

PROJECT NARRATIVE

Project: Farm and Ranch Resilience Program

Project Descriptive Title:

Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District (GCRCD) will implement the Farm and Ranch Resilience Program, a multilingual technical assistance and education program for farmers and ranchers in the NRCS Hollister Service Center area.

I. Institutional Background.

The mission of the Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District (GCRCD) is to provide education and technical assistance to constituents and watershed stakeholders to sustainably manage soil, water and wildlife with the best available science. It is an independent special district of the state of California dedicated to the conservation of natural resources in Santa Clara County, and is regulated by Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code (PRC). The primary purpose of California's resource conservation districts (RCDs) under Section 9001 (a) of the PRC is to secure "the adoption of conservation practices, including but not limited to, farm, range, open space, urban development, wildlife, recreation, watershed, water quality and woodlands." RCDs are leaders in locally led conservation work, and implement on-the-ground projects, provide technical assistance, and help educate the public to improve their local communities.

II. Conservation Activity Location.

Santa Clara County lies in the southern watersheds of the San Francisco Bay. GCRCD encompasses approximately 583 square miles and has an estimated service population of 300,577 in the northwestern, northeastern and central portions of the county, including urbanized areas within the City of San Jose and portions of the historic Coyote Valley. District offices are located in San Jose, which is home to a diverse population of 1.94 million people. Primary languages spoken at home are English (43.2%), Asian/Pacific Islander (25.6%) and Spanish (23.5%). An estimated 8.7% of residents are in poverty.

Through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Loma Prieta RCD, and a working partnership with the San Benito RCD, the three RCDs coordinate producer outreach, public education, and the provision of technical assistance through a broad area within Santa Clara and San Benito Counties. The project will be implemented throughout the geographical area served by the Hollister service area.

III. Problem Statement/Needs Assessment.

California agricultural producers are experiencing increased conservation challenges due to extreme natural events, including but not limited to drought, floods, catastrophic fires and high wind events, and are looking to integrate climate smart agricultural practices to address specific resource concerns. Additionally, farmers and ranchers who are just starting out in agriculture

within Santa Clara County, particularly those from historically underserved populations, can experience financial, technical and/or cultural challenges that inhibit their ability to obtain technical assistance, negotiate leases, integrate into established agricultural networks, and understand and access NRCS Farm Bill conservation programs such as the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). To address these conservation challenges, GCRCD plans to implement a multilingual technical assistance and education program within the NRCS Hollister Service Center area designed to: 1) provide culturally appropriate technical assistance and education to agricultural producers, with targeted outreach to beginning, limited resource, socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers; and 2) provide direct technical assistance to NRCS staff in the implementation of Farm Bill conservation programs.

IV. Program Goals and Objectives.

Funding from NRCS will be used to recruit a part-time bilingual conservation specialist who will build capacity to conduct outreach, offer educational opportunities and provide technical assistance to these historically underserved farmers and ranchers. Recipients of these services will be better able to complete and submit applications to NRCS and FSA for a variety of services and financial assistance, including CSP and disaster relief funds.

The goal of this project to develop and implement a multilingual farm and ranch outreach, public education and technical assistance program for agricultural producers wishing to implement climate smart conservation practices and Farm Bill conservation programs.

Objectives:

Objective 1: Provide technical assistance to agricultural producers facing conservation challenges from climate change and extreme weather events to help them integrate climate smart conservation practices into their operations.

Objective 2: Conduct culturally appropriate regional outreach to historically underserved agricultural producers in at least two languages other than English.

Objective 3: Provide direct technical assistance to NRCS staff in the implementation of Farm Bill conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), on eligible lands within the approved project area.

Term: One year

V. Methods/Implementation.

Planned Activities:

- Hire a 30-hour per week multilingual conservation program coordinator to provide public education, outreach and technical assistance services within the project area.
- Host an educational workshop for up to thirty (30) participants in a language other than English.
- Provide technical assistance to help identify and address resource concerns for up to twelve (12) agricultural producers.

- Provide at least four (4) hours per week of direct technical assistance to NRCS staff in the implementation of Farm Bill conservation programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), on eligible lands within the approved project area.

Timeline

The project will be one year in duration. Project activities, objectives and outcomes should be completed within the 12-month time frame. 50% of work completed by March 31, 2024 and 100% of work completed by August 31, 2024.

Task	Timeline
Begin project and grant administration.	September 1, 2023
Complete agricultural producer engagement plan.	September 30, 2023
Recruit and hire program-specific staff.	October 31, 2023
Complete multilingual outreach materials.	November 15, 2023
Commence direct services to NRCS.	November 30, 2023
Commence agricultural producer outreach.	November 30, 2023
Host educational workshop.	February 29, 2024
Complete twelve site visits to provide technical assistance.	July 30, 2024
Provide final report.	August 30, 2024

VI. Evaluation Plan.

GCRCDD will evaluate accomplishments and outcomes by tracking and preparing quarterly reporting on the products completed; the hours of service provided to NRCS; the number of agricultural producers contacted through the agricultural producer engagement plan; the number of attendees at the workshop; and the number of site visits completed. GCRCDD will use the reports to evaluate the success of the program and to determine the viability of continuing the program past the expiration of the grant using District and/or other revenue streams.