

**GREAT REDWOOD TRAIL AGENCY  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Teleconference**

**FINAL MINUTES**

**Monday, March 14, 2022  
11:30am**

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**A. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Hagele called the meeting to order at 11:32 am.

**B. ROLL CALL**

Directors Present: Marks, Madrone, Haschak, Mulheren, Bagby, Hart, Connolly, Campbell, and Chair Hagele

Others Present: CA Senator – Mike McGuire, NCRA Executive Director – Mitch Stogner, Legal Counsel – Elizabeth Coleman, Jason Liles – CA Senator Mike McGuire’s Office, Karyn Gear – California Coastal Conservancy

Public Attendees: Stacey Edgmon – Aycok and Edgmon, Dave Anderson – American Rail Engineers, Leishara Ward – CalSTA, Loretta Ellard – MCOG, Kai Cooper, Wilson Walker, Thomas Conti, Alicia Hamann – Friends of the Eel River, Mike Pechner, Nora Mounce, KPIX 5, Julie Bawcom, Scott Greacen, Greg Thomas, Lowell Hagele, C.S. Coolidge

**C. AGENDA APPROVAL**

Upon Motion by Director Campbell, seconded by Director Mulheren the agenda was unanimously approved with modification that item E.1 – Introduction – State Senator Mike McGuire will be moved to follow Public Comment.

**Motion Carried:**

**AYES:** 9 – Marks, Madrone, Haschak, Mulheren, Bagby, Hart, Connolly, Campbell, and Chair Hagele

**NOES:** 0

**ABSTAIN:** 0

**ABSENT:** 0

**D. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mike Pechner – My remarks are directed to Sen. McGuire: It’s quite obvious to me that you didn’t do any research on the north-end of the Northwestern Pacific railroad through the Eel River Canyon, or the NCRA which for many years fulfilled its legislative mandate without being funded. There are dozens of people, both private and public, that did everything they could to save the Willits to Eureka line and the history of the line in Mendocino and Humboldt Counties.

In the end, Mother Nature prevailed causing hundreds of millions of dollars in damage that could not be repaired. Estimates run from \$2-\$5 billion to rebuild the NWP. Your boondoggle idea of the GRT will eventually cost much more than that. You will have to repair the roadbed before putting the trail down and then when another El Nino storm hits, it will wipe out whatever trail you are able to construct. Are you to ask your friends in Sacramento to continue to fund a project that is a waste of money? Over the years, the late Ruth Rockefeller, PUC Attorney – Jim Quinn, PUC Inspector – Don Edmisten, Dan Hauser, Dave Herbert, Allan Hemphill, Executive Director – Mitch Stogner, and other former Board members of the NCRA fought valiantly to save the NWP to sustain the north coast economy. In my opinion, you single handedly eliminated 30 years of hard work of the NCRA and saddled SMART with freight operations. Your legacy will be a never-ending money pit for a trail that will benefit few. Without the NWP, hundreds of lumber trucks coming down highway 101 are polluting your constituents instead of reducing greenhouse gasses and shrinking the carbon footprint of Mendocino and Humboldt Counties.

Cal Coolidge – I echo what the others have said and specifically thank Director Hart. I am really excited about this, and we are entering a century which threatens dystopia at every turn and this vision is restorative of hope.

#### **E. INTRODUCTION - California State Senator - Mike McGuire**

The Senator welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Great Redwood Trail Agency and thanked the staff, all the Directors, and the public for being here on this historic occasion, one that should be celebrated. Working with so many of you for over 5 years we have accomplished so much towards this once in a lifetime transition. Transitioning away from an agency that for 30 years was the heart of controversy on the north coast. One that was full of project missteps, the constant focus of lawsuits, and constantly teetering on bankruptcy. The North Coast Railroad Authority will officially cease to exist as of today and the Great Redwood Trail (GRT) era has begun.

The GRT will be a game changer for our region and the Golden State. Transitioning this railroad right-of-way is truly a win-win. The GRT will quickly become a landmark that is known for world class hiking and biking that will run from the San Francisco Bay to the Humboldt Bay. As stewards of this right-of-way, you all know personally how truly special this corridor is. The trail will traverse through some of the most spectacular landscapes on Earth, including ancient redwoods, national and state parks, rolling oak studded hills, vineyards, and along the shores of the Eel and Russian Rivers. The trail will serve not only as a recreation, social and an exercise path, but it will quickly become an economic driver for the communities that it runs through. Outdoor recreation prior to Covid was a \$93 billion dollar economy in this state and now that economy is coming back stronger than ever. Over 25,000 miles of former freight rail have been transitioned to trails over the past 30 years in the United States of America and we could not be more excited to move the GRT trail forward here in Northern California. The GRT, thanks to your tenacity and hard work, is now a reality.

Communities are now moving forward. Cities from San Rafael to Petaluma, Healdsburg and Ukiah, and cities in Humboldt County have now installed portions of the trail, and many other cities are moving to build their sections of the trail, as we speak. But of course, the biggest opportunities are yet to come. We will be enlisting resident from across the region to take part in the master plan that will kick off in the coming months and will be part of the historic opportunity to create the longest rail trail in the U.S., the Great Redwood Trail. There will be great challenges, but first, we will beat off this proposal from an anonymous LLC that wants to start up a toxic coal train. I have full confidence that by working together we can beat this proposal. We have the right team and the budget to get it done. Most importantly, the people of California, the people who live in the Golden State, they are on our side.

With this Board, and the California Coastal Conservancy staffing this project, we are in the perfect condition to move forward, and I can safely say, that with the \$10 million dollars that we were able to

secure together with the GRT master plan effort, this is more than any other state in the U.S. has ever put into a trail effort like this. Let's not forget, we have hundreds of millions of dollars in grant opportunities that are now secured, and in the bank to get this project built. Undersecretary, Lisa Conov, she has been remarkable in the ability to get things done and we are grateful for her hard work. We want to say thank you Leishara Ward and we all know she has been working on this right-of-way, more than just about anyone, and is a huge part of the reason we are here today. Liz Coleman has been an integral part as the GRT attorney. She stepped into this process when it was completely underwater and in disarray as the NCRA, and she has truly pulled a rabbit out of a hat, guiding this agency to what it has become today, fully funded, and ready to go. To the Chairman, thank you, he stepped up at just the right time, and we can't say thank you enough for your leadership and hard work in making this transition happen. Thank you to Caryl Hart and Jason Liles, who have been the heart and soul of this effort for nearly 6 years, and I can say with authority, that this would have never happened without Ms. Hart and Mr. Liles and their incredible work. Finally, it's time to get to work. Let's get it done. Thank you to each of the members of the Board of Directors for allowing me to be here today.

The Chair called upon Directors for comments.

Dir. Hart – Thank you to the Chair and Senator McGuire for your incredible, super inspiring, energetic, dedicated, leadership, because none of this would be possible without you. It is so rare today in politics, or in the world, to see such a positive vision, that would take a struggling agency like NCRA and turn it into this incredibly inspiring moment, we are on the brink of creating a world-class resource trail that will transform the north coast. She thanked Jason Liles who has been her partner and constant companion as we have gone through this process. Thank you to everyone who has preserved this right-of-way and worked so hard to get to this point. I am excited to work with this amazing team and the Conservancy going forward. This is a fantastic asset to us and the future. A trail like this will be transformative.

Dir. Connolly – We have been waiting for this moment. A lot of Directors joined the NCRA Board within the last several years working through all the issues that the agency had bringing it to a close just to get to this point. Tremendous work went into this, over many years, by so many community members. Board members, stakeholders, Senator McGuire and his staff, and state agencies, and we are at the brink of a new moment where we can make this a reality. I cannot be more excited about this multi-generational investment that will be the longest rails to trails project in the U.S. This will be an asset to our counties, our communities, the state, and the whole nation. This will take effort and going one step at a time. Challenges will be faced but we have come to the table with perseverance, and we will work to make this dream a reality.

## **F. CONDUCT OF BUSINESS**

- 1. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Resolution 2022-01 Authorizing Continued Teleconference Meetings**

Chair Hagele called for Public Comment. No Public Comment was made.

Upon Motion by Director Marks, seconded by Director Madrone the Board approved Resolution 2022-01 Authorizing Continued Teleconference Meetings

**Motion Carried:**

**AYES:** 9 – Marks, Madrone, Haschak, Mulheren, Bagby, Hart, Connolly, Campbell, Chair Hagele  
**NOES:** 0  
**ABSENT:** 0  
**ABSTAIN:** 0

**2.** Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Election of Chair and Vice Chair

The Chair called for Public Comment.

Scott Greacen- You could not have two better leaders for this agency and thank you.

Upon Motion by Chair Hagele, seconded by Director Mulheren the Board elected Director Hart as the Chair and Director Madrone as the Vice Chair of the GRTA

**Motion Carried:**

**AYES:** 9 – Marks, Madrone, Haschak, Mulheren, Bagby, Hart, Connolly, Campbell, Chair Hagele  
**NOES:** 0  
**ABSENT:** 0  
**ABSTAIN:** 0

**3.** Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Approval of Sonoma County Legal Counsel Services Agreement

Dir. Hart – I want to express my gratitude to Elizabeth Coleman for helping us get to where we are today. Thank you for your incredible work and dedication.

The Chair called for Public Comment.

Upon Motion by Director Hart, seconded by Director Haschak the Board approved Sonoma County Legal Counsel Services Agreement

**Motion Carried:**

**AYES:** 9 – Marks, Madrone, Haschak, Mulheren, Bagby, Hart, Connolly, Campbell, Chair Hagele  
**NOES:** 0  
**ABSENT:** 0  
**ABSTAIN:** 0

**4.** Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Establishment of Time and Place of Regular Meetings of Great Redwood Trail Agency

Dir. Hart – I think that it makes sense to move to monthly meeting currently. We can meet on Zoom as long as possible, then we can meet in Ukiah. Personally, given the number of financial and planning items, a monthly board meeting is appropriate.

Dir. Bagby – We have been discussing this a lot at meetings, and due to Covid, we evaluated all the time and travel involved in meetings. Brown Act revisions are being made and a consensus through all counties is that going forward, it will be legal for us to easily conduct hybrid virtual meetings. I would suggest moving towards a hybrid model and due to the geography on this Board, meet virtually and it will become easier with Brown Act modifications.

Dir. Haschak – I agree with virtual monthly meetings because it allows people all throughout the counties to easily make public comment and access the meetings. I support monthly meeting that are virtual as long as possible.

The Chair called for public comment.

Karyn Gear – I was wondering if we could come back with a calendar moving forward. In terms of the Conservancy, we have various meetings scheduled as well.

Upon Motion by Director Bagby, seconded by Director Marks the Board approved the next meeting date: Monday, April 11, 2022, at 10:30am. Subsequent meetings will be finalized and agendized at this meeting, in consultation with staff calendars.

**Motion Carried:**

**AYES:** 9 – Marks, Madrone, Haschak, Mulheren, Bagby, Hart, Connolly, Campbell, Chair Hagele

**NOES:** 0

**ABSENT:** 0

**ABSTAIN:** 0

**G. STAFF REPORT - Karyn Gear – California Coastal Conservancy (CCC)**

Karyn Gear – It is important to note that we are not yet your staff, but we are diligently working to take on the responsibilities within the next couple of months. I have four things that we are working on right now and I wanted to update you on.

1. Joint Powers Agreement between the CCC and the GRTA that would lay out the staffing responsibilities, what the CCC is agreeing to, and what the CCC is expecting the GRTA to do. The draft will be submitted to Elizabeth Coleman this week and discussions will begin.
2. Draft Scope of Services for interim Executive Office/Development Consultant that can come in for the next two years and get all your policy & procedures in place for long term stability. The draft should be done within the next couple of weeks and that will be posted.
3. In-house staff will be hired to work on the Master Plan for the trail. Those positions are getting posted today and we expect to be getting application over the next month.
4. The Trail Master Plan Scope of Work has been completed and the RFP will be posted this week. We expect proposal back next month and hope to get the consulting team started this summer.

**H. MATTERS FROM THE BOARD**

Chair Hagele – I would like to acknowledge Richard Marks. He was appointed in 2013 and had 9 years of dedicated service with a stellar attendance record. He traveled from Humboldt to other counties and made a huge commitment to this agency. I acknowledge your service to the NCRA board and all the time you spent traveling to the meetings. your knowledge is very valuable, and I know this has been very passionate for you to see this transition. This is your final meeting, and I am glad you got to participate in this inaugural meeting of the Great Redwood Trail Agency.

Director Hart – I wanted to say thank you to Richard and second all the Chair’s comments. Richard brings such a unique perspective coming from the Harbor District and with his Humboldt County mindset that is very much appreciated. I wanted to express my gratitude for your dedication.

Director Madrone – Likewise and thank you your dedication. Richard loves sports and that all about being a team player. He has exemplified that here on our Board in his team approach. We will miss you Richard and thank you so much for your service. He not only represented the community, but the union and the working people.

Director Marks – When I first went for the appointment to this job it was very controversial. There were articles written about my appointment being a victory for the trail advocates. I had been vocal at a time when it was not real popular to be on the NCRA and be a trail advocate. I said publicly that I wanted to see a trail from Samoa to Eureka before I die. I have been fortunate to have portions of the trail in Humboldt County complete and I can use them with my wife. It has been a blessing for me to be on the NCRA and I did not mind the travel for the meetings. I am so excited that the vision to move this trail is happening. I am leaving this agency because I am relocating. Good luck to the new commission and this is a great thing.

**I. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING**

Regular Board Meeting  
Zoom Teleconference  
Monday, April 11, 2022  
10:30am

**J. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Hagele adjourned the meeting at 12:20 pm.