

Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District (GCRCD)

An independent special district of the State of California



Soil and water conservation became a national concern during the Great Depression.



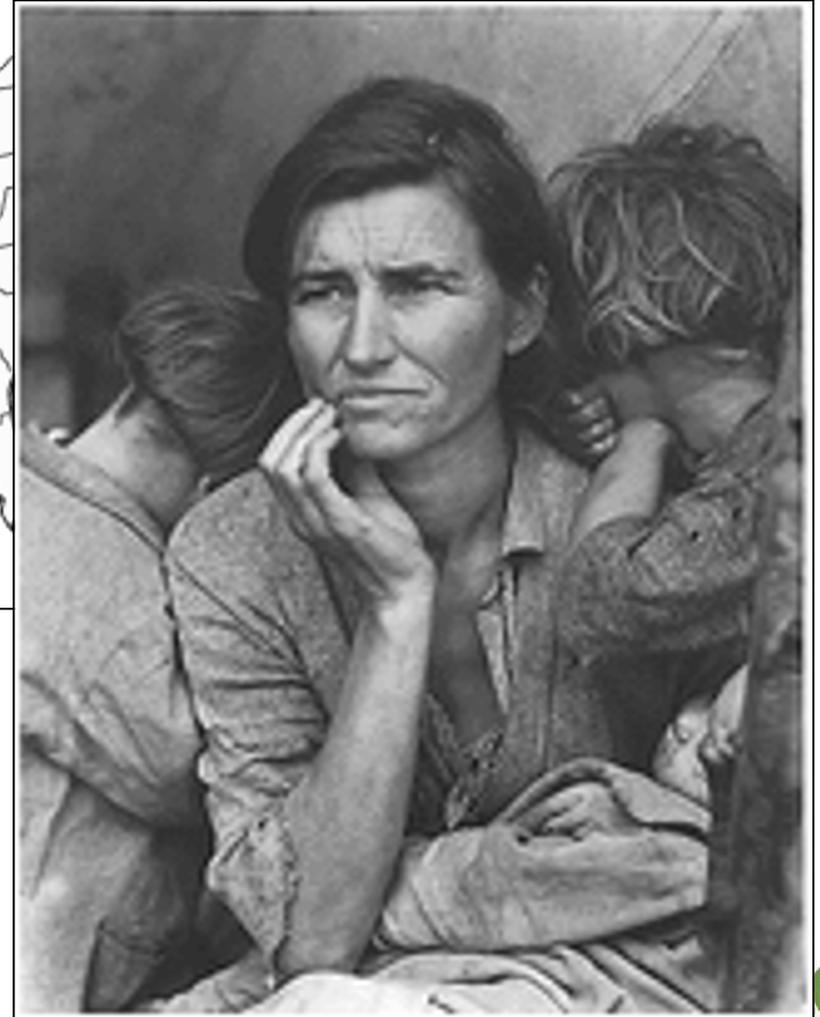


For nearly a decade, the United States suffered an ecological and agricultural disaster known as the Dust Bowl, a series of dust storms caused by a combination of drought and poor farming practices in the Midwest.

The Dust Bowl



Soil erosion by water and wind reduced the ability of the land to sustain agricultural productivity and to support rural communities who depended on it for their livelihoods.



**Over 80 years later,
soil and water conservation issues remain.**

Bakersfield, California, 2015



It was through the persistent efforts of Hugh Hammond Bennett, the “father of soil conservation”, that the federal government acknowledged the connection between agricultural production and the national economy.



Through his efforts, the Soil Conservation Service
was created in 1935.



*” ... the wastage of soil and **moisture resources** on farm, grazing, and forest lands . . . is a menace to the national welfare .. ”*

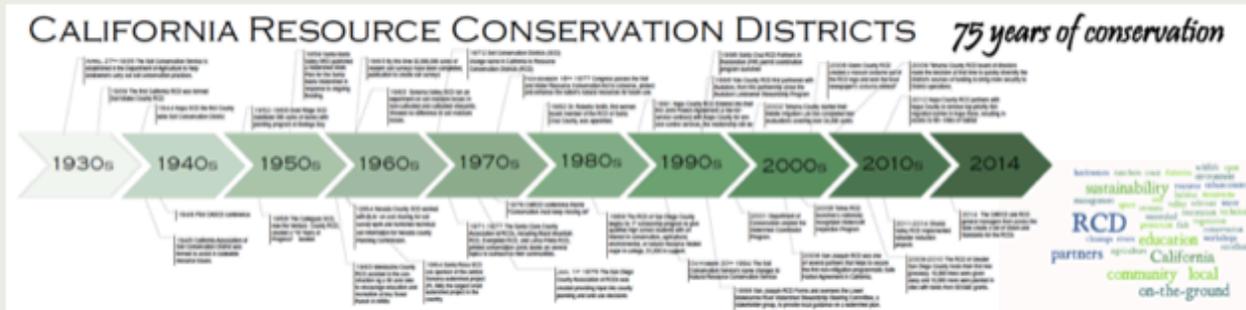
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In 1994, the USDA's Soil Conservation Service was renamed the Natural Resource Conservation Service. In California, soil conservation districts were renamed resource conservation districts.



Deeply rooted in California's communities

RCDs were first founded after the Dust Bowl in the 1930s to bring federal and state funding and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers so that they could voluntarily conserve water, soil, and wildlife habitat on their land with the help of a local and neutral partner.



Click the timeline to expand

Spanning many generations, RCDs have maintained deep connections to farmers and ranchers but most have also evolved with the changing needs of California's diverse communities. Today each RCD's projects and programs are different, and their services often include habitat restoration, forest health, healthy soils, public education, landscape-scale conservation planning, climate resilience, and assisting municipalities and the state in managing water use and preparing for drought and fire.

RCDs always work with their constituents on a voluntary basis – a key reason they are considered a trusted resource in their communities.

Image Credit: California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD)





What are Resource Conservation Districts?

Public Resources Code Division 9 established Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) to conserve soil and water, control runoff, prevent and control soil erosion, manage watersheds, protect water quality, and develop water storage and distribution.

RCDs are special districts of the State of California, set up to be locally governed agencies with their own locally appointed or elected, independent boards of directors. California RCDs implement projects on public and private lands, and educate landowners and the public about resource conservation.

RCDs are a vital link between federal, state, and local programs, helping these agencies meet their conservation goals. RCDs conduct:

- Watershed planning and management
- Water conservation
- Water quality protection and enhancement
- Agricultural land conservation
- Soil and water management on non-agricultural lands
- Wildlife habitat enhancement
- Wetland conservation
- Recreational land restoration
- Irrigation management
- Conservation education
- Forest stewardship
- Fuels management
- Urban resource conservation

Image Credit: California Department of Conservation

Public Resources Code (PRC)

Division 9

Article 1. Policy of State

Section 9001.

(a) The Legislature hereby declares that resource conservation is of fundamental importance to the prosperity and welfare of the people of this state. The Legislature believes that the state must assume leadership in formulating and putting into effect a statewide program of soil and water conservation and related natural resource conservation and hereby declares that this division is enacted to accomplish the following purposes:

(1) To provide the means by which the state may cooperate with the United States and with resource conservation districts organized pursuant to this division in securing the adoption in this state of conservation practices, including, but not limited to, farm, range, open space, urban development, wildlife, recreation, watershed, water quality, and woodland, best adapted to save the basic resources, soil, water, and air of the state from unreasonable and economically preventable waste and destruction.

(2) To provide for the organization and operation of resource conservation districts 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 development of storage and distribution of water, and the treatment of each acre of land according to its needs.



Public Resources Code (PRC)

Division 9

Article 1. Policy of State

Section 9001.

- (b) The districts, in addition to any other authority provided by law, may do all of the following:
- (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.
- (c) The districts shall not conserve water for power purposes or produce or distribute power for their own use or for the use of others.

Public Resources Code (PRC)

Division 9

Article 1. Policy of State

Section 9002.

It is hereby declared as a matter of legislative determination:

(a) That the construction and maintenance on privately or publicly owned land of works for resource conservation is in the general public interest and for the general public benefit.

(b) That the expenditure of state, county, city, district, or other public funds that are available or may become available for planning, designing, or implementing the above and for the construction or maintenance of such control or preventive works on privately or publicly owned land constitutes expenditure for the general public benefit.

Section 9003.

The Legislature hereby finds and declares that resource conservation districts are legal subdivisions of the state and, as such, are not-for-profit entities. For the purpose of contracting with state agencies only, resource conservation districts shall be considered agencies of the state.



Public Resources Code (PRC)

Division 9

Article 9. General Powers of District

Section 9408.

(a) The directors may cooperate and enter into contracts or agreements with the state, the United States, any county, any city, any other resource conservation or other public district in this state, any person, or the commission, in furtherance of the provisions of this division, and to that end may use any funds available to the district as provided in this chapter, and may accept and use contributions of labor, money, supplies, materials, or equipment useful for accomplishing the purposes of the district.

(b) Districts may cooperate with counties and cities on resource issues of local concern. It is the intent of the Legislature to encourage districts to facilitate cooperation among agencies of government to address resource issues of local concern.

(c) Districts may cooperate with federal, state, and local agencies and owners of private lands under the agreement between the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts and various public and private entities known as the coordinated resource management and planning memorandum of understanding.



Public Resources Code (PRC)

Division 9

Article 9. General Powers of District

Section 9415.

The directors may manage, as agents of the United States or any of its agencies, or of this state or any of its agencies, any soil conservation, water conservation, water distribution, flood control, erosion control, erosion prevention, or erosion stabilization project, within or adjacent to the district; and may act as agent for the United States, or any of its agencies, or for this state or any of its agencies, in connection with the acquisition, construction, operation, or administration of any soil conservation, water conservation, water distribution, flood control, erosion control, erosion prevention, or erosion stabilization project within or adjacent to the district.

History and Geography

Evergreen Soil Conservation Service District was formed in 1944 and Black Mountain Soil Conservation District was formed in 1943. The districts consolidated in 1977, and the new district was known as the Evergreen Resource Conservation District until 1995, when the name was changed to Guadalupe-Coyote.



GCRCD covers over 362,000 acres in northern Santa Clara County, and extends to San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Alameda and Stanislaus Counties. It represents a wide diversity of climate, vegetation, topography, geology, soils, population density and land use.

Watersheds and Wildlife

GCRCD encompasses at least a portion of ten distinct watersheds that drain to the lower portion of San Francisco Bay. Many of these watersheds once supported large runs of salmon and steelhead trout, and still continue to support a wide variety of other wildlife as well, including Tule elk, beaver, bobcat, mountain lion

(puma), coyote, gray fox, badger, burrowing owls, osprey, California tiger salamander, western pond turtle, and red-legged frog.



Mission

The mission of the 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.



Areas of Strategic Focus

In collaboration with agricultural and resource conservation partners, the District identified the following priority areas in its 2019-2024 Long-Range Plan:

- A. Agricultural Resources
- B. Biodiversity
- C. Water Quality
- D. Fire Risk
- E. Climate Change
- F. Public Engagement
- G. District Operations

NRCS-RCD Collaborative Services

GCRCD has a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and works collaboratively with them to provide:

- Technical and cost-sharing assistance for agricultural producers implementing conservation practices.
- Soil surveys for landowners and government agencies.
- Agricultural, equine and forest management workshops.
- Conservation promotion and education through forums, meetings, youth activities and scholarships.



Resource conservation districts use the same philosophy as NRCS in providing services:

- Assess the resources on the land.
- Evaluate the conservation problems and opportunities.
- Look to different sciences and disciplines for solutions.
- Integrate all into a conservation plan for the whole property.
- Through implementing conservation on individual projects, contribute to the overall quality of life in the watershed or region.
- Work closely with land users so that the conservation plan reconciles with their objectives.



Current Programs and Projects

Our District is currently working on or has committed to the following programs and projects:

- Ranchers Outreach Program
- Rural Roads Program
- Post-fire Restoration Program
- Monarch Butterfly Habitat Restoration Program
- Integrating Agriculture into Climate Mitigation Outreach
- California Envirothon
- Pond IT Open Source Development
- Community Grant Program
- aDNA Salmonid Research Project and Publications
- Tule Elk/Pronghorn Habitat Suitability Analysis
- Carbon Farming Planning
- Community Wildfire Protection Plan – Grazing Management



Photo Credits

- Cover Photo: Cattle in California rangelands, Coyote Ridge, Santa Clara Valley; Stuart B. Weiss; 4/15/2009; USGS Multimedia Gallery
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- Dust Storm, Bakersfield, California: Nicole Scrape Briggs, 2015; The Weather Channel
- Natural resources images: Wikipedia/Wikimedia Commons
- Planting activities: Veggielution Community Farm