

**Guadalupe-Coyote
Resource Conservation District
(GCRCD)**

Soon to be the North Santa Clara RCD

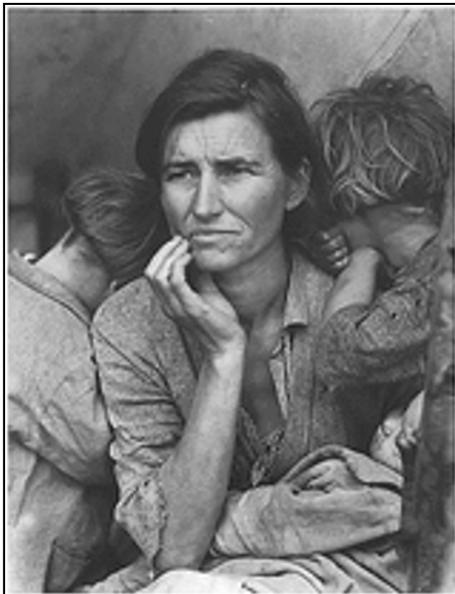
Soil and water conservation became a national concern during the Great Depression.



A dust storm approaches Stratford, Texas in 1935.

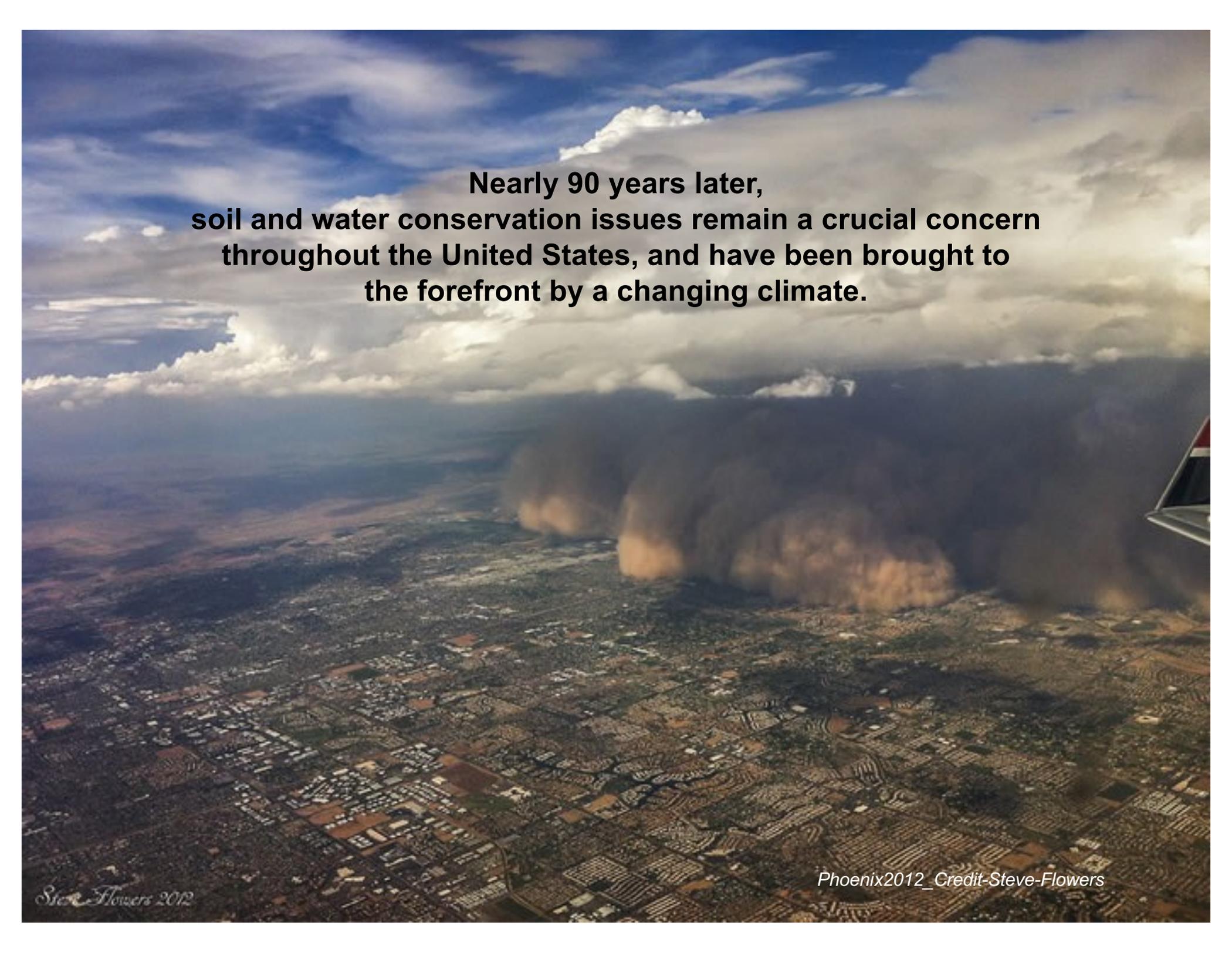
Credit: NOAA George E. Marsh Album

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. 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.



The Dust Bowl





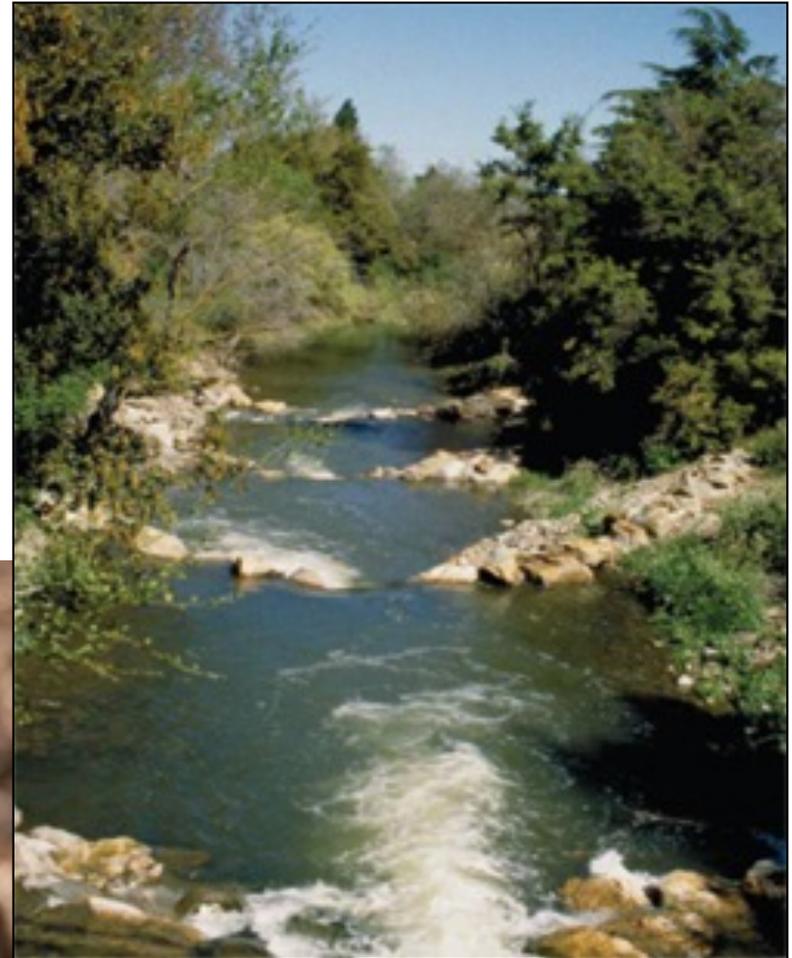
**Nearly 90 years later,
soil and water conservation issues remain a crucial concern
throughout the United States, and have been brought to
the forefront by a changing climate.**

It was through the persistent efforts of Hugh Hammond Bennett, “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 .." PL 74-46*

In 1994, the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Soil Conservation Service was renamed the "Natural Resource Conservation Service" (NRCS) to better reflect the important connection between soils and other natural resources in healthy watersheds.



California also renamed its soil conservation districts "resource conservation districts" (RCDs).

The California Department of Conservation works closely with RCDs in furtherance of its mission and goals.

Resource Conservation District Assistance Program



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

Image Credit: California Department of Conservation

The legal authority for RCDs can be found in Division 9 of California's Public Resources Code (PRC)



Article 1. Policy of State

Section 9001.

(a) The Legislature hereby declares all of the following:

(1) Resource conservation, enhancement, restoration, adaptation, and resilience are 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, water, and biodiversity conservation, enhancement, restoration, adaptation, and resilience and related natural resource conservation.

(2) The climate crisis is happening now, impacting California in unprecedented ways, including intensifying wildfires, mudslides, floods, and drought, sea level rise, and extreme heat, that threaten our economy, communities, public safety, and cultural and natural resources.

(3) Resource conservation districts are important partners to the state in achieving the state's ever-evolving goals to protect, conserve, restore, and enhance natural resources and to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Section 9001 (continued).

(4) This division is enacted to accomplish the following purposes:

(A) 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, enhancement, restoration, adaptation, and resilience 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.

(B) To provide for the organization and operation of resource conservation districts for the purposes of the protection, conservation, restoration, or enhancement of natural resources, the improvement or enhancement of adaptation or resilience to climate change, the mitigation or sequestration of carbon emissions on natural lands and working lands, 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.



Image Credit: Stephanie Moreno

Section 9001 (continued).

(b) The districts, in addition to any other authority provided by law, may do all of the following:

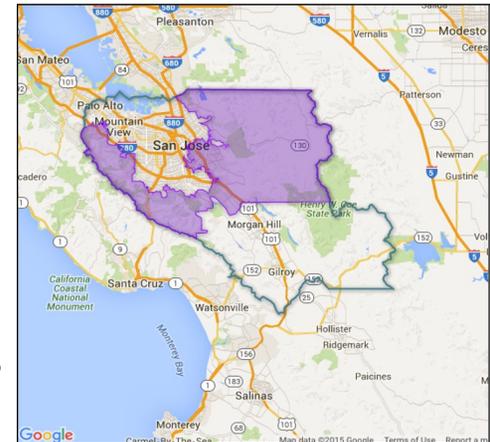
(1) Ensure consistency with the authorities and policies of the United States, this state, counties, cities, public districts, other resource conservation districts, persons, associations, and corporations.

(2) With the consent of the owner, construct on privately or publicly owned lands any necessary works for the protection, conservation, restoration, or enhancement of natural resources, the improvement or enhancement of adaptation or resilience to climate change, the mitigation or sequestration of carbon emissions, or the prevention and control of soil erosion and erosion stabilization.

(3) Facilitate coordinated resource management efforts for watershed restoration and enhancement.

(4) Develop and implement projects and programs for the conservation, enhancement, restoration, adaptation, and resilience of soil, water, and biodiversity and related natural resource conservation.

(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.



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.



Image Credit: Stephanie Moreno

Section 9003.

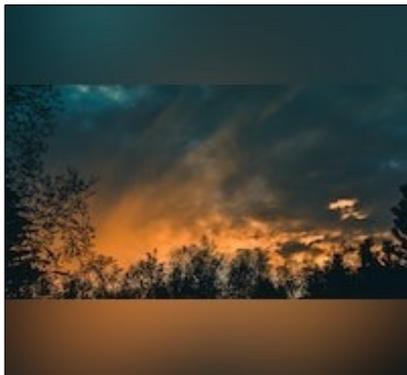
The Legislature hereby finds and declares that resource conservation districts are legal subdivisions of the state and, as such, are not-for-profit entities. For the purpose of contracting with state agencies only, resource conservation districts shall be considered agencies of the state.

Section 9151.

A resource conservation district may be formed pursuant to this division to provide resource conservation services for the protection, conservation, restoration, or enhancement of natural resources. Resource conservation services may include the development and implementation of programs, projects, practices, and activities on public and private lands for all, but not limited to, the following purposes:

(a) The control of runoff, the prevention or control of soil erosion, the development and distribution of water, the implementation of erosion stabilization projects, and the improvement of land capabilities.

(b) Protecting people, communities, ecosystems, and public and private resources from devastating wildfire, flood, drought, and other human-made and natural disasters.



(c) Protecting, conserving, restoring, promoting, and improving the health, resilience, and adaptability to climate change of natural, working, and urban lands.

(d) Protecting and improving water quality, conserving water resources, and developing and distributing water.

(e) Planning, preparing for, and addressing sea level rise, storm surge, and other threats to the conservation and preservation of natural resources in coastal areas.

Section 9151 (continued).

(f) Protecting, conserving, and restoring California's biodiversity and soil biology, including, but not limited to, plants and wildlife.

(g) Controlling and eradicating invasive species, disease, and pests on natural, working, and urban lands.

(h) Restoring, enhancing, and providing stewardship of forest resources.

(i) Restoring and enhancing of agricultural lands to sustain California's agricultural economy.

(j) Providing technical assistance to landowners and land managers in pursuit of all of the above.



Image Credit: Roger Castillo

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.

Section 9411.

The directors may disseminate information relating to soil and water conservation and erosion stabilization, and those purposes identified in Sections 9001 and 9151, and may conduct demonstrational projects within, or adjacent to, the district on public land, with the consent of the agency administering or having jurisdiction thereof, or on private lands, with the consent of the owners thereof, independently or in cooperation with the United States, this state or any political subdivision or public district thereof, or any person.

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 project or program consistent with Sections 9001 and 9151, 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 project or program consistent with Sections 9001 and 9151 within or adjacent to the district.



Image Credit: Dina Iden

GCRCD 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 RCD was known as the Evergreen Resource Conservation District until 1995, when the name was changed to Guadalupe-Coyote. A new name change is scheduled to take effect in 2023, and the District will be known as the North Santa Clara RCD.



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.

GCRC Watersheds and Wildlife

GCRC encompasses a portion of at least 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.

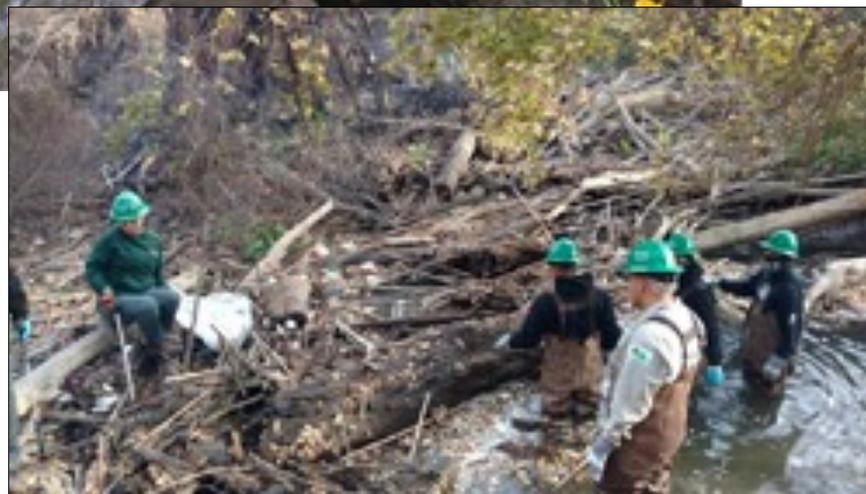


Image Credits: South Bay Clean Creeks Coalition

GCRCDD 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.”



Image Credit: Bill “The Fox Guy” Leikam

GCRCD 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

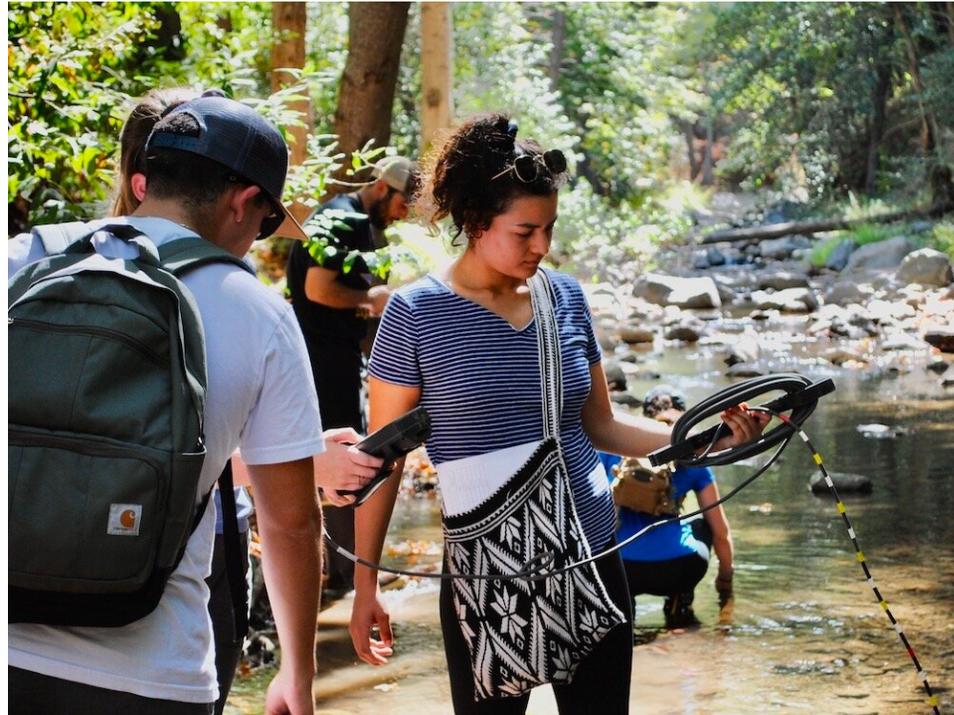


Image Credit: Grassroots Ecology

NRCS-RCD Collaborative Services

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

- 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.



Image Credit: Grassroots Ecology

GCRCD adheres to the NRCS philosophy in providing services to its constituents and stakeholders:

- 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.



Image Credit: Stuart B. Weiss

Additional Photo Credits

- Cattle in California rangelands, Coyote Ridge, Santa Clara Valley; Stuart B. Weiss; 4/15/2009; USGS Multimedia Gallery
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- Natural resources images: Wikipedia/Wikimedia Commons
- Landscape Photo: Urban Wildlife Research Project
- Guadalupe River: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Cover and Landscape Photos: Stephanie Moreno