

North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District

LONG RANGE PLAN
July 2025 through June 2030



Prepared by:

North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District
888 N 1st Street, Suite 204, San Jose, CA 95112

www.rcdsantaclara.org

A. INTRODUCTION

This Long Range Plan (LRP) establishes the strategic direction of the North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District (District) for the period 2025 through 2030. The plan provides a framework for identifying priorities, delivering services, and guiding annual implementation efforts that support conservation and stewardship across the District's service area.

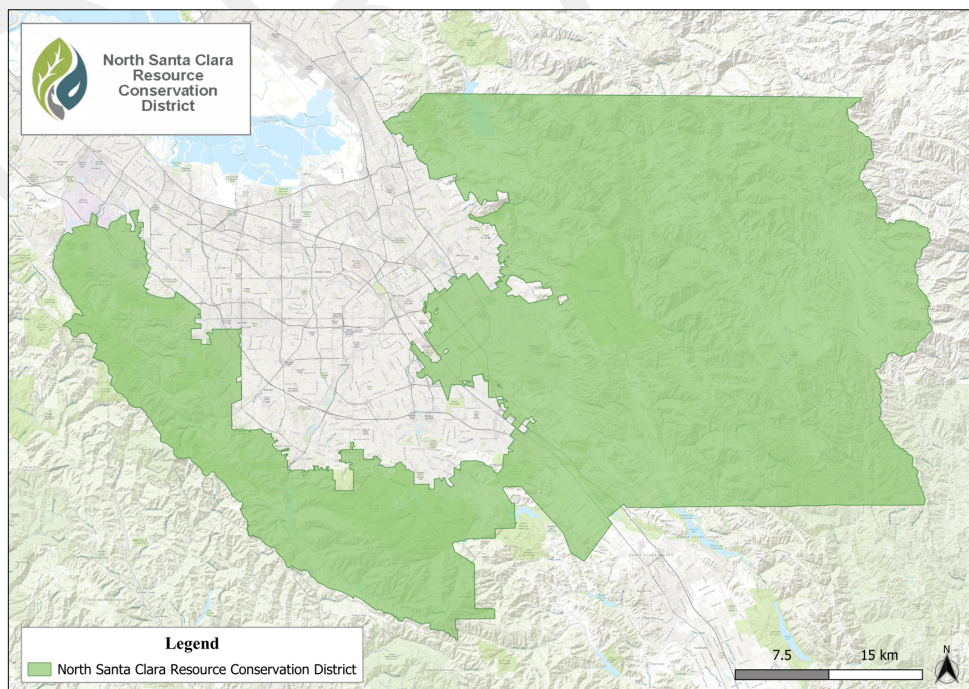
The plan was informed through Board and Associate Director input, stakeholder engagement, prior planning documents, and review of regional resource conditions and trends. Survey results were used to inform relative emphasis among priorities while maintaining alignment with the District's statutory role and long-standing service areas. This document reflects a five-year planning horizon and is designed to remain flexible to respond to funding opportunities, partnerships, and emerging resource needs.

Overall results of the planning effort indicated strong alignment around watershed health, biodiversity, climate adaptation, and wildfire preparedness as areas of emphasis over the next five years. It is a strategic framework, not a project list. Specific activities, budgets, and project selection is addressed through adoption of annual District budgets and work plans.

The purpose of this LRP is to:

- Establish the District's long-term strategic priorities.
- Provide a framework for organizational decision-making.
- Guide development of Annual Work Plans (AWP).
- Communicate the District's role to partners and the public.
- Support coordination across agencies, landowners, and communities.

B. ABOUT THE DISTRICT



North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District encompasses approximately 583 square miles within northern Santa Clara County and serves an estimated 300,000 residents. The District's service area encompasses urban, urban-edge, rural, foothill, watershed, and working landscapes, including agricultural lands, open space, stream corridors, rangelands, and communities vulnerable to wildfire and climate-related impacts.

Operating under [Division 9](#) of the California Public Resources Code, the District is an independent, non-regulatory special district of the State of California providing voluntary, locally-driven conservation services in partnership with landowners, public agencies, Tribes, and community organizations. Governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, the District is supported by volunteer Associate Directors who provide additional expertise to the Board and staff in areas of natural resource management, agricultural operations, or local government policy and procedures. The District is one of two resource conservation districts in Santa Clara County, and has its roots in two of the county's original conservation districts, the Black Mountain Soil Conservation District and the Evergreen Soil Conservation District, both of which were formed in the 1940s. Its name was changed from Guadalupe-Coyote RCD to North Santa Clara RCD in December 2023.

C. REGIONAL AND RESOURCE CONTEXT

Santa Clara County has a long history of agriculture, and the Santa Clara Valley was once known as the "Valley of Heart's Delight." According to the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture (updated every five years), the County contained approximately 803 farms encompassing roughly 238,000 acres of farmland. Compared to the figures cited in the District's 2019-2024 LRP, this reflects a decline of approximately 87 farms (roughly 10%) and more than 50,000 acres of farmland (roughly 17%).

Despite these declines, agriculture remains an important component of the County's economy, landscape, and cultural identity. The Agricultural Commissioner's 2024 Crop Report indicated that the gross value of agricultural production reached approximately \$389.9 million, reflecting continued strength in nursery crops, mushrooms, lettuce and leafy greens, bell peppers, wine grapes, specialty crops, and hay and forage production associated with the County's rangeland, grazing, woodland, and working landscape stewardship operations. The report further reflects the importance of specialty crops, grazing lands, and climate-resilient agricultural practices within Santa Clara County's diverse agricultural economy. In addition to commercial agricultural production, the District recognizes the growing importance of urban agriculture, local food systems, and community-based stewardship activities within developed areas of the District.

The District lies within the Santa Clara Basin (Basin), which consists of eleven watersheds including the Coyote Creek watershed on the east side of the valley and the Guadalupe River watershed which drains the south-central portion of the valley. These watersheds encompass a mix of agricultural lands, open space, rangelands, watersheds, and communities vulnerable to wildfire and climate-related impacts. Santa Clara County is also one of the most economically dynamic and rapidly developing regions in California. Continued urban development pressures, climate impacts, changing land use patterns, and increasing wildfire risk continue to affect natural resources, agricultural lands, watersheds, and open space throughout the Basin. For this reason, the District collaborates and partners with a variety of federal, state, local, and Tribal governments; nonprofit organizations; industry associations; land managers; and community groups throughout the region on projects and programs impacting its watersheds. Partnerships are essential to achieving the landscape-scale conservation outcomes and leveraging limited resources.

The District serves communities with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including significant Spanish-, Vietnamese-, and Chinese-speaking populations. These conditions influence how the District conducts outreach, develops partnerships, and delivers conservation services across urban, suburban, rural, and historically underserved communities.

D. VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

Vision

Healthy, resilient ecosystems and communities supported by collaborative, locally driven conservation.

Mission

Current mission statement: The mission of the North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District is to provide education and technical assistance to constituents and watershed stakeholders to sustainably manage soil, water and wildlife with the best available science.

Example for discussion: The mission of the North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District is to provide leadership, technical assistance, and partnership-based solutions that conserve natural resources and support sustainable land stewardship across working, natural, urban, and rural landscapes.

Values

- Inclusive access to conservation services
- Collaboration and partnership
- Science-based decision making
- Stewardship across working, natural, urban, and rural landscapes

E. DISTRICT SERVICES AND DELIVERY

Services

The District delivers conservation outcomes through a consistent set of services applied across all resource priorities. These services represent the District's core capabilities:

- *Technical assistance:* support to landowners, producers, community members, and partners to plan and implement conservation practices.
- *Project development and implementation:* design and delivery of on-the-ground conservation projects.
- *Education and outreach:* workshops, technical education, and community engagement with communities and stakeholders.
- *Monitoring and adaptive management:* tracking outcomes, evaluating effectiveness, and informing conservation approaches.

Delivery Enablers

District services are supported by:

- *Property Taxes:* a local percentage of property taxes supports discretionary District operations and programs.

- *Grant Funding:* federal, state, regional, and local funding sources fund specific programs and projects.
- *Research:* applied research and demonstration projects support conservation innovation, expand local knowledge base and facilitate collaboration and buy-in among landowners, communities, and partners.
- *Partnerships and Coordination:* collaboration with agencies, Tribes, nonprofits, and landowners builds capacity and helps meet regional goals
- *Organization capacity:* strong staff and technical expertise, funding diversity, governance and Board engagement, and current technology and data systems support service delivery.

F. WORKING LANDS AS A FOUNDATION CONSERVATION LANDSCAPE

The District recognizes that working lands, including agricultural and rangeland landscapes, play an essential role in achieving long-term conservation outcomes across Santa Clara County. Many of the District’s strategic resource priorities, including watershed health, biodiversity, wildfire preparedness, climate resilience, and restoration, are directly connected to the stewardship and management of working landscapes.

Accordingly, support for agricultural producers, land stewards, and conservation practices on working lands will remain integrated throughout the District’s planning, partnerships, and implementation efforts. This approach reflects both the District’s statutory role under Division 9 and the practical reality that many regional conservation objectives are achieved through voluntary stewardship on privately managed lands.

G. RESOURCE PRIORITIES, GOALS, AND OUTCOMES

Watershed Health and Biodiversity

Goal: Improve watershed function and ecological health across landscapes.

Outcomes:

- *100-1,000 acres restored or enhanced*
- *5-15 projects implemented*

Climate Adaptation and Wildfire Preparedness

Goal: Increase landscape and community resilience to wildfire and climate-related impacts.

Outcomes:

- *500-5,000 acres treated or managed*
- *10-30 landowners engaged annually*

Working Lands Stewardship

Goal: Support sustainable management and long-term viability of working landscapes.

Outcomes:

- *50-150 producers assisted*
- *500-5,000 acres improved*

Restoration and Landscape Stewardship

Goal: Implement restoration activities that improve long-term ecosystem function.

Outcomes:

- 100-500 acres restored
- 5-20 projects implemented

Urban and Community-Based Conservation

Goal: Expand conservation awareness and stewardship within urban and suburban communities, including urban agriculture, creek stewardship, and sustainable landscape practices.

Outcomes:

- 5-20 projects
- 200-1,000 people engaged annually

H. IMPLEMENTATION

The LRP establishes the District’s strategic priorities and organizational direction. Specific projects, grants, partnerships, and annual activities are identified through the District’s Budget and Annual Work Plan based on:

- Available funding
- Partnerships
- Organizational capacity
- Emerging resource needs

The District will use the following methods to guide successful implementation of the LRP:

- Track progress toward strategic goals
- Evaluate project and program outcomes
- Evaluate grant and other funding opportunities for alignment with the LRP
- Report regularly to the Board, partners, and the public
- Provide opportunities for District staff to expand their technical expertise
- Adjust implementation approaches as needed based on changing conditions and new information

Update Log:

The District’s Long Range Plan is a living document, and as such, may be updated from time to time in between successive five-year plan adoptions. Substantive narrative changes are reviewed and approved by the Board, and formatting, administrative, and non-substantive narrative changes are made by the District Manager (“DM”), with follow-up notification to the Board.

Date	Version #	Action