YEAR IN REVIEW 2019

RCDMC
RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF MONTEREY COUNTY

While human health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic are foremost on our minds at this time, this newsletter does not include COVID-19-related material because we began production prior to the advent of the pandemic. During this time all public meetings are being held remotely, special events are being postponed, and staff are working remotely and conducting field work in accordance with Social Distancing requirements to carry forward the projects described inside. Our top priorities at this time are public safety and continuing to provide support for the essential services of food production and disaster (fire and flood) preparedness. Take care-- Paul Robins

Letter from RCDMC Board Vice President, Rebecca King

California has been experiencing unprecedented droughts and fires with significant impacts to farms and ranches, and RCDMC has been working with local growers and land managers to adapt to these changing climate conditions and mitigate future disruption.

With the addition of our Fire Fuel Mitigation Program and Forest Health Coordinator Jamie Tuitele-Lewis, we have been able to engage more fully in this important work. Among other things, Jamie has been coordinating local fuelbreak projects with US Forest Service, CAL FIRE and local entities, and assisting the NRCS in developing Forest Management Plans for forest landowners in Monterey County. Another key county-funded project has been the mapping of fire infrastructure (fire hydrants, water tanks, gates, roads, bridges, etc.) and fire fuels (vegetation) projects--an important tool for emergency response and developing fuels-management work in Monterey County.

RCDMC's Soil Scientist Laura Murphy has also been providing assistance to growers applying to the CDFA's Healthy Soils Program, which is designed to to incentivize soil conservation practices such as cover cropping, reduced-tillage, mulching, compost application, and erosion control plantings. The concept is that by building soil and increasing soil organic matter, farmers can take carbon from the air and store it in the ground. This also benefits farmland by increasing soil water-holding capacity which is crucial in drought years.

On my livestock farm, Monkeyflower Ranch in Royal Oaks, we have been participating in a Healthy Soils Demonstration Project in conjunction with the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Fiesta Farm, a small producer of chicken, pork, and goats. This three-year project includes adding compost to half of our pastures and collecting data on soils and plants in comparison to untreated pasture.

I am proud of the on-going work of RCDMC to address climate change issues that are affecting our region and making positive steps to aid our farmers and growers in reducing future risks from drought and fire.

Sincerely, *Rebecca King*

What's Inside

- Fundraising and Educational Events
- Irrigation Management & Engineering Assistance
- Salinas River Programs
- Fire Fuels Mitigation Program
- RCDMC Board & Staff Changes
- Fiscal Year Financial Summary

Soil Scientist Laura Murphy prepares for a Distribution Uniformity analysis to assess water use efficiency in a strawberry field.

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.

Who's Who

RCDMC Directors
Benny Jefferson, President
Rebecca King, Vice-President
Brent Plemmons, Director
Bill Lipe, Treasurer
John Doud, Director
Jennifer Clarke, Secretary
Jynel Gularte, Director
Joanna Devers, Outgoing Treasurer
Linda Ferrasci, Outgoing Director

RCDMC Staff
Paul Robins, Executive Director
Maggie Errea, Finance Manager
Emily Zefferman, Ecologist
Megan Barker, Project Administrator
Laura Murphy, Soil Scientist
Adrienne Carter, Civil Engineer
Natalie Solares, Ag Water Management Specialist
Jamie Tuitele-Lewis, Forest Health Coordinator
Brandt Bates, Stream Maintenance Coordinator
Esther Haile, Biologist

Natural Resources Conservation Service
Erika Boyland, District Conservationist
John Warner, Soil Conservationist
Allison Tokunaga, Range Conservationist
Javier Flores, Ag Engineer
Jennifer Nowark, Programs Specialist
Chelsea Rutt, Soil Conservationist (Student Trainee)

2019 Special Events

February 28 Monterey Farm Day

RCDMC and NRCS partners demonstrated the importance of plants in protecting our soil and water to children at Monterey Farm Day. At Farm Day, third-graders from Monterey County are provided with an opportunity to venture outside of their classrooms for a chance to explore the world of agriculture. Farm Day is hosted each year by the local agricultural industry, through the non-profit Monterey County Ag Education and a dedicated team of volunteers.

March 6 Latino Ag Expo

The RCDMC Ag Water Management Specialist presented at the 21st Annual Monterey Bay Region Ag Expo and Seminar, sponsored by the Monterey County Ag Commissioner's Office and the California Strawberry Commission. The event was held at the Salinas Sports Complex. Shaun's presentation regarding "Erosión En Su Granja" ("Erosion on your farm") was

Ag Water Management Specialist Shaun Richards described methods and resources to control on-farm erosion along with NRCS Ag Engineer Javier Flores

geared primarily towards the Spanish-speaking, Latino farming community that attends the Ag Expo. In his presentation, Richards described the mechanisms of erosion and on-farm soil stabilization and runoff management practices, and outlined the resources available for technical and finanical assistance to plan and implement those practices.

April 12 RCDMC Annual BBQ

Together with our co-hosts, the Salinas River Stream Maintenance Program River Management Unit Association, we dined and celebrated collaborative river work along with 58 guests, raising over $7,000 (after expenses) to support our shared work. Event sponsors included The Farm, Rava Ranches, Alliant Insurance Services, American AgCredit, Noland Hamerly Etienne & Hoss, John and Jane Doud, Green Rubber Kennedy Ag, Alsop Pump, Ventana Forestry, and Ecological Concerns Incorporated.

October 25 Cheese and Wine Event

We held our 3rd annual Central Coast "Meet Your Makers" Cheese and Wine Celebration at the Cima

Local producers shared what inspires their agriculture at the "Meet Your Makers" Cheese and Wine Celebration in October.

High scool students learned and tested their skills at evaluating soil for growing different crops and other land uses at the Annual RCDMC Land Judging Competition, which was held at D'Arrigo Farms in Salinas.

Collina Tasting Room in Marina. The fall fundraiser brought in 54 guests and all proceeds went to support RCDMC programs. Attendees enjoyed the delicious, locally-produced wines, cheeses, salamis and honey from Cima Collina, McIntyre and Smith wines, Garden Variety Cheese, Schoch Family Farmstead, Stepladder Creamery, Central Coast Creamery, Carmel Valley Ranch Creamery, Foustman's Salami, and Las Lomas Lavender and Honey.

November 7 Land Judging Competition

Students from two local high schools in Gonzales and Soquel competed in our 2019 land judging competition, in partnership with the FARMS (Farming, Agriculture, and Resource Management for Sustainability) Leadership Program. D'Arrigo Farms graciously hosted the land judging competition at two of their Salinas area ranches. Gonzales High School students Kayli Plazola and Sophia Flores won first and second place and earned scholarships to attend Range Camp in Half Moon Bay this summer.

Numbers from 2019

12	Spanish-language Irrigation Workshop days
250	Number of workshop attendees
30	Technical Assistance Consultations & Site Assessments (nutrient management, irrigation, erosion control)
327	Acres of Arundo treated & mowed along Salinas River
23	Stream Maintenance Program channels managed
14	Landjudging Contestants

Programs and Results

Salinas River Arundo Control

In 2019, RCDMC expanded our Salinas River Arundo Control Program to treat 165 new acres of *Arundo donax* between King City and Soledad. Contractors worked from July through November spraying and mowing this noxious water-thirsty plant that has taken over vast areas of the riparian zone between farmland and the river. This work was primarily funded by a recently-awarded grant from the California Wildlife Conservation Board – our third from that agency since 2014.

With this new funding from WCB, we are also expanding our monitoring work on the river to document the responses of plant and animal communities to our restoration work. This year we began a partnership with California State University Monterey Bay to begin monitoring bats and aerial and aquatic invertebrates, and continued our partnership with Pathways for Wildlife to conduct wildlife camera trapping at work sites.

Revisiting previous arundo treatment areas is also an important part of this program, and this year we treated re-sprouts on 162 acres of former arundo stands. We have been pleased to find dramatic decreases in arundo from when we started treatment.

In spring 2019, we were awarded funding from the California Department of Food and Agriculture to map and treat arundo and tamarisk along the Salinas River between Bradley and King City. We hired a specialized contractor, Wildlands Conservation Science, to conduct surveys of the river via helicopter in September. The team mapped 414 discrete invasive plant patches along 35 miles of river. In November, the team returned to treat a portion of these plant populations. We are seeking new funding to complete these treatments in 2020. Contact Emily Zefferman for information

RCDMC Ecologist Emily Zefferman was able to survey the Salinas River from Bradley to King City by helicopter this season.

Salinas River Stream Maintenance

RCDMC helped administer the sixth season of the landowner-funded Salinas River Stream Maintenance Program (SMP) with the help of new Program Coordinator Brandt Bates. In 2019, 23 secondary channels were either retreated or opened as new maintenance areas. Acreages include 114 acres of secondary channel maintenance, 82 acres of arundo control for mitigation, and 12 acres of sediment management. In 2020, RCDMC is prioritizing areas particularly vulnerable to flooding and continuing to streamline coordination with partnering agencies, while also increasing landowner and farmer program participation. Contact Brandt Bates for information

Engineering Services

RCDMC Civil Engineer Adrienne Carter continued providing engineering designs for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) participants and other landowners needing stormwater drainage solutions such as undergound pipes, vegetated swales, and sediment basins. Carter also designed two projects combining farm and stormwater management with wildlife habitat restoration with Integrated Watershed Restoration Program funding in 2019.

Winter Cover Crop and Organic Amendments

In addition to our ongoing winter road and furrow cover crop seed reimbursements program to protect highly erodible lands, RCDMC provided reimbursements for applying cover crops and organic amendments such as compost to improve soil health on farms throughout the county. Funds for this program were provided by a Specialty Crop Block Grant in partnership with the RCD of Santa Cruz County. The rebates are focused on meeting the needs of the region's historically underserved Latino farming community. Forty producers received this assistance in 2019.

Contact Laura Murphy for information

RCDMC Soil Scientist Laura Murphy inspects strawberry plant roots during soil disease evaluation and management consultation for a local grower.

RCDMC Soil Scientist Laura Murphy provided technical assistance to growers in Monterey County for the Healthy Soils Program.

CDFA Healthy Soils and Water Efficiency Grants

Soil Scientist Laura Murphy supported several applications to the CDFA HSP and SWEEP programs in 2019. 2020 will be the third year that RCDMC's staff are available to provide Technical Assistance to farmers to write and submit grant applications for HSP and SWEEP funding, and they will also be available to support farmers to implement the projects and comply with reporting requirements to CDFA.

Irrigation and Soil Management Trainings

Soil Scientist Laura Murphy and past Ag Water Management Specialist Shaun Richards supported ongoing education and outreach at the Ag Land-Based Training Association (ALBA), with trainings for students, established farmers and the general public in both Spanish and English. Topics included general irrigation management and efficiency, optimizing soil health, managing soils and irrigation in "high tunnels", best practices for cover crops and compost application, and using the Soil Nitrate Quick Test for fertilizer management. They conducted multiple in-field one-on-one trainings and consultations with more than 30 individual farmers who were either enrolled in the ALBA incubator farm program or program alumni farming in other parts of the county.

Contact Laura Murphy for information

Pollinators, including the Monarch butterfly, have been in steep decline in recent years. RCDMC is working to enhance their native habitat with flowering plants and native California milkweed. Photo courtesy of FWS.

Pollinator Habitat Expansion and Enhancement

In recognition of the dramatic population decline of iconic pollinators like the Monarch butterfly and honeybee, RCDMC staff identified opportunities to support farmers to create habitat for beneficial insects. Soil Scientist Laura Murphy and Ecologist Emily Zefferman secured a grant of two "kits" of California native plants from the Xerces Society, and utilized a partnership with California Farmlink to cover the cost of four additional kits that were planted on Monterey County farms. Each kit provided 1,600 plugs of a variety of flowering plants and milkweed to supplement hedgerows or other on-farm sites to expand pollinator habitat in the county.

Fire Fuel Mitigation and Forest Health

With seed money from the County of Monterey, RCDMC Forest Health Coordinator Jamie Tuitele-Lewis and the Fire Fuel Mitigation Program coordinated project development and fundraising among local and regional partners regarding issues related to forest health management. In 2019, he partnered on six grant proposals, four of which have been funded for over $8,000,000 of mapping, chipping, fuel break development, and Prescribed Burn Assocation coordination.

With USDA funds, Tuitele-Lewis began working with NRCS this year to assist in developing and managing Forest Management Plans for forest landowners in Monterey County. He is actively looking to recruit landowners to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) that provides cost-share for Forest Management Planning and implementation of forest stewardship practices on their land. With county funding, Tuitele-Lewis also coordinated development of a county-wide geodatabase and preliminary maps for fuels management planning and coordination.

What's New

RCDMC Bids Farewell to Shaun Richards and Welcomes New Ag Water Management Specialist Natalie Solares and Stream Maintenance Program Coordinator Brandt Bates

Last year we bade farewell to Shaun Richards and welcomed Natalie Solares as our Ag Water Management Specialist. Solares is a native Spanish speaker with a Masters Degree in Plant Pathology from UC Riverside and prior plant pathology work with Driscoll's. Bates comes with a Masters Degree from SFSU with research in gully formations in the the Pescadero Watershed and work experience with the Santa Lucia Conservancy.

Directors John Doud, Jennifer Clarke and Jynel Gularte Join RCDMC Board

The RCDMC board bade farewell to Directors Emily Gardner, Joanna Devers and Linda Ferrasci and welcomed three new directors this year: John Doud, Jennifer Clarke and Jynel Gularte. Doud is a fifth-generation cattle rancher from Greenfield, who runs cow and calf operations on several ranches in South County and Big Sur. Clarke is currently the Executive Director of California Leafy Greens Research Board which oversees the California Leafy Greens Research Program. Gularte is a fifth generation farmer who works for her family farm in the Salinas Valley in food safety and compliance.

RCDMC Forest Health Coordinator Jamie Tuitele-Lewis has been inspecting forestry work in Big Sur in collaboration with NRCS.

Summary of Financial Statements (July 2018 to June 2019)

Building momentum for local and self-sustained funding is integral to RCDMC's long-term financial stability. Our locally-contracted services grew to over $360,000, and we also increased our non-grant funded income sources through fundraising efforts and private donations. We raised over $12,344 in sponsorships & donations at our annual fundraiser BBQ to help support Salinas River work and $1,800 for the Center for Landbased Learning youth education partnership through the MC Gives! campaign. We also raised $2,645 from ticket and raffle sales at our Cheese and Wine Celebration.

Donations to RCDMC are tax-deductible and very welcome, and can be targeted to support specific programs. Donate

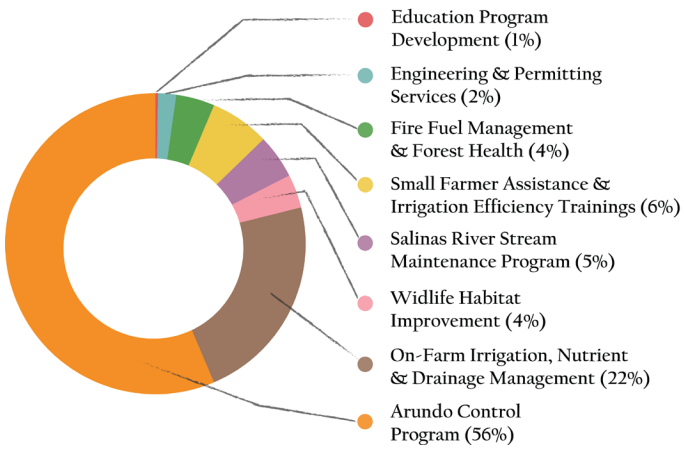
Expenses (per 2018-2019 audited reports)

Personnel	$ 738,871
Contract Services	$ 1,539,811
Office Expenses	$ 24,688
Project Permits	$ 7,818
Equipment & Field Supplies	$ 8,387
Vehicle & Travel	$ 15,693
Workshops, Meetings & Events	$ 7,587
Liability Insurance	$ 6,257
Total	**$2,349,109**

Income Sources (per 2018-2019 audited reports)

State grants	$1,423,892
Federal grants	$ 550,967
Local and Private Contracts	$ 360,175
Donations, Fundraising & Interest	$ 17,050
Total	**$ 2,352,084**

RCDMC Programs by Relative Budget



Special Thanks to Our 2019 Sponsors and Donors

Salinas River Partners BBQ Event Sponsors ($7,300)

The Farm, Rava Ranches, Alliant Insurance Services, American AgCredit, Noland Hamerly Etienne & Hoss, John and Jane Doud, Green Rubber Kennedy Ag, Alsop Pump, Ventana Forestry, and Ecological Concerns Incorporated

Salinas River Partners BBQ Auction Item Donors ($5,044)

American AgCredit, Arroyo Seco Vineyards, Benny Jefferson, Bill Lipe, Booth Machinery, Chris Nielson (Cal-Coast Machinery), Donna Meyers, Emily Gardner, Franscioni & Griva, Garden Variety Cheese, Green Valley Farm Supply, Janet Whitchurch, Jim Warren (101 Livestock), Leavitt Insurance, Melissa Costa, Melissa Duflock, Monterey County Farm Bureau, Neponset Ag, Ryan Jefferson (Quinn Company), Salinas Rodeo, Schoch Family Dairy, The Farm, Tom Nason & Ventana Forestry, Tonya Linares, Wilbur Ellis

Cheese & Wine Celebration Vendors (in-kind)

Cima Collina Winery, McIntyre Wines, Smith wines, Garden Variety Cheese, Schoch Family Farmstead, Stepladder Creamery, Central Coast Creamery, Carmel Valley Ranch Creamery, Foustman's Salami, and Las Lomas Lavender and Honey