

KONA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
MINUTES OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS
November 10, 2009

Directors Present: Virginia Isbell Greg Hendrickson Rick Robinson
Kawika Marquez

Directors Absent: Skip Cowell

Associate Directors Present: None

KSWCD Staff: Mary Robblee

NRCS Staff: Pam Aguon,
Larry Yamamoto, District Conservationist/Director

RC&D Joachim Oster

Meeting called to order at 7:20 a.m. by Chair, Rick Robinson.

MSCU* (K. Marquez/V.Isbell) to approve the minutes of the October 13, 2009 meeting as circulated.

MSCU* (K. Marquez /V. Isbell) to approve Treasurer's Report - available upon request.

Currently the District receives \$156.25 per quarter from the state General Fund. Director Yamamoto stated that TSP funding from NRCS to the District was discontinued because TSP funding is to be used for implementation of Farm Bill Programs rather than during the planning and processing stages. Director Yamamoto anticipates being informed of the fiscal allocation from Congress within the next 2-3 weeks. There may be funds available to contract with the District for work to be provided. He will advise the District when that information is available.

1) Reports:

A. NRCS Report: Kealakekua Field Office:

No monies have been committed yet although applications are currently being accepted for the 2010 program year. To date twelve applications have been completed. Under the new ranking criteria for Farm Bill Programs, crop land will be ranked against crop land, range land vs. range land, etc. The ranking criteria will be based 50% on national resource concerns, 25% on state resource concerns and 25% on local resource concerns. The Local Work Group met to determine the local resource concerns to be used in the ranking process. For N. and S. Kona the concerns, in order of priority are as follows:

1. Water Quantity
2. Soil Condition
3. Water Quality
4. Soil Erosion
5. Plant Condition
6. Fish and Wildlife
7. Domestic Animals
- 8 Air Quality

Following are the ranking questions the Local Work Group developed: (The first two existing questions remain unchanged.)

1. Does the applicant meet one or more of the following: a. Has the applicant never had an EQIP contract, b. Did the applicant successfully complete any past EQIP contract(s) in full compliance or, c. If the applicant has an existing EQIP contract has it been and is it now, on schedule and in full compliance?
2. Does the applicant currently have a conservation plan in place?

Additional questions the Work Group decided upon:

General Purpose:

3. Will the project address Kona's top three resource concerns of water quantity, soil condition and water quality?

Crop Land:

4. Will contracted practices improve or address water quantity concerns by increasing the amount of available water, improving irrigation efficiencies of the existing water supply or improving soil water retention?

Grazing Land:

5. Will contracted practices improve available feed and forage quality and quantity?

Mixed Land Use:

6. Does the contracted property included forest land which will be improved by contracted conservation practices?

Per Director Yamamoto, pig damage e.g. soil erosion, considered a secondary impact is a treatable resource concern. There are currently no criteria to consider pigs themselves as an “invasive species”. Director Yamamoto and his counterparts across the country are working toward adding “Invasive Species” as a separate resource concern. When that is accomplished, practices can be established to address pigs as a distinct resource concern. This is not likely to include fencing since fencing apparently just moves the problem.

Also, some local populations may not consider pigs an invasive problem. K. Marquez asks about the potential to create a market for invasive species which can then work towards lowering the numbers of an invasive species such as pigs.

With “Invasive Species” as a separate resource concern other issues such as the coqui frog may be addressed through Farm Bill programs.

An additional concern with addressing “invasive species” however, is that some invasive species are no longer considered invasive but, rather, “established” e.g. christmas berry.

KSWCD Staff-turnover Issue:

Director Yamamoto’s primary purpose for attending was to discuss personnel turnover in the Kealakekua Field Office. He

feels that one of the problems is that while the agency's tasks have changed over the years, personnel changes to fulfill the responsibilities were not made to implement them.

Prior to 1995, the first year of cost-share programs, NRCS provided technical assistance to local farmers and ranchers. From 1995 on, NRCS has had more contract management requirements to ensure the money provided is for the installation of practices that met the agency's specifications. The focus has been on accountability for the funds and less on conservation. During this time the agency's financial contract responsibilities have increased 300% while the number of NRCS employees has gone down.

There is currently a workload analysis being conducted to determine how to best organize the agency in light of the additional contracting responsibilities it has. Director Yamamoto stated he cannot change personnel types, i.e. hire a contract specialist, for any of the offices until the analysis is complete and recommendations made. Chair Robinson stressed the crux of the letter the Board sent to Director Yamamoto was more the "attitude" of State Agency Staff providing little or no support in dealing with KSWCD field office employees.

- B. **HACD Report:** Quotes were requested from the Sheraton and Hilton Hotels for the Sept. 22-24, 2010, Southwest Regional Annual Conference. Only one quote, from the Sheraton, was received. The Board requested M. Robblee to request quotes from the Hilton and Marriot hotels. Also, request whether we can obtain "free" rooms to be used as scholarship-type incentives to bring representatives from less financially viable Districts particularly from the Territory/Trust Island Nations in S. Pacific.
- C. **NACD Report:** Skip Cowell absent.
- D. **Big Island RC&D Report:** On Friday (Nov. 13th) RC&D will be having a presentation by a grant writer to learn how to obtain large grants as for all the island's SWCDs. Kawika is striving toward becoming the manager of programs instead of being an umbrella of smaller grants. Kawika specifically wants to increase vegetable production on the island. There is an influx of TARP money coming back into the government and there may be some opportunities to obtain funding for rural community development. There may be a change in the by-laws to increase island representation by not requiring that all council members be associated with the SWCDs.
- E. **Conservation Assistant Report:** Available upon request.
- F. **Monthly Report to the County:** Available upon request.

2) **New Cooperator(s):**

8-3-009:018 (80.6 acres): A producer interested in learning more about olive flowering and is working with the USDA Agricultural Research Service.

MSCU* (K. Marquez/G. Hendrickson) to approve the new Cooperator Application.

7-9-002:016: (3.2 acres): From last month's meeting. The applicant is not the land owner. The Board requested that evidence be provided

that the applicant has permission to farm the land. A letter had been sent to the mailing address on the Agreement but was returned as “undeliverable”. The Board did not take action on this application.

- 3) **Conservation Plans:** None for this meeting
- 4) **Correspondence Review:** Available upon request.
- 5) **Subdivision Reviews:** Available upon request. The Board requests that M. Robblee obtain the subdivision plan for Sub: 09-000918 since it has a substantial floodway through the length of it.
- 6) **Pilot Project Update:** Currently 26 producers signed up for both the soil testing and conservation cover aspect of the program. Two producers are signed up for just the soil testing and two are signed up for just the conservation cover. To date over 293 acres of land are impacted.
- 7) **Kealakehe Dump update**

County inquired as to whether RC&D and the Kona SWCD were presenting two separate proposals. Kawika advised he believed the District wants the problem addressed and is looking for avenues to pursue the solution. RC&D wants to create a public private relationship because of waste management grants currently available through the Department of Agriculture and also funds available through Brownsville for training. What is desired is a guarantee, in writing, that regardless of what happens in the future politically with the county that the problems with the dump are resolved. The District does not want to continually see this problem pushed out for someone else to deal with it.

County Dept. of Environmental Mgmt., Director, Lono Tyson, is requesting something in writing that states the KSWCD perspective and that RC&D will pursue the public/private relationship with the Dept. of Ag. and send it to L. Tyson and the Mayor. V. Isbell is to draft a letter stating that the Kona SWCD and RC&D are united on the need to have dump be remediated. The methodology is up to the county and the remediation plan under which the County plans to pursue that remediation needs to be communicated back to the District. The District would like to see a bill passed by the county which will carry the weight of law with dates for completion. **V. Isbell to write the letter to L. Tyson requests outlining the District position.**
- 8) **Flood Control Structure: Report** Copies available upon request. Copies sent to all tour participants and state elected representatives.
- 9) **Virginia Easton-Smith:** Joachim Oster requests the Board send a letter to CTAHR requesting a replacement for Virginia Easton-Smith who is moving to the mainland in early December. Joachim to provide draft and V. Isbell to review.
- 10) **Meeting Adjourned:** Next Meeting December 8, 2009.

Virginia Isbell, Secretary

*MSCU – Moved, Seconded, Carried Unanimously