



Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District (GCRCD)

2019-2024 Long Range Plan

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District's ("District") Long Range Plan is to describe the District, identify its priority natural resource issues, establish long-range district goals, and develop a framework to identify priorities for annual district activities. The long range plan also serves as a method of providing information to government agencies, community-based organizations, watershed stakeholders and individual members of the public regarding District programs and goals.

The 2019-2024 Long Range Plan establishes the areas of focus for the District using the Board's knowledge and understanding of current and forecasted circumstances, and lists goals and strategies for addressing these priority areas. The Board then develops an annual work plan each year listing scheduled and planned activities to guide implementation of the strategies during the course of each fiscal year.

ABOUT GCRCD

Mission

The District's mission is to provide education and technical assistance to constituents and watershed stakeholders to sustainably manage soil, water and wildlife with the best available science.

Organization

The District is a non-regulatory independent special district of the state of California dedicated to the conservation of natural resources within Santa Clara County. The District is regulated by Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code, and is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. State law provides for the Board of Directors to be elected to 4-year terms, but as an alternative to the election of directors, the board of directors may, by a resolution presented to the board of supervisors of the principal county, request the board of supervisors to appoint directors.¹ On June 1, 2004, in response to increasing County charges to the District for biennial elections, the District's Board of Directors passed Resolution 2-4-requesting that the Santa Clara Board of Supervisors make appointments to the Board of Directors in lieu of an election². The District also has volunteer associate directors who provide additional expertise to the Board, including but not limited to the areas of: natural resources conservation and management; agricultural and grazing management

¹ California Public Resources Code Section 9314(b)(1)

² County of Santa Clara Maddy Report (Local Appointments List)

practices; environmental health; land use; engineering; physical and life sciences; public outreach and education; and local government policy and procedures.

California's resource conservation districts (RCDs) are leaders in locally-led conservation work throughout the State. RCDs implement on-the-ground projects, provide technical assistance, and help educate the public to improve their local communities. They have a historic relationship of collaboration and partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), formerly known as the federal Soil Conservation Service.

History

The District is one of two resource conservation districts in Santa Clara County, the other being Loma Prieta RCD, located in south county. The District's has its roots in two of the county's original conservation districts, the Black Mountain Soil Conservation District and the Evergreen Soil Conservation District.

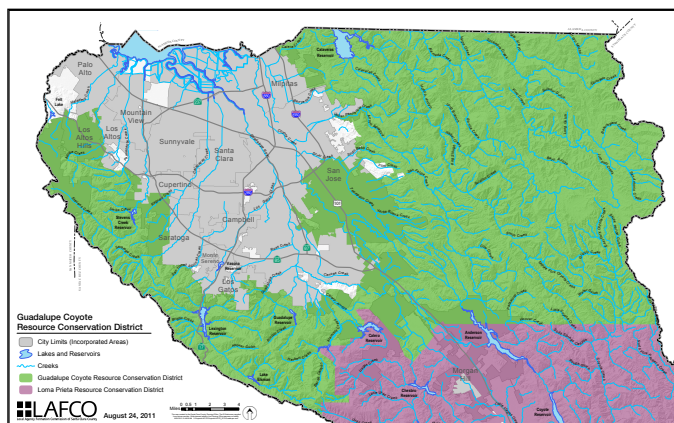
The Black Mountain Soil Conservation District was organized in 1943 to cover some 5,500 acres of land in the Calabazas Watershed on the west side of Santa Clara Valley. It later expanded to cover most of the hilly land on the west side of the valley from the San Mateo County line to Loma Prieta Mountain and the boundary of the Loma Prieta Soil Conservation District. Most urban lands at the time, as well as the lands of Stanford University, were excluded from the District.

The Evergreen Soils Conservation District was formed in 1944 and originally covered about 10,000 acres on the east side of the Santa Clara Valley, largely the Silver Creek Watershed. It later expanded to include most of the land on the east side of the Santa Clara Valley, largely the Coyote Creek Watershed from Morgan Hill to the Alameda County line, excluding the then urban city lands, although city expansions have meant some urban city lands now lie with District limits. In 1972, the Evergreen Soil Conservation District changed its name to the Evergreen Resource Conservation District.

In 1977, the Black Mountain Soils Conservation District merged with the Evergreen Resource Conservation District, keeping the Evergreen name until 1995. At the time, the District changed its name to more closely identify with the two largest watersheds in the District.

District Profile

The District encompasses approximately 583 square miles and has an estimated service population of 300,577. The District covers a large portion of the northwestern, northeastern and central portions of the County, including urbanized areas within the City of San Jose and portions of the historic Coyote Valley. It includes most of the hilly and mountainous land surrounding the Santa Clara Valley, north of Morgan Hill,



as well as lands from the Santa Cruz County line on the southwest to the Stanislaus County line in the east, and from the San Mateo and Alameda County lines in the north to the Almaden, Calero and Anderson Reservoirs on the south side. Great diversities of climate, vegetation, topography, geology, soils, population density and land use lie within the area. The district, for ease of description, may be divided into three sections: the Santa Cruz Mountains on the southwest, the Santa Clara Valley in the center and the Diablo Mountain Range to the northeast.

The District lies within the Santa Clara Basin, which encompasses the extreme South Bay (south of the Dumbarton Bridge) and those areas of Santa Clara County that drain to the South Bay, including the eastern slope of the Santa Cruz Mountains, the Santa Clara ("Silicon") Valley, and the western slope of the Diablo Range. Within Santa Clara County, the Basin consists of eleven watersheds including the Coyote Creek watershed on the east side of the valley, the Guadalupe River watershed which drains the south-central portion of the valley, the southern half of the San Francisquito Creek watershed on the western boundary of the Basin, a series of small, relatively urbanized watersheds that drain the remainder of the west side of the valley, and the Baylands.³ The District often collaborates and partners with public agencies and community organizations throughout the Basin on projects and programs impacting its watersheds.

Santa Clara County has a long history of agriculture, and the Santa Clara Valley was once known as the "Valley of Heart's Delight". The USDA Census of Agriculture County Profile Report (2017) indicated there are 890 farms in Santa Clara County on 288,084 acres. The 2018 Santa Clara County Agricultural Commissioner's Crop Report indicated the gross value of the County's agricultural production was \$295,837,000, with the top five crops being mushrooms, nursery crops, lettuce crops, bell peppers, and wine grapes, with a total of 21 different agricultural commodities grown in Santa Clara County exceeded \$1,000,000 in crop value. Agricultural crops are not broken down by resource conservation district boundaries, but the District is aware of approximately 100 agricultural producers that operate within its boundaries⁴.

Santa Clara County is one of the wealthiest regions in California. Santa Clara County is one of the wealthiest regions in California, with the per capita income of at \$126,606, and a median property value of \$1.1 million; the poverty rate is at 8.64% of the total population. The County is home to a diverse population of 1.94 million people (see Figure 1). The most common foreign languages spoken in the County are Spanish (320,676 speakers), Chinese (Incl. Mandarin, Cantonese) (170,758 speakers), and Vietnamese (117,542 speakers). Median age is 37.2 years.⁵

Legal Authorities

Resource conservation districts were created by the California Legislature "for the purposes of soil and water conservation, the control of runoff, the prevention and control of soil erosion, and erosion stabilization, including, but not limited to, these purposes in open areas, agricultural areas, urban development, wildlife areas, recreational developments, watershed management, the protection of water quality and water reclamation, the

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https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay/water_issues/programs/watershed/WMI/WMI_Sec_3/3_8.pdf

⁴ As indicated by Santa Clara County pesticides permits issued within the District.

⁵ Data USA; <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/santa-clara-county-ca/#about>

development of storage and distribution of water, and the treatment of each acre of land according to its needs.”⁶

Furthermore, State law authorizes resource conservation districts “to:

- 1) ensure consistency with the authorities and policies of the United States, this state, counties, cities, public districts, other resource conservation districts, persons, associations, and corporations.
- 2) With the consent of the owner, construct on privately or publicly owned lands any necessary works for the prevention and control of soil erosion and erosion stabilization.
- 3) Facilitate coordinated resource management efforts for watershed restoration and enhancement.⁷

In furtherance of its mission, the Board is empowered to conduct surveys, investigations, and research relating to the conservation of resources and the preventive and control measures and works of improvement needed, and to publish or otherwise disseminate the results.

Services Provided:

The District provides services to private landowners, public agencies, community organizations and watershed stakeholders. Services focus on the conservation of resources by promoting sustainable agriculture and proper range land management practices, supporting well-defined urban boundaries for the preservation of open space and farmlands, and promoting proper watershed, wetlands and riparian corridor management.

Partnerships

The District actively seeks to develop collaborative partnerships and strengthen its working relationships with other natural resource conservation organizations in order to accomplish its mission, goals and strategies; to broaden its ability to address its priority areas of focus; and to leverage available community resources.

AREAS OF STRATEGIC FOCUS

A. Agricultural Lands

Goal:

Preserve agricultural lands by providing producers and land managers with access to best management practices and technical assistance so they may maintain economically viable enterprises while preserving soil health, enhancing crop diversity, and protecting natural resources.

Strategies:

- Provide education and technical assistance to agricultural producers to encourage and enable them to develop and implement conservation plans using NRCS conservation practices.
- Provide educational resources to those living and working in urban areas regarding the value of agriculture in contributing to local economies and maintaining healthy ecosystems.

⁶ California Public Resources Code Section 9001(a)(2)

- Identify opportunities for agricultural producers to develop and implement carbon farm plans.
- Provide a venue for agricultural producers and their representative associations to provide input to on natural resource concerns and strategies.
- Partner with other involved agencies on planning and implementation activities identified in the Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan.
- Identify potential new market opportunities to better connect agricultural producers to consumers.
- Work with CDFW, CDFA, CALFIRE, UCCE and other state, regional and local agencies to address natural resource issues relevant to agricultural producers, including soil health, vegetation management, crop diversity and water quality.
- Develop a permit coordination program to assist agricultural producers with project implementation.

B. Biodiversity

Goal:

Promote biodiversity through the conservation and protection of natural habitats and ecosystems that provide a variety of ecosystem services, such as protection of water resources, maintenance of soil health, appropriate nutrient storage, contributions to climate stability, and improved resiliency after natural disasters.

Strategies:

- Provide education and technical assistance to watershed stakeholders to maintain healthy and sustainable native plant and wildlife populations.
- Promote the ecosystem service benefits to working landscapes available to producers through NRCS conservation practices, the CDFA Healthy Soils Program and the Bay Area Regional Carbon Farming Hub.
- Encourage the installation of green stormwater infrastructure and the maintenance of natural habitat areas within urban areas.
- Collaborate with regional partners to develop or improve wildlife linkages and corridors.
- Provide a clearinghouse of online resources to assist community members with maintaining and improving beneficial bird and bee habitats.
- Collaborate with partners in the Santa Clara County Weed Management Area to provide outreach and education on the importance of removing or controlling invasive species.

C. Water Quality

Goal:

Contribute to improvements in water quality available for the benefit of agricultural production, wildlife, and aquatic habitat within District watersheds.

Strategies:

- Provide educational outreach and technical assistance to agricultural producers and land managers on water resource issues impacting soil health, plant communities, and wildlife habitats.
- Provide technical assistance and financial support to projects affecting District watersheds to improve water quality and reduce erosion and sedimentation.
- Seek opportunities to collaborate on green stormwater infrastructure projects and initiatives.

- Encourage producers and communities to develop and implement practices that benefit soil and water resources.
- Collaborate with government entities, public land managers, community organizations, homeowners' associations and other watershed stakeholders to maintain and improve working landscapes and soil health to minimize erosion and sedimentation.
- Provide comments and participate in stakeholder groups addressing existing and proposed programs, projects and designation of land uses that impact District watersheds.

D. Fire Risk

Goal:

Reduce fire risk and natural resource impacts to communities located within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) through rural road, vegetation management, and fuel load reduction programs and projects.

Strategies:

- Seek funding for projects identified in the Santa Clara County Community Wildlife Protection Plan (CWPP).
- Promote the value of using best management practices for rangeland management as a tool for reducing fire risk to agricultural producers and neighboring communities.
- Expand scope of the District's Rural Road program.
- Provide comments and participate in stakeholder groups addressing fire risk.

E. Climate Change

Goal:

Contribute to regional climate change efforts by raising public awareness of the need for individual action, while recognizing and addressing the differences in capacity of individual communities and populations to respond to requests for action.

Strategies:

- When developing District programs and projects, consider both the environmental and socio-economic impacts of climate change, and work to develop mitigations that accommodate the capacity of the target populations.
- Add consideration of climate change impact as a criteria when considering applications to the District's Community Grant Program.
- Promote carbon sequestration through tree planting and re-oaking projects.
- Provide public outreach and education on the potential impact of climate change on local wildlife.
- Include climate change impacts and potential adaptations when submitting official comments on programs, projects and land use designations impacting District watersheds.

F. Public Engagement

Goal:

Ensure the public is aware of the role watersheds play in maintaining a healthy and resilient community, and the personal importance of preserving agricultural lands and healthy ecosystems.

Strategies:

- Seek research and grant administration opportunities to expand the knowledge base within the Santa Clara Basin.
- Expand existing outreach and education programs to homeowner associations, community organizations, and educational institutions.
- Ensure programs and projects provide specific outreach to BIPOC communities and other traditionally-underserved populations.
- Make presentations regarding the District’s mission, goals and programs to other government entities and regional organizations.
- Produce outreach materials that can be distributed at events and workshops.
- Develop a backyard conservation program to provide education and technical assistance to landowners living on small acreages.
- Consider ways to accommodate differences in community cultures and languages when developing website content.

G. District Operations

Goal:

Build and maintain organizational capacity and financial viability to accommodate District mission and goals.

Strategies:

- Seek partnerships and collaborations that will allow the District to leverage available funding to expand scope of projects and programs.
- Add program support staff to allow for expansion of technical assistance and public outreach programs.
- Develop and implement a fee-for-service program that can be offered to agricultural producers, government entities, and other watershed stakeholders to offset costs of providing technical assistance.
- Plan for “shovel-ready” projects and programs so as to be prepared for grant opportunities as they arise.
- Utilize existing MOUs with neighboring RCDs for staff support needed to expand scope of projects and programs.

Acronyms Often Used in District Strategic Planning Documents

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| ACRCD | Alameda County RCD |
| AWP | Annual work plan |
| CAL FIRE | California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection |
| CCI | Carbon Cycle Institute |
| CDFW | California Department of Fish and Wildlife |
| CNPS | California Native Plant Society |
| CWIWG | Coyote Watershed Integrated Working Group |
| CWPP | Community Wildfire Protection Plan |
| EQIP | Environmental Quality Incentives Program (NRCS) |
| FERC | Federal Energy Regulatory Commission |
| GBACH | Greater Bay Area Carbon Farming Hub |
| GCRCD | Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District |
| GWIWG | Guadalupe Watershed Integrated Working Group |
| LPRCD | Loma Prieta Resource Conservation District |

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| LRP | Long range plan |
| LWG | Local Work Group |
| MOA | Memorandum of Agreement |
| MOU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| MROSD | Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District |
| NCSAF | Northern California Society of American Foresters |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| NMFS | National Marine Fisheries Service |
| NRCS | Natural Resources Conservation Service |
| PG&E | Pacific Gas & Electric |
| RCDSC | RCD Santa Cruz |
| RWQCB | Regional Water Quality Control Board |
| SCC | Santa Clara County |
| SCCFSC | Santa Clara County FireSafe Council |
| SCMSN | Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network |
| SCVHA | Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency |
| SCVWD | Santa Clara Valley Water District (now VW) |
| SFBRWQCB | San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board |
| SFPUC | San Francisco Public Utility Commission |
| SMRCD | San Mateo RCD |
| SSCCFD | South Santa Clara County Fire District |
| UCCE | University of California Cooperative Extension |
| USDA | United States Department of Agriculture |
| VW | Valley Water (formerly SCVWD) |
| WMA | Weed Management Area |
| WMI | Watershed Management Initiative |