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Santa Cruz County is experiencing a fourth year of drought and I can’t help but wonder - is this the new normal? Climate models and several local studies have predicted that a changing climate could lead to a compressed rainfall season with larger, more intense storms followed by long dry periods. Obviously, such a scenario suggests significant implications for the natural resources of Santa Cruz County and provides all the more impetus for the important work that we do here at the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (RCD).

Chris Coburn joins RCD staff, board members, and Watershed Steward Programs interns at the annual RCD board tour highlighting new projects.

While I had a fairly good understanding of how and what the RCD did before I arrived, I am truly awed and inspired after seeing staff in action firsthand. The RCD is a non-regulatory special district with a mission to help people voluntarily protect, conserve and restore natural resources through information, education and technical assistance programs. The RCD receives a small amount of base funding from the County each year, but the majority of our revenue comes from grants. Grant funding supports discrete project implementation, but it does not fund day to day operations and expenses. Despite this challenging structure, the RCD is able to leverage funds through effective partnerships and innovative programs, several of which are highlighted in this report.

County that are showing great success. On the other side of the County, the RCD has worked in collaboration with Swanton Pacific Ranch / Cal Poly to install a number of in stream wood structures along Scotts Creek to provide habitat for endangered coho and steelhead. Later this year, we look to continue similar recovery efforts along Soquel Creek, Larkin Valley and along San Vicente Creek.

Even before the drought occurred, all of the County’s groundwater aquifers were stressed and in a state of overdraft, conditions that will only get worse if the climate change predictions become reality. Responding to this concern, the RCD is collaborating with a team from UCSC, led by Dr. Andy Fisher, to conduct a county-wide effort to map where the best opportunities are to capture runoff and return it to the aquifers. In line with our historic role, we continue our efforts
to partner with NRCS to provide services for soil and water conservation in agriculture and are also looking to develop programs to build soil health. We will also be increasing the scope of technical services we provide to growers to improve irrigation efficiency and nutrient management while identifying opportunities for the implementation of conservation practices.

One of the RCD’s major accomplishments this past year was our partnership with two other Bay Area counties and Earth Economics to complete an analysis of ecosystem services for Santa Cruz County. That report, entitled Nature’s Value in Santa Cruz County, looks at the economic value of our natural resources and the critical importance of stewardship. Not a surprise to many, the value of local natural resources is staggering and we are looking to engage in discussions about how we can better support and leverage stewardship efforts to support these values. In addition, this report, along with the Conservation Blueprint, provides a framework for thought as our community discusses a possible open space district.

The RCD continues our role as a hub for recovery efforts in Santa Cruz County. With funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board and the State Coastal Conservancy, among others, we are responding to amphibian and coho recovery needs. In partnership with California Fish and Wildlife, we have restored or created several amphibian breeding ponds in south

As our community faces ever-evolving challenges to conserving our natural resources, I continue to find inspiration in the partnerships and creative solutions being pursued throughout the County. We find even more motivation for the role of the RCD in collaborating to provide support and resources to our community. I look forward to more awe and inspiration!
What is the economic benefit of maintaining the integrity of natural ecosystems and working lands in Santa Cruz County? How do land conservation and stewardship activities support the local and regional economies? Why is this relevant in the context of climate change and drought? These are all important questions that are addressed in the recently published report Nature’s Value in Santa Cruz County.

Nature’s Value in Santa Cruz County offers an important complement to the County’s Conservation Blueprint, which already identified conservation goals and priority areas. Together, these two documents provide valuable guidelines to strategically invest in conservation and stewardship of landscapes in order to boost the County’s resiliency to climate change and drought impacts. It can also serve as a guide for the community as it discusses the possible complexion of an open space district.

This report is the second of three county-wide economic valuations of ecosystem services being completed in the greater San Francisco Bay area as part of the Healthy Lands and Healthy Economies (HLHE) regional initiative. Included in the report is an overview of the HLHE initiative, a basic introduction to the field of ecosystem services economic valuation, and a county-wide appraisal of natural capital assets and services in Santa Cruz County. Put simply, this is a process to monetize and communicate the number of benefits we derive from different landscapes and ecosystems, which are not represented or traded in markets but provide significant contributions to the County. In the same way that economies require built capital assets such as roads, pipelines and machinery to function, natural capital such as open space, natural areas, parks, farms, working lands, wetlands and water resources are all foundational inputs into our economy.

What is Nature’s Value in Santa Cruz County?

Sacha Lozano, Program Manager

Natural ecosystems and working lands in Santa Cruz County provide significant natural capital and assets to the community.
In addition, the report emphasizes the role of active management and stewardship in ensuring the long-term integrity and continued provision of value from natural ecosystems and working lands. It also features a number of illustrative stories that demonstrate the opportunity for optimizing economic and environmental trade-offs and achieving multiple benefits through partnership-based land management. Three local case studies are also highlighted with more in-depth economic analyses of specific conservation and stewardship investments.

Specific to Santa Cruz County, the case studies elaborate on the successes of partnership-based land management at varying scales. One case study looks at the benefit-cost ratio of acquisition and management of protected areas under State Park jurisdiction, including non-market ecosystem services values on the benefits side of the equation. The second case study looks at the return on investment of a managed aquifer recharge project in the Pajaro Valley, considering not only the value of water supply but the provision of additional services such as aquatic wildlife habitat, flood mitigation and prevention, and water quality. The third case study looks at leveraged dollars, direct economic output and jobs created through investments in the regional Integrated Watershed Restoration Program (IWRP) over the past ten years.

Finally, the report discusses the economic study in the context of land use planning, policy and investment decision-making, and provides recommendations to further support public and private stewardship of the County’s abundant natural capital. A copy of the report is available on the RCD’s website: www.rcdsantacruz.org/publications.
Acacia Removal Improves Habitat Conditions for Steelhead in the Pajaro Watershed

Stacie Ruffoni, Program Specialist

In November, over 140 acacia trees were removed in an on-going effort to improve habitat conditions for steelhead and other riparian species along Uvas Creek, a tributary to the Pajaro River.

Uvas Creek maintains a population of South-Central California Coast (S-CCC) steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), a federally listed species in the Pajaro River watershed. Acacia is a non-native, evergreen tree that outcompetes native trees and creates a dense canopy that shades large portions of the stream channel year-round, decreasing primary productivity and macroinvertebrate abundance. Macroinvertebrates feed newly emerged juveniles as well as smolts and pre-smolts during a time of year when they experience rapid growth, prior to ocean entry. Greater availability of food usually translates directly to increased individual fitness and carrying capacity for steelhead in freshwater.

Through removal of acacia in the Uvas Creek corridor, existing riparian vegetation willow, sycamore and cottonwood is likely to thrive.

This project marks the first of two phases of acacia removal along the 1000 Trails Campground being funded by Santa Clara Valley Water District. The funding will also allow the RCD to implement three other steelhead spawning enhancement projects along Uvas Creek over the next two years.

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**Acacia was removed along the stream edge to reduce year-round canopy cover and conserve existing riparian species diversity.**
Did you know that there are more than 6,000 species of amphibians living today? This includes toads, frogs, salamanders, newts, and caecilians. Approximately 75 of these can be found in California and 15 are known to occur in Santa Cruz County. Lack of water coupled with habitat loss and degradation has resulted in more than 1,800 amphibian species being threatened with extinction worldwide. Four of those species are here in Santa Cruz County, including the California tiger salamander, Santa Cruz long-toed salamander, California red-legged frog, and Foothill yellow-legged frog. In 2014, the RCD focused our species recovery actions on restoring local wetlands, which provide breeding habitat for the first three of these species.

To help the salamanders and frogs, local agencies and partners, including the RCD, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Wildlife Conservation Board, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife took advantage of the this year’s dry season to restore function in two breeding ponds that have been degraded over time by invasive species, sedimentation and hydrologic modification. The December rains were more than just a blessing to the water supply, they also put our efforts to the test, and so far the results are promising. Monitoring during this winter revealed thousands of salamanders on their way to existing and restored ponds, to breed. After three years of drought, we’re keeping our fingers crossed for a good reproductive year for these incredible species!
As California enters its fourth year of consecutive drought, agricultural producers on the central coast have renewed concerns over long-term water supply reliability to support their industry. The County’s agricultural industry is almost exclusively reliant on groundwater supply, which has been impacted by persistent aquifer overdraft and seawater intrusion. Farmers are constantly compelled to reinforce risk management and build system’s resiliency on their farms to ensure their long-term viability. From a conservation point of view, this involves managing water, soil and nutrients in a way that reduces pressure and dependence on limited supplies, as well as improving precision and timing of input application (i.e. use less water, applied when the plants need it and no more than they can use). Traditional irrigation and nutrient management assessments, known as practice-based assessments, determine how much water and fertilizer was applied and how uniformly it was done across the field. While useful, this approach does not account for climate and other factors that make performance difficult to determine.

Through a public-private partnership, the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (RCD) is working to address water supply and water quality protection on the central coast by developing Performance-based Incentives for Conservation in Agriculture (PICA). PICA is a voluntary program assisting growers to confidentially track, and anonymously compare against peers, their total water use and nitrogen loss (via surface runoff and leaching below root zone) on their ranches during a single crop cycle. Participating growers can use this information to adjust management decisions, demonstrate environmental performance, and qualify for potential incentives.

In 2014, RCD staff worked with nine strawberry growers in the Pajaro Valley and Elkhorn Slough watersheds to track water and nitrogen use efficiency on their farms during the 2013-2014 crop. PICA is helping participating growers to:

- Keep track of irrigation water applied, fertilizer applied, plant uptake and available nitrate in the soil throughout the season to calculate a nutrient budget and inform management decisions.
- Establish a water and nitrogen use efficiency baseline to track changes over time, assess performance relative to peers, and identify opportunities for improvement.
- Quantify and document water savings resulting from management actions.
- Assess if (and how much) a farm might be losing nutrients through surface runoff during storms and leaching below the root zone.
- Identify potential causes of nitrate losses from the farm and management actions to reduce losses.

Results of this monitoring indicated that, overall, growers are irrigating in a manner that generally meets the crops needs. However, the results also suggest that growers could benefit from additional technical assistance related to irrigation during establishment period and better matching of fertilizer applications to specific crop needs.
2014 was a historic year for water and agriculture in California. The unprecedented drought, passage of state groundwater legislation, and the approval by voters of the water bond all bring the need for local solutions for sustainable groundwater management into heightened focus. We are fortunate in the Pajaro Valley to be out in front on these issues through the ground breaking community-led effort of the Community Water Dialogue and partnerships with the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency (PV Water) to implement the Basin Management Plan.

Formed in 2010, the Community Water Dialogue (CWD), a collaborative group of landowners, growers, and business, community and agency leaders has been working from the ground up to find innovative solutions to the groundwater deficits threatening the Valley. In 2014 we continued to make great progress by increasing use of delivered water for irrigation in the coastal zone, improving water use efficiency, supporting PV Water led projects to increase supply, and advancing managed aquifer recharge projects.

On April 10, 2014 the CWD, in partnership with the RCD, PV Water, and the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau hosted the 2014 Drought and Irrigation Conference at the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds in response to the community concern over the drought. CWD organized a forum for growers and other experts to share best practices, and vendors to show the latest technological advances in water management.

Irrigation efficiency also continues to be a key community based solution to conservation. The Wireless Irrigation Network (WIN) helps growers to better understand how much water their plants need through real-time soil moisture tension data. Over 60 ranches are now using the WIN network to improve irrigation management. The RCD also administers the WIN loaner program that provides low cost equipment to growers who might not otherwise be able to utilize the technology. With additional support from PV Water, there are now eight sets of field level sensors available for growers to try for three months at minimal cost to see how the technology can benefit their operation and help conserve water.

The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) selected the CWD for funding through the new Regional Conservation Partnership Program. This and additional funding from Department of Water Resources will allow us to provide technical and financial assistance to growers to help meet water conservation and managed aquifer recharge goals.

Our work to date makes the Pajaro Valley well positioned to meet the challenge of sustainable groundwater management, but our work isn't done. While water use efficiency may be improving, overall groundwater pumping is increasing as growers have less precipitation to rely on during this record-breaking drought. We still have challenges, and we must continue to come together as a community in the spirit of shared sacrifice to bring our aquifer into balance. Through the Community Water Dialogue we can work together to not only respond to the drought today, but to develop and implement pro-active solutions to improve the resiliency of the Pajaro Valley basin over the long term.

Pajaro Valley Community Out in Front of the Drought

Lisa Lurie, Program Manager

The CWD Drought and Irrigation Conference had over 120 people in attendance and provided information on tools, technology and resources for growers to improve water use efficiency and save money.
Most who live in the Santa Cruz Mountains were drawn here by its natural beauty and rural lifestyle. But living here has its own unique set of challenges. Homes are built on steep terrain and Along creeks and streams. Rural roads meander through the hills altering water flow and forested areas pose high fire danger. These issues can threaten the very natural resources that make this place desirable and unique.

On June 4, 2014, the Felton Fire Station pulled out the engines to make room for over 90 Santa Cruz mountain residents interested in measures they could take that protect both the environment and their properties.

Topics included Best Management Practices for managing rural roads, tips for working with road associations, water quality and conservation measures, stormwater management and fire protection. The workshop was part of the RCD Rural Roads Technical Assistance Program (RRECAP) funded through a grant from the EPA managed through the Regional Water Quality Control Board. Additional funds were provided by the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County and the California Coastal Conservancy allowing for expanded topics such as fire protection to be included in the evenings discussions.

Over 90 participants attended workshops focused around rural road best management practices and rainwater catchment options for their properties.
Presenters spoke throughout the three hour workshop. John Martinez and Andy Hubbs from Cal Fire discussed fire protection and creating defensible space along roads, as well as the importance of road maintenance for fire emergency access. LeAnne Ravinale, Water Use Efficiency Coordinator from the Scotts Valley Water District, educated the audience on residential stormwater management and water conservation. Bill Birmingham, Conservation Program Manager from the Napa County Resource Conservation District, outlined best management practices for reducing sediment contributions to local waterways from rural roads. Tom Bird, president of a large road association in the San Lorenzo River Watershed, shared how road associations can work together to create and plan long-term road maintenance and repairs. The final speaker was Angie Gruys, Program Specialist with the RCD who highlighted technical and financial assistance programs offered by the RCD, local water agencies, and fire districts that help landowners implement conservation practices on their private properties.

Attendees also browsed informational tables staffed by local non-profits and agencies including the Bonny Doon Fire Safe Council, Valley Women’s Club, San Lorenzo Valley Water District, Central Coast Greywater Alliance and the RCD staffed information tables. Materials were provided on fire protection, watershed conservation and protection, water supply, ground water, a grey water demonstration, data sheets and brochures on rural roads, stormwater management, drainage, erosion control and a request for assistance form for those seeking on-site technical help.

A survey at the end of the workshop revealed that over 80% of respondents intend to complete a conservation project in the next 12 months. When asked what the barriers where to completing conservation projects and best management practices, 73% of respondents said cost, 53% said lack of “how to” information and 27% said lack of time. When posed the question “what resources might help overcome these barriers?”, the top two answers were cost-share or rebate programs and on-site technical assistance.

Following the workshop the RCD received over 40 requests for technical and on-site assistance. Four landowners received cost-share and rebates for installing road and drainage improvements like large rain cisterns. The Rural Road Program will continue to offer rebates through 2015.
Arana Gulch supports an important, highly-valued riparian community and creek corridor at the eastern edge of the City of Santa Cruz. It is one of the smaller streams on the Central Coast of California, but it has historically sustained steelhead, is an important area for groundwater recharge and serves an important area of open space. The watershed is also important because it is home to the Santa Cruz Harbor, and the relationship between the needs of the harbor and the watershed demonstrates the need for ongoing combined management activities.

In 2014, the RCD was awarded a grant from the Santa Cruz Port District and the City of Santa Cruz to address resource concerns and opportunities in the Arana Gulch watershed. Of principal concern to the Port District is the need to reduce erosion in the watershed and the resulting sedimentation of the Harbor. The amount of sediment from the watershed that enters the harbor has been a problem for decades. Over the course of an average winter, sediment from the watershed fills in portions of the upper harbor, which results in the loss of slips and requires costly dredging.

The RCD, working with the City of Santa Cruz, Port District and number of other partners, including County of Santa Cruz, Soquel Creek Water District, WSP Stewards, Private Consultants (Don Alley and Balance), CCC, Americorps and NRCS, has implemented several sediment reduction projects in the watershed over the past 15 years that have reduced an estimated tens of thousands of cubic yards of sediment from eroding into the watershed. Work under the existing grant continued to identify opportunities within the watershed for additional sediment reduction projects.

While upland erosional features like gullies that require action still exist, recent surveys, conducted by Balance Hydrologics under this grant, found that a significant portion of sediment now comes from the stream channel itself – a result of the changing hydrology resulting from the development of the watershed. One of the reasons why sediment is such a problem in the watershed is because it is carved from the sandy Purisima geologic formation – a formation that is one of the County’s primary sources of domestic groundwater supply. This fact, combined with the impact that runoff has on stream condition, calls out for multi-benefit projects that capture runoff and allow it to sink into the ground.

The RCD’s ‘Slow It, Sink It, Spread It’ guide for residential drainage is an excellent resource for anyone wanting to implement stormwater capture practices on their properties. The RCD also hopes to utilize work currently underway with UCSC to identify suitable areas for implementing managed aquifer recharge projects, and likely the Arana watershed will be one such area.
College Lake Multi-Objective Study Provides Key Technical Information to Proposed Alternatives for Lake Management

Stacie Ruffoni, Program Specialist

College Lake is formed in a seasonal drainage each year on the outskirts of the City of Watsonville near the fairgrounds. Traditional management of the lake has included draining it early each spring to allow for farming on the lake bottom during the summer and fall before the winter rains begin. In recent years, the long-term plans for the lake have become an important topic.

Through a grant awarded to the Pajaro River Watershed Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) group from the Department of Water Resources to the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County was able to lead a collaborative effort to better understand the hydrologic and stakeholder impact of alternatives for College Lake that maximize the benefits of water supply and flood management, while supporting other environmental and community benefits. The resulting technical report provides scientific data and a thorough documentation of various objectives and concerns regarding the future of College Lake along with additional information on multi-benefit project alternatives.

Development of the College Lake technical report was a two-year process that included input from a Technical Advisory Committee consisting of state and federal regulatory agencies, PV Water, RCD and others. Specific analysis included development of a hydrologic model that led to an alternatives analysis that examined several different operational scenarios. Stakeholder outreach was critical to this process, and included input from interests representing fish, waterfowl and agriculture.

The technical report analyzed a combination of six major physical and operational alternatives, identifying the ability of each alternative to meet the water supply, water quality, flood management and various environmental goals identified in the start of the process. From the analysis of the alternatives, some general conclusions were made that supported the IWRP and study goals for multi-objective management. Two alternatives were identified as technically impracticable, including the status quo and a compartmentalized lake. The most viable multi-objective alternative was a water supply project where either: a longer inundation of the College Lake, but drained early enough to allow for a single farming cycle on the lake bottom or farming no longer occurs on the lake bottom; landowners are fairly compensated for loss of or impacts to farmland.

The technical study identified future considerations that must be addressed as the most viable alternatives are further evaluated and pursued. These considerations include:

- Maintenance of Salsipuedes Creek.
- Upland Management.
- Shallow groundwater profile.
- Compensation alternatives.
- Dam/Weir configurations.
- Recreation.
- Flood Management Planning.
- Groundwater Recharge.
- Inundation Impacts.

A copy of the report is available on the RCD’s website: www.rcdsantacruz.org/resources-for-resource-professionals.
RCD Promotes Multi-partner Stormwater Capture and Recharge Projects

Angie Gruys, Communications Specialist

Even before the current drought, California’s residents recognized the need to maximize our limited water resources to address pressing watershed and environmental concerns. In particular, stormwater runoff that was once seen only as a nuisance is now recognized as a resource. Several projects in Santa Cruz County are demonstrating how we can capture and utilize stormwater to reduce runoff, improve water quality, and address ongoing water supply shortfalls.

In 2006, California’s voters passed Proposition 84, the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Act. One of the priorities of the program was to fund projects that change the way we deal with stormwater – turning it from a threat to a resource. Traditional stormwater management involves routing runoff from the urban environment as quickly as possible directly to streets and stormdrains. While that approach has reduced the threat of flooding, it has significantly altered the natural hydrologic cycle that allowed stormwater to infiltrate into the ground, thus reducing groundwater recharge.

The County of Santa Cruz partnered with City of Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley Water District, the Resource Conservation District, and the Regional

This city of Santa Cruz parking lot retrofit includes a specially designed vegetated (bioretention facility) for infiltration of runoff.
Water Management Foundation to secure over $2 million to implement several projects that capture, clean, and infiltrate stormwater. Four projects are being implemented under this grant in a diversity of settings to act as demonstration projects for how stormwater can be used as a resource. These projects include:

1. Heart of Soquel Park – this project began construction in late 2014 and includes design elements such as impervious pavement, bioswales and rain gardens designed to slow and clean runoff before it enters adjacent Soquel Creek.

2. City of Santa Cruz – Catalyst Parking Lot – this project is a demonstration of the use of pervious pavement in an already urbanized environment

3. Brommer Street County Park – this project will capture parking lot and other runoff, route it through a bioswale and then to seepage pits where it will percolate into groundwater.

4. Scotts Valley Metro Station – this project will capture roof and parking lot runoff and direct it to a recharge gallery for infiltration.

This project at Soquel Creek Water District headquarters, partially funded by a 2009 grant to the RCD from the EPA and State Water Board, is an example of stormwater retrofits that promote infiltration and water conservation.

Complementing the project implementation, the RCD is providing the outreach and education services for the grant that include designing interpretive signs for each of the projects, completing tours the projects to highlight the integrated stormwater features, and facilitating a day long public workshop for stormwater professional. For more information on these projects, visit www.rcdsantacruz.org/prop-84-projects
Eucalyptus Mapping Results in More Targeted Removal Efforts in the County

Crystal Garcia and Mark Seelos, WSP Interns

Tasmanian Blue Gum Eucalyptus (Eucalyptus Globalus) was introduced to the west coast in the late 1850’s by Australian prospectors for use as a wind break for farms and residences. The tree subsequently colonized coastal California and is now ubiquitous throughout Santa Cruz and Monterey counties. Eucalyptus outcompetes native plants, provides poor habitat for local animal species, and most concerning during the ongoing drought, presents a high fire hazard. A coordinated, ongoing removal program of this invasive species is a priority for the RCD with the goals of reducing the potential for severe wildland fire: lessening post-fire damage, minimizing soil erosion and the impacts to water quality, enhancing wildlife habitat, and limiting the spread of invasive species and diseases.

Finding where all of the stands exist is an important first step so the RCD enlisted Americorps Watershed Stewards Program members hosted by the RCD to locate and map eucalyptus groves throughout the county. The full scale map of the county’s Blue Gum stands they produced will be used by the RCD and other local partners to prioritize future eucalyptus removal efforts in the county. That prioritization is being conducted through meetings of local agencies and groups including local fire safe councils, CalFire, the County, fire districts and non-governmental groups working on fire preparedness in the County. Through coordinated efforts, the group hopes to attract additional resources to the County for the removal of eucalyptus and other fuel load reduction efforts.
Fire Preparedness Critical to Safeguard Community

Chris Coburn, Executive Director

After four years of drought, the County’s precarious water supply situation is at the forefront of many community members minds. However, an equally important concern heightened by drought, particularly after two of the driest years on record, is the potential for catastrophic wildfires. The intense wildfires that are now occurring with alarming regularity highlight how dry conditions are, how fast wildfires can move, and the importance of preparing for fires before they start.

Due to effective fire suppression over the last 65 years, local topography, high fuel loads and extreme drought conditions, Santa Cruz County has significant potential for catastrophic wildfires. Since 2008, five large wildfires burned over 13,900 acres in Santa Cruz County, destroying over 233 structures and costing the State over $35 million in suppression expenses.

The ongoing drought has essentially led to a year-round fire season, and now is the time to be aware and implement preventative measures. New sources of funding have become available for fire preparedness efforts, and local stakeholders have begun meeting in an effort to bring more of those resources to the County. Loosely formed as the Santa Cruz Fire Safe Council, this group includes RCD, CAL FIRE, the County, City of Santa Cruz, State Parks, Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, Monterey Bay Air Pollution Control District, California Conservation Corps, Pacific Gas and Electric, San Lorenzo Valley Water District and local fire chiefs. The intent behind forming a Santa Cruz Fire Safe Council is to support the existing fire safe councils while at the same time addressing concerns in areas not covered by an existing fire safe council (FSC). For example, much of the San Lorenzo River watershed, where there are pressing needs for fuels reduction and evacuation planning, is not covered by a FSC.

There are many things a property owner can do to be safe and decrease the likelihood of damage to home and property from wildfire - one of the most critical is to create defensible space. The RCD received funding from the Monterey Bay Air Pollution Control District to assist homeowners in creating defensible space by removing vegetation. Through this chipper program the cleared vegetation is chipped up and can then be used as mulch. This is not only a benefit to fire preparedness efforts but chipping also avoids air quality concerns associated with burning.

As we enter this fire season, you are encouraged to contact CAL FIRE, the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), your local fire district or one of the four Fire Safe Councils in Santa Cruz County for advice and helpful publications on making your property and our community fire safe.

Bonny Doon: www.bdfsc.org
South Skyline: www.southskylinefiresafe.org
Soquel: www.soquelfiresafe.org
Santa Clara: www.sccfiresafe.org

This dangerous void underneath a private road in the Santa Cruz Mountains was the result of a plastic culvert that melted due to the extreme heat of the Summit Fire in 2008. It has since been replaced with cost-share assistance from the RCD.
The RCD had much to celebrate at the 69th Annual Conference of the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD). The conference held in Ventura, CA, from November 12-15, 2014 drew nearly 200 participants, including RCD directors, RCD and NRCS employees, and representatives from many partnering organizations from all over California. Multiple RCD and NRCS employees, including Susan Pearce, Stacie Ruffoni, Sacha Lozano and Rich Casale were speakers in break-out sessions, while Lisa Lurie co-spoke with Emily Paddock, Board Member of RCD of Monterey County, during the opening session about the successes and lessons learned from the Community Water Dialogue.

For the 75th RCD Birthday luncheon, Rich Casale presented “Dust to Diamonds: 75 years of Conservation and the Role of California’s RCDs.” The presentation showcased the RCDs’ 75 year history in California, highlighting accomplishments from the late 1930s to date including NRCS/RCD cooperative and educational projects and the RCD of Santa Cruz County’s very successful Permit Coordination Program. Rich was also recognized in a surprise presentation made by Chris Coburn, Executive Director of RCD Santa Cruz County, with a Proclamation from the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors honoring Rich for his 40 years of service with NRCS to the County of Santa Cruz.

In the spirit of recognition, Stacie Ruffoni was presented with the 2014 CARCD Employee-of-the-Year Award during a special awards presentation for her outstanding work as the Pajaro River Watershed Coordinator serving the RCDs in Santa Cruz, San Benito, Santa Clara and Monterey Counties. Stacie’s job responsibilities involves bringing agencies, partners and diverse landowners together to address pressing issues in the 1,300 square mile watershed. Some of the achievements in just the two years she has been in the position of Watershed Coordinator include: development of a website for the San Benito County RCD; co-leading the Pajaro Valley Community Water Dialogue; facilitating meetings for the College Lake study; implementing a permit coordination program for the upper watershed; developing outreach materials; and assisting with the organization of various meetings and events including the 2014 Drought Conference that attracted more than 120 stakeholders.

The RCD had many outstanding staff representing the various efforts in Santa Cruz at the CARCD conference and congratulates Stacie in the CARCD recognition as the 2014 Employee of the year.
2014 Fiscal Year Funding Sources

American Rivers
Bureau of Land Management
California Department of Conservation
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Department of Food and Agriculture
California Department of Water Resources
California Natural Resources Agency
California State Coastal Conservancy
California State Parks
California Wildlife Conservation Board
Community Foundation of Santa Cruz
County of Santa Cruz
Ecology Action
Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation

James Irvine Foundation
Land Trust of Santa Cruz County
Moore Family Foundation
Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District
Reiter Family Foundation
Santa Cruz Port District
Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency
Sempervirens Fund
San Jose State University
State Water Resources Control Board
Sustainable Conservation
US Fish and Wildlife Service, Coastal Program
US Department of Agriculture

RCD Fiscal Year 2014 Budget
July 1, 2013–June 30, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Sources</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>$1,638.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Services &amp; Project Implementation</td>
<td>$1,816,964.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local &amp; Private Sources</td>
<td>$24,239.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries</td>
<td>$854,474.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Augmentation Funds</td>
<td>$28,900.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operating Expenses</td>
<td>$171,920.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Revenue Grants</td>
<td>$2,741,130.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
<td>$16,014.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>*$2,811,920.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expenses</strong></td>
<td>*$2,843,359.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The difference between income and expenses represents grant money spent but not yet received by the RCD.

CFSCC Support Leverages Outreach and Cost-Share Efforts

The Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County received a generous grant from the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County (CFSCC) to provide technical assistance to, and cost share implementation of conservation practices with, private property owners in the County. This funding enabled the RCD to leverage other state and federal grants to reach a broader audience and do what we do best – work with property owners to evaluate resource concerns and implement practices to address them.

Far exceeding what we had hoped to accomplish under this grant, the RCD provided technical assistance to 37 private property owners and several implementation cost share projects on issues ranging from manure and paddock management for livestock, erosion and drainage, water conservation, rural roads, fire protection, permit assistance and stormwater management. We were also able to reach broader audiences by offering a wider range of topics at outreach events fire protection, well water conservation and monitoring, and livestock management.

CFSCC grants have helped the RCD to secure more diverse funding, generate additional revenue through fee-for-service contracts and create new partnerships and programs resulting in expanded services to the community to improve our precious natural resources.
Put Your Money to Work for Local Resource Conservation

The Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County is primarily funded by grants and contracts with public and non-public entities. Private donations help to further the mission of the District and can be targeted toward your area of interest.

The RCD can receive tax deductible donations under Internal Revenue Service Code Section 170 (b) and 170 (c) (1). This section says that contributions to a governmental entity are deductible (up to 50% of the taxpayer’s adjusted gross income). The RCD may accept all forms of contributions including, but not limited to, gifts, property, cash, stocks and securities. Feel free to contact us with any questions at 831.464.2950.

Programs include:
- Species Recovery and Riparian Health
- Livestock and Equine Assistance
- Rural Roads
- Residential and Commercial Stormwater
- Agricultural Programs
- Fire Prevention
- Special Programs
- Other

Your contribution can be mailed to 820 Bay Ave, Suite 136, Capitola, CA 95010