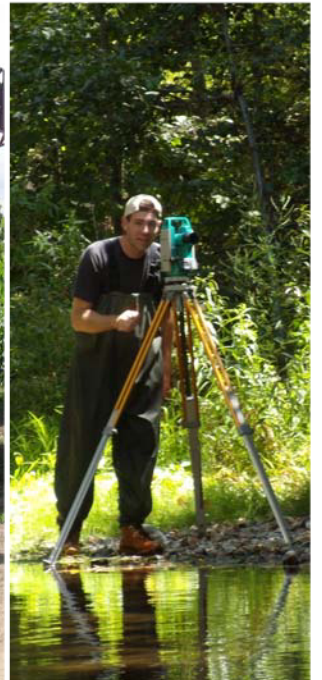


NAPA COUNTY

RCD



Resource
Conservation
District



2009
Annual Report



Board of Directors and Staff

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Dave Steiner, Sr. Soil Conservationist
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(L-R: Paul, Frances, Anna, Leigh, Kathleen, Steph, Dave, Jonathan)

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Message from the District



“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times” and without a doubt it was one of the most financially challenging times the District has ever had. As we review the past year to acknowledge our accomplishments, we do so with pride and also with sorrow.

Unprecedented financial hardship hit the District in December, 2008 when the State of California issued a “stop work order” to all projects funded by General Obligation bonds. That order, coupled with notice that the State would not pay invoices for completed work until the end of the “freeze,” affected just about every entity doing conservation and restoration work in the State, and it put a screeching halt to about half of the District’s activities and left us with a dismal cash-flow situation.

Despite the circumstances, the District Board and staff were remarkable. The Board demonstrated unwavering commitment and leadership and staff were flexible and kept positive attitudes, even through mandatory furloughs. Board members and staff helped each other and many volunteered personal hours to work at or participate in various District events. However, even with these measures, our reduced budget and cash-flow position left us unable to support all of our positions and ultimately we had to part with three very important staff members who had been with the District for several years. Now, one year later as we write this report, remaining staff are back to full-time, the “frozen” invoices are mostly paid, and we have survived.

“Every gray cloud has a silver lining,” and for us that silver lining came in the form of partnerships that have been built over the past several years. Many local agencies and organizations offered us their support, financial and otherwise, during the past year. The heartfelt concern and support of our community boosted our spirits and encouraged us to keep looking forward to brighter days. Organizations such as the **Wildlife Conservation Commission of Napa County, Napa Sanitation District, Carneros Land Stewardship Foundation, Napa River Steelhead, Napa County Flood Control & Water Conservation District, Friends of the Napa River, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Napa County Farm Bureau** assisted us in our time of need by funding “frozen” and new projects, volunteering, and exploring opportunities to seek more secure sources of funds to further our mission. In addition, **Supervisor Diane Dillon and Napa County Auditor Controller Tracy Schulze** provided sage insight as to the politics of our situation and how to weather the financial storm. **For all of the support from these and other sources, we are truly grateful.**

All of this says nothing of the tremendous accomplishments that were made over the past year: new education and outreach events, state of the art fisheries monitoring, habitat improvements, and more. The following pages highlight some of our accomplishments. We welcome you to celebrate with us and thank you for your support!

Clint Pridmore
Board President

Leigh Sharp
District Manager

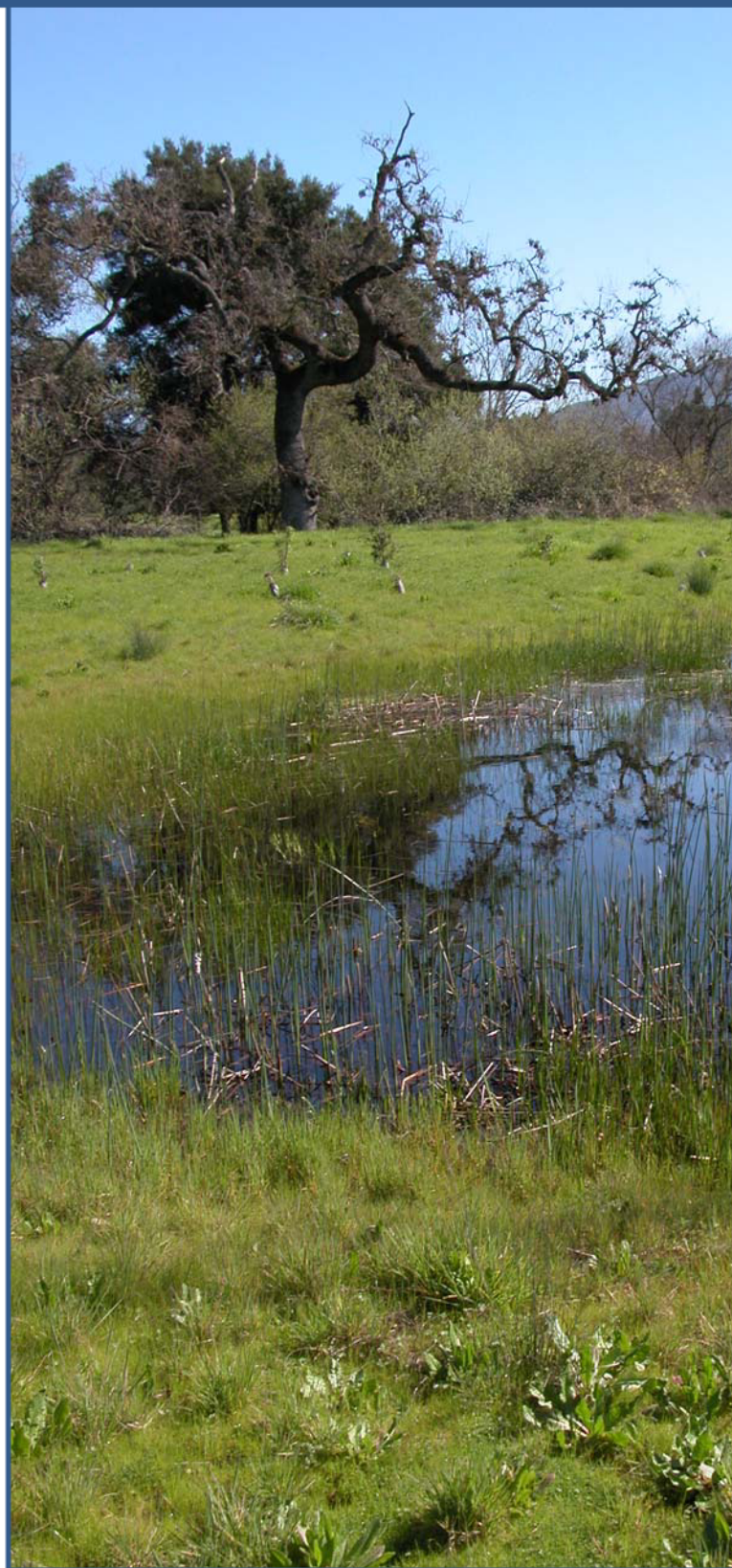
Our Mission

The Napa County Resource Conservation District (District, RCD) is a local non-regulatory organization whose mission is to promote responsible watershed management through voluntary community stewardship and technical assistance. Since 1945, the District has facilitated natural resource conservation through community involvement, education, technical expertise and scientific research. The District is committed to utilizing voluntary, cooperative and scientifically sound methods to ensure that the watersheds within the District are sustained, conserved, restored and protected within a landscape of productive agriculture, growing cities, and wild lands.

As a “Special District,” we are organized to support natural resource management solutions through partnerships with individuals, organizations and agencies. Our function is to “make available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local community for conservation of soil, water and related natural resources.”

We work to achieve our mission through:

- Promoting watershed-based land stewardship of natural resources
- Evaluating watershed conditions and functions
- Providing resource conservation planning services
- Implementing resource conservation practices and projects



Accomplishments



Bringing Natural Resource Awareness to the Community

Using film and dialogue to engage new audiences

Almost 300 people joined the RCD in our venture to use documentary films to engage the community in dialogue about important resource issues. This year's feature films included *Tales of the San Joaquin* and *Rivers of a Lost Coast*. The films entertained the audience with stories of people working to restore a major river in California, in the serenity of flyfishing, and in the decline of salmonid species in California. In both instances, participants engaged with one another, learning about the creeks and rivers in Napa County, the fish and wildlife that live here, efforts to improve our local watersheds, and ways that community members can become involved in watershed activities. The showing of *Rivers of a Lost Coast* interested flyfishing enthusiasts young and old and brought a lot of new faces to RCD. Coordinated in partnership with **Napa Valley Museum** and **Napa River Steelhead**, the event was considered by all to be a huge success and benefited from generous donations from several local wineries, beer brewers, and other private businesses. RCD intends to bring more films to the community and looks forward to continuing the dialogue that has started.

Making creeks and watersheds visible

Collaboration among RCD, **Watershed Information Center & Conservancy (WICC)** of Napa County,

Napa County Public Works Department, and **North Bay Watershed Association** paid off in spades this year as jointly we were able to begin posting the names of local creeks on the side of county-maintained roads near creek crossings. The first 20 creek signs were installed in the summer of 2009 and an additional 20, plus 6 watershed signs, were installed in the fall. Response from the community was outstanding; the RCD office phone kept ringing with messages of "thanks." The **Town of Yountville** jumped right on board with our effort and quickly purchased signs to identify Hopper Creek, which runs through town. We hope that other municipalities in Napa County will jump on board and we're certainly happy to help.

Encouraging exploration of watersheds

In our 5th yearly calendar, available to the public free of charge, RCD chose to focus on helping people in Napa County become more familiar with the local watersheds. The focus of the calendar is different from year to year and in 2009, the focus was to get people to explore their watersheds through hiking. RCD partnered with **Ken Stanton**, local hiking guru, and took "favorite hike" nominations from everyone who would participate. Each month featured a local hike, provided critical hike information, and displayed beautiful photos of local scenery. RCD received many accolades for this calendar and people called well into the year looking for the calendar or asking for more specific information about the hikes.



Focusing on the future of our watersheds

Back this year by popular demand, RCD worked tirelessly with the **Watershed Information Center & Conservancy** to host a second *Napa County Watershed Symposium*. The symposium in 2008 focused on the past, present and future of our watersheds. In 2009, the focus of the symposium shifted to managing our watersheds in a changing world. Over 150 people filled the Elks Lodge in Napa to hear about how Napa County's three watersheds may change over the next 50 years and what local groups are doing now to prepare for and adapt to changing social, economic, and environmental conditions. Judging from the comments of attendees, one of the symposium's most valuable contributions was providing an opportunity for people to come together to share ideas about improving the health and management of our local watersheds. Public agencies and private firms supported the symposium, and many local wineries and businesses donated raffle prizes. In addition, attendees were treated to a post-event wine reception with wines donated from many local wineries. A good time was had by all and we're hoping to bring the symposium back in 2011.

Sharing the value of biodiversity with Spanish-speaking vineyard workers

Vineyard workers and managers play an important role in caring for our watersheds and caring for our wildlife and their habitat. This year, over 50 Spanish-speaking vineyard workers spent a morning learning about the value of biodiversity and wildlife habitat in and around agriculture. Sponsored by **Napa-Solano Audubon, Constellation Wines U.S., and Napa Sustainable Winegrowing Group**, participants in the workshop learned about wildlife habitat, birds, native plants, beneficial insects, pollinators,

reptiles, invasive weeds, detrimental insects and more. They engaged in rich discussions regarding the pros and cons of no-till vineyard floor management and other tradeoffs between the use of herbicides, mechanical tillage, and hand-labor. Participants also learned how to provide habitat for raptors that help to control rodent populations and built bluebird boxes to mount at their vineyards to control insects.

Demonstrating under-vine weed management techniques

The **Napa Sustainable Winegrowing Group** partnered with **Napa Valley College** and **UC Cooperative Extension** to host an equipment demonstration showcase where seven vendors demonstrated their wares and the effectiveness of controlling under-vine weeds using mechanical means or targeted spraying. Over 75 vineyard managers attended the event where they were able to see equipment at work and participate in a panel discussion regarding weed management practices that protect water quality and soil health.

Running for Resources

This year brought some financial challenges and RCD responded with creativity. RCD held the first ever **Napa Valley Salmon Run** to raise funds to support our programs and to raise awareness about our local resources. Despite the sweltering heat, 230 people, mostly from Napa County but some from as far away as Ohio, participated in the run and enjoyed the scenery of the Napa River along Yount Mill Road. Educational booths were on display, everyone seemed to have good time. The event helped get us through tough times, and we're looking forward to **Salmon Run 2010!**

Accomplishments



Assessing fish and flow to inform watershed management

Establishing population estimates for Napa River steelhead and salmon

One of the most common questions the RCD fisheries biologist receives from decision makers and the community at large is, “How many steelhead and salmon are in the Napa River watershed?” Perhaps surprisingly, and definitely frustrating to the people who ask, the answer is generally, “there are no good data to provide a very reliable answer.” However, thanks to the **Gasser Foundation, Napa River Steelhead, and the Wildlife Conservation Commission of Napa County**, this situation has changed. With their generous contributions, RCD purchased a large rotary screw trap (*pictured below on the left*) to count young steelhead and salmon that are born in the Napa River watershed and on their way to the ocean. RCD is focusing on the number of smolts (the lifestage when young fish transition from fresh to saltwater) because it directly reflects habitat conditions in the freshwater portion of the fishes’ lifecycle and gives us a solid indication of watershed condition. Results from the first catch season were impressive: a total of 22 fish species were found (12 native, 10 exotic), 99% of all fish caught were native, and measurements of the smolts indicate that the smolts tend to be large and therefore likely to experience relatively high marine survival. Operation of the trap would not have been possible without the **20+ dedicated volunteers** who helped assemble and disassemble the trap and also helped carry out daily monitoring and trap maintenance for over four months. RCD is thankful and proud to be able to carry out this important and timely monitoring effort and will operate the trap annually to develop salmonid population estimates to help inform water quality policy decisions and to track ecological responses to on-going habitat restoration projects throughout the Napa Valley.

Capturing stream flow information

In a County-wide effort to provide current and historical rainfall data and creek and river level data, RCD is assisting **Napa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, the cities of American Canyon, Napa, St. Helena, and Calistoga, the Town of Yountville, and Napa County** with improving the on-going **Napa Valley Regional Rainfall and Stream Monitoring System**. RCD facilitates

communication among the agencies and provides technical consultation and field support for expanding the system to add sites. RCD also monitors flow at 7 of the 23 stream gage sites and is able to draw statistical relationships between “water level” and “water flow.” Rainfall and water level data are important to predict flooding. Flow information is useful for scheduling water use, planning appropriate water retention, erosion control and bypass structures, assessing fisheries habitat and passage conditions, and calculating the forces that are exerted on streambanks and channel bottoms by water movement. All of this information can be helpful to land managers when it comes to making informed decisions.

Monitoring ecological conditions of the Napa River through restoration of the Rutherford Reach

Before restoration of the Napa River through Rutherford came to fruition in summer 2009, a team of dedicated staff and consultants from **Napa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District** (Flood District) and RCD began monitoring pre-project ecological conditions of the 4 ½ mile reach of the Napa River that will be restored to prevent excessive bed and bank erosion and to provide improved habitat conditions. Detailed information about channel shape, gravel composition, and vegetation was gathered to provide a baseline so that improvements and ecological changes could be monitored and documented over time and so that maintenance needs could be identified and addressed. The monitoring team is comprised of the RCD’s Sr. Biologist and Hydrologist, an RCD consulting geomorphologist, and the Flood District’s Resources Specialist. This team of four braves thorny blackberry bushes, slippery slopes, and chilly water on a regular basis to ensure that the project is adaptively managed over time to provide the intended environmental benefits. Ongoing project implementation, monitoring, and maintenance of the Rutherford Reach project, which will take two to three years to implement and will require on-going monitoring and maintenance, would not be possible without the partnerships that have been built between **private landowners, the Rutherford Dust Society, the Flood District, RCD, several private consultant groups, and many State and Federal funding agencies.** Landowners initiated the project concept in 2002 and have supported the project all along by attending meetings, financing assessment and monitoring through self-imposed fees, and in many cases giving up valuable vineyard land to allow the Napa River space to flow and meander.



Accomplishments

A History of Helping Growers Conserve Resources and Protect Water Quality in Napa County

Providing technical assistance and perspective regarding vineyard development and management

Throughout the 1970's and 80's, demand for Napa wines increased as Napa Valley's reputation as a world-class winegrowing region continued to grow. The eventual result was extensive vineyard planting on the valley floor. This phenomenon, together with the realization that many of the world's very finest wines are grown in hillside vineyards, began to push more new vineyard developments into the steeper hillsides surrounding the valley proper.

Unfortunately, much of this early hillside development pressure was brought to bear using viticultural techniques appropriate to flatland farming, which are woefully inadequate to prevent excessive soil loss (and sediment-induced water quality impairment) from these steeper, more erosive sites. Progressive growers understood the hazards and sought more appropriate practices through technical assistance from the RCD and the local USDA/Soil

Conservation Service (now known as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)). Other vineyard developers continued the use of flatland practices and public concerns over environmental damage intensified. Grumbling turned to outrage in 1989, in the wake of a catastrophic September storm that delivered so much silt from a new vineyard clearing to a local municipal water storage reservoir, that the filtration system was overcome. Regulation of vineyard planting was needed, was imminent and was ultimately instituted in 1991 as Ordinance 991, now referred to as "the Conservation Regulations," or "ConRegs."

By design, the RCD has a technical assistance and education role in the ConRegs. The RCD's role as educators—of both the grower and regulatory communities—is paramount. The RCD knows that the growers and their consultants need to understand the regulations, their rationale and the path to compliance, and that the regulatory agencies need to understand the perspective of the grower community they regulate: its processes, cycles, imperatives, and constraints. The

Pre-ConRegs: 45% slope, ripped in February, no protection from erosion



Post-ConRegs: gentler slope, attention to drainage, erosion protection in place before the rainy season



regulations themselves must be flexible enough to adapt to the changing environment and *its* constraints, as well as the opportunities created by evolving technologies.

Implementation of the ConRegs, including protective practices during vineyard development and establishment, coupled with winterization practices, works to significantly reduce the transport of sediment to local water ways. Soil loss modeling corroborates what we know, that water quality today is better than it would have been without the ConRegs.

However, time does not stand still and implementation of the ConRegs has undergone a number of significant changes over the years, primarily due to lawsuits and new requirements from State and Federal regulatory agencies which are responsible for protecting endangered species and water quality. The most important of these changes has been the application of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to the Erosion Control Plan review and approval process. With the application of CEQA, many vineyard development projects must assess, address, and mitigate a litany of potential environmental impacts. Often times specialists in biology, archeology, hydrology, traffic analysis, dust and noise management and many other

disciplines are needed to satisfy the requirements of CEQA. Erosion control is no longer enough.

The challenge (among others) for vineyard planners, for the RCD, and for Napa County, is that the CEQA standards require more, and more rigorous, soil loss and hydrologic modeling to correctly and defensibly evaluate soil loss, sediment delivery, and runoff, under both historical and prospective conditions. The technical challenges for all involved are enormous.

The ConRegs have undoubtedly become more onerous and inclusive than originally anticipated. However, the RCD, on behalf of growers and Napa County, remains dedicated to evaluating the technical merits of each erosion control plan. We also remain dedicated to understanding the changing regulatory climate, to communicating that change to growers, to promoting reasonable standards by which to evaluate vineyard developments, to providing the growers' perspective to the County, and other regulatory agencies with which we work, and to conserving Napa County's natural resources within a landscape of productive agriculture, growing cities, and wild land.

Post-ConRegs: cover crops reduce sheet and rill erosion and protect water quality



Post-ConRegs: dispersion of runoff to avoid concentrated flow



Accomplishments



Developing Partnerships to Improve Watershed Conditions

Demonstrating habitat creation at RCD's Huichica Creek Vineyard

The RCD's demonstration vineyard saw quite a bit of action in 2009. In addition to growing chardonnay and pinot noir for premium wine production, the vineyard is providing habitat for ground nesting birds and supporting owls, raptors and other birds. The habitat element of the demonstration vineyard was expanded this year thanks to the **Carneros Land Stewardship Foundation**, which funded the purchase of creeping wild rye, and with thanks to students from **Napa High**, volunteer mentors, and **RCD staff volunteers**, who provided many hours of planting labor and helped to maintain nearby owl boxes. Thanks to the collective efforts, in spring 2009 we added an additional 1/2 acre of habitat for ground nesting birds and it should be suitable for habitation by nesting season 2010.

Congregation Beth Shalom followed-up shortly thereafter to add native trees and shrubs to the vineyard. Their efforts were spearheaded by **Jill Matthiasson** who was looking for a hands-on opportunity for her congregation to celebrate Tu B'shvat (Year of the Trees). Tu B'shvat is a special day for those of the Jewish faith to celebrate new life and renewal. Approximately 50 congregants, led by Jill Matthiasson and **Rabbi Oren Postrel**, and instructed by NRCS District Conservationist, **Phill Blake**, planted valley oaks and other native trees and shrubs at the vineyard. The trees and shrubs, donated by **Main Street Trees** in Napa, enhance biodiversity in the vineyard and improve habitat conditions for birds such as quail and pheasant. Our thanks go out to everyone who helped with these projects and also to **Nissen Vineyard Management**, who helped prepare the planting sites and who provides on-going vineyard management services to ensure that our vines are well taken care of.

Engaging High School Students in Restoration Projects

SLEWS came to Napa County in 2009 and RCD is proud to help coordinate this program for high school students and landowners interested in restoration and environmental studies. SLEWS is a program developed and managed by **Center for Land-Based Learning**, a non-profit organization based in Yolo County, and

implemented in partnership with private landowners, local high schools, funding organizations, volunteer mentors, and resource agencies. Through this program participating high schools commit to a year-long restoration project that evolves from season to season. In 2009 students from Napa and Vintage High participated in the program and participated in removing invasive vegetation, planting native vegetation, cleaning bird nesting boxes, installing irrigation equipment, harvesting willows for stream bank plantings, and water quality monitoring. Projects were implemented along Dry and Carneros Creeks and at the RCD Demonstration Vineyard. Funding for the SLEWS program for 2009 and 2010 is provided by an **anonymous donor** in the Napa Valley.

Giving Dry Creek more room to move

The condition along Dry Creek is similar to many other tributary streams in Napa County. The channel is incised (lowered) and the creek banks are vertical, eroding, and sometimes inundated with non-native invasive plant species. This trend of “channel incision” and “bank erosion” threatens property and causes habitat degradation. In an effort to reverse the trend and improve habitat, **Trefethen Family Vineyards** and **Page Nord Vineyards** partnered with the RCD and **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** to lay the banks of the creek back to a more gentle slope, thereby providing the creek with more room, which in turn will reduce the overall force that the creek exerts on its bed and banks and hence reduce pressure on the channel. The freshly formed creek bank was covered with a planting of live willow brush mattress that will provide root structure, bank stability, wildlife habitat, and shading. The project was managed by the RCD, designed by NRCS, carried out by **Prunusky Chatham, Inc.** and the **California Conservation Corps**, funded by the **California Department of Fish and Game** and the **Napa County Wildlife Conservation Commission**, and made possible by the support of Trefethen Family Vineyards and Page Nord Vineyards. It is another example of **partnerships at work to improve watershed conditions**.

Before: May 23, 2008



During: Sept. 29, 2008

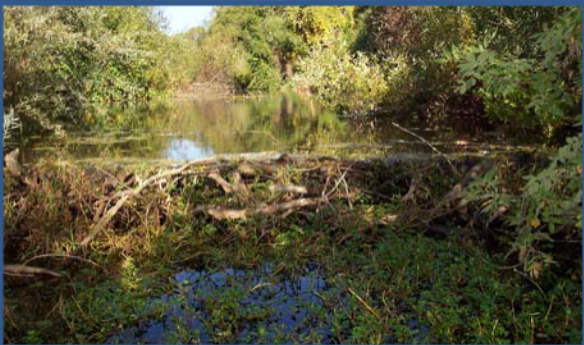


After: October 6, 2008



Partnerships & Funding

Implementation of resource conservation and stewardship requires strong and trusting partnerships among conservation and research organizations, community and interest groups, individual landowners and managers, private industry, and government agencies. The RCD values all of its partners who help create meaningful opportunities for natural resource conservation and voluntary stewardship of natural resources.



2008/09 Funding Agencies & Organizations

Bay-Delta Authority
California Coastal Conservancy
CA Department of Conservation
CA Department of Fish and Game
CA Department of Water
Resources
California Land Stewardship
Institute
CA State Water Board
Carneros Land Stewardship
Foundation
Carneros Wine Alliance
City of Napa
Center for Land Based Learning
Friends of the Napa River
The Gasser Foundation
Laurel Marcus & Associates
Movie Night 2009 Participants
Napa County Conservation,
Development & Planning Dept.
Napa County Department of
Environmental Management
Napa County Department of Public

Works
Napa County Flood Control &
Water Conservation District
Napa County Stormwater
Pollution Prevention Program
Napa County Wildlife Conservation
Commission
Napa River Steelhead
Napa Sanitation District
Napa Sustainable Winegrowing
Group Members
North Bay Watershed Association
Oakley Water Strategies
Pacific States Marine Fisheries
Commission
Putah Creek Watershed Group
Rutherford Reach Landowners
Salmon Run 2009 Participants
San Francisco Estuary Institute
Sonoma Ecology Center
US Environmental Protection
Agency
USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service

Financial Report

Statement of Net Assets

ASSETS

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| Cash and cash equivalents..... | \$507,686 |
| Due from other governments..... | 237,301 |
| Other receivables..... | 40,968 |
| Prepaid expenses..... | 4,877 |
| Land..... | 350,100 |
| Other capital assets..... | 44,518 |
| TOTAL ASSETS..... | \$1,185,450 |

LIABILITIES

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Accounts payable..... | \$62,725 |
| Payroll wages payable..... | 22,676 |
| Deferred revenue..... | 34,903 |
| Non-current liabilities..... | 83,475 |
| TOTAL LIABILITIES..... | \$203,806 |

NET ASSETS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| Investment in capital assets..... | \$329,158 |
| Unrestricted..... | 652,486 |
| TOTAL NET ASSETS..... | \$981,644 |

Statement of Activities

REVENUES

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| State and Local Agencies..... | \$834,767 |
| Federal Agencies..... | 33,505 |
| Huichica Creek Vineyard..... | 82,189 |
| Taxes..... | 249,433 |
| Use of money..... | 12,380 |
| Donations..... | 15,000 |
| Fundraising, net..... | 23,144 |
| Miscellaneous..... | 12,240 |
| TOTAL REVENUES..... | \$1,262,658 |

EXPENSES

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| Salaries and benefits..... | \$777,184 |
| Office expenses (rent, insurance, materials equipment, maintenance, etc.)..... | 62,624 |
| Staff development (training, memberships, staff education, etc.)..... | 18,214 |
| Professional services (project related services, legal counsel, auditing service, human resources, etc.)..... | 386,672 |
| TOTAL EXPENSES..... | \$1,244,674 |

| | |
|---------------------------|----------|
| Change in net assets..... | \$17,984 |
|---------------------------|----------|

Based on audited figures for FY 2008-09. Copies of all financial documents are available at the RCD office.





Napa County Resource Conservation District
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www.naparcd.org

*Promoting responsible watershed management through voluntary
stewardship and technical assistance since 1945.*