

NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION



Natural Resources Conservation Service

USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

NRCS was formerly known as the **Soil Conservation Service (SCS)**, is an agency of the USDA that provides technical assistance to farmers and other private landowners and managers.

Its mission is to improve, protect, and conserve natural resources on private lands through a cooperative partnership with state and local agencies. While its primary focus has been agriculture lands, it has made many technical contributions to soil surveying, classification and water quality improvements. Soil survey/mapping, is the process of classifying soils types and other soil properties in a given area and geo-encoding such information. It applies the principles of soil science and draws heavily from geomorphology, theories of soil formation, physical geography, and analysis of vegetation and land use patterns. The NRCS works closely with county Resource Conservation Districts.

USDA - Natural Resource Conservation Service

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Resource Conservation Districts

The mission of Sonoma County's two Resource Conservation Districts (RCD) is to empower and partner with landowners and the community to address Sonoma County's most pressing natural resource concerns. They are the state's only grassroots conservation delivery system that identifies local conservation problems and guides solutions on a voluntary basis. There are 97 Districts throughout California – each covering a different geographic area.

RCDs are established under California law to be locally governed with independent boards of directors that are accountable to their local communities. Their relationships with the communities that they serve are crucial to how they accomplish their work on agricultural, rural and urban landscapes.

They are overseen by a seven-member Board of Directors and several Associate Directors that volunteer their time for the benefit of local landowners and land managers and their natural resource concerns. Directors are local landowners in the district and are actively engaged with rural, agricultural, and natural resource conservation issues and businesses. The RCD receives between 3-5% of their annual budget from the county tax base. The remainder of RCD's annual budget comes from competitively sought grant funding and fees for service contracts to support their activities and the conservation needs of Sonoma County.

RCDs are not part of county government, but rather are special districts, a form of local government created by the community to meet a specific need, similar to districts created for needs such as fire protection, open space, or flood control. As trusted stewards of public and private funds, RCDs are subject to transparency and accountability laws that require public meetings, open records, annual audits and financial reporting.

Since 1946, the Sonoma RCDs have facilitated natural resource conservation through community involvement, education, technical expertise and scientific research. They are committed to utilizing voluntary, cooperative and scientifically sound methods to ensure that the natural resources of the watersheds within the Districts are sustained, conserved, restored and protected within a landscape of productive agriculture, growing cities, and wild lands.

A key area of their work is creating quality conservation programs that suit the needs of agriculture, rural residents and urban constituents. Resource management involves a wide variety of stakeholders including farmers, ranchers, local agencies and non-profits, scientists, schools, and consultants. The RCD often serves as a critical liaison between these groups, aiming for win-win solutions in our service to the community.

The RCD diligently works to protect water quality, restore fish and wildlife habitat, conserve water resources, fight drought and a changing climate, and support the sustainability of agriculture and local food systems, while they educate the next generation on conservation. They strive to use the best information and experience available to achieve the greatest collective impact on the ground and in the county watersheds.

History

RCDs were created as a result of the 1930s ecological disaster the Dust Bowl. In 1937, President Roosevelt wrote the governors of all the states recommending legislation that would allow local landowners to form soil conservation districts. Brown Creek Soil & Water Conservation District in North Carolina was the first district established. The movement caught on across the country with district-enabling legislation passed in every state. Today, the country is blanketed with nearly 3,000 conservation districts.



Sonoma Resource Conservation District (SRCD)

SRCD district covers 919,000 acres, or over 85% of Sonoma County and includes the Russian River, Petaluma River, Sonoma Creek, Stemple Creek, and Gualala River Watersheds.

The Sonoma RCD was established over 70 years ago by farmers who were concerned with natural resource conservation and land stewardship. The Sonoma RCD has evolved from many districts since its inception including: Sotoyome, Central Santa Rosa, Petaluma, and Sonoma Valley RCD's. The most recent reorganization of the Sotoyome and Southern Sonoma County RCDs (to become the Sonoma RCD) occurred July 2013. These mergers have strengthened the consistency and technical abilities of the RCD to serve constituents throughout the district in Sonoma County. <https://sonomarc.org/>



Goldridge Resource Conservation District (GRCD)

In 1941, the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (Gold Ridge RCD) was established as one of the original Resource Conservation Districts, the first in Sonoma County and the 7th in California. The 134,000-acre district is located in West Sonoma County and is bordered by Marin County to the south, the Russian River to the north, the Pacific coastline to the west, and the Laguna de Santa Rosa to the east. The diverse resources of the region include rangeland, woodland, wildlife habitat, vineyards, dairies, orchards, cropland, streams, coastal areas, as well as rural and urban areas. <http://www.goldridgercd.org/index.html>

See the district's watershed maps: <https://www.northbeachlotsandland.com/geologists>

Sonoma County Agriculture Preservation & Open Space District



SONOMA COUNTY

**AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION
AND OPEN SPACE DISTRICT**

In 1990, Sonoma County residents created the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to permanently protect the greenbelts, scenic viewsheds, farms and ranches and natural areas of Sonoma County. Situated on the northern edge of the rapidly urbanizing Bay Area, and facing the loss of the natural and agricultural landscapes that define the county's rural character, the visionary voters of Sonoma County recognized the need for proactive local funding for agricultural and open space protection.

Sonoma County voters approved Measures A and C to create Ag + Open Space and enable a quarter-cent sales tax to fund Ag + Open Space operations until 2011. In 2006, with 76% of the vote, Sonoma County residents approved Measure F to extend the quarter-cent sales tax through 2031.

As one of the first organizations in the country established to protect both agricultural and open space lands, Ag + Open Space has protected over 111,000 acres to benefit people and wildlife. www.sonomaopenspace.org