

5-11-2022

**Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Report
to the Resource Conservation District (RCD) of Santa Cruz County**

Covering April 14th, 2022 to May 11th, 2022

By Drew Mather

Staffing Updates:

Drew Mather, Soil Conservationist with the NRCS Capitola Local Partnership Office (LPO), has accepted the Soil Conservationist (District Conservationist) position for the same office as of 4-27-22 with a start date of May 8th, and reporting date of Monday, May 9th, 2022. Drew's former position, Soil Conservationist for Capitola, has already been advertised on USAJOBS from 4-15-22 to 4-25-22. No word yet on when this new position will be filled to backfill Drew Mather's current soil conservationist position. Drew's last day as the soil conservationist for the Capitola Office was on May 7th, 2022.

Jim Howard, District Conservationist (DC) for the Half Moon Bay Field Office, served his last day as Acting DC for the Capitola Office on May 7th. We thank Jim most kindly for his service from the end of December to May 7th for our office.

Financial Assistance Updates:

EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program):

Deadline for new EQIP and EQIP-CIC (Conservation Incentives Contract) applications was on April 1st. Have 11 applications for financial assistance in Santa Cruz County (7 cropland, 3 forestland, 1 Animal Feeding Operation (AFO)); two of the cropland projects are very large planned biochar applications.

3 forestland applications have had direct RCD involvement with Matt Abernathy and Angie Richman and we thank them for all their help on these projects. Two of the forestland applications have Forest Management Plans created by Jeff Kelly, NRCS Area Forester, in Petaluma, CA and have been redacted and shared with the RCD for training purposes.

Of the 11 applications, four are from Historically Underserved populations of growers, and four are from primarily woman owned farming operations.

RCPP (Regional Conservation Planning Partnership):

Lisa Lurie, Erin McCarthy, Jim Howard, and Drew Mather attended a meeting in March with the NRCS State Office leads for RCPP to discuss reporting and [continuing site assessment activities under](#) the RCPP grant for Stormwater Management. ~~Jim was able to obtain assurances from both the State and National Office on being able to move forward with this RCPP Stormwater grant.~~

Continuing discussions with a large grower on a potential joint Stormwater RCPP project with the RCDs of Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties. ~~Application due date was May 6th and interested parties indicated 'internal issues' and would circle back with me once they'd worked through those issues.~~ This project would be a large sediment or groundwater recharge basin with stormwater drop outlets.

~~Lisa Lurie is aware of the issue and indicated she was going to reach out to the RCDMC to see if she could find out more information on why they didn't want to apply during this round of funding.~~

EQIP Cover Crop Initiative -

NRCS Chief's Initiative – 11 States

Demonstrates NRCS' capacity to streamline processes and rapidly plan and contract by focusing on a single practice.

California - \$6.8 million available

Multiple growers have reached out over the past month to see if this initiative was still available. Our State Conservationist, Carlos Suarez, indicated on a teleconference call that there may be a reopening of this program in the coming months.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP):

One Santa Cruz County grower has applied for this program and would be the 1st for the Capitola Office if awarded a contract. I visited this grower on April 28th to survey their properties in Santa Cruz County and to start the assessment.

Deadlines Table:

Batching Period	Applicable Ranking Pool	Application Deadline	Ranking Deadline	Funding Selections	Obligation Deadline
1	Cat Fire	December 10, 2021	December 29, 2021	December 30, 2021	March 18, 2022
2	Cat Fire	December 10, 2021	January 13, 2022	January 14, 2022	March 18, 2022
3	All EQIP Ranking Pools	December 10, 2021	January 28, 2022	February 9, 2022	March 18, 2022
4	All EQIP Ranking Pools	April 1, 2022	May 27, 2022	June 8, 2022	August 5, 2022
5	EQIP Sage Grouse	May 6, 2022	July 8, 2022	July 11, 2022	August 5, 2022
CSP	All CSP "classic" Ranking Pools	April 1, 2022	May 27, 2022	June 1, 2022	August 5, 2022

Note: CSP application deadline above changed from April 1st, 2022 to **April 15th, 2022**. Ranking, funding, and obligation deadlines will stay the same.

Other news:

Received new directives on our seasonal high tunnel initiative where the high tunnel structure must have built-in end walls, an access door, and purlins (ridgepole). Also, the high tunnel structure must be a stand-alone structure with no adjoining hoop structures and no shared walls with adjacent high tunnel systems.

Went out on a site visit with Sacha Lozano, RCDSCC, to a grower in Las Lomas, CA interested in financial assistance for high tunnels and possibly cover crops.

Went out on a site visit in the Whitehouse Canyon region in the northern portion of Santa Cruz County with Jim Howard and Dillon Beatty to look at two debris flows that had occurred on two separate properties.

Took both Government vehicles in for maintenance (Malibu – repair of a side view mirror that was damaged due to vandalism; Jeep – repair of a fuel cap door cover that was damaged due to vandalism). In progress to get both the mirror and the fuel cap door painted to match the respective vehicle base color.

Met with Marcos Perez at the State Office for a Workload Analysis for the Capitola Office. Dillon Beatty, Shared NRCS Field Engineer, and Jennifer Nowark, Shared Farm Bill Assistant, were also in attendance. Final staffing percentages were determined and are forthcoming from Marcos for the Capitola Office. In brief, the final analysis for the Capitola LPO was approximately between ‘maintenance’ and ‘stable’, with a notation that any potential changes to the area with natural disasters would put us in an ‘unstable’ staffing situation, and we’d require staffing assistance.

Attended a Microsoft Teams Pollinator Hedgerow training in mid-April offered by our NRCS State Biologist, Tom Moore.

Attended a 4-day Facilitating Meetings Training in late April offered by Jim Nelson of Nelson Consulting in Redding, CA. Jim is a retired US Fish and Wildlife Service biologist and game warden with extensive mediation and facilitation training experience. Training was excellent and very well received by the majority of participants.

Attended a Microsoft Teams meeting in mid April with Dan Hermstad, RCDSCC, and Dillon Beatty, NRCS Field Office Engineer (shared between HMB and Capitola) to discuss NRCS Irrigation practices and financial assistance.

Attended an NRCS Welcome Back to the Office Microsoft Teams Meeting from Carlos Suarez on May 2nd, 2022.

Attended an NRCS Civil Rights Town Hall Microsoft Teams Meeting on May 3rd, 2022.

Organized and Attended a Biologist Meeting with NRCS Area Biologist Lauren Sullivan, NRCS Contract Biologist Glenn Wilcox, and Jim Howard, Acting DC in Capitola and DC in HMB, to discuss San Francisco Garter Snake issues with two projects in San Mateo County, one very near the Santa Cruz County line.

Attended the RCDSCC weekly Staff Meeting on Zoom on May 4th, 2022.

Planning to complete an online NRCS Preventing Workplace Violence training due at the end of this month.

Outreach Updates:

Planning to attend a Local Workgroup and High Tunnel meeting next week in Monterey County at Javier Zamora’s farm with Ari DeLara (DC in the NRCS Salinas Field Office, invitation coming from him to all the District Conservationists in the Area) State Conservationist Carlos Suarez and Area Agronomist Karen Lowell are also planning to attend. I have invited a few growers from Santa Cruz County to attend including Hispanic growers.

Planning to attend a Climate of Hope event in Watsonville at the end of the month to discuss climate change and climate justice with growers and agencies in Santa Cruz County and beyond. Lisa Lurie sent out an invitation to all of her staff and me inviting us to attend.