



**AG + OPEN SPACE**  
SONOMA COUNTY

SONOMA COUNTY OPEN SPACE DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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**APPROVED MINUTES**

**Virtual Meeting Due to Sonoma County's Shelter in Place Order  
February 24, 2022 | 5:00 pm**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Steve Rabinowitsh	Don McEnhill	Wendy Eliot	Curt Nichols
Cary Fargo	Bill Smith	Jesús Guzmán	Michelle Whitman
Paul Martin	John Nagle	Neysa Hinton	Kristina Tierney

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Tawny Tesconi	Sue Conley
Jan McFarland	Brian Barnacle

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Misti Arias, General Manager; Jennifer Kuszmar, Acquisition Manager; Sheri Emerson, Stewardship Manager; Catherine Iantosca, Stewardship Specialist; Allison Schichtel, Senior Conservation Planner; Mary Chambers, Agricultural Specialist; Amy Ricard, Community Relations Specialist; Jacob Newell, Stewardship Supervisor; Taylor Acosta, Stewardship Technician; Lauren Alpert, Community Relations Assistant; Marina Montes, Stewardship Technician; Sara Ortiz, Administrative Aide; Verne Ball, County Counsel; Mariah Robson, Advisory Committee Clerk

**Call to Order**

Chair Michelle Whitman called the meeting to order at 5:01 pm. Chair Whitman did a roll call: Steve Rabinowitsh, yes; Don McEnhill, no; Wendy Eliot, yes; Brian Barnacle, no; Cary Fargo, yes; Bill Smith, no; Jesús Guzmán, yes; Paul Martin, no; Sue Conley, no; John Nagle, yes; Neysa Hinton, yes; Tawny Tesconi, no; Jan McFarland, no; Curt Nichols, yes.

**Public Comment**

Chair Whitman asked for any public comments on items not on the agenda. Susan Kirks reported out that she appreciated and wanted to thank Advisory Committee member John Nagle for posing a question at the last meeting about Paula Lane and the displaced badgers and asked what role the Advisory Committee members have in this issue. She also wanted members to know that the situation is still the same and the badgers continue to be displaced.

**Approval of Minutes from January 27, 2022**

Chair Whitman asked for any comments or revisions regarding the January 27, 2022 minutes. There were none. Chair Whitman asked for public comments on the minutes but there were none. Wendy

Eliot motioned for the minutes to be approved as is. Bill Smith seconded the motion. All in favor except Curt Nichols who abstained as he was not present at the January meeting.

### **General Manager's Report**

- Ag + Open Space is bringing two projects to the Fiscal Oversight Commission next week: the Americorps Trail Matching Grant and the acquisition of the Mark West Wikiup property that is a joint project with Sonoma Water.
- The Vegetation Management Grant Program launched the 2022 request for proposals in December and on January 23, 2022 we received 40 proposals for vegetation treatments from around the county requesting \$7 million in support. The Selection Committee will be submitting its recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on April 19, 2022, proposing the funding of 15 projects for \$2-3 million.
- We are recruiting for our fourth management position and have changed the name from Conservation Planning to Community Resources given our stated goals to increase our role in community engagement and building support and resources for landowners.
- Catherine Iantosca has returned as our Stewardship Specialist. She is an excellent resource and detail-oriented and we are extremely pleased to have her back.

Chair Whitman asked if there were any public comments on the General Managers report out, and Ms. Kirks welcomed Catherine Iantosca back.

Chair Whitman wanted to know if the Wikiup project will go to the Fiscal Oversight closed session since it is a real estate item. Ms. Arias responded that yes it will be in the closed session.

Sara Ortiz, Administrative Aide, announced that there is a live transcription on the zoom call that states that if anyone needs assistance with hearing to click on the live transcript. It can be closed if not needed.

Sheri Emerson, Stewardship Manager, through the Chair, asked that her item, Nuts and Bolts of Easement Stewardship, be moved from #5 to #6 in the agenda.

### **Community Relations Update**

Amy Ricard, Community Relations Specialist, presented a PowerPoint presentation on Community Relations and discussed background, strategic plan, media relations, outings and education, online communications and specific "Land for" outreach campaigns.

Chair Whitman opened up the meeting for discussion with the Advisory Committee members and members of the public.

For more information, please feel free to contact Ms. Ricard at Ag + Open Space. The PowerPoint presentation is available upon request.

### **Nuts and Bolts of Easement Stewardship**

Ms. Emerson explained the foundation of conservation easements. A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and an easement holder. Ag + Open Space is not regulatory; conservation easements are legal documents that restrict certain uses. The purpose of the easement depends on what is being protected, and the protection is perpetual and runs with the



land no matter who owns the property. There are consequences if landowners are not compliant with the easement. One of the Stewardship Program's responsibilities is monitoring for compliance. In 2021 the Stewardship Policy was updated and gives guidelines for easement stewardship.

Jacob Newell, Stewardship Supervisor, presented a PowerPoint presentation on the 2021 Stewardship Policy, easement monitoring and reporting, permitted use requests, easement enforcement, easement amendments, and best practices.

Ms. Emerson concluded the presentation with a look at the Stewardship Reserve Fund that will provide funds for Ag + Open Space to manage fee lands, steward easements, and provide funding for legal defense to enforce easements.

For more information, please feel free to contact Ms. Emerson or Mr. Newell at Ag + Open Space. The PowerPoint presentation is available upon request.

### **Projects in Negotiations**

No questions or comments on Projects in Negotiations.

### **Announcements from Advisory Committee Members**

There were no announcements made.

### **Adjournment**

Chair Whitman adjourned the meeting at 6:50.

Next Meeting: March 24, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Mariah Robson  
*Advisory Committee Secretary*

