North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District
An independent special district of the State of California

To: NSCRCD Board of Directors
From: Stephanie Moreno, Executive Director/District Clerk
Subject: Staff Report for Regular Agenda Item 7.3: *California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD): Discussion and possible action regarding CARCD's request to contribute towards costs for a federal lobbyist to advocate on behalf of California's resource conservation districts regarding changes to federal funding and services.*
Meeting Date: March 6 , 2025

Proposed Action:

Consider making a contribution of $150.00 to CARCD to offset their cost for a federal lobbyist, subject to conditions as determined by the Board.

Discussion:

The loss of federal funding and services which the State's resource conservation districts (RCDs) have relied on in developing their FY 2024-25 budgets and work plans has had a significant impact on many of the State's RCDs. Because CARCD's current lobbyist only works with the State Legislature, they have secured a federal lobbyist at a cost of $4,000 per month to address the federal issues. CARCD's Executive Committee has committed to using the lobbyist for at least three months, with a possible extension to six months. CARCD's Executive Director is seeking contributions from individual RCDs for at least the initial three-month period to help offset these unanticipated costs.

There are a number of points the Board may want to consider before making a decision regarding contributing to this effort, including but not limited to:

- *Impact of Federal Issues:* Federal executive orders, funding freezes, and staff firings are having a significant impact on the State's RCDs, including our District. The federal lobbyist would specifically advocate for these issues.
- *Cost Efficiency*: Hiring a lobbyist that represents CARCD's members collectively is more cost-effective and strategic than individual RCDs hiring a lobbyist independently.
- *Expertise of Federal Lobbyist*: An experienced federal lobbyist likely has better access to members of Congress and a clearer understanding of their expectations regarding outreach and messaging than individual RCD Directors and staff.
- *Financial Capacity:* The District has the financial capacity to contribute the suggested amount of $150.00 ($50.00 per month for three months) without significant impact to other budget priorities.
- *Strengthening Relationships*: Contributing to this effort may help improve our relationship with CARCD and further our collective advocacy efforts.
- *Uncertainty of Effectiveness*: It is unclear whether this lobbying activity will have a measurable impact, especially in light of recent court orders addressing our specific issues regarding federal funding freezes and firings (e.g., in just the last few days, all USDA probationary employees have been reinstated for at least 45 days pending further agency review).
- *Transparency Concerns*: CARCD has not always been inclusive or transparent in its State lobbying efforts, and it is not clear as to whether individual RCDs will have the ability to provide input into

and/or approve the engagement strategy and messaging. It is important that the District has visibility and input into how its contributions will be used.

- *Potential Regulatory and Reporting Concerns*: Federal and/or State regulations related to lobbying may be triggered for the District, as experienced during our advocacy for amendments to AB 1902. It is recommended that District Counsel Gantenbein be consulted if the Board wishes to contribute funding.