



December 8, 2022

Supervisor Dennis Rodoni, Board President

Chair Dennis Scremin, Marin Parks and Open Space Commission Chair

Max Korten, Marin Parks Director

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Subject: Measure A Draft Expenditure Plan

Dear Supervisors,

Thank you for including the Marin Resource Conservation District (Marin RCD) allocation of 1% in the existing and latest draft of Measure A. This Measure has been a model and the envy of other counties working on natural resource protection and we have made every effort to use that funding wisely under a publicly transparent and equitable process.

The Marin RCD is a Special District bound by Division 9 of the CA Public Resources Code (See Exhibit A, CA Public Resource Code) which declares our authority to seek the cooperation of local, state, and federal agencies on issues of local concern for the purposes of soil and water conservation, water quality protection, GHG reduction, carbon sequestration, fish and wildlife enhancement on public and private lands. Furthermore, it is stated that the "expenditure of state, county, city, district, or other public funds that are available or may become available for planning, designing, or implementing the above and for the construction or maintenance of such control or preventive works on privately or publicly owned land constitutes expenditure for the general public benefit." For the past 10 years we have been doing the work as directed by the Measure A expenditure plan which outlines Measure A's purpose and funding allocations. Measure A funding has enabled us to attract over \$3M of State and Federal funding to do the same. With the help of our key partners, we have:

- Improved 6 miles of endangered salmonid habitat by eliminating summertime farm water diversions
- Improved streams by installing 9.8 miles of riparian fences
- Installed alternative livestock water sources to reduce pathogens in Tomales Bay: 10 solar pumping plants, 9 tanks and 11 troughs equipped with wildlife escape ramps
- Installed 2,978 native plants to increase wildlife habitat and biodiversity
- Improved 111,300 gallons of water before entering nearby streams
- Sequestered 37 MT CO₂e and increased soil water retention at one 23-acre ranch with compost application

This month our Measure A funding was used to secure a \$1 million dollar grant from the CA State Coastal Conservancy to implement 6 riparian restoration projects on ranches and to queue up 6 more to be shovel ready for grant applications with the help of 7 partnering agencies and organizations. These are specific carbon beneficial practices approved by State and Federal agencies such as the CA Department of Food and Agriculture's Healthy Soils and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Environmental Quality Incentives Programs. Applications to these programs require cost share funding and Measure A has been a reliable and consistent 10-year source of support for farmers and ranchers.

The Marin RCD has three recommendations to portions of the Measure as they relate to our District:

- Support Marin agriculture in meeting Marin County Climate Action Plan goals
- Increase funding to support increased demand for services, and
- Dedicate an allocation for ecosystem services on working lands

The Draft Measure A expenditure plan recommends 15% for agriculture and resource protection and includes an allocation of \$130,000 per year for our District. While we are grateful for the allocation, we need to do more, and the demand is evident. The Marin County Unincorporated Area Climate Action Plan calls for a GHG reduction/carbon sequestration target on agricultural lands of 82,049 MT CO₂e by the year 2030 with an estimated cost of \$1M per year. Carbon Farming is identified as a solution, supporting technical assistance and the construction of carbon sequestration projects on farms and ranches. At the United Nations Glasgow Summit, the United States repledged its commitment to reducing US carbon emissions by half of 2005 levels, by 2030. A cornerstone of the plan is ensuring agricultural land becomes a carbon sink and that farmers "make American soil the next frontier of carbon innovation." This is our opportunity to follow up on this pledge.

Our future relies on our ability to be resilient and adaptable to climate change impacts related to wildfire and drought. In the last two years, and potentially entering a third, Marin County has experienced drought conditions which have severely impacted farm viability and ecological health. These conditions are forcing us to address fire and fuels management across 170,000 acres of working landscape which can be managed cost-effectively. If this active agricultural management were abandoned, there is a potential for fire fuels and fire frequency and intensity to increase, which is particularly concerning in areas identified within the Wildland Urban Interface. Measure A can also assist land managers by supporting the implementation of practices that enhance soil health. According to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, a 1% increase in soil organic matter will yield an additional 20,000 gallons of water per acre.

The demand is evident. Each year the Marin RCD turns away dozens of ranchers wanting to improve soil health, biodiversity, air and water quality, simply because we do not have enough funding (see Exhibit B, Carbon Farming Map). To scale this work up, we will need \$500,000 annually for planning, permitting, engineering, implementation, and monitoring which we can match with \$500,000 in outside funding sources. Due to the ecological sensitivities associated with riparian and wetland restoration, careful planning will be necessary that far exceeds financial contributions that can be made by ranchers. This year we will be completing a half mile

stream restoration project in the Stemple Creek watershed costing upwards of \$400,000. These types of projects need significant technical and financial support to do the groundwork.

Furthermore, the Marin RCD recommends a clear and dedicated allocation for “Ecosystem Services on Working Lands” that will support "wildfire prevention, biodiversity, enhance and improve forests, streams, lakes and wetlands, restore natural resources, and provide climate resiliency through carbon farming practices." Currently the draft Measure A expenditure plan recommends a competitive grant program for easements and stewardship funding. We recommend renaming the program and removing the competitive nature of this allocation.

The Marin RCD believes the preservation of farmland and the stewardship of them are equally important and should be supported in this Measure, however in the stewardship of working lands, this is the work the Marin RCD is chartered to do. The Marin RCD spent the 80s working on soil erosion, the 90s on water quality and fisheries and for the past 15 years, we initiated the first program in the state for carbon sequestration on ag lands, all with discretionary grant funding. The Marin RCD, the county’s ranchers and local partners have practiced innovation through grants year after year whether to benefit salmon fisheries, oyster beds, threatened freshwater shrimp, birds or to save eroded farmland. The benefits extend beyond individual property lines to the public at large through the enhancement of shared watershed resources and more recently the inclusivity of disenfranchised communities. We have developed a programmatic structure that offers fairness, equity and transparency in the distribution of grant funding, and it includes the partnership of ALL, not just some, agencies and organizations in the county.

This is our county’s opportunity to lead. At the United Nations Glasgow Summit more than 100 countries agreed to cut emissions of methane, a potent planet-warming gas by 30 percent by the end of this decade. Our 2020 County CAP also pledges this and identifies agriculture as a solution. To enable the Marin RCD to reach the goals of the Carbon Action Plan, please consider raising the Measure A allocation from \$130,000.00 to \$500,000.00 per year. Although it would take \$1,000,000.00 per year to satisfy County GHG reduction goals, we feel that \$500,000.00 per year is achievable and can be used to leverage the remaining funding necessary to reach our goal. We can lead by example and already have the institutional structure in place to get it done. Please support it.

Sincerely,

Sally Gale
President, Marin RCD

EXHIBIT A

CALIFORNIA PUBLIC RESOURCES CODE - PRC

DIVISION 9. RESOURCE CONSERVATION [9001 - 9972]

(Division 9 repealed and added by Stats. 1975, Ch. 513.)

CHAPTER 1. General Provisions [9001 - 9044]

(Chapter 1 added by Stats. 1975, Ch. 513.)

ARTICLE 1. Policy of State [9001 - 9003]

(Article 1 added by Stats. 1975, Ch. 513.)

9001.

(a) The Legislature hereby declares that resource conservation is of fundamental importance to the prosperity and welfare of the people of this state. The Legislature believes that the state must assume leadership in formulating and putting into effect a statewide program of soil and water conservation and related natural resource conservation and hereby declares that this division is enacted to accomplish the following purposes:

(1) To provide the means by which the state may cooperate with the United States and with **resource conservation districts** organized pursuant to this division in securing the adoption in this state of conservation practices, including, but not limited to, farm, range, open space, urban development, wildlife, recreation, watershed, water quality, and woodland, best adapted to save the basic resources, soil, water, and air of the state from unreasonable and economically preventable waste and destruction.

(2) To provide for the organization and operation of **resource conservation districts** for the purposes of soil and water conservation, the control of runoff, the prevention and control of soil erosion, and erosion stabilization, including, but not limited to, these purposes in open areas, agricultural areas, urban development, wildlife areas, recreational developments, watershed management, the protection of water quality and water reclamation, the development of storage and distribution of water, and the treatment of each acre of land according to its needs.

(b) **The districts**, in addition to any other authority provided by law, may do all of the following:

(1) Ensure consistency with the authorities and policies of the United States, this state, counties, cities, public districts, other resource conservation districts, persons, associations, and corporations.

(2) With the consent of the owner, construct on privately or publicly owned lands any necessary works for the prevention and control of soil erosion and erosion stabilization.

(3) Facilitate coordinated resource management efforts for watershed restoration and enhancement.

(c) The districts shall not conserve water for power purposes or produce or distribute power for their own use or for the use of others.

(Amended by Stats. 1994, Ch. 719, Sec. 2. Effective January 1, 1995.)

9001.5.

(a) It is the policy of the state that the protection and management of natural and working lands is an important strategy in meeting the state's greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals. The protection and management of those lands can result in the removal of carbon from the atmosphere and the sequestration of carbon in, above, and below the ground.

(b) The protection and management of natural and working lands provides multiple public benefits, including, but not limited to, assisting with adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

improving water quality and quantity, flood protection, ensuring healthy fish and wildlife populations, and providing recreational and economic benefits.

(c) All state agencies, including, but not limited to, the Natural Resources Agency, the Department of Food and Agriculture, and the California Environmental Protection Agency, and their respective departments, boards, and commissions, shall consider the policy set forth in this section when revising, adopting, or establishing policies, regulations, expenditures, or grant criteria relating to the protection and management of natural and working lands. State agencies shall implement this requirement in conjunction with the state's other strategies to meet its greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals and with the intent to, among other things, promote the cooperation of owners of natural and working lands.

(d) For purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

(1) "Working lands" means lands used for farming, grazing, or the production of forest products.

(2) "Natural lands" means lands consisting of forests, grasslands, deserts, freshwater and riparian systems, wetlands, coastal and estuarine areas, watersheds, wildlands, or wildlife habitat, or lands used for recreational purposes such as parks, urban and community forests, trails, greenbelts, and other similar open-space land. For purposes of this paragraph, "parks" includes, but is not limited to, areas that provide public green space.

(e) Nothing in this section shall affect the existing authority of a city, county, city and county, state agency, department, commission, or board relating to natural and working lands.

(Added by Stats. 2016, Ch. 545, Sec. 2. (SB 1386) Effective January 1, 2017.)

9002.

It is hereby declared as a matter of legislative determination:

(a) That the construction and maintenance on privately or publicly owned land of works for resource conservation is in the general public interest and for the general public benefit.

(b) That the expenditure of state, county, city, district, or other public funds that are available or may become available for planning, designing, or implementing the above and for the construction or maintenance of such control or preventive works on privately or publicly owned land constitutes expenditure for the general public benefit.

(Added by Stats. 1975, Ch. 513.)

9003.

The Legislature hereby finds and declares that **resource conservation districts** are legal subdivisions of the state and, as such, are not-for-profit entities. For the purpose of contracting with state agencies only, resource conservation districts shall be considered agencies of the state.

(Added by Stats. 1996, Ch. 994, Sec. 1. Effective January 1, 1997.)

EXHIBIT B

Prop 68 Climate Adaption Map 1: Marin Carbon Farming

Plans, Designs, and Implementation

