RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF MONTEREY COUNTY
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Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCDMC)

Strategic Plan 2024 – 2029

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About Us

The Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCDMC) was formally incorporated in 1994 from all of the Conservation Districts that had served the different regions of Monterey County since 1942. RCDMC and our predecessor Conservation Districts were initially formed to support voluntary conservation work combining local leadership with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service financial and technical assistance. Since the mid-1990's, RCDMC has added grant- and contract-funded professional staff to amplify and refine this service.

The RCDMC is guided by a 7-member Board of Directors who are appointed by the County Board of Supervisors to serve voluntarily and represent a broad spectrum of experience including farming, ranching, finance, and non-profit management. To support implementation of our mission, the RCDMC employs an 18-person staff with expertise including Agronomy, Botany, Civil Engineering, Ecology, Environmental Policy, Landscape Architecture, Plant Sciences and Soil Science. Our work is funded by project-based public and private grants and contracts.

Mission

The mission of the RCDMC is to conserve and improve our natural resources, integrating the public interest in environmental protection with the needs of agricultural and urban users.

Vision

The RCDMC collaborates with diverse partners to develop natural resource solutions that foster thriving and resilient ecosystems, communities, and economies.

Values and Guiding Principles

Collaboration: *We work with land managers and with other local, state and federal partners to leverage our collective strengths in pursuit of shared goals.*

Equitability: *We believe in the fair and just treatment of all members of our community. We endeavor to serve the entire community equitably, with emphasis on addressing unmet needs in the context of our mission.*

Inclusion: *We believe that successful conservation depends on the inclusion, empowerment, and engagement of all members of our community, and that our organization should reflect the diversity of our community. We strive to encourage community dialogue and develop effective programs which promote a healthy environment and thriving communities.*

Non-Regulatory: *We work with cooperating land managers and owners on a voluntary basis and are not regulatory. We honor the confidentiality concerns of our cooperators.*

Objective, Scientific Approach: *Our work is rooted in and endeavors to contribute to current science and scientific understanding. We work realistically with cooperators within their operational and physical constraints.*

Professionalism & Dependability: *We hold ourselves to a professional standard of work and strive to meet the expectations of our customers, funders, and the public. We consistently seek to improve our quality of service and invite stakeholder feedback.*

Regional Partnership: *Natural resources are not constrained by county lines. We are good neighbors and work proactively with regional and state partners and coalitions to address our shared resource concerns. We share with and learn from our partners and bring conservation innovations to Monterey County.*

Trust and Integrity: *We are trusted because we treat others respectfully, and we conduct our work in an honest, ethical, and transparent manner.*

Identified Goals and Strategies for Achieving Them 2024-2029

We endeavor to plan and conduct our work in a manner supportive of our Vision and consistent with the Values and Guiding Principles summarized above. We developed the Goals, Objectives and Key Results outlined here after engaging Dr. Mahabat Baimyrzaeva to consult with community members and partner organizations through a survey and interviews, and through a series of facilitated meetings of the RCDMC Board and Staff in 2023 and 2024. The following Goals, Objectives and Key Results (the Plan) serve as our touchstone for affirming progress and best serving our community. To be responsive to changes over time, we utilize this as a working document.

Strategic Goals

1. **Strategic Goal 1: Build RCD's internal organizational capacity.**

   Rationale: *RCDMC is at a critical juncture in its evolution as an organization. The size of the organization, quality and quantity of projects and partners, and overall impact grew rapidly in the last several years. While adding more high-quality staff amplifies RCDMC's scope of work and its potential for greater impact, funding and operational stability has compromised effectiveness, sustainability and impact of projects. RCDMC therefore is compelled to rethink how it operates internally to be able to optimally channel everyone's energy to desired goals.*

2. **Strategic Goal 2: Continue to amplify the impact and effectiveness of our existing programs.**

   Rationale*: RCDMC has established itself as a respected and trusted organization in natural resource conservation in Monterey County thanks to its ability to identify unmet needs and step in to fulfill them, technical expertise, relationship skills, and reputation as a neutral party who can work with a wide range of different stakeholders. RCDMC will continue to fund and grow its current programs with the goal of sustainability.*

3. **Strategic Goal 3: Engage local, state and federal partners to lead new programs and initiatives, inform natural resources policies, and benefit local resource conservation needs.**

   Rationale*: RCDMC has unique strengths, expertise, and reputation working across all key natural resources issues in Monterey County including water, soil, and wildlife that are tightly interconnected part of the same ecosystem. RCDMC has observed a disconnect between policies and regulations and on-the-ground coordinated implementation. RCDMC wants to take a leadership role in influencing new policies and creating new programs that fill a community need while spearheading initiatives and partnerships that benefit the entire system.*

Strategic Goal #1: Build RCDMC's internal organizational capacity.

Objective 1.1: Clarify key roles and responsibilities for RCDMC staff and leadership

KR 1.1.1: Create an Operations Committee to prepare for, hire, and work with the Operations Manager to better integrate operations, efficiency, and identify current capacities and limitations of staff and board members, to recognize gaps, and to identify opportunities for staff and board members to engage in needed roles.

KR 1.1.2: Identify operational management responsibilities among program staff to support, oversee, and ensure operational improvements.

KR 1.1.3 Establish and support cross pollination across programs, teams, and functions.

KR 1.1.4 Develop, review, and refine internal policies, procedures, and templates to provide clarity for staff and increase efficiency and effectiveness.

KR 1.1.5: Reestablish safety program and develop policies and protocols for emergency situations.

Objective 1.2: Diversify and amplify additional funding sources beyond regular grants

KR 1.2.1 Develop a robust fundraising committee, structure, and plan to support private and foundation donations to the RCD.

KR 1.2.2: Develop and implement a 3-5 year fundraising campaign to support RCD initiatives and provide stability for RCD operations and existing programs

KR 1.2.3: Foster relationships with local and regional foundations for strategic program and organizational support.

Objective 1.3: Optimize and increase efficiency of financial, grant and information management systems and tools

KR 1.3.1: Establish grant, project and financial management system to streamline information availability and accuracy for project managers and streamline application, management, reporting, and invoicing processes.

KR 1.3.2 Improve RCDMC information management system for easier access and use.

Objective 1.4: Improve, optimize, and expand the office space, equipment and tools

KR 1.4.1: Form and assign staff-based committee led by Operations Manager to conduct initial assessment and semi-annual reviews of progress.

KR 1.4.2: Optimize Current Office space and acquire new space as needed to ensure comfortable and adequate space for all staff, including meeting rooms. (Desks, office space for growth, shared office limitations)

KR 1.4.3 Acquire and maintain adequate vehicles to support work.

Objective 1.5. Strengthen the existing staff's capacity, cohesion, and continuity

KR 1.5.1: Maintain and improve technical expertise and professional development.

KR 1.5.2: Build and maintain staff diversity by prioritizing recruitment and retention of staff of color for a more diverse team reflective of the community we serve.

KR 1.5.3: Develop and maintain annual or periodic rituals, activities, and events for office cohesion and positive working environment (physical and social).

KR 1.5.4: Develop a leadership succession plan to ensure the seamless transition and continuity of the organization as staff leadership changes.

Objective 1.6: Strengthen the board's capacity to increase RCDMC's impact and reach.

KR 1.6.1: Add strong, knowledgeable, and widely networked new members to maintain a full 7-member board plus committed associate members and advisors with diverse and strategic representation of communities and skills.

KR 1.6.2: Provide relevant annual training for Board Directors and Associate Directors annually.

KR 1.6.3: Establish objectives and key results for existing Sub-Committees (Fundraising, Executive, and Finance) to establish clear strategic priorities.

KR 1.6.4: Create structure for staff and board engagement by board member subject and skill areas outside of standing committees.

Strategic Goal #2: Continue to amplify the impact and effectiveness of our existing programs.

Objective 2.1: Ensure funding is in place to maintain and continue to grow all programs

KR 2.1.1: Maintain existing and acquire new grant funding to carry forward existing programs.

Objective 2.2: Maintain and broaden RCD's core programs to increase the health and resilience of Monterey County's landscapes and communities

KR 2.2.1: Manage Salinas River programs to increase habitat enhancement, flood risk reduction, and water conservation.

KR 2.2.2: Manage forest health and fire fuel mitigation programs to expand internal and partner capacity while increasing wildland resiliency, acres treated, and communities served.

KR 2.2.3: Support pollinator and wildlife habitat improvement projects in wildlands, working lands and urban gardens throughout Monterey County.

KR 2.2.4: Implement cooperative and voluntary wetland, waterway, and fish habitat improvement projects throughout county.

KR 2.2.5: With local partners, engage agricultural land managers to build soil health, improve water use efficiency, appropriately manage the soil-water interface, and diversify habitat, with an emphasis on equitable service.

Objective 2.3: Expand education and outreach on issues related to each programmatic area

KR 2.3.1: Ensure the public has a greater understanding of what RCD does and why through multiple communication channels.

KR 2.3.2: Continue to engage with local schools to reinforce and/or instill a conservation ethic in youth agricultural and environmental science programs, including school gardens and farms.

Strategic Goal #3: Engage local, state and federal partners to lead new programs and initiatives, inform natural resources policies, and benefit local resource conservation needs.

Objective 3.1: Engage on critical policies where RCDMC could intervene to have a higher impact on the broader system

KR 3.1.1: Provide technical information to Ag Order regulatory dialogue to promote incentives, foster collaborations with producers, and equitability.

KR 3.1.2: Provide technical input and energy toward collaborative permit streamlining efforts with state, federal and local resource agencies.

KR 3.1.3: Engage in local efforts to support collaborative, comprehensive resource management solutions for Monterey County (possible JPA/'district' formation/s, etc.)

KR 3.1.4: Develop clarity for public works project requirements and applicability for vegetation management projects in partnership with other project proponents, lawyers and legislators.

KR 3.1.5: Engage with growers, buyers, and researchers to support food safety practices that balance public health with soil health, wildlife and water quality.

Objective 3.2: Expand community engagement and awareness regarding local conservation work and opportunities to contribute

KR 3.2.1: Explore opportunities for expanding youth education.

KR 3.2.2: Develop programs for community volunteer engagement.

Objective 3.3: Maintain and expand communication with legislators and agencies to develop effective responses to our communities' needs

KR 3.3.1: Provide technical information for policy makers to support good policy making and changes.

KR 3.3.2: Engage with state, federal and local legislators through invitations to project and district tours, office visits, presentations, and regular communication with their respective staff.

KR 3.3.3: Engage directly with state and federal funding agencies to promote funding resources to support our work and reduce inefficiencies associated with grant management.

Objective 3.4: Increase engagement and partnerships with local tribal groups

KR 3.4.1: Support staff training for engagement with local tribal groups and initiatives.

KR 3.4.2: Seek, identify, and procure funding for more proactive engagement with local tribal priorities and initiatives.

Objective 3.5: Support and extend local initiatives to address agricultural natural resource challenges

KR 3.5.1 Support positive outcomes of local, organized Ag Order regulatory compliance through collaboration with Central Coast RCDs collaboration with Preservation Inc. and CCWG.

KR 3.5.2 Engage with local, innovative companies, research institutions, and agricultural industry initiatives to learn from and possibly extend their work.

Objective: 3.6: Implement Monterey County Small Farmer Land Access and Conservation Assistance program

KR 3.6.1: Develop RCDMC capacity for land management program.

KR 3.6.2: Develop and initiate pilot project in Monterey County.

Objective 3.7: Collaborate with Monterey County partners to develop a long-term vision for the Salinas Valley that protects natural resources and agricultural land

KR 3.7.1: Formalize a planning team with SVBGSA, MCWRA, IRWM partners and others.

KR 3.7.2: Secure funding for RCDMC staff to pursue Salinas Valley long-term vision

KR 3.7.3: Formalize a collaborative entity and investigate legislative, financial, and organizational options for long-term stability.