

MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MOJAVE DESERT RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

February 6, 2019

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Mojave Desert Resource Conservation District was held on Wednesday afternoon, February 6, 2019 at 1:00 p.m. at the Victorville Service Center at 15415 W. Sand St., Victorville, CA 92392.

Directors in attendance were:

Chuck Bell
Neville Slade
Bobby Boytor
Eldert Van Dam
Paul Johnson

Directors absent/excused:

None

Others in attendance were:

Dana Raponi, District Manager
Holly Shiralipour, NRCS, District Conservationist
Tony Walters, Conservation Specialist - IWM
Luis Cortes, Conservation Technician I
Elizabeth Bickham, NRCS, Soil Conservationist
Becca Everett, NRCS/RCD
Pat Flannagan, Guest
Fred Stern, Guest
Meredith Hergenrader

Item 1. Call to order, pledge of allegiance: The regular meeting was called to order by Chuck Bell at 1:03 p.m. Minutes were recorded by Dana Raponi. Flag salute was led by Pat Flannagan.

Item 2. Self-Introduction of Guests(s): No guests were present

Item 3. Approval of Agenda: **Neville Slade moved to approve the agenda. Seconded. Passed.**

Item 4. Consent Calendar:

Approval of Minutes: January 2019
Approval of Financial Report: January 2019
Approval of Bills: February 2019

Dana Raponi, RCD District Manager, distributed bank statements for the board to review and initial. Raponi reported the MWA invoice for tamarisk re-treatment in Barstow has been paid. Raponi stated the RCD is waiting on an invoice from NorTerra, our Contractor, on the mastication at the Lewis Center and Mojave Narrows Regional Park. **Neville Slade moved to approve the consent calendar. Seconded. Passed.**

A power point presentation developed by Ken Lair and Jackie Lindgren showing the before and after photos of the mowing/mastication work done at the Lewis Center and the Mojave Narrows Regional Park, was shown to the board. Discussion followed on how often this kind of debris

clearing will need to be done, fire being the natural debris removal tool, and the amount of tumbleweed seed left from the mowing/mastication that will lead to new growth. Bell stated there is currently an MOU in place between Mojave Narrows Regional Park and Lee Graham allowing monitored cattle grazing to help alleviate the new weed growth issue.

Item 5. District Conservationist's Monthly Report: Holly Shiralipour, NRCS District Conservationist, reported due to the government shutdown and the new farm bill, NRCS is still in a waiting mode. Shiralipour reported Curtis Tarver is the new State Area Conservationist for area 4 and discussed his recent visit to the Victorville Field Office to introduce himself and speak with staff. Shiralipour stated Tarver would like to attend an RCD Board Meeting in the near future. Shiralipour discussed the government shutdown, possible consequences should the shutdown continue and program processes once NRCS is fully up and running again. Shiralipour discussed the cover crop demonstrations planted at two producer farms in November of 2018, stating the workshop is still planned for March. Shiralipour discussed a recent security incident caught on camera involving a minor stealing from vehicles in not only our parking lot but from the businesses across the road. Discussion followed. NRCS employees are currently creating a list of objects that were stolen from the Federal vehicles. Shiralipour stated the NRCS is still awaiting the camera and security system for the Victorville Service Center. Shiralipour reported there is possible funding to assist an RCD in forming an Envirothon Team.

Item 6. District Manager's Report: Dana Raponi, RCD District Manager, reported she had received a call from Mandy Parks, Inland Empire RCD, concerning funding for projects in the San Bernardino mountains. Raponi explained the funding would be distributed by the Inland Empire RCD for Cal Fire approved projects. Raponi stated this funding could be used for the ReLeaf program and to possibly fund Cheryl Nagy's salary. Raponi stated an MOU would need to be put into place between Inland Empire RCD and the Mojave Desert RCD.

Item 7. ReLeaf Project: Cheryl Nagy's report was in the director books for review. Raponi stated there is nothing new regarding the Edison grant. Raponi stated Nagy is going to have a meeting with American Forest concerning the impending grant from them. Raponi stated the pending American Forest grant will cover Nagy's salary for the ReLeaf program until June 2019, before her salary begins to come out of the RCD budget. Discussion followed on funding opportunities, Nagy's job title and description, and how the ReLeaf program and salary was funded. Raponi stated Vic Leader, a business owner and NRCS producer, is applying for a grant to expand his processing capacity to process more lumber in the San Bernardino mountains. Raponi stated Vic Leader has been in the area working with NRCS for many years. Bell stated the RCD sent a letter of support for his grant.

Item 8. Irrigation Water Management: Tony Walters, Irrigation Water Management Specialist, reported he and Luis Cortes have been conducting follow up visits to homeowners, and has an upcoming workshop at Victor Valley Museum on Saturday, February 23, 2019. Walters reported he will be attending a Baja Sub-area Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting in Newberry Springs on February 21, 2019. Walters stated he has a meeting set up with Nick Schneider at MWA to discuss the specifics for the swamp cooler study. Discussion continued regarding flow meter funding and availability. Bell explained the MWA funded swamp cooler study to those attending. Walters stated he and Cortes had visited Las Flores Ranch to GPS irrigation canals and begin performing the irrigation assessment to determine how many gate valves are needed, how many gate valves need to be replaced and existing/replacing pipelines. Walters stated there has not been much maintenance in these areas for some time, so through this grant these items can be replaced. Walters reported he and Cortes will be attending a National NRI training in Tucson, Arizona, the end of February. Discussion followed.

Item 9. Mojave Weed Management Area: Bell asked about an upcoming Mojave Weed Management Area, scheduled conference call meeting. Raponi stated she had sent out emails, with information regarding grant projects for weed management areas, and asked for agenda items for the upcoming meeting, but had not received any response. Discussion followed.

Item 10. Old Business:

- a. RC&D Program Update: Nothing new at this time.
- b. Conservation Easements/Mitigation: Raponi stated Stephanie Pacheco from Tetra Tech had contacted her regarding a possible mitigation. Raponi stated this would be a mitigation of .96 acres. Discussion continued regarding the area and size of the property. Raponi stated there is another possible mitigation for a site in Adelanto.
 1. Recurrent Energy (Victor-Phelan)
 2. Oro Grande Wash (MWA)
 3. Sun Power
 4. Barstow Sanitary Landfill
- c. Mojave Water Agency FY 2017-2018 Weed Removal Program: Bell stated they will know more on re-treating the tamarisk in the Spring, when they can survey the areas. Bell stated he didn't think there would be much funding from the Bio fund for weeds in the next fiscal year. Bell reported the Mojave Water Agency had agreed to allot Fish and Wildlife a substantial amount from the Bio fund to purchase water rights in Baja. Discussion followed.
- d. Sand Blow/Fugitive Dust/Erosion Control: Nothing new at this time.
- e. Dairy Issues: Nothing new at this time.
- f. Update on Camp Cady: Raponi stated she had contacted Alisa Ellsworth concerning a new battery for the HOBOWE Weather Station at Camp Cady and charging it to the Bio fund. Ellsworth had consented for the district to purchase the battery and charge it to the Bio fund for Camp Cady. Raponi stated that Bickham finished her report of the rehabilitation/restoration area and copies are available.
- g. Raven Issue: Bell stated according to Bobbie Willhite, San Bernardino County Agriculture Commissioner, there will not be any type of ordinance regarding the misuse of propane cannons for raven control. Boytor stated the representative from Flock Free will be in the area next week. Discussion followed on assisting Willhite in meeting with the Flock Free representative, the Flock Free Raven irritant product bothering the eyes of cattle and the price of the products. Raponi reported Willhite had responded to the email Bell had sent regarding Industrial Hemp, stating the State of California has not yet completed the Industrial Hemp regulations. Once the regulations are completed, the San Bernardino County counsel will need to review them before they proceed. Bell stated neither Willhite nor a San Bernardino County representative will be attending an RCD board meeting until the County regulations are completed. Discussion continued regarding county involvement with the Industrial Hemp regulations and a representative from the state of California speaking at the local Work Group meetings.
- h. Grant Funding Opportunities: This item covered under New Business below.
- i. Tamarisk Alliance - Bio Control: Bell reported Tom Dudley will continue to monitor the beetles. After discussion Tamarisk Bio-Control will remain a separate item on the agenda.
- j. Regulations for Standards for Different Levels' of Mulch/Compost: Bell reported the San Bernardino County ordinance will cover green waste mulch and bio solids and stated compost will not be regulated. Johnson inquired on the benefit for the district to partner with NRCS, or RCD staff to complete research on the feasibility of creating another outlet for manure from the Dairy's. Discussion followed on the possibility of forming a co-op to stimulate a specific operation to deal with compost from the High Desert Dairies. Some topics to research would be a location to truck compost to and cost to truck it to the location. Bell inquired who, from NRCS, can possibly assist in looking into the feasibility of

establishing a compost operation to primarily facilitate dairy manure. Discussion continued regarding compost, possible grant opportunities for healthy soils and partnering with companies who are already making compost. Shiralipour stated she could assist in these areas. Bell asked for background information from NRCS and for this topic to be put on the agenda for the March board meeting. Discussion followed regarding the guidelines and specifications of the description of what makes something organic.

- k. Federal Review of DRECP – RCD Involvement: Nothing new at this time.
- l. Comments on the WMRNP Plan Amendment: Nothing new at this time.
- m. Ramp Down in Baja to 35%: Nothing new at this time.
- n. Mojave Riverbed Fire Hazard Debris Clearing: Bell suggested taking Ellsworth, Fish and Wildlife, on a ride through the Mojave Narrows Regional park riverbed to determine if Fish and Wildlife wanted more clearing in this area. Discussion followed on mastication and the existence of pepperweed in the Mojave Narrows riverbed area. Slade stated he had spoken with Steve Myers, a wildlife biologist, concerning how cattle overgrazing, intensive grazing and not resting, has devastated riparian areas, but it is not the case in today's cattle prescribed grazing. Slade further discussed the need for more management in this area. Bell suggested the need for creating a working group, headed by Rick Piercy, to create a plan and propose it to a bigger group. Discussion followed on the effects of fire, the need for range transects to study the plants present, and the need for science to manage the areas. Johnson stated proper guidance is the most important aspect in this area.
- o. Attempt to Exempt Well/Pump Rigs via Legislation: Bell stated he and a local well driller will be meeting with Assemblyman Obernolte in Hesperia on Friday February 9, 2019, to inquire about a way to obtain exemption for pump rigs under the Tier 4 standards. Discussion followed regarding the DMV's involvement in regulating and citing individuals who don't conform to the Tier 4 standards.
- p. Mojave Narrows Fire Protection & Restoration Plan – Meeting Feb 5, 2019: Bell asked Raponi to leave this item on the agenda and remove Mojave Riverbed Fire Hazard Debris Clearing.

Item 11. New Business:

- a. Review and Possible Rescission of Project #6 of the Mojave Water Agency Workplan – RCD's Role as Funding Passthrough for Research to Acquire BAP Water Rights in BAJA: Bell explained the RCD's role in the MWA workplan was to act as a funding passthrough for a Fish and Wildlife chosen consultant to research water rights in Baja for possible purchase. Bell stated the RCD's roll was not to purchase the water rights but to only pay the Fish and Wildlife consultant. Bell explained because of possible competing interest, concern has been expressed about being a funding passthrough. Bell stated he had contacted Ellsworth with Fish and Wildlife and Lance Eckhart with Mojave Water Agency and both were very understanding of the situation. Bell requested board action to drop item #6 from the districts MWA workplan. **Neville Slade made a motion to rescind project #6 - Funding Passthrough for Research to Acquire BAP Water Rights in BAJA, of the RCD/MWA 2019/2020 workplan. Seconded. Passed.**
- b. RCD Letter to S.B. County and State Lands Commission RE: Solar Project Resource Issue Drafted by Pat Flannagan/Neville Slade/Ken Lair/Chuck Bell: Bell explained he wanted the board to be aware of this letter being drafted mostly by Pat Flannagan concerning the resource issues of solar projects. As the district cannot be a supporting or opposing entity in this situation, it can express concern with resource issues and offer assistance with such matters as soil types, plant types, reclamation and restoration plans per project. Bell explained that he, Flannagan, Lair, Slade and NRCS will be involved with this resource project. Flannagan discussed the particulars of a substantial resource document and stated it can be linked as a resource reference for comment letters. Discussion followed on various

- resource documents and data existing separately, needing to be combined to create a resource. Discussion continued regarding rooftop solar. Bell stated the letter will be from the RCD to pertinent agencies sharing resource concerns needing to be considered in projects.
- c. RCD Investment Policy: Raponi stated she had emailed copies of two investment policies from different agencies to the board and copies were on the director books. After discussion Bell asked the directors to review the sample policies, pick out the high points and bring them back to the meeting next month to come up with an investment policy. Raponi will meet with DCB bank to obtain rates.
 - d. RCD/NRCS Workgroup Meeting: Shiralipour stated she would like to conduct three work group meetings. One in the Victor Valley Area, one in the Needles area and a joint meeting with the Inland Empire in the San Bernardino mountains. Shiralipour stated these meetings were needed to determine what are the most pertinent issues NRCS should be working on in the county. After discussion Shiralipour will set up the meetings for March or April.
 - e. Assistance to MDLT for Weed Removal/Restoration at its Palisades Ranch: Bell stated there is a meeting scheduled on Tuesday, February 12th with the Mojave Desert Land Trust at the Palisades Ranch. Bell reported he and Jackie Lindgren can spray Arundo and Tamarisk but as far as their overall project, no decisions can be made until the meeting.
 - f. NRCS Assistance in Compiling Information on Soils/Vegetation/Restoration/Etc. for Input to County RE: Industrial Solar Projects in Lucerne Valley and Daggett: This item discussed in item 'b' above.
 - g. 2019 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program RE: Contract IWM for Korean Farmers: Walters reported a few years ago the district had co-sponsored a Specialty Crop Block Grant with Luis Sierra and the CCC Co-Op. The submitted concept proposal had not been accepted. Walters stated Luis Sierra, CCC Co-Op, had contacted the district again to co-sponsor the 2019 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Walters stated Luis Cortes and himself would contract to assist with their water conservation efforts, including holding workshops and classes. Walters explained if the grant gets approved, it will give Walters and Cortes 15 hours each per week for 2 years. Walters stated the grant concept has already been submitted and the CCC has been asked to submit a full proposal. Slade asked for a breakdown of the responsibilities. Walters explained the duties and responsibilities of the RCD for this grant. After discussion Neville Slade moved to continue forward as a contract participant in the 2019 Specialty Crop Grant with Luis Sierra and the CCC. Seconded. Passed.

Item 13. Correspondence (Discussion items only) Raponi stated she would like to attend a policy and procedure writing workshop presented by CSDA to be held on March 13, 2019 at the Mojave Water Agency in Apple Valley. Bell agreed. Raponi stated she had received an email from Zachary Bayren from the Forest Service seeking public comment for 2020 Off Highway Grants. Raponi stated there will be an informal open house on Thursday February 7, 2019 to discuss the next opportunity in Off Road Vehicle grant funding from the state. Raponi discussed the grant application submittal timeline and preferred input media. After discussion **Paul Johnson moved to send a letter of support to the Forest Service. Seconded. Passed.** Discussion followed on obtaining legal advice on what constitutes a contract and what constitutes a pass through. Slade will formulate a question with exact wording of what the district is asking and Raponi will present it to County Counsel.

Item 14. Closed Session (Litigation and Personnel): No Closed Session was held.

Item 15. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 3:20