RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF MONTEREY COUNTY

Year in Review 2018

Letter from RCDMC Board Vice President, Rebecca King

Over the past two years the RCD has been assessing our organizational strengths and weaknesses and developing goals and strategies to build a better district for the future — culminating in the production of a Business Plan this past spring. Throughout this process of gathering input internally and within our community about RCDMC's work, a recurring theme was the RCD's strength in using partnerships and collaborations. The overview of the highlights of our work from 2018 in this report only serves to reinforce this idea.

In 2018, we continued our work on the Salinas River Arundo Control Program and Stream Maintenance Program in collaboration with the Salinas River Partners and we held a joint fundraiser which raised over $12,000 to offset RCDMC costs for arundo control and stream maintenance biological oversight. The County funded us to hire a Coordinator to ramp up Fire Fuel Mitigation efforts with broad local partnerships. With our new Soil Scientist and Ag Water Management Specialist on staff, we have continued our Spanish-language Irrigation Efficiency Trainings and On-Farm Irrigation and Nutrient Management Tracking and Engineering Services, collaborating with NRCS and the County Ag Commissioner's Office. RCDMC has also joined with the Center for Land-based Learning to develop a Monterey County ag educational program to serve High School students that supplements existing programs. We participated in the Monterey County Gives! year-end campaign to raise $8,000 in seed funds for that effort.

As a Board member over the past 8 years I have been so proud to see how much the RCD has developed and grown and how our engagement with so many projects and partners in the ag and wildlands communities has expanded and strengthened. I hope you share my appreciation of the unique role the RCD plays and continue to support us and collaborate with us in the future.

Sincerely, Rebecca King

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- Fundraising and Educational Events
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RCDMC Vice President Rebecca King hosted a Raising Goats and Sheep Workshop and Tour at her Monkeyflower Ranch in September

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
Joanna Devers, Treasurer
Linda Ferrasci, Director
Emily Gardner, outgoing Director
Brent Plemmons, Director
Bill Lipe, Director
Paul Binsacca, Advisor
Melissa Duflock, Advisor

RCDMC Staff
Paul Robins, Executive Director
Maggie Errea, Finance Manager
Emily Zefferman, Ecologist
Esther Haile, Biologist
Megan Barker, Project Administrator
Laura Murphy, Soil Scientist
Adrienne Carter, Civil Engineer
Shaun Richards, Ag Water Management Specialist
Jamie Tuitele-Lewis, Forest Health Coordinator
Ben Burgoa, Program Engineer (2013-2018)

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

2018 Events

April 20 RCDMC Annual BBQ

Together with our co-hosting organizations, the Salinas River Channel Coalition and the Salinas River Stream Maintenance Program River Management Unit Association, we celebrated our collaborative work along the Salinas River with over 100 guests. In addition to our fundraising auction, we honored "2018 RCD Partner of Distinction", NRCS Soil Conservationist John Warner, and premiered our short film "Within Reach: Releasing Arundo's Leafy Grip on the Salinas". Event sponsors included Driscoll's, Fresh Harvest, part of Scaroni Family of Companies, General Farm Investment, Bill Lipe, Rava Ranches, Alliant Insurance Services, American AgCredit, Graniterock, and Noland Hamerly Etienne & Hoss.

October 25 Cheese and Wine Event

We held our 2nd annual Central Coast "Meet Your Makers" Cheese & Wine Celebration at Happy Girl Kitchen in Pacific Grove. The event benefited our youth ag education program, a partnership with the FARMS Leadership Program in Monterey County. During the event, local cheese, wine and delicacies producers answered questions about their craft and what in their youth inspired their conservation-minded food production. Garden Variety Cheese, Schoch Family Farmstead, Central Coast Creamery, Evergreen Acres Guernsey Goats, Odonata Winery, Cima Collina Winery, Las Lomas Lavender and Honey, and Happy Girl Kitchen offered tastings of their products.

Board President Benny Jefferson speaks to the over 100 guests who attended the Salinas River Fundraising BBQ that brought in over $12,000 to support river work

November 10 Cal-IPC Award and Tour

The California Invasive Plant Council honored RCDMC as the "Wildland Stewardship Organization of the Year" for our Salinas River arundo control program at the Cal-IPC symposium in November. As part of the symposium, RCDMC hosted a Salinas River site tour for ecologists and land managers from across California. RCDMC took guests to arundo control sites to see first- hand how arundo has impacted the Salinas River and learn more about RCDMC's Salinas River arundo control methods, results and lessons learned.

RCDMC Ecologist Emily Zefferman led a tour to Salinas River arundo sites during the Cal-IPC symposium

FARMS Leadership students assess soil properties in a soil pit at the Land Judging Competition

November 15 Land Judging Competition

Thirty-two students from four local high schools in Salinas, Watsonville, Gonzalez and Soledad competed in our 2018 land judging competition, in partnership with the FARMS (Farming, Agriculture, and Resource Management for Sustainability) Leadership Program. Rincon Farms hosted the land judging competition at a ranch south of Salinas. Jessica Rodriguez and Luis Gomez from Watsonville High School garnered the top two spots, followed closely by Hailey Higgins from Soledad High School. The top two students received scholarships to attend Range and Natural Resources Camp this summer at Elkus Ranch in Half Moon Bay. RCDMC has partnered with the Center for Land Based Learning on the Land Judging Competition for the last two years. We are happy to be the Monterey County partner as the FARMS Leadership Program closely matches the RCDMC Strategic Plan's youth education goals and is a time-tested and impactful program for fostering our conservation minded farmers and scientists for the future.

Numbers from 2018

30	Spanish-language Irrigation Workshop days
247	Number of workshop attendees
57	Technical Assistance Consultations & Site Assessments (nutrient irrigation, erosion control)
576	Acres of Arundo treated & mowed along Salinas River
18	Stream Maintenance Program channels managed
32	Landjudging Contestants

Programs and Results

On-Farm Irrigation and Nutrient Management Tracking and Engineering Services

Throughout 2018, outgoing RCDMC Program Engineer Ben Burgoa and incoming Ag Water Management Specialist Shaun Richards and Soil Scientist Laura Murphy provided technical support for irrigation evaluations, nutrient management evaluations, and erosion control planning assistance for farms throughout Monterey County. RCDMC continues our partnership with USDA NRCS and assists local growers with their Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) engineering designs. RCDMC civil engineer Adrienne Carter worked with other NRCS engineers and conservationists to provide designs for erosion control practices including vegetated ditches, pipe inlets, and sediment basins.

RCDMC Ag Water Management Specialist Shaun Richards conducts a bulk density test of the soil on a local strawberry farm

Salinas River Arundo Control

RCDMC had a successful work season for our Salinas River Arundo Control Program. This year we focused on re-treating the 500 acres of arundo that we mowed or sprayed in previous years, since multiple herbicide treatments are needed to achieve full eradication. Contracted herbicide crews worked from July through November along 17 river miles between King City and Soledad. In addition to being honored with the Cal-IPC "Wildland Stewardship Organization of the Year" award for this work in November, our arundo control work was featured in a KION news segment and in a news article in the *Salinas Californian*.

Arundo causes problems for Salinas Valley farmers and wildlife by increasing the risk of flooding, taking over native vegetation, and consuming huge amounts of water. RCDMC is committed to continuing to move our program downstream until all the arundo in the

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Three backpack sprayers apply herbicide to arundo along a dry section of the Salinas River

river is under control. This work to date has been mostly funded by $4M in grants from the CA Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB). In 2019, we are seeking Salinas River landowners to sign up for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, a USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service program that will provide up to $1.07 million in financial assistance directly to landowners controlling arundo on their property. Contact Emily Zefferman for information

Salinas River Stream Maintenance

RCDMC helped administer the fifth season of the landowner-funded Salinas River Stream Maintenance Program in 2018 in partnership with the Salinas River Management Unit Association and the Monterey County Water Resources Agency. The Stream Maintenance Program is a voluntary flood risk reduction program focused on targeted vegetation clearing in dry, secondary channels along the river. Arundo control is required as mitigation for vegetation removal, and participants treated 87 acres of arundo by mowing and spraying this year. In addition to spraying, participants mowed 18 secondary channels between San Ardo and Salinas. Contact Emily Zefferman for information

Winter Seeding Rebates

RCDMC continued to provide winter road and furrow cover cropping seeding rebates to the many small-scale berry-growing farmers that work on the hilly and highly erodible lands of north Monterey County. The winter seeding rebates were focused on meeting the needs of the region's historically underserved Latino farming community, which make up eighty percent of the farmers in the Elkhorn Slough watershed. Contact Laura Murphy for information

Spanish-language Irrigation Workshops

Ben Burgoa, Laura Murphy and Shaun Richards provided training workshops in Spanish to new farmers and irrigators in the Salinas Valley on water conservation this year. At the workshops, irrigators learned about soil-plant-water relationships, flow and pressure measurement, irrigation scheduling, irrigation system maintenance, and factors affecting irrigation distribution uniformity. Successful participants received Irrigation Training & Research Center (ITRC) certification at designated trainings. Ag Water Management Specialist Shaun Richards will be leading irrigation workshops in 2019, in partnership with the RCD of Santa Cruz County, thanks in part to grant-funding from the CA Dept of Water Resources. Contact Shaun Richards for information

Irrigation efficiency trainings typically run two days and include both classroom and hands-on field components

Fire Fuels Mitigation Coordination Program

In August, the County of Monterey approved $150,000 for 'Fire Fuels Mitigation Coordination' to RCDMC to help implement the Monterey County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). RCDMC will oversee the planning and coordination work with staff, contractors, local partners and fire agencies. Through CWPP project prioritization, pre-plan mapping, and project funding development, the ultimate goal of the partnership is to help reduce risk of catastrophic wildfire and improve forest health through strategic vegetation and fuel break management for public safety and environmental health. The USDA has since approved a request to match the county funding by the same amount for additional forest management planning and outreach to forest landowners in the region. In November, RCDMC hired Jamie Tuitele-Lewis to lead this work. Jamie comes to us after almost two decades as Forest Botanist for USFS.

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Wildlife Monitoring by Pathways for Wildlife

RCDMC is excited to have begun a collaboration with the research organization Pathways for Wildlife to track wildlife use in habitat improvement projects in the Salinas River corridor using camera "traps". Their work is part of the long-term effectiveness monitoring program for the Stream Maintenance Program (see Salinas River Stream Maintenance, p.4). While capturing some extraordinary images, they are helping fill the large gap in knowledge about the type and numbers of wildlife that use the river. Pathways for Wildlife caught on camera bobcat, coyote, fox, deer, raccoon, rabbit, raptors, pigs and other critters that call the Salinas River home. This work is funded by the CA State Coastal Conservancy and Monterey County Water Resources Agency.

To monitor the effectiveness of the Stream Maintenance Program, wildlife cameras are placed strategically along riparian corridors in the Salinas River

Video Productions about River and Irrigation

RCDMC Project Administrator Megan Barker produced two new short videos, titled "Within Reach: Releasing Arundo's Leafy Grip on the Salinas" about the Salinas River Arundo Control Program and "En Español: Irrigation Efficiency Workshops" or "Talleres de Eficiencia de Riego" (available in both English and Spanish) about our Spanish-language Irrigation workshop program. These videos were made possible by funding from the California Wildlife Conservation Board, California Department of Conservation, and California Department of Food and Agriculture. The videos are intended to raise awareness about RCDMC's Salinas River work and our water management education efforts with the agricultural community. Drones were used to shoot the aerial video footage in both films. Contact Megan Barker for information about our video or drone services

RCDMC produced a short video in both English and Spanish to promote the value of bilingual irrigation training programs

What's New

RCDMC Bids Farewell to Ben Burgoa and Welcomes New Staff

Last summer, we bid farewell to our unforgettable Program Engineer Ben Burgoa. During his five years of service, Ben's unique skillset enabled RCDMC to provide technical services to farmers and farm workers in both Spanish and English, with emphasis on improving water and nutrient management throughout the region. Ben moved to Grand Junction, CO with his wife. RCDMC also welcomed new staff earlier in 2018, Engineer Adrienne Carter, Soil Scientist Laura Murphy, Ag Water Management Specialist Shaun Richards; and most recently brought on Forest Health Coordinator Jamie Tuitele-Lewis. View staff bios online

Drone scouting and mapping - NEW SERVICE!

RCDMC recently purchased a DIJ Phantom Pro 4 drone to help monitor the efficacy of our Arundo Control and Stream Maintenance Program work along the Salinas River. We have used our drone for land management and wildlife conservation applications including invasive weed scouting, 2D and 3D mapping, and videography for public education purposes.

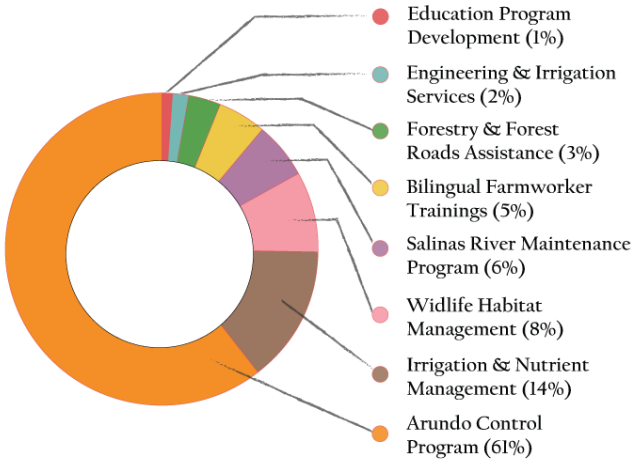
Summary of Financial Statements (July 2017 to June 2018)

This year, RCDMC engaged local business-planning consultant Kristen Fletcher to guide board members and staff through development of a plan to focus our local and private fund-raising efforts to enhance core financial stability and build a more robust locally-supported youth conservation ag education program. Initial implementation included participation in the Monterey County Gives! year-end campaign with the Center for Land Based Learning (see Land Judging, p. 3) and meeting with other local ag education programs for ag industry fundraising collaboration and program coordination. In 2018, we raised $12,000 from events & donations and $8,000 (for CLBL partnership) from the MC Gives! campaign. Donations to RCDMC are tax-deductible and very welcome, and can be targeted to support specific programs. Donate

Expenses (per 2017-2018 audited reports)	
Personnel	$ 606,491
Contract Services	$ 1,651,840
Office Expenses	$ 27,722
Project Permits	$ 17,645
Equipment & Field Supplies	$ 14,922
Vehicle & Travel	$ 14,037
Workshops, Meetings & Events	$ 11,739
Liability Insurance	$ 4,989
Total	**$2,349,385**

Income Sources (per 2017-2018 audited reports)	
State grants	$ 1,492,549
Local and Private Contracts	$ 364,258
Federal grants	$ 234,276
Donations, Fundraising & Interest	$ 17,362
Total	**$ 2,190,905**

RCDMC Programs by Relative Budget



Special Thanks to Our 2018 Sponsors and Donors

Salinas River Partners BBQ Event Sponsors ($7,700)

Driscoll's, Fresh Harvest (part of Scaroni Family of Companies), General Farm Investment, Bill Lipe, Rava Ranches, Alliant Insurance Services, American AgCredit, Graniterock, Noland Hamerly Etienne & Hoss, Leavitt Insurance

Salinas River Partners BBQ Auction Item Donors ($5,605)

Melissa Duflock, Benny Jefferson, Donna Meyers, Bill Lipe, Abby & Paul Silva, Green Valley Farm Supply, Angel Garibaldo (Trace Genomics), Coastal Tractor, Emily Gardner, Neponset Ag, Christenson and Giannini, Garden Variety Cheese, Schoch Dairy, Tonya Linares, Emily Millar, Kay Joy Barge, American Ag Credit, Monterey County Farm Bureau, Mary Schoch, Green Valley Farm Supply, Kay Mercer, Las Lomas Lavender, Linda & Tony Ferrasci, Kristina Wyatt, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Quinn Caterpillar, The Farm, Star Market, Dirk Giannini, Helena Chemical Company, 1st Capital, Pezzini Farms

Cheese & Wine Celebration Vendors (in-kind)

Garden Variety Cheese, Schoch Dairy Family Farmstead, Central Coast Creamery, Evergreen Acres Guernsey Goats, Odonata Winery, Cima Collina Winery, Las Lomas Lavender and Honey, Happy Girl Kitchen

Monterey County Gives! Donors ($8,000)

Wave Rider Nursery, Brent & Julie Plemmons, Bill Lipe, Joanna & Christopher Devers, Bradley Zeve, Susan Morse, Nona Childress, Jazmin Lopez, Leslie Foote, Denyse Frischmuth, Winston Carson, Leticia Hernandez, Kristen Fletcher