



Napa County Resource Conservation District
Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025



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About Us

Napa County Resource Conservation District (Napa RCD) was established in 1945 as a special district of the State of California to help farmers and ranchers in Napa County tackle erosion and other problems on their land. As natural resource issues change, we continue to evolve.

Today, we help our community achieve conservation goals by providing technical assistance, educational programs, monitoring programs, and funding sources on issues ranging from fisheries to forest health, soil management, water conservation and quality, and more.

We are governed by a locally-appointed Board of Directors. Our leaders are also your neighbors — they live in the district and understand what the local resource needs and concerns are, which helps steer Napa RCD in the right direction. Our team consists of conservation scientists and outreach and administrative professionals who are skilled at developing, implementing, and monitoring many types of projects. Our Napa RCD works at many scales — from the individual landowner to entire watersheds.



Our Mission

The mission of the Napa County Resource Conservation District is to support and empower everyone in Napa County to conserve, protect, and restore natural resources and sustainably manage working lands.

Our Vision

Just as all people need clean and abundant water, healthy soil, open spaces, and diverse wildlife and plants to thrive, our natural resources in turn depend on the strengths and contributions of all people. Napa RCD imagines and strives towards a vision of Napa County as a model of sustainability.

A place where a healthy natural environment and thriving communities are not separate, but instead depend on, support, and enhance each other. This relationship has never been more important than today, when we face the unprecedented scale of change caused by rising global temperatures and other associated climate change effects.

We envision a future for Napa County that includes:

A shared culture of conservation, where all community members contribute their strengths and talents to support each other and the natural world, and well-informed, engaged community members make good natural resources decisions together.

Sustainable management of working lands that provide economic, community, and environmental benefits.

Rivers, streams, and watersheds that support clean drinking water, sustainable irrigation for agricultural crops, and intact natural habitat for native fish, wildlife, and plants.

Land devoted to urban and residential uses, agriculture, publicly accessible open space, and wilderness.

In 2020-2024, we will strive to realize this vision by:

Creating ongoing opportunities for all community members to learn from and inspire each other as we actively participate in stewarding our shared resources.

Providing education, technical assistance, and financial support to help landowners steward their agricultural land, forest land, open spaces, and urban properties.

Collecting information about the health of our watersheds and sharing that information with community leaders and land managers to help them make sound management decisions for working lands and natural resources.

Restoring rivers and streams, supporting native vegetation and wildlife habitat, and implementing state-of-the-art agricultural and rangeland practices as well as sustainable wildfire management projects.

Partnering with other organizations — in Napa County, regionally, and statewide — on large-scale approaches to the most pressing natural resource challenges of our time, including climate change.

Reflecting Napa RCD's full commitment to community and conservation through our operations at every level.

Guiding Principles

Collaboration: Conservation in Napa County depends on the collaboration of individuals, community organizations, and government agencies. Napa RCD works with others to leverage our collective strengths in pursuit of shared goals.

Supporting Decisions With Sound Science: We are committed to using scientifically sound methods to inform our own actions and those we are serving. We provide evidence-based information and guidance to support leaders, landowners, and community members in understanding natural resource issues and making both on-the-ground and policy decisions.

Non-Regulatory: Napa RCD shares best practices, and offers technical support to help our community members understand their natural resource management options, including how to comply with relevant regulations.

Equitability: We believe in the fair and just treatment of all members of a community. Equity requires commitment to strategic priorities, resources, respect, and civility, as well as ongoing action and assessment of progress toward achieving specified goals.



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.

Regional Orientation: Watersheds, wildlife, and climate do not divide along county lines. We proactively work with regional and state partners and coalitions to address some of our most pressing shared resource concerns. We share with and learn from our partners, and bring cutting-edge conservation innovations to Napa County.

Trust and Integrity: In all of its work, the Board of Directors and staff act as professionals, treat others equitably and with respect, and behave in an honest, ethical, and inclusive manner.

Our Collaborators & Funders

NRCS – RCD Partnership: Napa RCD enjoys a special partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS) which spans the history of the organization. Our agencies share an office, and we often work together to provide locally-led technical and funding assistance to landowners to implement conservation practices on private lands.

Funding: A small portion of our funding comes from property taxes assessed within our district boundary. Approximately 85% of our annual funding comes from competitively sought grants, professional service agreements, tax-deductible donations, and revenue from the sale of wine grapes from our Huichica Creek Sustainable Demonstration Farm. Napa RCD consistently seeks to diversify revenue sources to mitigate for the inherent risks in our funding structure.



Goal #1:

The communities of Napa County effectively plan for and monitor the health of our watersheds so they provide safe drinking water, sustainable irrigation, and intact natural habitat for native fish, wildlife, and plants.

Strategies

1. Collect, assess, and communicate data and information on the health of Napa County's watersheds.
2. Proactively share watershed health information with partner organizations, community leaders, and residents to inform decision-making.
3. Develop a plan to most beneficially use Napa RCD's Huichica Creek Sustainable Demonstration Farm property in pursuit of the vision, mission, and goals expressed above.
4. Increase Napa RCD's leadership in climate change response and resilience.
 - 4.1. Participate in the development and implementation of a comprehensive climate action plan which includes Napa County and its incorporated municipal jurisdictions.
 - 4.2. Revise Napa RCD outreach materials to show how conservation actions relate to climate change mitigation and response.
 - 4.3. Provide references to additional climate-related resources.
5. Collaborate with other local organizations to explore the creation of a "Conservation Blueprint" guiding restoration activities for Napa County.
6. Provide technical guidance to the Napa County Groundwater Sustainability Agency.
7. Collaborate with community partners to plan for increased availability and access to locally-produced food in Napa County.

Potential Outcomes

- Awareness of watershed issues by elected officials and general public.
- Key plans developed.
- RCD guidance used in achieving targeted environmental and social outcomes.

Goal #2:

The wild and working lands of Napa County provide environmental and community benefit, and are managed in ways that prepare us and build resiliency for climate change.

Strategies

1. Assist private and public landowners and managers in implementing best management practices in erosion control, water management and conservation, soil health, invasive species management, forest health, and climate-smart agriculture. Proactively share watershed health information with partner organizations, community leaders, and residents to inform decision-making.
2. Implement in-stream and riparian restoration projects in local watersheds.
 - 2.1. Restoration projects in the Napa River and its tributaries.
 - 2.2. Restoration projects in the Putah Creek watershed.
3. Implement programs to restore native terrestrial habitats in Napa County.
 - 3.1. Restore native oak woodlands, and other critical native plant communities.
 - 3.2. Exclude, detect, eradicate, and suppress noxious weeds and invasive exotic plants using an integrated approach.
4. Work with local and regional partners to implement best landscape management practices to minimize wildfire impacts on human life and property in the urban-wildlands interface and restore natural fire regime patterns in undeveloped areas consistent with a changing climate.
5. Expand programs to assist urban residents of Napa County in implementing conservation measures with a focus on climate change mitigation and resilience.
 - 5.1. Provide education and support to help residents implement sustainable stormwater management practices at home.
 - 5.2. Provide education and support to help residents implement water conservation practices at home.
 - 5.3. Provide education and support to help residents implement habitat enhancement practices at home.

Potential Outcomes

- Reduced sediment in rivers and streams.
- Improved habitat, including streamflows, riparian and wildlife corridors, and overwintering and feeding resources for a diversity of insects.
- Reduced use of water for irrigation.
- Increased soil organic carbon.
- Healthier and more fire-resistant forest.
- Reduced carbon emissions.
- Awareness and use of best practices.

Goal #3: Napa County develops a shared culture of conservation that includes all community members.

Strategies

1. Partner with a diverse array of organizations, including new community partners, to assess community interest, needs, and assets related to natural resources.
 - 1.1. Use assessment findings to inform current and future Napa RCD programs and strategies.
2. Engage all segments of the Napa County community in the work of Napa RCD.
 - 2.1. Napa RCD staff and board engage in activities and processes to increase cultural awareness and responsiveness.
 - 2.2. Increase cultural responsiveness of current programs and communications.
 - 2.3. Diversify the staff and board of Napa RCD to reflect the community it serves.
 - 2.4. Increase integration of Napa RCD's education, watershed, and technical assistance programs with each other.
3. Expand youth education programming and youth volunteer programs.
4. Expand adult education and volunteer programs to reach throughout the county.



Potential Outcomes

- Napa RCD programs, board, staff reflect the demographics of Napa County.
- Community members identify natural resources as community assets.
- Natural resource organizations identify all community members as conservation allies.
- Community members feel empowered to act on local natural resource issues.
- Napa County asked to support similar efforts in other communities.

Goal #4: Diverse revenue streams allow Napa RCD to advance its mission and vision.

Strategies

1. Revisit indirect cost rate to be able to incorporate appropriate expenditures into grant and contract cost accounting.
2. Cultivate increased support from local governments for restoration and watershed monitoring.
3. Become a truly county-wide district by annexing portions of the City of Napa that were incorporated as of 1945.
4. Seek additional private funding for Napa RCD programs.
 - 4.1. Increase applications to private foundations with a focus on multi-year funding.
 - 4.2. Increase outreach and communication with the viticulture community.
 - 4.3. Conduct an individual donor campaign.
5. Increase connections, coordination, collaboration, and partnerships with higher education and science institutions.
6. Develop and implement fee-for-service programs for activities such as irrigation evaluations, tree planting, and climate change mitigation.
7. Develop a strategic marketing and communications plan to support Napa RCD's revenue goals.



Potential Outcomes

- Decreased reliance on government grant funding.
- Stable revenue for monitoring and education programs.

Goal #5: The Napa RCD Board of Directors and staff have the capacity and tools to implement the strategic plan goals.

Strategies

1. Develop and support a diverse, skilled, and engaged Board of Directors.
 - 1.1. Form a board development committee with attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion principles.
 - 1.2. Increase board/staff connection.
 - 1.3. Engage the board in strategic and generative discussion.
 - 1.4. Revise board structures and practices to increase community responsiveness.
 - 1.5. Identify Directors and Associate Directors with key skills, connections, and demographics that reflect the community.
 - 1.6. Engage Directors and Associate Directors as ambassadors, advocates, and fundraisers on behalf of Napa RCD.
 - 1.7. Incorporate succession planning into board and staff development processes.
2. Continue to hire and retain a highly skilled professional staff.
 - 2.1. Continue to diversify the staff to reflect the community.
 - 2.2. Increase financial literacy of staff and board members, and develop capacity in marketing and fundraising.
 - 2.3. Refine Napa RCD staff management structure, and provide professional development support to managers.
 - 2.4. Provide competitive staff compensation package.
3. Sustain Napa RCD's excellent organizational culture.
 - 3.1. Encourage innovation and risk-taking.
 - 3.2. Encourage collaboration and training within and across Napa RCD programs.
 - 3.3. Create and support opportunities for professional development for all staff members.
 - 3.4. Support ongoing learning and development of the Board.
4. Ensure Napa RCD has the space and equipment needed to reach its goals.
 - 4.1. Plan for and develop expanded RCD office space.
 - 4.2. Plan for and acquire equipment, tools, and vehicles needed for RCD programs.

Potential Outcomes

- Diverse board.
- Engaged board.
- Staff retention.
- Staff satisfaction.





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Board of Directors

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Rainer Hoenicke, PhD
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Beth Painter
Bill Pramuk
Gretchen Stranzl McCann

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John Henshaw
Zen Hunter-Ishikawa
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Staff

Lucas Patzek, PhD, Executive Director
Danielle Ashton, Education Program Assistant
Amanda Benton, Forestry Program Manager
Bill Birmingham, Conservation Project Manager
Paul Blank, Senior Hydrologist
Miguel Garcia, PhD, Sustainable Agriculture Program Manager
Frances Knapczyk, PhD, Program Director
Jonathan Koehler, Senior Biologist
Ashley Kvitek, Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator
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Ruby Stahel, Conservation Project Manager

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Photo Credits

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