



Guadalupe-Coyote
Resource Conservation District (GCRCD)
An independent special district of the State of California

1560 Berger Drive, Room 211, San Jose, CA 95112
Phone: 408-288-5888 Email: gcrcd@gcrcd.org www.rcdsantaclara.org

TO: GCRCD Board of Directors

FROM: Stephanie Moreno, Executive Director/District Clerk

SUBJECT: *7.3.2 Agricultural Resilience*: Discussion and possible action to authorize the Executive Director to submit a USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) cooperative agreement proposal in partnership with the Loma Prieta and San Benito Resource Conservation Districts and to execute all required documents for an agreement to provide technical assistance to agricultural producers and improve outreach to historically underserved producers and communities.

DATE: March 2, 2023

Recommendation:

The Board of Directors approve the following motion:

Authorize the Executive Director to submit a USDA-NRCS cooperative agreement proposal in partnership with the Loma Prieta and San Benito Resource Conservation Districts and to execute all required documents for an agreement to provide technical assistance to agricultural producers and improve outreach to historically underserved producers and communities.

Background:

Since 2015, GCRCD has successfully executed three Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) agreements with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA):

- San Jose Community Composting Network (ongoing; project narrative attached).
- Rural Roads Program (completed 9/30/2019; final progress report attached).
- Rancher's Outreach Program (completed 12/31/2017; final progress report attached).

The first two agreements were regional and included activities for constituents and stakeholders of the Loma Prieta RCD (LPRCD) and San Benito RCD (SBRCD). The programs were considered highly successful programs by those who received technical assistance and participated in the workshops.

In February 2023, LPRCD and GCRCD met with the new Assistant State Conservationist for Area Operations for our area, and expressed our interest in securing a new cooperative agreement for our region. We were advised to develop a "shovel-ready" project that we could use to apply for new opportunities as they arose. We created the *Agricultural Producer Resilience Technical Assistance Program* draft proposal (included in the Board's packet), which outlines a regional program for Santa Clara and San Benito Counties which meets the priorities for service for NRCS as well as the three RCDs, and focuses on outreach to historically underserved producers¹ within our counties.

¹ USDA-NRCS website; <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/underserved-farmers-ranchers>

On February 27, 2023, USDA-NRCS issued a notice of funding opportunity for the *FY2023 Equity in Conservation Outreach Cooperative Agreements*, with priorities and objectives that match well to our draft proposal. Although our proposal was created with a match component, this funding opportunity does not require one, so the draft proposal in the Board's packet will be adjusted to increase services and remove in-kind match commitments before making application.

District Mission and Goals:

The proposed project is in furtherance of the mission of the District, which is “ to provide education and technical assistance to constituents and watershed stakeholders to sustainably manage soil, water and wildlife with the best available science.”

The proposed project meets the goals for the following areas of strategic focus set forth within the District's 2019-2024 Long Range Plan:

- *Agricultural Lands*: 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.
- *Biodiversity*: 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.
- *Water Quality*: Contribute to improvements in water quality available for the benefit of agricultural production, wildlife, and aquatic habitat within District watersheds.
- *Fire Risk*: 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.
- *Climate Change*: 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.
- *Public Engagement*: 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.
- *District Operations*: Build and maintain organizational capacity and financial viability to accommodate District mission and goals.

Summary:

I recommend the District move forward with this project, which is in furtherance of the mission and goals of the District, will provide multiple benefits to regional constituents and watershed stakeholders, and will help build our capacity to deliver services.