewed their \$200,000 allocation and it comes at a perfect time.
 - The application period to our board has closed.
 - Received some donations from Coastside Gives and it brought new donors to the RCD.
- The May revise California budget has a significant deficit. The Department of Finance has issued notices to the legislature and also to different state departments that they are freezing certain types of expenditures. Not a lot of clarity to what it means yet about our funding contracts. We could also lose federal funds that are match to the State grants. We don't know yet exactly how it's going to affect our budget and our funding, but it was really important that we had the County funds.
 - Kossy asked if we know what projects will be affected. Nelson said that there is no way to know yet.
 - Stielstra asked if we have many things aligned to spend as much as we can.
 - Nelson responded with not being sure and that's what the budgeting process will be revolved around in the next few weeks since there is so much uncertainty.
 - Nelson said the worst case scenario if we were to lose like a substantial chunk of funds and have to dip into our operating reserves, she could see a year of really morale boosting time for staff not having to bill to 50 different projects in 15 minute increments. Instead, we would pay people to be able to think and provide technical assistance, monitoring, learn and develop a plan for what we want to do when these funds start coming through.
 - Nelson updated that staff celebrated Cesar Chavez day with service to farm-workers be volunteering at Puente de la Costa Sur.
 - Nelson expressed appreciation for Weil and Stielstra diving into the financials, Weil helping with the website, Etherton being a sounding board for personnel



matters and event planning, Stielstra helping with the procurement policy, and Kossy being in constant communication and partnership. It is the most engagement that Nelson can remember on the board.

- Nelson said we made a misstep where we advertised something we would do in the Bay Area and we didn't check in with the other RCD's. Kossy offered to go to the other RCD boards to help out.
- Nelson let the board know that the budget draft won't happen until the next board meeting.
- Nelson stated that the audit is under way.
- Nelson asked the board if they want RCD swag.
- Kossy told a story of her helping out with ranch questions. It helped a lot to have an RCD hat on.
- Nelson asked the board if they want to extend next meeting so Skybrook can present what the network is and it would take about 75 minutes.
- Nelson updated everyone on the contractor that we were having an issue with. It went to their bonding agency and that did expedite the resolution. It resulted us in paying 67,000 which was about a quarter of what they were originally asking for.
- Issel states that they actually just came back and requested a couple change orders.
- Nelson wanted to give everyone a heads up that there is a lot of focus on the water quality in San Vincent creek that goes past the horse stables, largely because of a GGNRA planning document for Rancho Corral de Tierra that could substantially reduce the number of horses. It has brought a lot of attention to our report and water quality monitoring data. There is often misinterpretation of our scientific data. Nelson has met with many individuals and organizations and was doing a roadshow explaining this. We never know when we will be in the spotlight and how.
- Nelson explained that we are working in an area where there are no tribes with federal recognition and there are different claims regarding ancestry legitimacy or how to define tribal designation. There are many ways that it can go wrong and there are many implications from a misstep. We are working on an SOP on how we approach this. She described issues pertaining to CEQA and federal Section 106 consultations, the State's NAHC list, local relationships, and a concern expressed by one of our native partners that "the politics of inclusion are undermining the doctrine of sovereignty." This is when groups reach out to tribes who are not from an area to be inclusive. It's like consulting with another country to be inclusive.
- San Benito County is hosting the next regional RCD meeting at Paicines Ranch on the same date as our October board meeting. The group discussed changing the board meeting date.
- Nelson reported on her work on committees of the California Landscape Stewardship Network, Fisheries Restoration Grant Program, and CARCD. Stielstra and Kossy offered to serve as alternates to the CARCD legislative committee.



6.4. USDA NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) report

- Howard states that the NRCS is going hard now on conservation stewardship program.
- Impressive to see the workforce crank it up even with the inflation Reduction Act.
- Howard states that they are losing a few people. One of them is Jeff Kelly who is awesome.
- They will be getting a soil conservationist but it won't happen immediately.
- Howard said Alan will always get on the phone since they take the partnership so seriously.
- Howard will be helping out at Capitola BRCS
- California's approach to filling up vacancies and building the workforce has revolved around the intern program.
- Howard said that Carlos' main focus is retaining and recruiting.
- Howard reminded people about the agency notifying all of the field offices to hold all aerial photography. There is some ongoing conflict.

6.5. Directors' connection and directors' reports

- Weil updated everyone on the website and the recent changes coming in.
- Weil wasn't aware of the hacking.
- Stielstra wants to talk about partnering.
- Stielstra is interested in how we could be investing our funds to make a bit of safe money and use it more on our mission.
- Etherton mentioned the grant application for Brisbane Acres.
- Kossy brought up difficulty finding the Form 700.
- Kossy provided updates about the California invasive plant Facebook page. It is a good resource to network and promote RCD.
- Great way to help people be active and ask questions

7. Adjourn Meeting

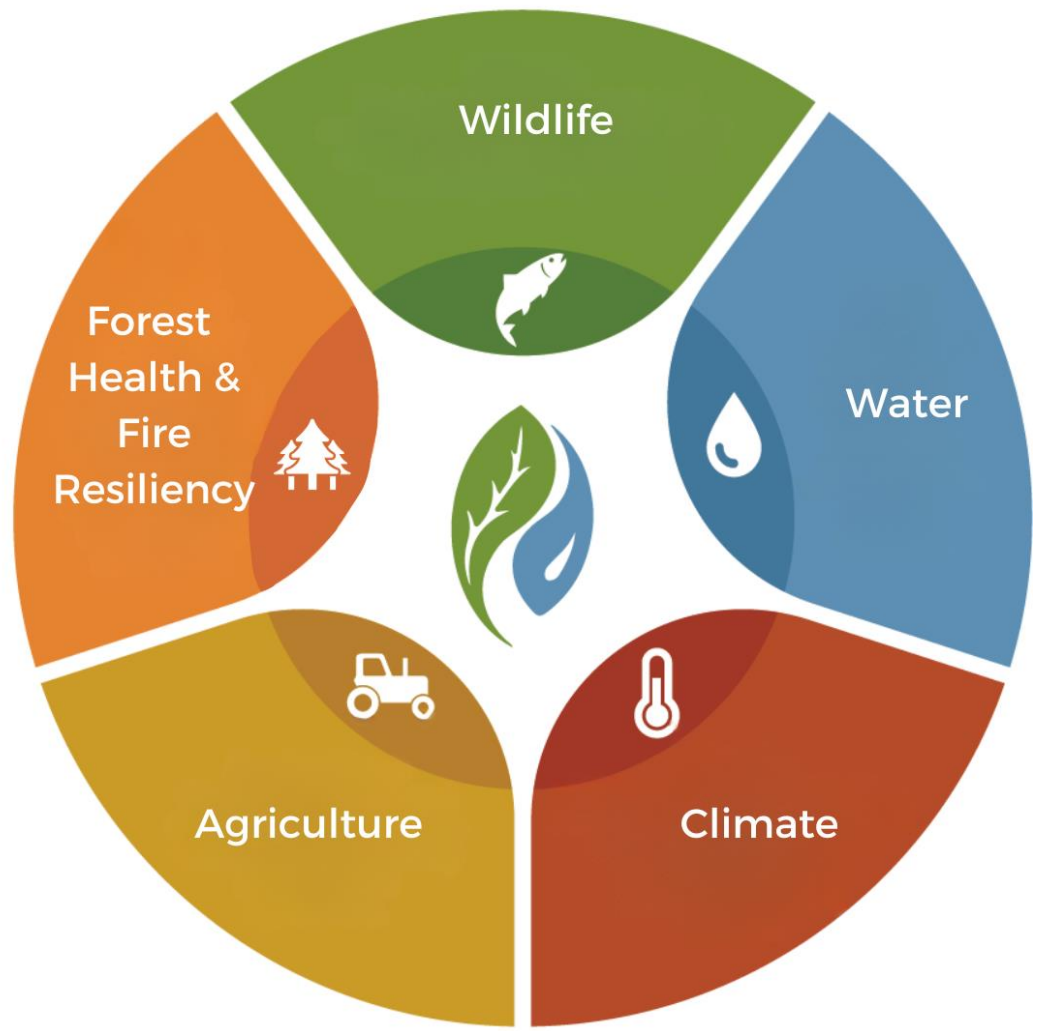
Kossy Adjourned the meeting at 6:21.

La Honda Fuel Break



Presentation to
Board of Directors
May 2024





Wildlife

Water

Climate

Agriculture

Forest
Health &
Fire
Resiliency

RCD Projects



Butano State Park Forest Health



Granny Flats Reservoir



Mindego Creek Salmon Habitat



Background

- 2018 - CWPP priority
- 2020 - CZU Fire
- 2022 - CAL FIRE Fire Prevention Grant
- 2022 - Landowner outreach
- 2023 - CEQA



What is a Shaded Fuel Break?

- Remove hazardous ladder fuels
- Strategic ridges, roads, and trails
- Retain canopy



This project will...

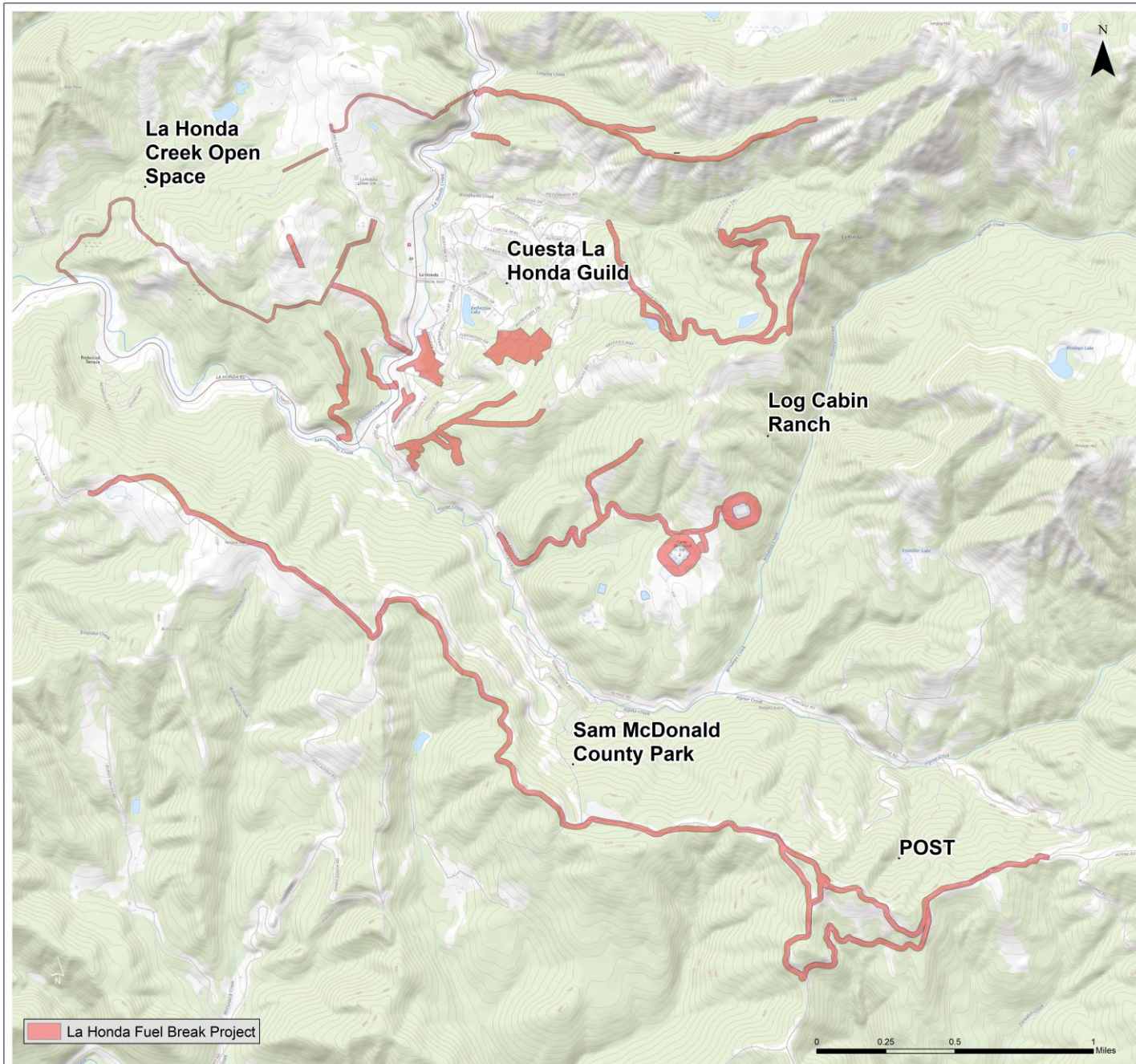
- Target ladder fuels in strategic areas
- Improve access and safety for firefighters
- Improve egress for evacuations
- Complement existing fire resilience efforts
- Potentially slow the spread of wildfire

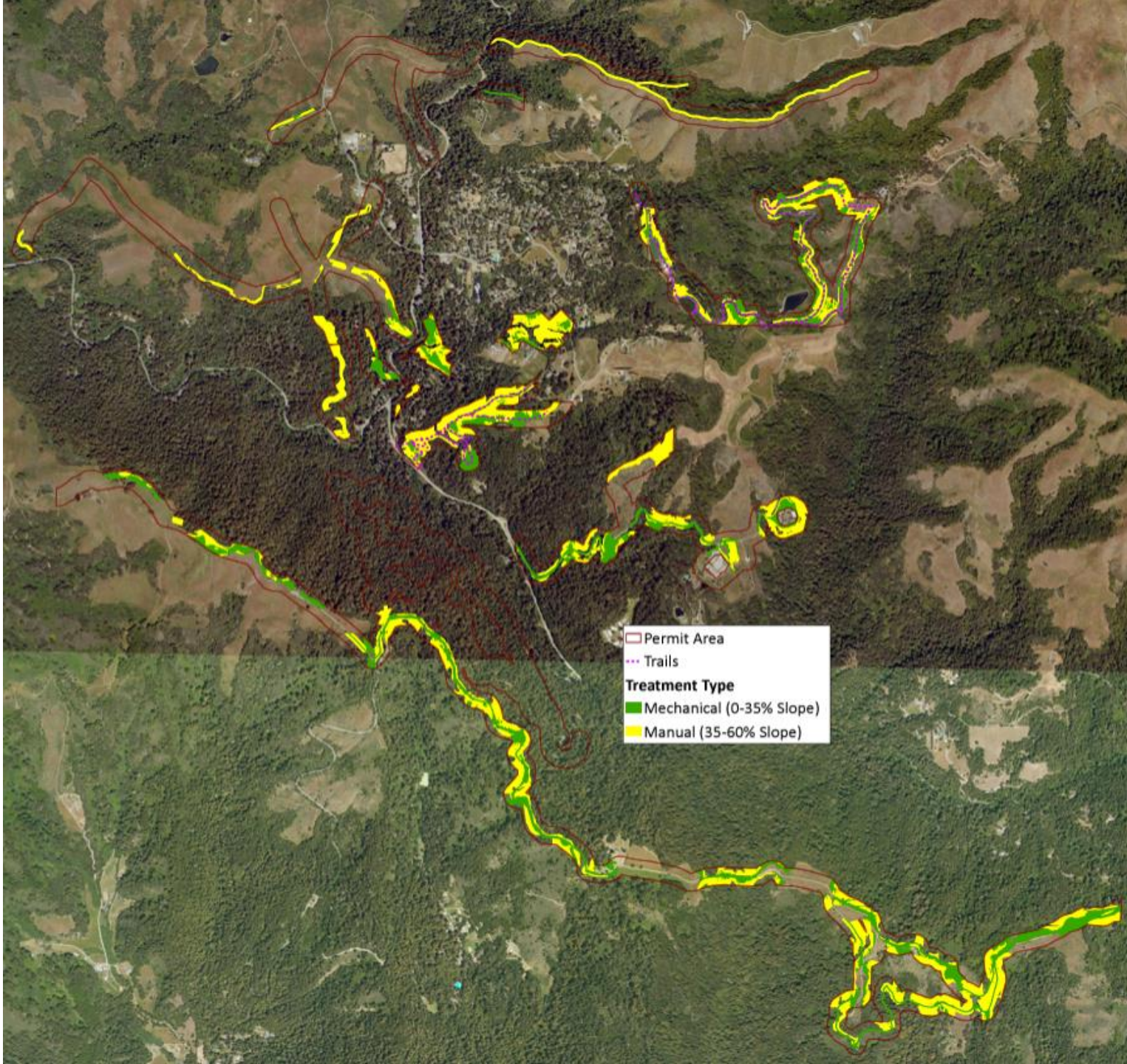
This project will not...

- Prevent ignitions
- Remove all fuels in the project area
- Eliminate the risk of fire



La Honda Fuel Break Project





Project Work

Forests:

- Removal of:
 - Ladder fuels <8" diameter
 - Debris
 - Dead/dying vegetation
- Limb trees up to 15' from forest floor
- Retaining at least 50% of canopy



Project Work

Shrub and Grasslands:

- Removal of shrubs in some grassland areas
- Creating horizontal spacing

FROM THIS ...



TO THIS ...



Project Work



Project Work



Equipment

- Masticators
- Excavators
- Skid Steers
- Track Chippers
- Chainsaws
- Curtain Burner
- Water buffalo



Equipment



Equipment



Biomass Management

- Chipped on-site
- Lop and scatter
- Pile burning
- Curtain burner

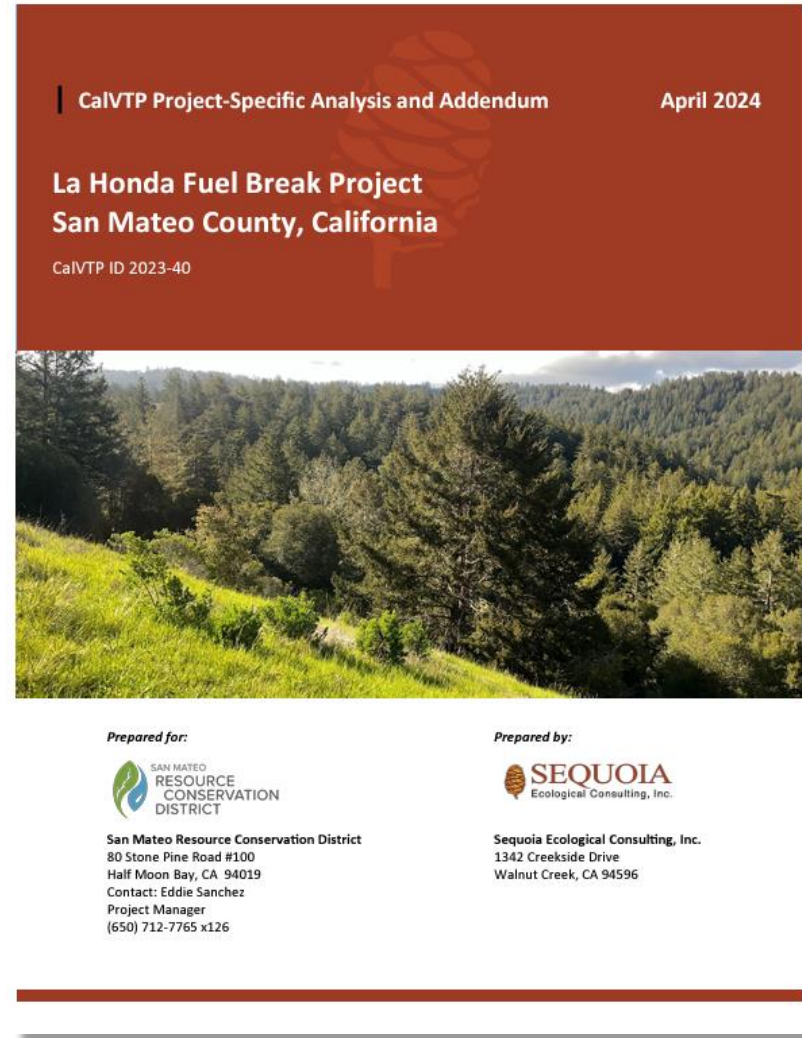


Environmental Planning



Environmental Planning

- CalVTP PEIR
- Project Specific Analysis
 - Biological Resources
 - Cultural Resources
 - Avoidance/Mitigation



Timeline

Environmental Permitting:

- Expected completion Spring 2024

Contractor Selection:

- Public Bid Process – Late Spring 2024
 - *Board recommendation May 2024*

Project Implementation:

- Expected start date in early Summer 2024.
- Project continues until completion through 2025.



Partners



23 private landowners



Questions?

Sign up for newsletter & project updates:

<https://www.sanmateorcd.org/announcements/newsletters/>

<https://www.sanmateorcd.org/project/la-honda-fuel-break-project/>

fire@sanmateoRCD.org



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National Association of Conservation Districts



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What We Do

1

Provide **one voice** for conservation

2

Advocate for programs, policy, and funding for conservation on Capitol Hill and throughout the country

3

Communicate through publications, blogs and social media

4

Provide **direct services** to districts

5

Develop conservation leaders



NACD Pacific Region Representative

Caleb Griffin (caleb-griffin@nacdnet.org)

cell: (301) 501-1155



Contact your NACD Region Representative



Direct Services & General Resources

- **Publications** - Help us feature your district's local work through our many publications!
- **Webinars** - Network, share, and learn from other districts and partners through NACD's extensive catalogue of webinars!
- **Soil Health Champions Network** - Acknowledge, honor, and support local soil health advocates through NACD's specialized network of Soil Health Champions!
- **Stewardship & Education** - Engage your local community with conservation education opportunities through NACD's annual "Stewardship Week" and other resources on our Conservation Education Hub!



The NACD eResource
Weekly news brief from the National Association of Conservation Districts

FRIENDS OF NACD DISTRICT GRANTS PROGRAM NOW ACCEPTING PROPOSALS October 18, 2022

Friends of NACD 2023 DISTRICT GRANTS PROGRAM

Grants for conservation districts to conduct new activities or test new approaches to their operations.

8 grants available, up to \$2,500 each

Now accepting applications through **NOV. 29, 2022**

Register for NACD's 2023 Annual Meeting!

Registration for the National Association of Conservation Districts' (NACD) 77th Annual Meeting is now open. Hosted in partnership with the Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts, the 2023 Annual Meeting will take place in New Orleans, Louisiana from February 15-19 at the New Orleans Morial. Early bird registration for the discounted price of 2023 will be open through December 21, 2022. NACD's Annual Meeting brings together hundreds of conservation leaders from across the nation with opportunities for networking, learning, and exploring New Orleans! More details, including notes and tour information, can be found [here](#).

Register Here



Funding Services & Resources

- **Technical Assistance Grants** - Provide “Boots on the Ground” funding for districts to hire staff to deliver customer technical and conservation programs assistance in partnership w/ local NRCS teams. >\$13M to Pacific Region since 2020



- **Urban & Community Agriculture Conservation Grants** - Provide technical assistance on urban and small-scale conservation projects to address community needs in both rural and urban contexts. >\$1.7M to Pacific Region since 2020



Funding Services & Resources, continued

- **Friends of NACD Grants** - Provide up to \$2500 for conservation districts to conduct new activated or test novel approaches to their operations. Program entirely funded through donations to Friends of NACD. >\$20,000 awarded to districts nationwide since 2020



- **Climate Smart Commodities Program** - Currently reviewing the several proposals submitted for both project grants and planning/capacity grants. (\$80M secured for nationwide program - ~50% secured for on-the-ground implementation incentive payments)

- **Feral Swine Perimeter Fencing Program** - Currently developing award packages (over \$2M awarded to Pacific Region CDs)

- **Readiness & Environmental Protection Integration** - Strategic partnership w/ Dept. of Defense to protect and secure status of working conservation lands in locations adjacent to military installations

Membership Incentives

PLATINUM LEVEL: \$3,001+

- 2nd registration free to NACD Annual Meeting
- 2 invitations to NACD President's Reception at NACD Annual Meeting
- 20% off a single purchase of \$100 or more from the NACD Marketplace (excluding sale/clearance items)
- Recognition in the NACD Annual Report
- Access to the Members Only Section of the website

DIAMOND LEVEL: \$1,776 – \$3,000

- 2nd registration half-price to NACD Annual Meeting
- 1 invitation to NACD President's Reception at NACD Annual Meeting
- 15% off a single purchase of \$100 or more from the NACD Marketplace (excluding sale/clearance items)
- Recognition in the NACD Annual Report
- Access to the Members Only Section of the website

GOLD LEVEL: \$775 – \$1,775

- 10% off a single purchase of \$100 or more from the NACD Marketplace (excluding sale/clearance items)
- Access to the Members Only Section of the website

NACD and California's Conservation Districts *Investing in Each Other*



In the last 3 fiscal years, NACD has invested over \$93 into CA Resource Conservation Districts for each dollar contributed through CA district dues.



Questions???

← Every acre,

every American,

every day.

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