RCDMC

RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF MONTEREY COUNTY

Year in Review 2017

Letter from RCDMC Board Vice President, Rebecca King

Looking back on 2017, I am proud of the efforts RCDMC made to increase its involvement with the community through outreach and events, as well as programs like our winter seed program, Spanish-language irrigator trainings, and Salinas River projects.

Our events included an annual BBQ honoring Cooperator of the Year Javier Zamora, the youth Land Judging Contests and Speak Off Competitions, and a Public Leaders Bus Tour. We also unveiled a new website design, produced multiple news articles, and increased our social media messaging. RCDMC has been working to increase public awareness and appreciation for farmers and ranchers' conservation work for the County.

Our winter erosion control seed program and trainings continued our work with the underserved Latino farming community in hilly north Monterey County. RCDMC Program Engineer Ben Burgoa's workshops teach irrigators and small farmers in Spanish, providing them with tools they need to succeed in conserving water and nutrients, and protecting water quality.

On the Salinas River, RCDMC continued to advance the Salinas River programs, for both Stream Maintenance and Arundo Control. This work requires respectful coordination with farmers and local agencies in order to effectively benefit over 90 river miles, eradicating arundo and reducing flood risk in Monterey County.

I am excited to see what 2018 brings. I hope you enjoy learning more about our projects in our 2017 newsletter.

Vice President, RCDMC Board of Directors

Rebecca King

Students from four Monterey County high schools competed in a Land Judging Contest to assess soil properties for agriculture

What's Inside

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The Mission of the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County is to conserve and improve our natural resources, integrating the demand for environmental quality with the needs of agricultural and urban users. We seek to achieve the sustainable management of natural resources including soil, water, vegetation and wildlife throughout Monterey County.

Events

March 14 Land Judging Contest

Twenty-nine students from five local high schools in Salinas, Watsonville, Gonzalez and Soledad competed in a land-judging contest, hosted by the FARMS Leadership Program and RCDMC. A Land Judging Contest is an annual competition in which high school students compete in their ability to assess a soil's capacity for supporting different land uses with emphasis on agricultural production. Students evaluated three separate soil pits, about 5 feet deep and 15 feet long, using evaluation criteria established by the California Future Farmers of America (FFA) and a standardized Soil Classification System. Each student begins by judging a pit's soil characteristics at ground surface level, and then climbs down into the pit to continue evaluating the soil structure below ground, as soil properties that affect fertility, drainage and plant rooting change with depth (See page 1 image).

Watsonville High School student Jacob Dixon won a Range Camp scholarship after placing first in last Spring's Land Judging Contest

The spring Land Judging Contest was held on farmland south of Salinas managed by the local farming company, Christiansen and Giannini LLC. Jacob Dixon of Watsonville High School won the top score and a scholarship to California Range and Natural Resources Camp aka 'Range Camp'. Range Camp is a five-day educational camp held in June at Elkus Ranch near Half Moon Bay. High schoolers learn hands-on with agricultural and environmental scientists and range management professionals to expand their ag and conservation-related knowledge and broaden future opportunities.

April 28 RCDMC Annual BBQ

Over 50 people gathered at the Salinas Sports Complex for RCDMC's annual Stewardship and Scholarship Barbeque fundraiser. Farmers, resource conservation professionals and friends came together to enjoy food and fellowship, and to honor berry, vegetable and flower farmer, Javier Zamora as 'Cooperator of the Year'. Mr. Zamora's dedication to conservation agriculture in his growing business, JSM Organic Farms, and his zeal for sharing what he has learned with farmers, students and others through presentations and tours on his farms, continues to inspire the agricultural community.

L-R: RCDMC Executive Director Paul Robins, Board President Benny Jefferson and Program Engineer Ben Burgoa present Organic farmer Javier Zamora from JSM Organics with 'Cooperator of the Year' award at RCDMC Annual BBQ

September 28 Land Judging Contest

FARMS Leadership students from North Salinas, Gonzales, Soledad, and Watsonville High Schools competed in a second land judging contest on September 28th. The event was hosted by Huntington Farms. North Salinas High School student Kyla Monroe took first place in the contest. As the first-place winner of the Land Judging Contest, Kyla received a 2018 Range Camp scholarship.

RCDMC Executive Director Paul Robins presents Land Judging Contest winner Kyla Monroe from Salinas High School with a first place certificate

(Events Continued)

Oct 11 Farm Sustainability Practices Bus Tour

With funding from the Department of Conservation, RCDMC hosted local and regional leaders on October 11th for a tour to highlight local, innovative conservation work in north and mid Monterey County. More than 30 guests attended the tour, which featured project partners, including Elkhorn Slough Foundation, Central Coast Wetlands Group, strawberry and vegetable farmers, and the Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA). Tour guests included Assemblymember Anna Caballero, Monterey County District 4 Supervisor Jane Parker, and aides from Representative Jimmy Panetta and four County Supervisors' offices.

RCDMC's Farm Sustainability Practices Tour stopped at an arundo infested site along the Salinas River near Gonzales

Oct 20 Local Food and Producers Celebration

Happy Girl Kitchen in Pacific Grove hosted the Central Coast 'Meet Your Makers' Cheese and Wine Celebration. Garden Variety Cheese, Schoch Family Farmstead, Central Coast Creamery, Stepladder Creamery, Odonata Winery, Cima Collina Winery, McIntyre Vineyards, Las Lomas Lavender and Honey, Barbara McHale, and Happy Girl Kitchen offered locally-produced cheese and wine pairings to guests as we celebrated agricultural resource stewardship. The producers each spoke about their craft and what inspired them to work with the land and food production, and the ecosystem benefits or services their work provides to the region. Proceeds will support RCDMC education work.

Everett Alvarez Senior Juan Rivera Perez took 1st place in Monterey County's Speak-off Contest

Oct 24 Conservation-themed Speech 'Speak-off' Contest

Everett Alvarez High School senior Juan Rivera Perez won the county-wide and regional RCDMC Speak-Off Competitions this past fall. Juan moved on to the state championships on November 17 where he earned 3rd place. Speak-Off Competitions are held each year by RCDs to challenge students to address topics related to agriculture and conservation while helping the students further develop their public speaking skills.

Programs

Salinas River Arundo Control

The 2017 work season for the Salinas River Arundo Control Program initiated in June and wrapped up in November. Program work typically includes mowing and herbicide applications applied over several years. Herbicide treatments were completed on the 113 acres of arundo between Greenfield and Soledad that were mowed in fall 2016. The 100 acres of arundo that were mowed in 2014, generally south of Greenfield, received a third year of herbicide treatment, while interspersed small, un-mowed arundo patches and tamarisk plants within the project area received initial herbicide treatment. Approximately 120 acres of arundo near Soledad were mowed this fall. RCDMC will continue with the Arundo Control Program in 2018.

RCDMC contractor using large masticating mower to reduce 120 acres of Arundo near Soledad for the Salinas River Arundo Control Program. Photo: Mike Matulis.

Salinas River Stream Maintenance

The Salinas River Stream Maintenance Program is designed to increase flow conveyance in the Salinas River through targeted vegetation clearing and sediment removal in secondary channels, minimizing impacts to the main river channel. During the fall 2017 work season, landowners conducted work

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in 5 new channels and maintained 12 established channels. They also managed over 50 acres of arundo treatment (mowing and spraying) as mitigation for impacts to native vegetation. We oversee biological monitoring of the program and co-administer the program with the Monterey County Water Resources Agency and the River Management Association. Contact Ecologist Emily Zefferman for details

On-Farm Irrigation and Nutrient Management Tracking and Engineering Services

Throughout 2017, RCDMC Program Engineer Ben Burgoa provided technical support for irrigation evaluations, nutrient management evaluations, and erosion control planning assistance to growers, farms and vineyards throughout the Salinas Valley. Ben also conducted irrigation evaluations for neighboring RCDs including Coastal San Luis Obispo RCD, Loma Prieta RCD, and Upper Salinas-Las Tablas (USLT) RCD. Some of the types of farms evaluated over the growing season included strawberries, wine grapes, romaine lettuce, head lettuce, and brussel sprouts. Some of Ben's erosion prevention expertise includes developing erosion control plans, with design and installation support for water and sediment control basins from RCDMC's licensed Civil Engineer. Contact Ben Burgoa for details

Winter Seeding Rebates

This year, RCDMC and Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner's Office provided winter road and furrow cover cropseeding rebates to small-scale berry-growing farmers that work on the hilly and highly erodible lands of north Monterey County. The winter erosion seeding rebates are focused on meeting the soil protection needs of the region's historically underserved Latino farming community, which constitutes eighty percent of the farmers in the Elkhorn Slough watershed. Six growers participated to apply seed on 178 acres.

RCDMC Program Assistant Jorge Calva assists organic farmer Javier Zamora with the Winter Seed Program, which helps reimburse farmers for costs of winter cover crops

Spanish-language Irrigation Workshops

RCDMC's Ben Burgoa provided 22 training workshop days in Spanish to new farmers and irrigators in

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RCDMC Program Engineer Ben Burgoa provides an irrigation training in Spanish to a group of farmers

Who's Who

RCDMC Directors
Benny Jefferson, President
Rebecca King, Vice-President
Joanna Devers, Treasurer
Linda Ferrasci, Director
Emily Gardner, Director
Brent Plemmons, Director
Bill Lipe, Director
Paul Binsacca, Advisor
Melissa Duflock, Advisor

RCDMC Staff
Paul Robins, Executive Director
Ben Burgoa, Program Engineer
Adrienne Carter, Civil Engineer
Emily Zefferman, Ecologist
Laura Murphy, Soil Scientist
Esther Haile, Biologist
Megan Barker, Project Administrator
Maggie Errea, Finance Manager

Natural Resources Conservation Service
Erika Boyland, District Conservationist
John Warner, Soil Conservationist
Allison Tokunaga, Range Conservationist

RCDMC Stats Summary

22	Spanish-language Irrigation Workshop days
329	Number of workshop attendees
30	Technical Assistance Consultations & Site Assessments (nutrient irrigation, erosion control)
443	Acres of Arundo treated & mowed along Salinas River
17	Number of Stream Maintenance Program channels managed

(Continued from p. 4)

the Salinas Valley on irrigation management and erosion control this year. At the workshops, irrigators learn about soil-plant-water relationships, flow and pressure measurement, irrigation scheduling, irrigation system maintenance, and factors affecting irrigation distribution uniformity. Specified trainings provided Irrigation Training & Research Center (ITRC) certification. More workshops are scheduled for 2018 and we are accepting requests from companies wanting to host their own. Contact Ben Burgoa for details

Other News

RCDMC Brings On Licensed Engineer and Project Administrator

This year, we welcomed new staff members, Civil Engineer Desi Ramirez and Project Administrator Megan Barker. Desi was brought on to support engineered project design, and Megan assists with permitting and communications. Adrienne Carter, formerly of Fall Creek Engineering, has assumed the role of RCDMC Civil Engineer since Desi's departure in January 2018. View staff bios

Bill Lipe Joins Board of Directors

Bill Lipe joined RCDMC's Board in spring of 2017. Bill is a Monterey County native who believes that environmental stewardship is paramount to agricultural sustainability and that it is essential that conservation programs help landowners and businesses meet that objective by enhancing their viability and giving them the tools to succeed. He also serves on the Board of Directors for the Monterey Farm Bureau and the newly-formed Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency. Bill is Government Affairs & Policy Director for Rava Ranches Company in King City. View Board of Directors

Snowy Plover Watch: RCDMC Field Biologist holding a snowy plover chick from the threatened population she helps track and protect

Snowy Plover Watch

RCDMC Field Biologist Esther Haile works under an RCDMC contract with California State Parks to protect the western snowy plover, which is listed by California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife as a threatened species. About 400 of the 2,000 existing snowy plovers in California nest exclusively on Monterey County beaches. Because Monterey County is a vital part of the species' long-term survival, it is not only important to track populations, but also to educate the public about how they can help protect this vulnerable groundnesting shore bird. Beach goers can help by staying out of marked nesting zones, keeping dogs on a leash, disposing of trash properly, and being aware that airborne items such as kites, frisbees and drones frighten plovers and may cause them to abandon their nests.

Executive Director Paul Robins goes to Chile as Part of Climate Smart Ag Delegation

From November 25 – December 2, RCDMC Executive Director Paul Robins traveled through central Chile with a group organized by the California Department of Food and Agriculture to learn about what Chilean agricultural operations and researchers are doing to address climate change and drought. Chile has a similar climate to California and grows many of the same specialty crops. Sites visited included the Ministry of Agriculture, and many farms including vineyards, avocado and cherry orchards, ag experiment stations, and an indoor hydropronic lettuce operation.

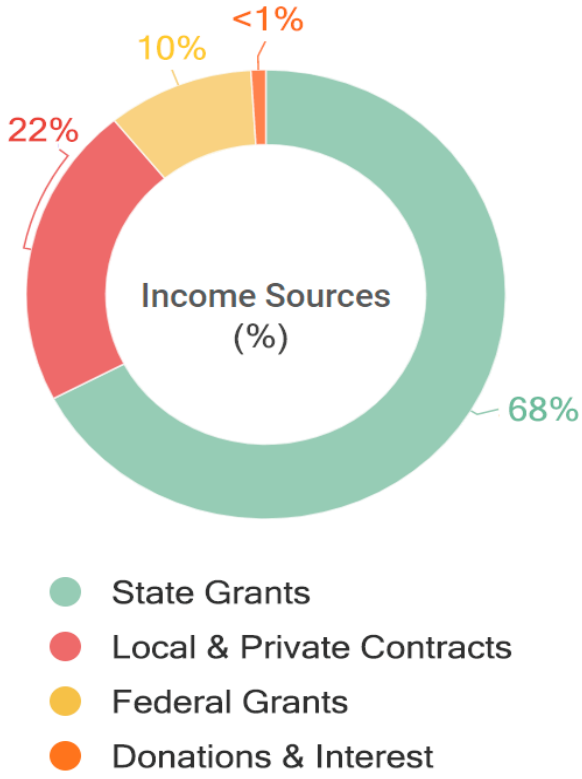
A Chilean lettuce grower shows off the growth medium and root structure of his crop which is grown indoors using hydroponics

Summary of Financial Statements (July 2016 to June 2017)

RCDMC has had increasing success in bringing in state and federal grants/investments for local conservation work. We are also steadily building local funding resources to support sustained, stable core services for landowner assistance and education which slow-moving grant funds can't easily maintain. Donations to RCDMC are tax-deductible and very welcome, and can be targeted to support specific programs. Donate

Expenses

Personnel	$ 509,176
Contract Services	$ 988,039
Office Expenses	$ 31,574
Project Permits	$ 16,800
Equipment & Field Supplies	$ 12,345
Vehicle & Travel	$ 10,552
Workshops, Meetings & Events	$ 6,722
Liability Insurance	$ 3,911
Depreciation	$ 2,028
Total	**$ 1,581,150**

Income Sources

State grants	$ 1,108,490
Local and Private Contracts	$ 364,258
Federal grants	$ 159,474
Donations and Interest	$ 6,116
Total	**$ 1,639,477**