



# SLOUGHHOUSE

## Resource Conservation District

HERALD | SLOUGHHOUSE | WILTON

### Meeting of the Board - MINUTES Sloughhouse Resource Conservation District

When: Wednesday, October 11, 2023  
Where: Rancho Murieta Community Services  
15160 Jackson Rd.  
Rancho Murieta, CA 95683

Time: 12:30 pm – 3:30 pm

Board Members: Barbara Washburn, Herb Garms, Gary Silva Jr., Lindsay Liebig, Jay Schneider  
Associate Directors: Teresa Flewellyn  
Staff: Austin Miller, Brittany Friedman

#### OPENING

*Chairman Garms called the meeting to order at 12:44pm.*

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Any member of the public may address the Board concerning any matter not on the Agenda within the Board/District's jurisdiction.

None.

#### CONSENT CALENDAR:

- a. Agenda – October 11, 2023
- b. Minutes – September 13, 2023
- c. Financial Report – October 2023
- d. Extension of Financial Services Contract with CA Special District Association

*Director Washburn moved to approve the consent calendar items a, b and c.*

*Director Liebig seconded the motion.*

*The motion passed with all in favor.*

*Director Liebig moved to approve the consent calendar item d.*

*Director Washburn seconded the motion.*

*The motion passed with all in favor.*

Finalized on:  
11/15/2023

## REPORTS

- a. Sacramento County Ag. Commissioners Report  
None.

- b. SRCD Board Member Reports

Director Silva Jr. voiced his disappointment over paying EKI Environment and Water(via Cosumnes Groundwater Authority - CGA) in regards to the way they are invoicing as well as how Downey Brand invoiced us for the amount of hours they work. Director Schneider agreed with these comments and mentioned that he attended the SSCAWA meeting yesterday (October 10) and wondered about Zone 13 funding for the basin. The Board further discussed the charges/invoices for CGA as being inaccurate and noted that spending should be monitored more closely where inaccuracies like these do not occur.

Director Garms recently attended a CPAC meeting and passed around a packet of information regarding that meeting to the Board of Supervisors including new protocols on farming operations. In February of 2024, these protocols will go before the Board to be voted on, with FEMA in mind due to their funding and Director Garms voiced his concern over this. Staff and the Board agreed to add this item to the agenda for November to discuss further.

Assistant Director Flewellyn also attended the SSCAWA meeting and discussed the missing levee fees in regards to Galt Irrigation District and the general concern over this. She wondered if Wakeman Consulting possibly missed something in regards to this. She also mentioned that she was unable to attend the monitoring events due to language in the access agreements and she wanted to note that CGA Staff should have notified herself and public member Tish sooner to let them know.

## INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION

- a. USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

Toney Tillman presented to the Board information on the many different programs NRCS and USDA has to offer. Conservation technical assistance and planning is one of their main practices they offer. After the plan, which is non-financial, a funding-related program can be offered such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program to help producers apply conservation practices on their land. NRCS accepts applications year-round and the deadline for FY24 is November 3, 2023. There is also a Conservation Stewardship Program to help producers to take their conservation activities to the next level (above the minimum requirements of their base-line programs) which also accepts applications year-round.

Toney discussed the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program which aids landowners and eligible entities with conserving, resorting, protecting wetlands, productive agricultural lands and grasslands which has a footprint of more than 5 million acres (applications also accepted year-round). The two types of easements are for Wetland Reserve Easements and Agricultural Land Easements. Additionally, there is a Conservation Reserve Program offered by FSA that provides yearly rental payments for farmers who maintain conservation for 10 to 15 years. The Conservation Innovation

Grants are competitive grant programs that support the development of new conservation tools, approaches, practices and technologies. They help build resilience in producers; operations and improve their bottom lines. All non-federal entities and individuals are eligible to apply.

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program is a partner-driven approach to voluntary conservation that funds solutions to natural resources challenges which leverages \$1 for every \$1 invested by USDA. The steps for assistance from NRCS are listed as: planning, application, eligibility, ranking and implementing (in that order).

In terms of conservation practices, there are about 170+ practices available through NRCS programs (ex: prescribed grazing) and each practice has a conservation practice standard which details how producers should implement them to maximize benefits. Some of the main issues that NRCS offer practices and programs on include: Soil Health, Water Quality, Water Quantity, Wildlife, Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry.

Toney also discussed the local working groups which covers locally led conservation to serve the local community and build local program capacity and participation. These groups provide recommendations to NRCS and are convened by the local RCD where all stakeholders are invited to participate. Benefits of local work groups include building trust, maintaining diverse local partners, receiving direct feedback, prioritizing resource concerns and analyzing how to improve conservation efforts and celebrate accomplishments. The closest NRCS field office to the Sloughhouse District is the Elk Grove Service Center.

## **GENERAL BUSINESS ACTION ITEMS**

### **1. Conservation Ag Planning Grant Implementation**

Sloughhouse RCD was awarded \$199,800 from CDFA and the Board has approved the grant contract agreement. To begin the grant work, agreements with the certified conservation planners who will write the plans must be approved by the Board. Three planners and their agreements were presented to the Board for approval: Matthew Wacker (Grazing Management Plan), Michael Kersten (Carbon Farming Plan), Harol Gallardo (Soil Health and Carbon Farming). It was noted that Matthew and Michael are local to the area but Harol is further south of the district area. However, there have been no additional applicants for that planner role. There are also plans that were awarded to Tuolumne County and Sloughhouse RCD recommend entering into an agreement with Tuolumne RCD so they may be able to work with landowners for those plans.

Director Washburn viewed all of the planners' resumes and noted that they all seem qualified and capable for these positions. Director Garms commented that the Board would ideally like to see updates on these planners and the costs incurred on a monthly basis (may be quarterly if Grant Agreement stipulates that timeline). The Board suggested that they may be able to provide possible interested landowners for the planners to work with and staff agreed. Director Schneider suggested that staff reevaluate the number of each type of plan at a later date if there is more interest for one plan over another. Staff agreed to look at this in January of 2024.

Staff has developed an interest survey intended for landowners whose property will receive the conservation plans:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SRCDconservationplanning> . Staff intends to promote the interest survey to landowners that want to work with Sloughhouse RCD to develop the farm conservation plans.

Staff also suggests requesting additional funding for Carbon Farm Plan development from CARCD.

*Director Silva Jr. made a motion to authorize the agreements with planners Matthew Wacker, Michael Kersten and Harol Gallardo.*

*Director Liebig seconded the motion.*

*The motion passed with all in favor.*

## **2. Water Efficiency Technical Assistance Grant**

Sloughhouse RCD was awarded \$432,153 from CDFA to provide water efficiency technical assistance and hired an Assistance Provider. The grant application requested funds to cover personnel costs (roughly 4% FTE of the District Manager position, 8% FTE of the Administrative Coordinator position and a Water Efficiency Program Coordinator at 75% FTE), supplies, travel, employee training, outreach supplies, and pump efficiency test. The position for the Program Coordinator has been posted to the SRCD Website as well as LinkedIn. Additional postings can take place as \$300 has been set aside to promote this, but it may not be needed as there are some quality candidates that have already applied. The Grant Agreement needs to be approved so staff may begin to execute the grant.

Staff is also requesting a Board Member to meet with staff to assist in the hiring process for the Program Coordinator. Director Silva Jr. volunteered to assist staff with this and suggested that we should keep the tools related to pump efficiency and other water efficiency practices as an RCD so we may be able to assist constituents in the future. Director Schneider suggested hiring someone who does not work with any existing GSA in the basin so they can be a truly independent employee who does not have any conflicting loyalties.

*Director Washburn moved to authorize staff to execute the CDFA WETA grant agreement with Counsel's approval.*

*Director Schneider seconded the motion.*

*The motion passed with all in favor.*

## **GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY ACTION ITEMS**

### **3. Cosumnes Groundwater Authority**

SRCD Staff member Brittany gave an overview of the Well Monitoring conducted with Confluence and EKI for CGA last week. 25 wells were monitored in total with 8 being water quality sampled and the rest had water levels taken. There are 15 access agreements in total for Sloughhouse RCD of which 3 have data that is publicly available.

Staff is working with EKI to gather the data and present it at the next CGA board meeting in November. The Board discussed issues that arose, how we can reduce costs by limiting viewing wells that are monitored virtually, and that access agreements need to be looked at and possibly revised or created for GSA's that do not have them.

In regards to letting members of the public accompany staff at the monitoring sites, it was suggested that there needs to be more transparency and updated access agreements allowing this or that every GSA needs to do their own monitoring separately. Director Schneider wants a public member to be there at the monitoring events while Director Washburn opposes this. The Board agrees that the access agreement language should be looked at for Sloughhouse RCD and CGA to ensure that proper protocols are being followed.

CGA staff then discussed the Member Contribution Agreement (FY '23-'24) with the Board in which the GSA's need to adopt the agreement and invoices will then be developed. The initial Member Agency Contribution Agreement was adopted by CGA in June 2023. The contribution agreement for Sloughhouse RCD came out to \$148,402 in total to go to CGA. The Board discussed the logistics in paying this contribution and Director Washburn wondered what the County of Sacramento does to levy a fee and what those options would be going forward. There was news that there is a missing levy fee associated with Galt ID. Director Garms is concerned about the 5 year proposal that would commit Sloughhouse RCD to contributing funds to CGA. Staff ensured that this particular agreement is only for the '23 - '24 fiscal year. Associate Director Flewellyn voiced concern over transparency and trust that CGA is trying to obtain and how the missing levy fee will affect this for CGA as a whole and for the Outreach and Engagement Committee. Director Schneider wants to take a step back and reevaluate the agreement between Sloughhouse RCD and CGA. The Board agreed to table this discussion until the November Board meeting as more information needs to be obtained to move forward.

Director Washburn shared an alternative Fee Structure in regards to the Fee Study Development that CGA is exploring. Under current estimates, Sloughhouse RCD would be responsible for \$256,263 annually for CGA operations. Additionally, the current fee study is looking at a parcel base fee, a public supply fee, and an irrigated acreage fee. Director Washburn's modified version of the fee structure adjusts the costs per parcel and revenue type. Director Silva Jr. disputed the figures represented in the modified fee structure and argued that aquaculture costs are much larger and more complicated than what was displayed. Director Liebig also disputed these figures and suggested that this alternate version is not a good idea in that it is not equitable for all involved. No action was taken on this matter.

#### **4. South American Subbasin GSP Implementation**

Staff shared information regarding the contribution to the South American Subbasin for Fiscal Year '22 - '23 in which Sloughhouse RCD has still not made a payment as we are waiting for a final breakdown of expenses. The anticipated budget for the joint GSA efforts in the South American Subbasin for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 is the same as the

previous year and the Sloughhouse RCD contribution would be the same (\$8,325). Starting in Fiscal Year 2024-2025 work on the 5-year Update to the South American Subbasin will begin and a separate funding agreement will need to be developed.

Currently Sloughhouse RCD makes their GSA contribution payments from our general fund. To generate funding to sustain this work, we will need to either explore voluntary contributions from landowners or develop and implement a groundwater sustainability fee.

No action was taken on this matter - item tabled.

**5. Center for Land-based Learning SLEWS Academy**

Item tabled.

**INFORMATIONAL/DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**6. SRCD Staff Report**

Staff provided a brief report highlighting the National Association of Conservation Districts' (NACD) 78th Annual Meeting which will take place in San Diego on February 10 - 14, 2024. <https://www.nacdnet.org/news-and-events/annual-meeting/>

Rancho Murieta CSD is in the process of updating their Integrated Water Management Plan. A draft of the plan is anticipated in the coming months. View the story map here: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/f1891e0bda0e48f3b7e8281645fd2af2>

There will be a Residential Organics Workshops for residents of Rancho Murieta on October 24th, 2023 to help residents comply with California Senate Bill 1383. Food waste and food soiled paper, such as napkins and paper towels, must now be thrown away in the Gray Cart along with yard waste. The Gray Yard Waste Cart is now considered the Gray Organics Recycling Cart.

Learn more here: <https://www.ranchomurietacsd.com/cal-waste-organics-workshop>

**IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Board approved the following future agenda items by consensus:

- Contribution Agreement between SRCD and CGA
- Center for Land-based Learning SLEWS Academy
- South American Subbasin Contribution Agreement
- District Manager Position and Transition
- Gary Silva Jr. as Treasurer

**ADJOURNMENT**

*Director Garms adjourned the meeting at 4:27pm.*