



## Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network Member Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate organization name: Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District

Organization representative name: Stephanie Moreno, Executive Director

Organization description: We are an independent special district of the State of California dedicated to the conservation of natural resources and the stewardship of agricultural lands.

Describe the land stewardship your organization engages in: We develop projects with and provide services to agricultural producers and watershed stakeholders to facilitate the implementation of best management practices related to soil, water and wildlife.

Describe the goals of your organization's land stewardship: The District established the following goals for its 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.

Who has a stake in the outcomes of your organization's work? Taxpayers, landowners, residents, businesses, government agencies, community-based organizations, and other watershed stakeholders within the Santa Clara Basin.



Describe your organization's relationship with current members of the SCMSN. We have engaged in the following relationships with members of the SCMSN (as listed on its website):

- Current MOU with San Jose Water Company.
- Current collaborative discussions regarding potential projects with Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve (Tule elk habitat), Santa Clara Valley OSA (pollinator habitat), and San Mateo RCD (Greater Bay Area Carbon Farming Hub).
- Previous project and/or event partners relating to forestry, rural roads, fire risk, climate action, ponds, and/or wildlife habitat with CalFire, Santa Clara County Parks, Valley Water, Midpeninsula Regional OSD, Santa Clara Valley OSA, San Mateo RCD, and RCD Santa Cruz County.

Does your organization represent a stewardship type or stakeholder not currently well represented in the SCMSN? Resource conservation districts have a unique relationship with rural landowners and agricultural producers that can help facilitate projects on private lands. Additionally, as part of our watershed stewardship commitment, GCRCD supports expert consultants to provide best available science and has driven novel scientific publications, including the first physical proof that beaver were native to the Santa Cruz Mountains region (Saratoga Creek) and that Chinook salmon were historically native to the Guadalupe River watershed. Two additional publications have been accepted for the California Fish and Wildlife Journal on important wildlife linkages in the Santa Cruz Mountains region.

In what ways does the work of your organization involve collaboration? The District has made a commitment to work collaboratively on as many of its projects and programs as possible in order to leverage available resources, increase the regional scientific knowledge base, and maximize public education related to the conservation of natural resources. For example, we have entered into partnership agreements with the City of San Jose (climate action), the South Bay Clean Creeks Coalition (salmonid research) and Veggielution Community Farm (crop irrigation and pollinator habitat); recently executed a formal MOU with San Jose Water Company (watershed projects and educational activities); and have pending subcontractor agreements with ReScape (biochar workshop) and the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy (student and adult environmental educational workshops) to assist with the implementation of their respective grants from Valley Water. We also established a Community Grant Program, which has provided funding to local environmental groups for environmental projects and programs, and provides free grant-writing technical assistance to small community-based organizations to help them build capacity.

How will becoming a member of the SCMSN aid the work of your organization? It will increase our knowledge base of issues specific to the Santa Cruz Mountains, a portion of which is included in our District, facilitate potential new and enhanced collaborations with other



member organizations, and allow other watershed stakeholders to become more familiar with our District's work.

How does your organization engage with issues of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion? The District has established an ad hoc Environmental and Social Justice committee to receive public input and provide guidance to the Board regarding issues related to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI). The District has adopted an Environmental and Social Justice Policy; maintains a page on its website showcasing a number of resources; and in 2020 arranged for an interactive presentation at its Board meeting for the Directors to engage in its first meaningful discussion about JEDI goals and objectives for the District. JEDI remains a priority work in process.

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