



Napa County Resource Conservation District
Annual Report 2022-2023







Dedicated To Our Mission Since 1945



Our Mission

The Napa County Resource Conservation District serves to support everyone in Napa County to conserve, protect, and restore natural resources and sustainably manage working lands.

Our Story

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. A lot has changed over the past 79 years, and so have we. As natural resource issues change, we continue to evolve.

Today, we help our community achieve shared goals like climate resiliency, water security, thriving ecosystems, and environmental literacy. We do this by providing technical assistance, environmental monitoring, education, collaboration, and funding assistance on issues related to forest health, watershed health, and regenerative agriculture.

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



161 land stewards received free technical assistance to improve water use efficiency, carbon sequestration and forest health on their properties



2,587 students increased their awareness of nature, conservation actions, and leadership skills



3,320 hours of volunteer service coordinated to plant trees, remove trash, and restore wildlife habitat



127 acres of forest received treatments to enhance forest health and fire resiliency in partnership with land managers

Letter from Napa RCD

Dear Friends,

We welcome and thank you as volunteers, donors, and supporters of Napa RCD! We continue to grow our impact for students, farmworkers, landowners, and partners---to protect and enhance our soil, water, forests, wildlife, and communities in Napa County.

Please allow me to share my personal experience with Napa RCD and why I am so passionate about our mission and value. I joined the Board of Napa RCD in 2021 as an Associate Director after retiring from corporate America. My desire was to serve my community and help support its wonderful natural resources. I expected Napa RCD to be a good organization, but I have been amazed by the people, programs, and partnerships of Napa RCD! This is an organization deeply committed to the health of our county's natural resources and its human and wild inhabitants.

Napa RCD is a trusted broker, following the science and working collaboratively with local residents and partner organizations. Our staff are true technical experts, yet are committed to solving practical environmental problems. This includes areas as diverse as carbon farming and regenerative soil practices, pollinator and fish habitat, forest health, water conservation, and youth education. We are small but mighty, focused on collaboration and results.

As we go forward, we are committed to even greater community engagement and environmental leadership. We will support the Napa County Regional Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, and recently hired a second Community Engagement Project Manager to allow us to scale up our work in the community. Our volunteer and youth education ranks continue to grow quickly, with thousands of participants in 2023. I hope you enjoy reading our Annual Report, and thank you deeply for your support of Napa RCD and the environmental health of Napa County.

Dr. Bruce Barge

Napa RCD Board President



Community Engagement

Highlights

- 2,500 youth across Napa County participated in our programs, which support students in taking collective actions that have positive impact and create a sense of connection to their local environment
- 800+ volunteers removed 5,800+ pounds of trash from the Napa River and its tributaries

Growing Service-Learning Opportunities in Our Community

Napa RCD launched our Teen Conservation Internship Program and oversaw 3-month-long, paid internships with four high school students this year. The internships were designed to give high school-aged youth a chance to develop job skills and gain professional experience related to environmental or service careers.

Prior to formalizing the Internship Program, Napa RCD hosted one or more high school volunteer interns each year. Internship projects were developed according to staff capacity and need, and included producing oak and fish education cards, taking care of recently planted native plants, and helping to monitor fish in the Napa River.



Solis Anguiano and Xiara Diaz

We developed the Internship Program in response to a growing demand from students, and offered stipends to make it accessible to teens from all walks of life.

Today, the Internship Program supports Napa RCD's regular volunteer events such as oak plantings, invasive plant removals, and trash cleanups. Interns gain valuable experience in digital event marketing, planning site-specific logistics, and facilitating and supervising volunteers.

Napa RCD's Teen Conservation Internship Program is supported by Friends of the Napa River, County of Napa, and California Department of Food and Agriculture.



Isabella Lopez and Liliana Karesh

"I gained confidence talking to strangers! My passion to teach and direct people helped me overcome feelings that were stopping me from speaking. I am very proud of how I was able to bring my creativity into the workplace."

Solis Anguiano, Teen Conservation Intern,
Spring 2023

Regenerative Agriculture

Highlights

- 65 land stewards worked with Napa RCD to improve carbon sequestration and water use efficiency
- 16 pollinator planting projects completed
- 300 farmworkers received Spanish-language training on soil health and irrigation efficiency

Connecting Farmworkers to Opportunities to Learn about Regenerative Agriculture

Napa RCD strives for everyone who works in the vineyard to feel empowered to enhance their stewardship of soil, water, and habitat. Our local farmworkers are one of the most important players in Napa's wine industry as they make hands-on environmental decisions on a daily basis. Investing in them is one of Napa RCD's top priorities.

Larger conferences offer a great opportunity for farmworkers to receive information in Spanish, so Napa RCD staff participate by giving presentations and building relationships with attendees. Napa RCD also sees the need for small-group, field-based trainings.



To this end, our staff began working with vineyard management companies to coordinate trainings for farmworkers related to soil health and water sustainability.

This year, Napa RCD worked closely with the Napa Valley Farmworker Foundation (NVFF) to pilot two 2-day Spanish-language courses. Our staff provided 32 farmworkers with in-depth training about assessing soil health and how to effectively manage irrigation water.

Class participants said that the information presented was very practical, and that they would use it in the vineyard immediately. Several students own farms or support farm management in Mexico and mentioned that the classes helped them think differently about farming challenges they face there. Napa RCD and NVFF are excited to take what they learned from these pilot workshops to expand Spanish-language regenerative viticulture education in the County.

Grants from California Department of Food and Agriculture provided funding for Napa RCD's participation in farmworker trainings.



Farmworkers gain hands-on experience assessing how evenly water is being applied across the vineyard.

Forest Health

Highlights

- Worked with 97 land stewards to improve forest health and fire resilience on their properties
- Kicked off the development of a Napa County Prescribed Burn Association, with the goal of getting more beneficial fire back on the ground
- Produced an Oak Planting Guide in English and Spanish to guide community members to plant and care for oaks

Partner Work Makes the Conservation Dream Work

Over the past couple of years, we have partnered with nonprofit Suscol Intertribal Council to improve forest health and wildfire resilience at their Suskol House property and support their workforce training program.

To guide the management of the forested 17-acre property, Napa RCD staff and Dogwood Springs Forestry worked with Suscol Intertribal Council to develop a Forest Management Plan. Forest Management Plans help shape a landowner's goals for their property and create a roadmap for achieving those goals grounded in the



Before treatment: dense forest with overgrown vegetation, contributing to wildfire risk.



After treatment: trees have been selectively thinned, minimizing wildfire risk and enhancing habitat; 'burn piles' have been created for next phase of treatment.

history and current state of the forest and other natural resources on the property.

Suscol Intertribal Council's primary goals include protecting Suskol House from potential wildfires and preserving culturally important species such as manzanita and gray pine for future stewardship using indigenous practices. To achieve this goal, Napa RCD hired a crew to selectively thin forested areas to reduce risk of wildfire spread and damage, improve tree health, remove invasive species, and enhance habitat for native plants and wildlife.

As part of their ongoing stewardship, Suscol Intertribal Council developed and hosted workforce development training days for young adults who learned about creating defensible space, operating tools, clearing culverts, laying drip irrigation, and learning about the cultural uses of native plants.

Our collaboration was supported through grants from the California State Coastal Conservancy, the California Department of Conservation's Regional Forest and Fire Capacity program, and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

Watershed Health

Highlights

- Completed engineering designs for fish-passage-barrier removal on Sulphur Creek that blocks steelhead and salmon from 3 miles of prime habitat
- Brought together a team of experts to accelerate removal of 35+ artificial fish passage barriers across the entire Napa River watershed

Fish Tales from 18 Years of Monitoring the Napa River

Through high flows and low, Napa RCD has been monitoring the Napa River's fish community since 2005. Sometimes our staff (and fish!) have easy years, with rains coming at the right time and in the right amounts. In other years, drought or floods make it very difficult to monitor fish.

After 18 years of consistent monitoring through snorkel surveys, counts of salmon carcasses, counts of redds (salmon nests), and a rotary screw trap (live trap that catches fish in the Spring), we have learned and documented some key characteristics of our fish community that were previously unknown:



Napa RCD collects the ear bones from dead Chinook salmon to determine where they were born.



Napa RCD performs kayak surveys to find where salmon lay their eggs.

- Over 95% of our fish are native, which is relatively rare for a California river system since most have been impacted by introduced species.
- Despite drought, fire, atmospheric rivers, and habitat degradation, our native salmonids have been able to spawn each year. Some years are limited due to adverse conditions, but there is always some level of fish reproduction.
- Napa RCD's monitoring program was the first to tag juvenile steelhead smolts and re-detect some as returning adults. We learned that our fish spend about 2 years in the ocean before returning home to the Napa River Watershed.
- Steelhead smolts found in the Napa River watershed are relatively big compared to other river systems. We do not yet know why, but we do know that bigger smolts have a higher chance of surviving their time in the ocean and returning to our river.

Long-term monitoring is important to help us understand how our fish are affected by climate change and human activity here in Napa County.

The Forecast Calls for Innovation, Partnership, and Community!

Napa RCD is excited to launch several new initiatives next year that expand our ability to help you take care of the land, water, soil, and wildlife – and each other– in Napa County.

These new projects cut across program areas to help our community adapt to climate change and build equity and inclusion around who participates in local stewardship. Here is a glimpse of what's to come:

Forest Health

Napa RCD will expand our forest health programming to urban areas, with a particular focus on improving healthy tree canopy in disadvantaged communities. We will be launching new initiatives to improve the health of our incredibly valuable urban tree canopy. We will be partnering with the cities of American Canyon, Napa, and St. Helena, American Canyon Community and Parks Foundation, and Napa Valley Vine Trail. The work will be funded by a grant from the US Forest Service.

Community Engagement

Our County is developing a Regional Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, and we will be guiding community engagement to help make sure that community members from diverse experiences and backgrounds may provide input that's incorporated into the Plan. Our community is vibrant thanks to a variety of perspectives of individuals, and our Plan will be only as strong as the representation of voices included.

Regenerative Agriculture

Irrigation evaluations have been a cornerstone service of Napa RCD that connects vineyard stewards with the specific recommendations they need to take good care of our water supply. With a new grant from California Department of Water Resources, Napa RCD will expand the number of evaluations it provides, increase Spanish-language water trainings, and partner with RCDs in neighbor Counties to launch Spanish-language trainings.

Watershed Health

Collaborating with Napa County's Groundwater Sustainability Agency will lead to meaningfully expanding our stream and fish monitoring efforts. We plan to expand our Stream Watch community science project that studies when and where streams are flowing throughout the watershed, and do more field-studies of the health of our riparian corridors, especially those that rely on groundwater to thrive.

Donor Spotlight

This year, Napa RCD is grateful to have received donations from 124 community members. Here are the stories of two community members that recently decided to include Napa RCD in their charitable giving.

Andy Beckstoffer, Founder of Beckstoffer Vineyards Steven Rasmussen, Mathematics Education Publisher turned Farmer and Vintner

What motivated you to give to Napa RCD?

AB: In the mid-1970s, I was new to farming. I remember hearing from the young viticulturalists about the danger posed by some of the chemicals being applied to vineyards. It made me realize the need to farm with softer hands, to get out of the way of nature while farming. Napa RCD helps us do this. They are scientifically-based, and simply interested in helping people and providing guidance, with no other motives. Napa RCD does the right thing and they do it the right way.

SR: For as long as I can remember, stewarding the land has been a focus for me and my family. We are also passionate about education and its potential to be life-changing for people. As we acquired our vineyard property near Calistoga, those two passions became one. We became focused on finding ways for our community to access our property for education and connection to the land. When I first came to work with Napa RCD on soil health and irrigation in our vineyard, I thought of them as a resource. But as I learned more about them, I realized they could be my partner and help me achieve my goal of fieldtrips for local youth on my property.



How do you recommend others get involved in supporting the mission of Napa RCD and advancing conservation in Napa County?

AB: Find ways to practice conservation and preservation everyday, because that is Napa RCD's goal. Napa RCD should do more marketing of its opportunities because if more people knew about them, they would want to join the mission. It's part of our DNA here, but people just need more opportunities to get involved.

SR: Napa RCD has so much great technical information about soils, irrigation, and forests, but also knows how to work with kids and teachers outdoors. I cannot say enough good things about working with their staff. They are focused and have strong partnerships. You can feel confident in them as a resource or as a partner.



"When I first came to work with Napa RCD, I thought of them as a resource. But as I learned more about them, I realized they could be a partner to help me achieve my goals" **Steven Rasmussen**

Donor Circle



Thank you to the individuals and businesses who donated over the past year!

With your support we help wildlife and farms thrive, ensure clean and reliable water, and combat climate change.

More than 80% of our budget comes from grants and contracts. Donations are leveraged at about a 23:1 ratio, making a very effective use of your charitable dollars.

Donations of \$50,000+

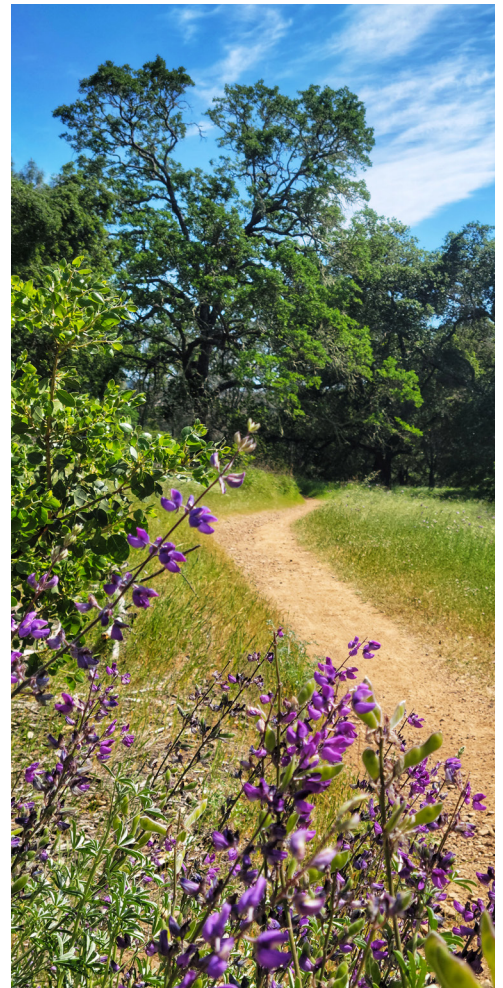
- Andy Beckstoffer
- Steven Rasmussen & Felicia Woytak

Donations of \$5,000+

- Susan Burchill

Donations of \$1,000 - \$4,999

- Guy & Tracy Jacquier
- Isabella & Launce Gamble
- Basset Fund
- Bryant Vineyards
- Providence Health



5 Reasons to Invest in Conservation

Do you want to protect water quality, restore fish and wildlife habitat, conserve water resources and fight drought, sustain agriculture, work to reverse climate change, and help our communities adapt to a changing climate? Then consider an investment in Napa RCD!

Established in response to the social, environmental, and economic struggles of the Dust Bowl Era, Napa RCD has been a trusted focal point for conservation in Napa County for 79 years. We provide comprehensive, integrated services addressing wildlife, water, climate, forestry, and agriculture – but we're only successful because individuals and businesses are willing to donate their money, time, or talent.

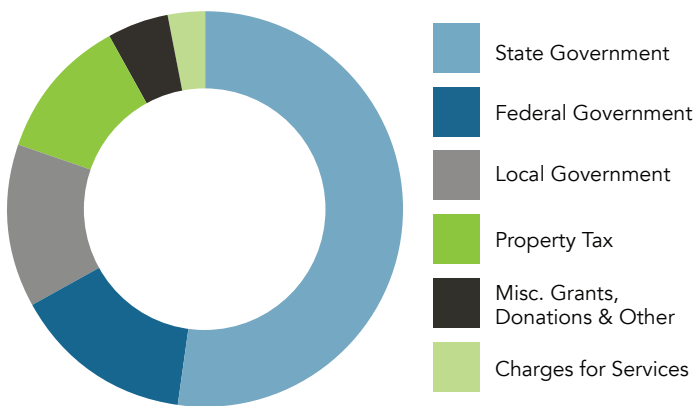
Here are five reasons to invest in Napa RCD:

- 1. Napa RCD protects and restores key ecosystems.** We connect people to the tools and information they need to be excellent stewards of natural resources. As local, trusted partners, we are responsive solely to our community's specific needs and interests.
- 2. Napa RCD supports sustainable agriculture and healthy forests.** Stewards of our farms and forests work closely with Napa RCD to plan, design, implement, and monitor climate-smart conservation practices that build soil health and enhance the resilience of our vulnerable lands.
- 3. Napa RCD fosters community connections to nature.** We work with a broad range of schools and community organizations to connect people with natural ecosystems. Volunteer workdays are one example of how Napa RCD engages families and young people in their efforts to be good stewards of our resources.
- 4. Napa RCD expands educational opportunities.** We are the go-to expert on local conservation information. Examples of the expertise you might find at Napa RCD include soil and water conservation specialists, biologists, environmental educators, and more!
- 5. Napa RCD is deeply rooted in local communities.** Spanning many generations, we have maintained deep connections while evolving with the changing needs of our diverse communities.

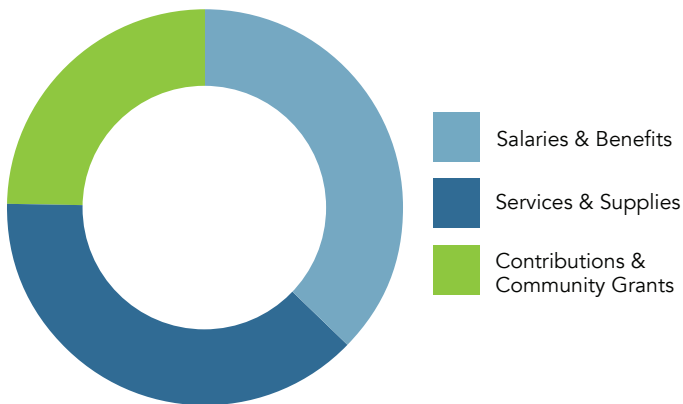
Fiscal Year Financials

Napa RCD is a special district of the State of California, a form of local government created by the community to help meet the need for voluntary resource conservation.

As a trusted steward of public and private funds, Napa RCD is subject to transparency and accountability laws that require public meetings, open records, annual audits, and financial reporting. Presented below are our revenues and expenses for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023.



Revenues		
State Government	\$2,021,168	52.4%
Federal Government	\$565,072	14.7%
Local Government	\$507,630	13.2%
Property Tax	\$449,169	11.7%
Misc. Grants, Donations & Other	\$197,752	5.1%
Charges for Services	\$112,803	2.9%
Total Revenues*	\$3,853,594	



Expenses		
Salaries & Benefits	\$1,464,272	37.4%
Services & Supplies	\$1,489,014	38.0%
Contributions & Community Grants**	\$961,249	24.6%
Total Expenses	\$3,914,535	

* Does not include receivables deposited after the fiscal audit was completed.

** Napa RCD administers grants that include other governments or nonprofit organizations, and passes money on to them to do important work.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for all of the partners in conservation with whom we work, including community members; local, state, and federal agencies; community organizations; foundations; and more. Our work is a team effort, and we are honored to work together to help the land, water, wildlife, and communities of Napa County thrive.

Board of Directors

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Alex Wilbanks, Forestry Project Manager

USDA-NRCS Staff

Evelyn Denzin, District Conservationist
Chip Bouril, Soil Conservationist
Frank Bradley, Biologist
Erika Valek, Soil Conservationist

Photo Credits

Andrew Lincoln
Napa RCD Staff and Volunteers

In loving memory of Anna Marie Mattinson, 1959-2023

Connect with Us



Board of Directors Meetings

Second Thursday of every month

8:00 AM at the NVT, 625 Burnell St., Napa
(unless otherwise posted)

Meetings are open to the public

Agendas and minutes may be found online

Contact Information


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