

North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District

LONG RANGE PLAN
July 2025 through June 2030



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A. INTRODUCTION

This Long Range Plan (LRP) establishes the strategic direction of the North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District (District) for the period 2025 through 2030. The plan provides a framework for identifying priorities, delivering services, and guiding annual implementation efforts that support conservation and stewardship across the District's service area.

The plan was informed through Board and Associate Director input, stakeholder engagement, prior planning documents, and review of regional resource conditions and trends. Survey results were used to inform relative emphasis among priorities while maintaining alignment with the District's statutory role and long-standing service areas. This document reflects a five-year planning horizon and is designed to remain flexible to respond to funding opportunities, partnerships, and emerging resource needs.

Overall results of the planning effort indicated strong alignment around watershed health, biodiversity, climate adaptation, and wildfire preparedness as areas of emphasis over the next five years. It is a strategic framework, not a project list. Specific activities, budgets, and project selection ~~is~~[are](#) addressed through adoption of annual District budgets and work plans.

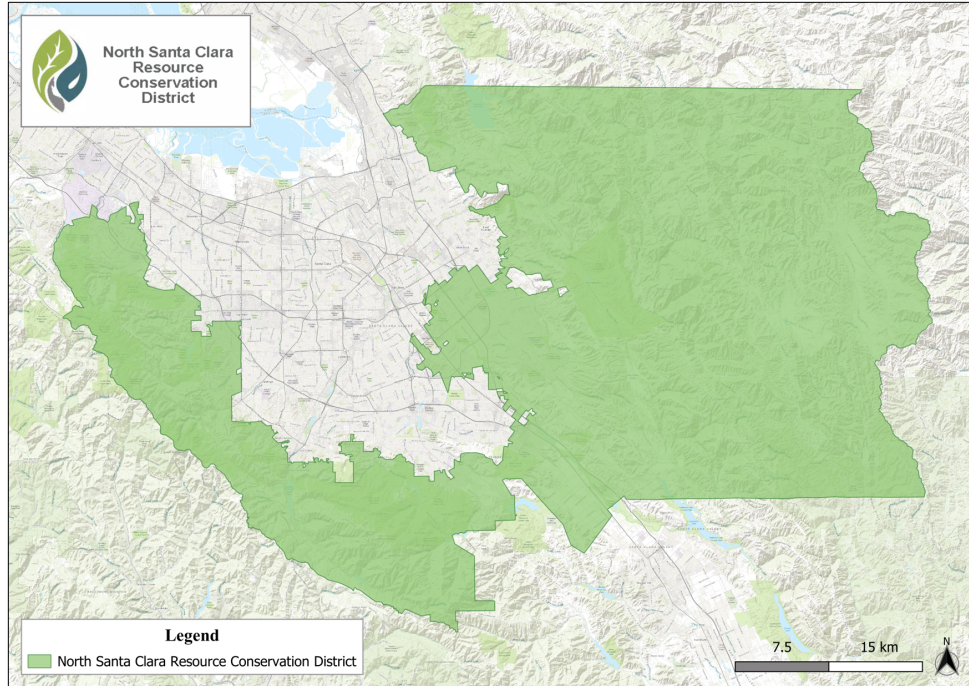
The purpose of this LRP is to:

- Establish the District's long-term strategic priorities.
- Provide a framework for organizational decision-making.
- Guide development of Annual Work Plans (AWP).
- Communicate the District's role to partners and the public.
- Support coordination across agencies, landowners, and communities.

B. ABOUT THE DISTRICT

[North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District \(NSCRCD\) is a resource conservation district \(RCD\), which is an independent special district of the state of California dedicated to the conservation of natural resources and preservation of agricultural lands in Santa Clara County. RCDs are regulated by Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code \(PRC\), in which the Legislature declared them to be legal subdivisions of the state. The primary purpose of California's 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." California's RCDs are leaders in locally-led conservation work and RCDs implement on-the-ground projects, provide technical assistance, and help educate the public to improve their local communities.](#)

[Our District is governed by a 5-member, volunteer Board of Directors. The Board also relies on its volunteer Associate Directors to provide additional expertise to the Board, including but not limited to the areas of: natural resources conservation and management; agricultural and grazing management practices; environmental health; land use; engineering; physical and life sciences; public outreach and education; and local government policy and procedures.](#)



History of RCDs

Resource Conservation Districts (RCD's) were first known as Soil Conservation Districts and were originally authorized by Federal Legislation in 1937 under the Standards Act. They were initially formed in the Midwest to deal with the unparalleled ecologic disaster known as the Dust Bowl and were created to serve as the local liaisons between the US Soil Conservation Service, now known as the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service and local landowners. They were immediately recognized as serving a very important purpose and thus rapidly spread to other states throughout the country. California quickly adopted State provisions authorizing the formation of Soil Conservation Districts in 1938 and these are expressed in PRC Sections 9001 et. seq. These provisions have been amended through the years to reflect the changing needs of all those affected as well as the changing environmental conditions.

Purpose and Function of RCDs

Under PRC Section 9001 (b-1), the District has the legal authority to cooperate with the United States, the State of California, counties, cities, public districts, other resource conservation districts, persons, associations and corporations. Additionally, PRC Section 9001 (b-2) authorizes RCD's to construct on private or publicly owned lands, with the consent of the owner, "necessary works for the prevention and control of soil erosion and erosion stabilization." The California Legislature determined that the construction and maintenance of conservation projects on publicly or privately owned lands in or adjacent to District lands is in the public interest and for the general public benefit. For this reason, the expenditure of state, county, city district or other public funds for planning, designing or implementing conservation works constitutes expenditure for the general public benefit.

RCDs are not rule making or regulatory agencies but can advise individual members of the public. Certain forms of federal assistance are available only through resource conservation districts, and for purpose of of contracting with state agencies only, resource conservation districts are considered agencies of the state (PRC 9003).

NSCRCD History

North Santa Clara RCD is an outgrowth of the Black Mountain and Evergreen Soil Conservation Districts. It is one of two RCDs in Santa Clara County and covers the northern portion of the county. The Loma Prieta RCD covers the southern portion of the county. The Black Mountain Soil Conservation District was organized in 1943 to cover some 5,500 acres of land in the Calabazas Watershed on the west side of Santa Clara Valley. It later expanded to cover most of the hilly land on the west side of the valley from the San Mateo County line to Loma Prieta Mountain and the boundary of the Loma Prieta Soil Conservation District. Most urban lands at the time, as well as the lands of Stanford University were excluded from the District.

The Evergreen Soil Conservation District was formed in 1944 and originally covered about 10,000 acres on the east side of the Santa Clara Valley, largely the Silver Creek Watershed. It later expanded to include most of the land on the east side of the Santa Clara Valley, largely the Coyote Creek Watershed from Morgan Hill to the Alameda County line, excluding the then urban city lands. In 1972 the Evergreen Soil Conservation District changed its name to the Evergreen Resource Conservation District.

In 1977 the Black Mountain Soil Conservation District merged with the Evergreen Resource Conservation District. The combined districts carried the name of the Evergreen Resource Conservation District until 1995 when its name was changed to the Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District after the two largest watersheds in the District. In 2022, in recognition of its more integrated natural resource conservation approach, in alignment with its social equity goals, and as clarification of its geographical location within Santa Clara County, the District changed its name to North Santa Clara RCD.

At this time, the ~~North Santa Clara Resource Conservation~~ District encompasses approximately 583 square miles within northern Santa Clara County and serves an estimated 300,000 residents. The District's service area encompasses urban, urban-edge, rural, foothill, watershed, forested, and working landscapes, including agricultural lands, open space, stream corridors, rangelands, and communities vulnerable to wildfire and climate-related impacts.

~~Operating under Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code, the District is an independent, non-regulatory special district of the State of California providing voluntary, locally driven conservation services in partnership with landowners, public agencies, Tribes, and community organizations. Governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, the District is supported by volunteer Associate Directors who provide additional expertise to the Board and staff in areas of natural resource management, agricultural operations, or local government policy and procedures. The District is one of two resource conservation districts in Santa Clara County, and has its roots in two of the county's original conservation districts, the Black Mountain Soil Conservation District and the Evergreen Soil Conservation District, both of which were formed in the 1940s. Its name was changed from Guadalupe-Coyote RCD to North Santa Clara RCD in December 2023.~~

C. REGIONAL AND RESOURCE CONTEXT

Santa Clara County has a long history of agriculture, and the Santa Clara Valley was once known as the "Valley of Heart's Delight." However, that history rests upon a much longer history of Indigenous stewardship of the lands, watersheds, grasslands, oak woodlands, and wildlife that continue to shape the region today. For thousands of years, Indigenous peoples maintained deep relationships

[with these landscapes through practices informed by ecological knowledge, cultural responsibility, and care for future generations. The District recognizes the continued presence, stewardship, and contributions of Tribal communities and the value of ongoing partnership in advancing conservation, restoration, and resilience across the region.](#)

According to the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture (updated every five years), the County contained approximately 803 farms encompassing roughly 238,000 acres of farmland. Compared to the figures cited in the District's 2019-2024 LRP, this reflects a decline of approximately 87 farms (roughly 10%) and more than 50,000 acres of farmland (roughly 17%).

Despite these declines, agriculture remains an important component of the County's economy, landscape, and cultural identity. The Agricultural Commissioner's 2024 Crop Report indicated that the gross value of agricultural production reached approximately \$389.9 million, reflecting continued strength in nursery crops, mushrooms, lettuce and leafy greens, bell peppers, wine grapes, specialty crops, and hay and forage production associated with the County's rangeland, grazing, woodland, and working landscape stewardship operations. The report further reflects the importance of specialty crops, grazing lands, and climate-resilient agricultural practices within Santa Clara County's diverse agricultural economy. In addition to commercial agricultural production, the District recognizes the growing importance of urban agriculture, local food systems, and community-based stewardship activities within developed areas of the District.

[Regarding environmental stewardship,](#) The District lies within the Santa Clara Basin (Basin), which consists of eleven watersheds including the Coyote Creek watershed on the east side of the valley and the Guadalupe River watershed which drains the south-central portion of the valley. These watersheds encompass a mix of agricultural lands, open space, rangelands, watersheds, and communities vulnerable to wildfire and climate-related impacts. Santa Clara County is also one of the most economically dynamic and rapidly developing regions in California. Continued urban development pressures, climate impacts, changing land use patterns, and increasing wildfire risk continue to affect ~~natural resources, agricultural lands, watersheds, and open space~~ [watersheds and their natural resources](#) throughout the Basin. For this reason, the District collaborates and partners with a variety of federal, state, local, and Tribal governments; nonprofit organizations; industry associations; land managers; and community groups throughout the region on [environmental stewardship](#) projects and programs impacting its watersheds. Partnerships are essential to achieving the landscape-scale conservation outcomes and leveraging limited resources.

The District serves communities with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including significant Spanish-, Vietnamese-, and Chinese-speaking populations. These conditions influence how the District conducts outreach, develops partnerships, and delivers conservation services across urban, suburban, rural, and historically underserved communities.

D. VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

Vision

Healthy, resilient ecosystems and communities supported by collaborative, locally driven conservation.

Mission

[*The mission of the North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District is to conserve natural resources*](#)

and support sustainable land stewardship.

~~*Current mission statement: The mission of the North Santa Clara Resource Conservation 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.*~~

~~*Example for discussion: The mission of the North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District is to provide leadership, technical assistance, and partnership-based solutions that conserve natural resources and support sustainable land stewardship across working, natural, urban, and rural landscapes.*~~

Values

- Inclusive access to conservation services
- Collaboration and partnership
- Science-based decision making
- Stewardship across working, natural, urban, and rural landscapes

E. DISTRICT SERVICES AND DELIVERY

District Services

The District advances its resource priorities by providing a consistent set of conservation services throughout its service area. While specific programs, projects, and funding sources may change over time, these services represent the primary ways in which the District supports landowners, agricultural producers, residents, partner organizations, and communities.

Technical Assistance: Providing conservation planning, resource assessments, practice recommendations, grant assistance, and implementation support to landowners, agricultural producers, residents, and partner organizations. Examples may include:

- Conservation planning
- Agricultural assistance
- Resource assessments
- Grant and funding assistance
- Landowner consultations

Project Development and Implementation: Developing, coordinating, and implementing conservation and stewardship projects that address identified resource concerns and advance District priorities. Examples may include:

- Habitat restoration projects
- Watershed improvement projects
- Fuels reduction projects
- Agricultural conservation projects
- Community stewardship projects

Education and Outreach: Providing educational opportunities and community engagement activities that promote conservation awareness, stewardship, and informed decision-making. Examples may include:

- Workshops and training events
- Demonstration projects

- [Youth education activities](#)
- [Community outreach](#)
- [Educational materials and resources](#)

Monitoring and Adaptive Management: Evaluating conservation outcomes and resource conditions to inform future planning, project design, and management decisions. Examples may include:

- [Project monitoring](#)
- [Effectiveness evaluations](#)
- [Data collection and analysis](#)
- [Resource conditions assessments](#)
- [Adaptive management recommendations](#)

Partnership Development and Coordination: Building and maintaining collaborative relationships that leverage resources, expertise, and capacity to address conservation challenges. Examples may include:

- [Interagency coordination](#)
- [Tribal partnerships](#)
- [Collaborative planning efforts](#)
- [Regional conservation initiatives](#)
- [Stakeholder engagement](#)

Research and Demonstration: Supporting applied research and demonstration activities that improve understanding of local resource conditions and conservation practices. Examples may include:

- [Demonstration sites](#)
- [Pilot projects](#)
- [Applied conservation research](#)
- [Practice evaluations](#)
- [Knowledge-sharing initiatives](#)

~~The District delivers conservation outcomes through a consistent set of services applied across all resource priorities. These services represent the District's core capabilities:~~

- ~~• *Technical assistance:* support to landowners, producers, community members, and partners to plan and implement conservation practices.~~
- ~~• *Project development and implementation:* design and delivery of on-the-ground conservation projects.~~
- ~~• *Education and outreach:* workshops, technical education, and community engagement with communities and stakeholders.~~
- ~~• *Monitoring and adaptive management:* tracking outcomes, evaluating effectiveness, and informing conservation approaches.~~

Service Delivery Enablers

District services are supported ~~by:~~ through a combination of funding, partnerships, and organizational capacity, including:

- *Property Taxes:* ~~a~~ A local percentage share of property ~~taxes~~ tax revenues supports discretionary District operations and programs.

- *Grant Funding:* ~~federal~~ [Federal](#), state, regional, and local funding sources ~~fund~~ [support](#) specific programs and projects.
- ~~Research: applied research and demonstration projects support conservation innovation, expand local knowledge base and facilitate collaboration and buy-in among landowners, communities, and partners.~~
- *Partnerships:* ~~and~~ [Coordination:](#) ~~e~~ Collaboration with agencies, Tribes, nonprofits, [educational institutions](#), ~~and~~ landowners, [and community organizations](#) ~~builds~~ [expands](#) capacity and ~~helps meet regional goals~~ [strengthens conservation outcomes](#).
- *Organizational capacity:* ~~strong staff and technical expertise, funding diversity, governance and Board engagement, and current technology and data systems support service delivery.~~ [Staff expertise, Board leadership, technology, and sound financial management support effective service delivery.](#)

F. WORKING LANDS AS A FOUNDATION CONSERVATION LANDSCAPE

The District recognizes that working lands, including agricultural and rangeland landscapes, play an essential role in achieving long-term conservation outcomes across Santa Clara County. Many of the District’s strategic resource priorities, including watershed health, biodiversity, wildfire preparedness, climate resilience, and restoration, are directly connected to the stewardship and management of working landscapes.

Accordingly, support for agricultural producers, land stewards, and conservation practices on working lands will remain integrated throughout the District’s planning, partnerships, and implementation efforts. This approach reflects both the District’s statutory role under Division 9 and the practical reality that many regional conservation objectives are achieved through voluntary stewardship on privately managed lands.

G. RESOURCE PRIORITIES, GOALS, AND OUTCOMES [REQUIRES BOARD DISCUSSION](#)

Working Lands Stewardship

Goal: Support sustainable management and long-term viability of working landscapes.

Outcomes:

- *50-150 producers assisted*
- *500-5,000 acres improved*

Watershed Health and Biodiversity

Goal: Improve watershed function and ecological health across landscapes.

Outcomes:

- *100-1,000 acres restored or enhanced*
- *5-15 projects implemented*

Climate Adaptation and Wildfire Preparedness

Goal: Increase landscape and community resilience to wildfire and climate-related impacts.

Outcomes:

- *500-5,000 acres treated or managed*
- *10-30 landowners engaged annually*

~~Working Lands Stewardship~~

~~Goal: Support sustainable management and long-term viability of working landscapes.~~

~~Outcomes:~~

- ~~• 50-150 producers assisted~~
- ~~• 500-5,000 acres improved~~

Restoration and Landscape Stewardship

Goal: Implement restoration activities that improve long-term ecosystem function.

Outcomes:

- 100-500 acres restored
- 5-20 projects implemented

Urban and Community-Based Conservation

Goal: Expand conservation awareness and stewardship within urban and suburban communities, including urban agriculture, creek stewardship, and sustainable landscape practices.

Outcomes:

- 5-20 projects
- 200-1,000 people engaged annually

H. IMPLEMENTATION

The LRP establishes the District's strategic priorities and organizational direction. Specific projects, grants, partnerships, and annual activities are identified through the District's Budget and Annual Work Plan based on:

- Available funding
- Partnerships
- Organizational capacity
- Emerging resource needs

The District places a high priority on identifying and developing 1) key relationships with other agencies to expand its capacity to serve its constituency, and 2) additional sources of funding beyond tax revenue and grants. The Board will include activities as part of its Annual Work Plan to ensure this remains a priority.

The District will use the following methods to guide successful implementation of the LRP:

The Board will regularly review implementation of the Long Range Plan and consider progress toward strategic priorities when adopting annual budgets, Annual Work Plans, and major organization initiatives. In support of its oversight responsibilities, the Board may periodically conduct focused reviews of specific resource priorities, District services, organization capacity, funding opportunities, partnership, or implementation activities to evaluate progress, identify emergency needs, and inform future decision-making. It will also use the annual Local Work Group meeting to solicit input on resource priorities and the provision of District programs, projects, and services. Specific activities will be developed as part of the Annual Work Plan to:

- Track progress toward strategic goals
- Evaluate project and program outcomes

- Evaluate grant and other funding opportunities for alignment with the LRP
- Report regularly to the Board, partners, and the public
- Provide opportunities for District staff to expand their technical expertise
- Adjust implementation approaches as needed based on changing conditions and new information

Update Log:

The District’s Long Range Plan is a living document, and as such, may be updated from time to time in between successive five-year plan adoptions. Substantive narrative changes are reviewed and approved by the Board, and formatting, administrative, and non-substantive narrative changes are made by the District Manager (“DM”), with follow-up notification to the Board.

Date	Version #	Action