

Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors
Thursday November 21, 2024
4:00 – 6:00 pm

The hybrid meeting will be accessible via Zoom at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89675733636>

If you are using a computer or other device to join the meeting, you may click [here](#). A computer video camera is not required to participate. If you do not have access to a computer or internet during this meeting, or if your computer does not have audio, you can call in by phone: (669) 900-6833 and enter the meeting ID: 896 7573 3636 when prompted.

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Introduction of Guests and Staff
4. Public Comment- The Board will hear comments on items that are not on the agenda. The Board cannot act on an item unless it is an emergency as defined under Government Code §54954.2.
5. Consent Agenda The Board of Directors approves: 5.1. September 2024 Draft Regular Meeting Minutes 5.2. October 2024 Draft Regular Meeting Minutes 5.3. Entering into contract with L.D. Giacomini Enterprises Inc. for the Pescadero Marsh Habitat Restoration and Resiliency Project. <u>The Board of Directors receives into record:</u> 5.4. November 8, 2024 Coastside Buzz article, " San Mateo Resource Conservation District Honors Local Nature Champion, Ricardo 'Rico' Raya of Brush Hog Tree Service for the 19-Mile La Honda Fuel Break " 5.5. November 11, 2024 Global Newswire article, " Correction: Scaling Climate Software Solutions in California " 5.6. November 13, 2024 The San Mateo Daily Journal article, " Ricardo Raya honored for work on La Honda fuel break "
6. Regular Agenda 6.1. Discuss and consider adoption of Draft Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice Plan. 6.2. Executive Director's report 6.3. USDA NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) report 6.4. Directors' connection and reports
7. Adjourn Meeting The next Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors will be December 19, 2024

Public records that relate to any item on the open session agenda for a regular board meeting are available for public inspection. Those records that are distributed less than 72 hours prior to the meeting are available for public inspection at the same time they are distributed to all members, or a majority of the members of the Board.

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors
Thursday, November 21, 2024
4:00 – 6:00 pm**

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

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

Associate Directors: Denise Philips (Wolter, Kassam, and Keener were absent)

RCD staff: Kellyx Nelson, Barb Kipreos, Clarissa Maciel, Lau Hodges, Christina Kelleher
(first 10 mins)

NRCS staff: Jim Howard

Guests: Sara Moncada

1. Call to Order

Kossy called the meeting at 4:02 p.m.

2. Approval of Agenda

ACTION: Stielstra approved the agenda, Guy seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Introductions of Guests and Staff

All in attendance introduced themselves.

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

5. Consent Agenda

- **ACTION:** Weil moved to approve the consent agenda removing the September minutes. Stielstra seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
- Kossy requested including the RCD's newsletter in the future to include it in the record.

6. Regular Agenda

6.1. Discuss and consider adoption of Draft Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice Plan.

- Nelson and Kipreos presented the attached PowerPoint and the DEIJ plan in depth.
 - Plan begins with call to action, what is our responsibility how we approach DEIJ work, and our plan.
 - Tied to our goals and principles which defines our "lane "
 - Vision/mission statement exist and include reference to DEIJ but more in detail here
 - Document was developed to be empirical, based on evidence
 - Holistic, successful approach to conservation considers systems of oppression and inequality.

- Plan focuses on barriers that contribute to inequity specific to the RCD.
- Kossy requested to add language to DEIJ Plan in land ownership section about how those who own land can use their land as they see fit, but sometimes this can lead to environmental degradation. Their decisions, while benefiting themselves, can harm others and negatively impact the quality of life for those around them.
 - **ACTION:** Add language to DEIJ Plan to the effect that landowners can make decisions that affect others.
- Philips asked whether funders required organizations and companies the RCD collaborates with to incorporate DEIJ into their business models. Nelson answered no, but that we incorporate some of our DEIJ requirements into bid documents and consultant requirements.
- Draft was shared with 68 ppl of various backgrounds, identity, age range, professions including staff, directors, external organizations, networks, and DEIJ experts.
- Additional discussion included:
 - How this plan compares to other organizations, interest in hearing more in the future about Barb's experience working with equity groups, whether the plan needed legal review, that other government agencies reviewed it, estimated cost of \$20k of staff time went into creating plan, how implementation of the plan will be tracked, that staff is presenting the plan at CARCD in December.
 - Kossy expressed respect, admiration, gratitude and pride for being part of the RCD and the forward movement that society needs to take. She compared it is cutting edge as Cutting Green Tape for all our institutions. Appreciated that it articulates not just concepts but actions and results.
 - Others shared Kossy's enthusiasm, calling it "concise and empirical, capturing what the RCD is already doing," "bold and amazing," appreciated that it was pushing boundaries, felt proud to be part of it, looked forward to seeing it implemented, being impressed with the work that went into it, and commenting that it is rare to have a plan designed to implement real change.
 - Discussion also considered how the plan might be received by some members of the community; whether there was risk to alienating neighbors or losing partners; how to bring them in; a comment that the NRCS maintains a strong, nondiscriminatory and equitable approach to conservation; where the document would be stored and how people could find it; whether it would be included in RFP documents; goals for presenting it at the CARCD conference; the importance of discussing history; efforts underway to revise Division 9; discussing the budget further and exploring how to adapt the plan to better support the financial side of this work; how DEIJ contributes to effective conservation; and how this approach is no more political than the status quo or conservation work itself and is not new, but rather a helpful tool.
- Etherton requested to report on response from presenting DEIJ plan at CARCD and to other groups/meetings.
 - **ACTION:** Etherton moved to adopt the DEIJ plan including language proposed by Kossy, subject to legal review. Guy seconded the motion. Unanimous decision to adopt.

6.2 Executive Director's report

- Nelson recommended to push ED report to next meeting. Asked to keep in mind administrative needs and capacity.

6.3 USDA NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) report

November 21, 2024, Minutes

- Jim Howard discussed how current dynamics are affecting the organization but highlighted that there are areas of positive energy and collaboration within the RCD. The staff remains upbeat.
- A new group of customers has signed up for environmental programs and conservation contracts. This is the largest year of funding from the Inflation Reduction Act.
- Efforts to hire and train staff continue as much as possible, preparing for the upcoming year.
- Nelson asked if the funding awarded through the Infrastructure Investment Act by NOAA is guaranteed, or if we should expect it to be withdrawn.
- Jim stated that if participants are obligated to receive funding, they will get it. Only additional funding is at risk. Given the current workload, NRCS is working to staff up and prepare.

6.4 Directors' connection and reports

Denise Phillips

- No comment but interested in update from fundraiser event.
- Nelson replied that an update will be available in a month or two. It would have been ideal to have a consultant for fundraising preparation, during the event, and post event.

Steve Stielstra

- As a new board member of CARCD there is a lot of history to learn.
- Currently conducting regional calls with other RCD directors to build relationships and provide opportunities to meet and communicate across RCDs.
- Seeking to connect with regional RCDs in preparation for CARCD December meeting.

Barbara Kossy

- Reported grateful to be a part of the RCD and support organizations that are doing impactful work and moving forward.

7. Adjourn Meeting

Kossy adjourned the meeting at 6:04 p.m.

The next Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors will be December 19, 2024 .

Memorandum

Date: November 21, 2024
To: Board of Directors
From: Kellyx Nelson
Re: Recommendation to contract with L.D. Giacomini Enterprises Inc. for the Pescadero Marsh Habitat Restoration and Resiliency Project

RCD staff recommends the board of directors approve contracting with L.D. Giacomini Enterprises Inc. (“Giacomini”) to implement the Pescadero Marsh Habitat Restoration and Resiliency Project. This project will restore the ecological, geomorphic, and hydraulic processes in the North Marsh North Pond and improve habitat for native fish and wildlife.

The RCD designed this project in partnership with California State Parks to achieve a broad range of habitat, resiliency, and water quality benefits for the Pescadero marsh and lagoon system. Work will include culvert removal in three locations, excavation and lowering of two levees, channel and ditch filling, installation of 38 wood habitat structures, and vegetation management and removal of invasive plants.

A Request for Bids was distributed to approximately 15 construction contractors and shared publicly via the RCD’s website, San Mateo Daily Journal, and four trade journals. Six firms attended a mandatory pre-bid site tour. Two of the six firms submitted bids, both by the deadline of October 8, 2024. Bids were opened during a public bid opening held on October 10, 2024 with the following results:

- L.D. Giacomini Enterprises Inc. (\$2,712,965.00)
- Gordon N. Ball, Inc. (\$3,016,795.00)

The RCD and the consulting engineer for the project, Stillwater Sciences, reviewed the bid documents and determined that Giacomini was the lowest cost responsible bidder for the project. Giacomini has local experience on projects involving creeks, large wood, and restoration. Additionally, the RCD worked with the firm to successfully complete both phases of the Butano Creek Backfield Floodplain and Streamflow Enhancement Project, and the Dark Gulch Crossing Stabilization Project.

Figure 1. Project Location Map



NOTICE: We are currently transitioning to an updated website! There may be some bugs while we get everything up and running. We appreciate your patience during this process! **Thank you! - The Buzz Team**

 English

 Thu, Nov 14, 2024



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San Mateo Resource Conservation District Honors Local Nature Champion, Ricardo "Rico" Raya of Brush Hog Tree Service for the 19-Mile La Honda Fuel Break

November 8, 2024



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PRESS RELEASE. From the [San Mateo Resource Conservation District](#) on November 4th, 2024.

(Half Moon Bay, CA – [November 4, 2024]) Ricardo Raya is the inaugural recipient of the Nature Champion Award, part of an initiative of the San Mateo Resource Conservation District (RCD) to recognize the invaluable laborers who carry out critical conservation work on the

ground. The award was presented in collaboration with State Senator Josh Becker and Assemblymember Marc Berman in recognition of exceptional workers like Mr. Raya who are advancing State priorities for natural resource protection.



Mr. Raya, a resident of Pacifica who was born and raised in Half Moon Bay, is an employee of [Brush Hog Tree Care, Inc.](#) and is leading the hand labor crew for an RCD project to create a [19-mile fuel break around the community of La Honda](#). As described by Kellyx Nelson, the Executive Director of the RCD, "Mr. Raya is being recognized for his exceptional thoughtfulness, curiosity, and meticulous care for sensitive resources that have been crucial in building community resilience to wildfire while protecting the local environment."

Senator Josh Becker and Assemblymember Marc Berman provided a joint certificate to Mr. Raya, recognizing him as a recipient of the Nature Champion award. Senator Becker commented, "I am pleased to honor Mr. Raya who highlights the exceptional workers essential to California's priorities for conservation and community protection." Assemblymember Berman echoed these sentiments, adding, "Mr. Raya is an example of how wildfire resiliency can be carried out with precision, dedication, and care for the natural world."



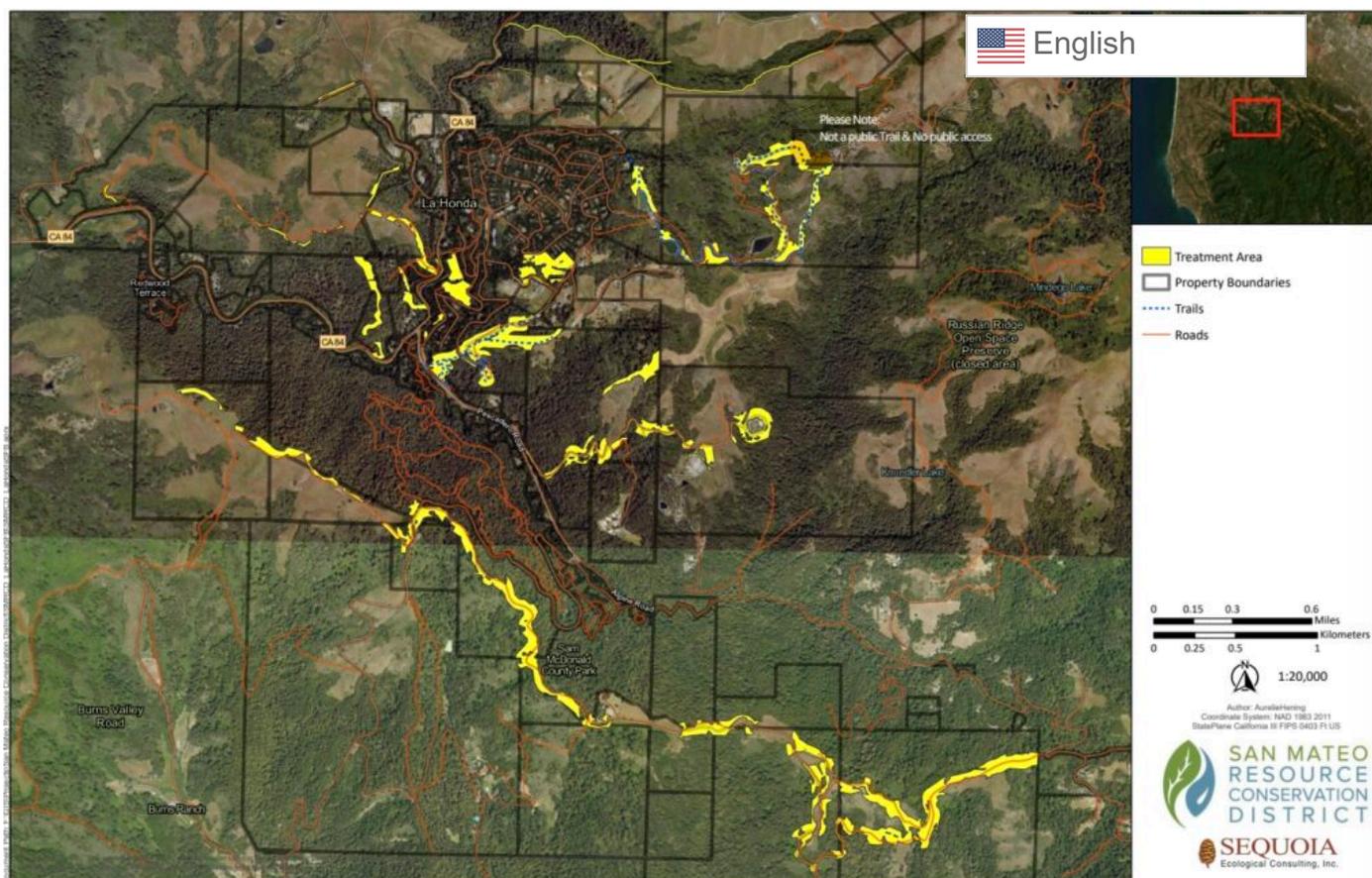
While Mr. Raya's excellence is being specifically recognized, the RCD also extends its appreciation to the many workers who tirelessly implement projects that improve conditions for both people and wildlife throughout San Mateo County.



From Left: Brush Hog President Krystle Reneir, RCD Executive Director Kellyx Nelson, Ricardo "Rico" Raya and Marc Berman.

About the RCD: The San Mateo Resource Conservation District is a local hub for conservation, helping the people of San Mateo County build a more thriving natural environment for all. The district provides comprehensive, non-regulatory services to protect, conserve, and restore natural resources in partnership with land owners and managers, technical advisors, area jurisdictions, government agencies, and others. For more information visit www.sanmatorcd.org.

About the La Honda Fuel Break Project: <https://www.sanmatorcd.org/project/la-honda-fuel-break-project/> Funding for this project was provided by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's Fire Prevention Program.



CAL FIRE envisioned a strategic 19-mile (approximately 100,000 feet) [fuel break](#) around the community of La Honda to reduce the risk of fire, which the RCD is implementing.

La Honda is in the predominantly high-fire risk south coast region of San Mateo County. The local [CWPP](#) (Community Wildfire Protection Plan) has identified it as a High Priority area for fire prevention work to protect the approximately 1000 residents, recreational lands (county parks, open preserves, youth camps), community services (humane society, juvenile services), community assets, ranches, and businesses, which are tucked within the forested landscape of the Santa Cruz Mountains.

The RCD is partnering with 21 private and public landowners to complete this fuel break. The fuel break is expected to treat approximately 250 acres through the reduction of dense vegetation and removing ladder fuels (fuel that can carry fire into the trees canopy from the ground like a ladder) such as small-diameter trees and brush. In the event of a wildfire, this would provide safe access for fire engines and firefighting personnel, support the creation of firelines, and potentially slow the spread and lower fire intensity.

[Project Overview Map](#)

[Project Detailed Maps](#) English**Timeline**

- Project

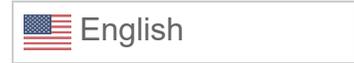


implementation: 2024 - 2025

Partners

- [CAL FIRE CZU](#)
- [La Honda Fire Brigade](#)
- [Cuesta La Honda Guild](#)
- [Peninsula Open Space Trust](#) (POST)
- [San Mateo County Parks](#)
- [Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District](#) (MROSD)
- Other public and private landowners and land managers

Funders



Funding for this project was provided by the [California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's Fire Prevention Program](#).

Follow RCD on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) for regular updates.

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San Mateo County Supervisors to → Consider Seeking Sheriff's Immediate Resignation over Findings from Independent Investigation

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November 14, 2024



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November 14, 2024



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November 13, 2024



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November 13, 2024

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cBrain A/S

Industry: Software

Website:

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Press Release no. 10/2024



Scaling Climate Software Solutions in California



Copenhagen, November 11, 2024



cBrain (NASDAQ: CBRAIN) has signed a contract with San Mateo Resource Conservation District (RCD) to help accelerate adoption of Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices through digitization.

This solution, called the Sustainable Land Initiative (SLI), relies on cBrain's standard F2 Climate Software. The goal is to empower conservationists to rapidly identify and quantify the value of CSA practices and support landowners in adoption by connecting them with implementation and funding support.

cBrain configured and delivered the first F2 based SLI solution in 2022 for the Upper Salinas-Las Tablas RCD. The agreement with San Mateo RCD demonstrates how the F2 platform can be copied and adapted to other geographies and agencies at

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PETTER JENSEN, CEO

Inquiries regarding this Press Release may be directed to

Ejvind Jørgensen, CFO & Head of Investor Relations, cBrain A/S,
ir@cbrain.com, +45 2594 4973

Attachments



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Copenhagen, November 14, 2024 The United Nations Development Programme...



November 11, 2024 05:24 ET

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FEATURED

Ricardo Raya honored for work on La Honda fuel break

Conservation district names nature champion

By Holly Rusch, Daily Journal staff
Nov 13, 2024



Pacifica resident Ricardo Raya has been honored with the San Mateo Resource Conservation District’s inaugural nature champion award, honoring his work on a 19-mile fuel break project in La Honda.

The fuel break protects approximately 1,000 residents of La Honda, as well as recreational lands and community services, through the removal of dense vegetation and ladder fuels like small trees and bushes that can carry fires into the tree canopy.

Raya, who grew up in nearby Half Moon Bay, has been leading the hand labor crew on the Resource Conservation District fuel break project since July and said safety of employees and the community is always his first priority.

“Safety is our number one priority — just making sure everybody’s safe, making sure nobody gets hurt,” he said. “I like my job, so just for me to be recognized, that makes me feel good, [but] I just do it because I like it.”

Raya, an employee of Brush Hog Tree Care, works with a team mowing debris, taking dead trees out and removing fuel vegetation to protect the La Honda community.

The award — intended to honor on-the-ground laborers carrying out critical conservation work — was presented to him by state Sen. Josh Becker, D-Menlo Park, and Assemblymember Marc Berman, D-Palo Alto, according to a press release from the Resource Conservation District.

“Mr. Raya is an example of how wildfire resiliency can be carried out with precision, dedication, and care for the natural world,” Berman said, per the press release.

The Resource Conservation District provides resources and establishes funding for a variety of conservation-related projects in San Mateo County, including water quality protection, habitat restoration and improving forest health and wildfire resilience, Executive Director Kellyx Nelson said.

The nature champion award was born from a desire to showcase the individuals making those projects possible in a tangible way, Nelson said. Raya’s work has been exceptionally thoughtful and meticulous.

“We wanted to highlight the actual people on the ground, who are doing that work by hand,” she said. “We had a number of projects moving forward this year, and we asked our staff to identify anyone who’s exceptional.”

The Resource Conservation District plays different roles depending on project need, but always offers confidential and nonregulatory technical assistance, Nelson said.

“Sometimes we just provide people with technical assistance. Sometimes we implement projects. Sometimes we help with hazard mitigation,” she said. “It’s a lot of different ways that we work. We’re kind of like a Swiss Army knife of conservation.”

For Raya, the award serves as motivation to continue the kind of work he’s been doing.

“It makes me more motivated to do the job that I’m doing, and makes me want to work even harder and even better than what I’m doing ... and help, maybe, other people do the same thing,” he said.

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Holly Rusch, Daily Journal staff

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DEIJ Plan

November 21, 2024

Why Develop a DEIJ Plan?

- Conservation reasons
 - RCDs provide comprehensive, integrated, holistic conservation
 - Already integrating multiple systems, e.g. ecology, hydrology, geology, political, regulatory, economic, and financial
 - Environmental protection and DEIJ are intersectional
 - We can get more conservation done
 - We can get better conservation done
 - Many environmental issues disproportionately affect those who are most vulnerable
 - Contemporary understanding of sustainability integrates wellbeing of people with environmental health
- Strategic Plan requirement
 - Goal #3 in the plan adopted by the board
- Moral reasons

Key Considerations

- We can be a model for other orgs, including RCDs
 - Define a lane for RCDs
 - Model appropriate risk
 - Show what is affordable
- Any effective plan must include
 - The individual, the organization (internal), the programs (external)
- The continuum from neutrality to change

Neutrality	Conflict-Free Diversity	Listening and Learning	Risking for Change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees itself as having open doors and defines equity as meaning everyone is treated equally • Asserts that everyone has equal access to opportunity and advancement based on merit • Views discussions about oppression as too political for the workplace • Culture, policies, and procedures seen as apolitical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages diversity but prioritizes not having conflict • Highlights cultural life (holidays, cuisine, dress, achievements and celebrations) of a marginalized or minority group but not more complicated structural barriers and inequalities • Has hired people from marginalized identities but haven't changed policies or evaluated the overall structure of their organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gradually shifting identity of organization to one that acknowledges longstanding identities • Makes a statement or takes a stand on certain issues • Sponsors trainings, workshops, speaker series, etc. to educate staff more on the history of inequity, but sees this work as not core function. • Still sees conservation as separate than justice and equity work, and out of scope of the central mission of the organization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed to share, risk, or give up power, money, resources, and decision-making in order to take collective action towards change. • Audits and restructures all aspects of institutional life towards a future vision of justice. • Ends harmful partnerships/ policies/ investments etc. that go against equity goals.

Components of the Plan

- Our Call to Action
 - Sets a vision and describes how that vision is undermined by broader systemic barriers
- Our Responsibility, Our Opportunity
 - Delineates our unique role in being able to advance DEIJ in conservation
- Our Approach
 - Identifies key principles underlying how we approach DEIJ work
- Our Plan
 - Charts our path forward
 - Specific goals and strategies for our RCD
 - Directly tied to addressing the systemic barriers within our unique role grounded in our principles, i.e. "our lane"

Our Call to Action

Our vision is that coastal San Mateo County will be environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable. In support of that vision, **our mission** is to be a local hub for conservation, helping the people of San Mateo County build a more thriving natural environment for all. The health of the land and the wellbeing of people are deeply interconnected. This is why we help the land by helping people, and help people by helping the land.

These aspirations do not exist in a vacuum. They are undermined by **broader societal structures, both historic and current**. We are not truly sustainable while marginalized groups face unequal access to the benefits of nature or disproportionately bear the brunt of environmental degradation, including related natural disasters.

Our Call to Action (cont'd)

A **successful approach to conservation is holistic** and integrates multiple systems, e.g. ecology, hydrology, geology, policies and regulations, funding and finance. We believe that **truly effective conservation must also consider systems of oppression and inequality**. In this document, we identify some of those systems, our place in it, and chart a path forward for San Mateo Resource Conservation District to ensure diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) in our work.

We recognize that the threats posed by biodiversity loss, climate change, pollution, and other environmental harms affect some people more than others. Furthermore, the benefits of thriving ecosystems and a healthy environment are not experienced equally. **Multiple barriers contribute to inequity**, such as:

Our Call to Action (cont'd)

Land ownership. Land ownership is a key factor in building intergenerational wealth, accessing natural resources, and having influence over land management decisions. This is particularly true in the work of resource conservation districts, which were largely created to serve landowners—a focus that remains embedded in our enabling legislation. Marginalized groups have faced disproportionate and systemic barriers to owning land through discriminatory laws, HOA covenants, and banks discriminating against people of colorⁱ by denying loans or offering predatory loans.^{ii,iii,iv} Land ownership is a particular obstacle in San Mateo County, which has the highest cost of housing in the nine-county Bay Area and among the costliest in the state. This is exacerbated by San Mateo County having greater income inequality than any other county in California. The average income of the top 1% of residents is nearly 50 times greater than the average income of the bottom 99%.

Our Call to Action (cont'd)

Power and influence. People with more resources and capacity have more access to decision-making and decision-makers. As a result, they have more influence on setting community priorities and allocating resources. Barriers to participation can include language spoken, work schedules, childcare, competing priorities (often involving basic living needs), feelings of non-belonging in public forums, fear of retribution from landlords or employers, and more. In the area we serve, there are significant discrepancies between community demographics and representation in public leadership positions.

Our Call to Action (cont'd)

Settler colonialism. The land that today forms our district was stewarded by Native people for over 10,000 years. Since their arrival, colonizing settlers committed genocide, forced assimilation, displaced, and enslaved the people who were indigenous to this area; fundamentally altered how natural resources are managed; and disrupted or lost much of the local indigenous knowledge of land management.

Our Call to Action (cont'd)

White Environmentalism. Conservation in the United States has historically prioritized the activities, perspectives, and values of white environmentalists.^{v,vi} This has narrowed the lens on the definition of conservation, often parsing environmental issues as separate from equity issues and viewing people as separate from nature. It has also shaped what is considered knowledge, prioritizing Western science and academic knowledge over lived experiences. People of color are not only underrepresented in conservation; they also report feeling uncomfortable in these overwhelmingly white spaces.^{vii} Meanwhile, studies have found that people of color in the U.S. support environmental policy and can be more likely to care about climate change.^{viii}

Our Call to Action (cont'd)

Career pathways. Expectations for college degrees, unpaid or low paying internships, and low-wage entry-level positions pose significant hurdles for people from traditionally low-income communities. Implicit biases in the hiring process, such as bias towards those who communicate similarly or are more relatable to the interviewer, can further exclude candidates from different backgrounds. People of Color face additional obstacles in advancing to leadership roles, with racial diversity often limited to lower-level and non-leadership positions.^{ix,x} Frequently people of color are hired for administrative or outreach roles rather than delivering environmental programs. Retention rates for conservationists from marginalized groups are also lower.^{xi} Another barrier is that specialized trade workers who implement conservation projects are often not included in the conservation community or recognized in conservation career pathways. These careers are often overlooked, even though they can be accessed with lower barriers to entry and higher-level wages.

Our Call to Action (cont'd)

Discrimination in agriculture. Farmers of color have historically faced barriers in receiving financial aid and technical support from the USDA^{xii,xiii} and Agricultural Extension Service,^{xiv,xv} in addition to discrimination from banks in lending for farm ownership.^{xvi} While many farms provide fair employment and good worker conditions, some do not. Many farmworkers experience unjust labor practices and unsafe housing. These impacts are compounded for farmworkers from more vulnerable communities with less access to services and resources due to issues such as language barriers and immigration status.

Our Call to Action (cont'd)

Climate justice. Climate change disproportionately impacts people of color, Native American, low-income, and disabled communities.^{xvii,xviii} They also face greater challenges in recovering from climate-related impacts, often prolonging their hardship.^{xix} For instance, during wildfires, those with more resources can afford to evacuate to other homes or hotels that remove them from hazardous conditions. Similarly, during floods some people can work remotely or have paid time off, while others (e.g. hourly laborers) risk losing income. Additionally, social inequality is predicted to compound with worsening climate conditions^{xx,xxi}.

Our Responsibility, Our Opportunity

- RCDs were born of systems of inequity, and we have perpetuated those systems. Primarily, we were envisioned as a resource for people who own land. This is clearly expressed in our enabling legislation (CA Public Resources Code, Division 9) and other documents and practices throughout our history. Furthermore, a key mechanism to ensure our community-led conservation is the requirement that our boards of directors be landowning residents of our districts. While there are notable exceptions to these requirements (RCDs are enabled to work with non-landowners and non-landowners can serve as directors if certain criteria are met), landownership is nonetheless “in our DNA” and frequently expressed as a core component of RCDs’ brand and identity.

Our Responsibility, Our Opportunity (cont'd)

RCDs are perfectly positioned to bring inclusive and equitable conservation to communities:

- We **work across boundaries with diverse entities and diverse interests**. We can bring services and resources (financial, technical, educational) to landowners, tenants, tribes, government agencies, non-profit organizations, farm owners, farm laborers, and community members alike.
- The collective **impact of our work can benefit everyone**- clean air, clean water, thriving wildlife, resilience to flooding and drought and wildfire, viable local food systems, and more. Furthermore, the environmental degradation that we reverse often disproportionately affects those who are most vulnerable.

Our Responsibility, Our Opportunity

- RCDs are enabled with authorities to provide diverse services and directly consider economic sustainability as a component of conservation. Collectively, this enables us to work on conservation justice where it is mission aligned.
- RCDs were formed with a keen awareness that thriving human communities and healthy natural resources depend upon each other. This is why we were created as conservation agencies that serve people. Our approach is to bring boots-on-the-ground solutions that benefit both the environment and people.
- We provide free, confidential, nonregulatory assistance in support of voluntary conservation. This positions us to offer government support to assist people of little economic means as well as those whose trust in government has been eroded.

Our Responsibility, Our Opportunity

- Our enabling legislation ensures that our board of directors is comprised of community members. If we are intentional about representation on our boards, it can advance equity and inclusion in conservation leadership.
- RCDs were designed to evolve with changing needs and priorities. This enables us to address emerging issues and opportunities that are of greatest concern to those we serve in support of thriving communities, landscapes, and economies.

Guiding Principles

- **DEIJ is not a program or outreach.** It does not occur solely or primarily outside of the organization. It is also not limited to one or a few members of the organization, regardless of their role. For meaningful and lasting impact, DEIJ must be embedded in all facets of our work for all staff and directors.
- **We are not alone in this work.** We operate in a larger ecosystem of communities, nonprofits, government entities, working in their unique roles towards more just and equitable futures.
- **This work is nonlinear and iterative.** It requires continuous reflection, adaptation, and improvement rather than following a straightforward path.^{xxii}

Guiding Principles (cont'd)

- **Real change will require new ways of working and thinking.** Power and capacity must be shared, relationships built, and our understanding of conservation must be expansive.
- **Big changes often come from small actions.** By embedding equity into every aspect of how we do this work and valuing incremental progress, we trust that these small actions will lead to significant and lasting outcomes.
- **The wellbeing of land and people are interconnected.** While the systems that harm one harm the other, embedding DEIJ principles into our work benefits the land, people, and communities.

Goals and Strategies

- Organizational Excellence
- Conservation Priorities and Services
- Conservation Workforce
- Community of Practice

Organizational Excellence

1. Cultivate an inclusive work environment

- 1.1. Offer tailored accommodations whenever feasible
- 1.2 Provide different ways to give feedback and insights for different cognitive styles and preferences
- 1.3 Align our language with our principles and be willing to change as many times as needed.

2. Foster a culture of learning, dialogue, and growth

- 2.1 Create spaces for continuous learning, model a culture of growth that embraces open dialogue and grace, and set expectations for cultural humility.
 - Note: The Executive Director has a key responsibility for modeling and setting these expectations for culture.
- 2.2 Provide learning opportunities for staff and directors.

Organizational Excellence (cont'd)

3. Bring equity to organizational systems and practices
4. Ensure that internal rewards systems (e.g. promotions and salary increases) express organizational values.
5. Demonstrate integrity and take appropriate risks when representing our values externally.
 - 5.1 Demonstrate our DEIJ values publicly.
 - 5.2 Stand behind our values when it involves some risk or cost.

Conservation Priorities and Services

6. Include people from disempowered, marginalized, underserved, vulnerable, colonized, and displaced communities as partners, advisors, consultants, and contractors.

- 6.1 Include these voices in priority-setting.
- 6.2 Recognize that resources for these groups to participate may be limited, invite them anyway, and create the conditions, as feasible, for effective and inclusive participation.
- 6.3 Support Native environmental stewardship.

7. Design and implement projects that directly benefit these communities.

Conservation Priorities and Services (cont'd)

8. Strengthen disaster resilience in communities vulnerable to climate change

- 8.1 Collaborate with community-based organizations for disaster resilience
- 8.2 Seek flexible funding for disaster response
- 8.3 Hold accessible community meetings about natural resource management and natural disaster preparation
- 8.4 Design and implement nature-based hazard mitigation projects that directly benefit vulnerable communities.

Conservation Priorities and Services (cont'd)

9. Foster equitable access to programs and services

- 9.1 Expand and deepen relationships with farmworkers and non-English speakers
- 9.2 Provide services to farms and community gardens that strengthen food access and sovereignty
- 9.3 Foster access to information about RCD programs and services
- 9.4 Identify and reduce barriers to funding work that benefits vulnerable communities.

Conservation Priorities and Services (cont'd)

10. Support the capacity of partner organizations that serve marginalized communities when needed.

11. Foster diverse and inclusive leadership in conservation on the board of directors

Conservation Workforce

12. Promote access to careers in conservation

- 12.1 Implement equitable hiring practices.
- 12.2 Offer mentoring and information to a diversity of early career professionals and students.
- 12.3 Support paid opportunities for youth to gain conservation experience and be thoughtful about how unpaid internships can widen opportunity gaps.
- 12.4 Increase awareness of conservation careers

Conservation Workforce (cont'd)

13. Promote practices that are thoughtful and supportive of laborers employed by contractors completing RCD projects.

- 13.1 Ensure worker safety and wellbeing are integrated into project design and implementation.
- 13.2 Highlight and celebrate workers' contributions
- 13.3 Support professional development and equitable opportunities for workers in conservation
- 13.4 Recognize all roles in project planning and implementation as important and critical to project success.

Community of Practice

14. Engage with others centering DEIJ in their work to learn, share, and collaborate

Reviewers

- Shared with 68 people
 - 24 staff
 - 10 directors
 - 30 external organizations/ networks/ tribes working in conservation and/ or DEIJ
- Received feedback from 16 people
 - 5 staff
 - 2 directors
 - 9 external, including both tribes we work with
- Diversity of commenters
 - 11 who identify with a marginalized community
 - 9 who identify as non-white
 - Age range from 20s to 70s
 - Expertise included conservation, science, agriculture, Indigenous knowledge, organizational systems and leadership, public policy, DEIJ, community organizing, labor organizing, law, and more

Summary of Comments

- Recommendations
 1. to include specific goals, strategies, or actions
 2. regarding structure of document
 3. regarding use or clarity of language and preferred terms
 4. one recommendation to refocus overall on class
- Praise, appreciation, and requests to use it as an example

Some Comments

- “I just want to say how inspiring it is to be part of an organization that genuinely prioritizes its community and team members. This is by far the most comprehensive and inclusive plan I’ve seen. What stood out to me immediately was the way the plan addresses multiple barriers of inequity particularly the focus on power, influence, and career pathways. I often felt the need to bring up the issue of white environmentalism with peers and colleagues, so it’s truly empowering to see them addressed here. I’m excited to be a part of an organization with an inclusive DEIJ plan!” – staff member
- “Wow. These look really good. I especially appreciate RCD’s acknowledgement of past complicity and the notion that real progress is marked by embedding these [strategies] throughout the entirety of the RCD.” – tribal partner
- “I found the document inspiring, clear-eyed, and practical. I’d love to get permission to share as the document is a powerful example of how to do DEIJ work right” – Equity Officer at a land trust
- “This is fabulous and powerful! I like the connection between bigger concepts and the tactical actions. I may reach out for permission to reference your work as we continue to work on our own at the park district.”- Equity Officer at a park district

Next Steps

- Action Tracking Table
 - Updates for staff, board, partners, others
- Barb's workplan
- Embed in budgets
- Incorporate into strategic plan update
- Present at CARCD conference in December