

North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District (NSCRCD)

Environmental and Social Justice Policy

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Governance. The Board of Directors (“Board”) for North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District (“District”) consists of five members (“Directors”) of the Board. As the governing body of the District, the Board reviews and approves District policies. The Board has delegated responsibility for policy administration to the District’s Executive Director (“ED”), including but not limited to the development of procedures and internal controls to implement the policies.

Purpose of the Policy. It is the policy of the District to recognize, apply, and uphold environmental and social justice within its purview and provide support for partner organizations as they strive to do the same. It also seeks to provide equal access for everyone, particularly those with the greatest need. This includes equity pertaining to District engagement with stakeholders and other members of the public, particularly those in marginalized communities/areas.

Definitions.

- Environmental Justice: the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, policies, programs and projects.
- Marginalized: those who are systematically excluded from full participation in society. In District documents, the term may be used interchangeably with “underserved”, “underrepresented”, and “socially disadvantaged”.
- Social Justice: the fair treatment of all people in a society, including respect for the rights of minorities and equitable distribution of resources among members of a community.

Policy Revisions. The Board reviews District policies annually. Any Director or the ED may make recommendations for changes to a policy at any time, but all policy changes require approval by the Board.

Statement of Non-Discrimination. The District conducts its business on a non-discriminatory basis, without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, political affiliation or beliefs, religion, gender, age, physical and invisible disability, medical condition, marital status or pregnancy (as those terms are defined by the California Fair Employment and Housing Act – Government Code Section 12900-12996). Additionally, the Board has adopted a Statement of Diversity and Inclusion to ensure diversity and environmental justice are key components of the District’s strategic planning and programmatic work.

II. SCOPE

The District will practice environmental justice while pursuing its mission. The District will give particular consideration to marginalized communities within its sphere of influence, as defined by the State of California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) as well as references such as DAC Mapping websites and others. Focus will include areas with the greatest risk of environmental impact to marginalized communities, such as areas near industry, freeways, and railroads.

III. PRINCIPLES

The District is committed to: 1) dissolving existing environmental justice barriers; 2) rectifying previous imbalances to marginalized communities; and 3) increasing transparency in how the District supports environmental justice in its decision-making and actions. To further its commitment, the District intends to apply the following principles:

- Minimize or avoid new or expanding sources of environmental burdens in low-income communities and communities of color.
- Ensure the programs, grants, and investments the District supports do not negatively impact low-income and communities of color.
- Encourage investment where opportunities exist in neighborhoods where there is existing infrastructure, in particular where an opportunity exists to restore a degraded or contaminated site and encourage its clean, productive and sustainable use.
- Encourage investment in community development in areas where there is no infrastructure to build on.
- Support land uses and industries which are generally recognized as not being harmful to public health and the environment.
- Promote projects that avoid, minimize, or mitigate climate change impacts on vulnerable populations.
- Adopt sustainable strategies to protect the soil, wildlife, water from degradation and the community from potential health hazards.
- Work as an organization to learn about justice, equity, diversity and inclusion, and how they relate to the District's mission.
- Ensure diversity and environmental justice are key components of the District's strategic planning and programmatic work.
- Use Director positions as conservation leaders to amplify diverse voices in the conservation movement.

IV. OBJECTIVES

The District supports collaboration between its organization, its partners and the community. It wants to ensure a positive impact as a result of any decisions made by the Board. Before initiatives are implemented, the Board will address the following areas:

- Provide proper translation of any District plans and updates to the community which it impacts.
- Work with local agencies/community organizations to establish additional channels of communication regarding projects and initiatives related to the District's mission.

- Provide a variety of opportunities for the public to receive information, addressing the varying levels of information accessibility within underserved communities using different types of communication/mediums.
- Establish clear and attainable ways for the public to engage in discussions.
- Provide resources to the community for education regarding projects that may have a direct impact on their environment (for example, how to read an Environmental Impact Report (EIR)).
- Enable stakeholders to participate in environmental decision-making.
- Encourage community engagement with underrepresented stakeholders and community members via tailored outreach plans.
- Advocate on behalf of underrepresented or socially disadvantaged community members on local projects affecting the environment.
- Encourage the County Board of Supervisors to maintain the diversity of the Board of Directors.
- Recruit employees and consultants whose background and experience show a commitment to diversity and environmental justice.

Policy Log:

| Date | Action |
|------------|---|
| 06/03/2021 | Board adopted policy. |
| 07/20/2023 | The Executive Director updated the policy to reflect the District's name change from Guadalupe-Coyote RCD to North Santa Clara RCD. |