

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Our Mission:

*To protect, conserve, and
restore natural resources through
education, information & technical
assistance programs.*



**RESOURCE
CONSERVATION
DISTRICT**
Greater San Diego County

www.rcdsandiego.org

A Message from Our Executive Director

Dear RCD friends and partners,

We are excited to share our successes during 2021 with you! Despite still riding the COVID rollercoaster, 2021 marks a year of progress and growth here at the RCD. Many of our programs have expanded, and we have learned a lot about how to adapt our services to meet the needs of the community while adhering to the guidelines created to keep us safe during these unpredictable times. We have also had some organizational changes in 2021. Our previous Executive Director, Sheryl Landrum, retired and moved out of state for a beautiful new chapter in Texas, and Ann Baldrige, RCD's former Community Programs Director, has taken on the Executive Director role.

Some key highlights to share from 2021 include the growth of both our agriculture and our fire prevention & forest health departments. We continued to provide outreach and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to help them implement land management practices that build soil health and conserve natural resources, our San Diego Agriculture Planning Program gained a lot of momentum, and we have attracted funds to diversify the services we offer.

Our fire prevention and forest health department has continued to provide much-needed programs that help homeowners create and maintain defensible space, serving over 600 homes in 2021. We also piloted a new education program, the Last Chance Survival Simulation Workshop, which expands on our popular Fire Operations in the Wildland Urban Interface course and state-wide Ready, Set, Go campaign.

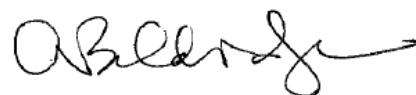
In our pollinator health work, the San Diego Native Milkweed Project that we manage with the San Diego Pollinator Alliance produced 18 pounds of narrowleaf milkweed which can be planted to create monarch habitat across the county. Please contact us if you would like a pack of the seed! We also started a program to link pollinator habitat with our healthy soils work, as many land management practices that build soil health also support pollinators and vice versa.

In addition to supporting farmers and ranchers, we are also farmers ourselves and continue to grow food, soil, and community at Wild Willow Farm &

Education Center. Despite operating in a global pandemic, we were able to provide a safe outdoor space for workshops, offering 33 gardening and preserving workshops and five sessions of our 8-week Farming 101 course in 2021. We were also able to pilot a new program, Growing Garden Boxes, which offered free or subsidized workshops to help local residents learn how to grow vegetables and pollinator habitat in small spaces. With support from SDG&E and USFWS Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program, we were able to offer participants free plants and raised beds for creating their own gardens at home.

The RCD has a wonderful staff of 18 that works incredibly hard on our mission to protect, conserve, and restore our natural resources, as well as an active and supportive Board of Directors and a wealth of amazing partners. We are also proud to work with many talented interns both in our office and at our farm and community gardens, who add significant value to our programs. We look forward to another year of collaboration, conservation, and community building in 2022.

Please feel free to reach out to RCD staff with any questions or to get involved.



Ann Baldrige, RCD Executive Director



Who We Are... What We Do...



Protecting, conserving, and restoring natural resources across 1.8 million acres, the Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County (RCDGSDC) is a non-regulatory Special District organized under Division 9 of the California State Public Resources code.

The RCD administers programs to restore and protect San Diego County watersheds, prevent

wildfire damage through education and fuel reduction, promote nutrition and stewardship through sustainable agriculture, and revitalize pollinator habitats. As stewards of the regional environment, we partner with a diverse group of landowners, public and private institutions, and concerned citizens to address the diverse conservation and environmental concerns that are unique to San Diego County.

Our District at a Glance

Service Areas of Resource Conservation Districts in San Diego County



The Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County serves the following:

Incorporated cities and surrounding communities: Carlsbad, Chula Vista, Coronado, Del Mar, El Cajon, Encinitas, Escondido, Imperial Beach, La Mesa, Lemon Grove, National City, Poway, San Diego, San Marcos, Santee, Solana Beach, Spring Valley, and Vista.

Unincorporated communities including: Alpine, Borrego Springs, Campo, Cuyamaca, Descanso, Guatay, Jacumba, Julian, Lakeside, Mt. Laguna, Mt. Palomar, Pine Valley, Ramona, and Warner Springs.

Our Service Area:

- 1,847,300 acres or 2,886 square miles

San Diego County Population:

- 3.3 million
- Fifth highest populated county in US
- 19th largest agricultural economy in US
- Largest number of small farms (6,687) in US

San Diego County Topography:

- San Diego is considered a biodiversity hotspot. It is home to more than 30 vegetation communities as well as hundreds of rare plant and animal species.
- Encompasses mountains, deserts, forest, and coastal resources.
- Includes 11 watersheds with streams, rivers, sloughs, lakes, beaches and bays, as well as urban, agricultural, and suburban areas.

The northern boundary extends into the Bonsal community; the southern boundary extends to the United States-Mexico border; the western boundary extends to the Pacific Ocean; and the eastern boundary extends to the Imperial County line.

OUR HISTORY — 1940s TO TODAY



1935

Soil erosion, dust storms, and floods sweep the nation. In response, the Soil Conservation Service is formed in the US Agricultural Department.



1930's

Farmers around the nation organize soil conservation districts to work with the new Soil Conservation Service.



1970's

The district's name is changed to the "Resource Conservation District" as it takes on new challenges like wildlife habitat loss, invasive species, water and air pollution, and diminishing air and water quality.



2000's

There are currently 95 RCDs within California and 3,000 nationwide, accomplishing tens of thousands of practical, hands-on conservation projects every year.



1937

FDR writes state governors encouraging legislation to allow landowners to form Conservation Districts.



1940's

California's Soil Conservation Districts are formed. San Diego originally had 13 districts.



1995

District consolidations result in the formation of the Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County.

We currently serve a population of 3.1 million people, in a territory that spans 1.8 million acres. The region includes miles of coastline, mountains, forest, deserts, and hosts the largest number of small scale farms in the nation



At the close of 2021, the RCD was managing 30 grants, totaling more than \$1,998,000

RCD 2021 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Total net assets of the district for 2021	\$2,543,268
Net assets not invested in buildings, land or equipment (i.e. unrestricted assets)	\$715,892
Total tax assessment dollars deposited to the District	\$384,804
Projected operating budget 2020-21	\$1,318,425
Projected operating budget 2021-2022	\$1,166,005

Our district's programs, projects, and services are primarily funded by local, state, and federal grants and donations. In addition, we receive income in the form of lease rentals from the Tijuana River Valley Community Garden and the Sweetwater Community Garden, which we manage. The RCD receives annual tax apportionment funds in the amount of 1% of unimproved properties (assessed land values only).

As a local governmental entity, the RCD is tax-exempt under IRS rules. We conduct annual financial audits by an independent auditing firm. Our most recent audit was conducted by Wilkinson Hadley King & Co. LLP. It covers fiscal year 2020-2021 and is available to view in full on our company website. The audit shows the RCD to be solvent and stable.

Community Gardens

The Benefits of Fresh Produce, Open Air, and a Vibrant Gardening Community

For nearly two decades, our community garden, located in the beautiful Tijuana River Valley Regional Park, has been serving the residents of the South Bay, offering them the ability to grow fresh produce for themselves and their families. The community garden is home to 210 plots that are rented to local residents.

The garden continued to thrive in 2021, allowing the RCD to bring more volunteer opportunities and community engagement to serve the South Bay area. We were able to lead our first garden cleanup since the pandemic which resulted in the collection of 160 cubic yards of green waste and trash! Additionally, we hosted volunteer events where community members contributed time to replant the native hedgerow, upgrade the irrigation system, care for communal fruit trees and clear weeds from common areas.

The TRV is also home to nine quarter acre plot holders. These spaces are for farmers in San Diego County who want to start their own farm business. Offering these spaces increases access to land, fresh food and encourages healthy soil practices.

In 2021, our Sweetwater Community Garden in Bonita continued to flourish and created a new space for those who want to grow their own food. We continued to fill the plots this year and gained a total of 60 new gardeners! We were able to team up with the Solana Center to significantly improve the communal composting system, host two public composting workshops, and train gardeners to facilitate proper use of our composting system. Want to rent a Sweetwater Garden plot? Call our office at 619-562-0096.



Left photo: Sweetwater Community Garden.

Right photo: Volunteers at the TRV Coastal Cleanup Day.



COMMUNITY IMPACT

60 new gardeners received plots at the Sweetwater Garden	In 2021, a total of 351 hours of volunteer time were contributed by the community to garden maintenance, hedgerow planting, fruit tree care, and garden improvement	One cleanup day drew 78 volunteers with 238 hours of volunteer time	Serving the local community for nearly 20 years
19 new gardeners received plots at the Tijuana River Valley Community Garden in 2021		Received a \$500 grant from the Master Gardener's to buy tools and a storage shed for the compost system at the Sweetwater Garden.	Thanks Go Out To: San Diego Co. Dept. of Parks & Recreation and our gardeners & volunteers, who keep the garden thriving

Supporting Farmers and Ranchers

Technical support for agricultural producers

In 2021, outreach and education was a big focus of the agricultural support programs. In total, we hosted eight webinars, lectures and application workshops, including a Spanish-language workshop in collaboration with UC Cooperative Extension and Mission RCD. 337 participants joined in these events, including 187 agricultural producers. Staff began offering soil sampling to help producers assess baseline conditions for regenerative practices.

This year we focused on deepening partnerships with additional partners like San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), San Diego State University, Community Health Improvement Partners, San Diego Food System Alliance, Upper San Luis Rey RCD, and Foodshed Inc. 119 new readers subscribed to the Farmer

and Rancher monthly newsletter – a more than 150% increase – including 57 new agricultural producers.

Additional grant awards diversified the mix of funders and the programs we offer, such as federal funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to assess producer eligibility for grant funding, state funding from the Department of Conservation to conduct a 2-year County-wide planning program for San Diego LAFCO, and private funding from Zero Foodprint for conservation practices in Campo. Existing funding from the CA Department of Food and Agriculture expanded with two additional programs: a second round of Healthy Soils Incentives technical assistance and economic relief for underserved producers.



Left photo: Pollinator plants at Solidarity Farm

Right photo: Hukama produce farm in Ramona

As part of our support to farmers and ranchers, the RCD manages three active carbon farming demonstration projects—prescribed grazing and cover crops.

The practice of cover cropping aims to make sure the soil is always covered with plant growth and full of active root systems below. Permanent vegetation cover absorbs excess soil nitrogen that might otherwise be leached below the root zone, increases soil microbial

activity, and provides structure to the soil that allows for more effective water transportation and helps limit soil erosion. Outreach efforts for this grant have included a webinar in the Spring of 2021 focused on protecting orchards from extreme heat, and a field day focused on the benefits of compost and cover crops as a means of increased water retention and disease suppressant.

Prescribed grazing is the practice of intentionally

Supporting Farmers and Ranchers

Carbon Farming Demonstration Projects

moving grazing animals through rangeland to ensure that enough vegetation remains to allow for vigorous regrowth the following year. The practice has many added benefits, including to at-risk wildlife such as burrowing owls which prefer open meadows to dense weeds. Grazing has also been key in fire management by reducing fuel loads on rangeland bordering homes and public facilities. Outreach efforts for this grant included three webinars regarding fire prevention and ecosystem services. The webinars featured regional experts from NRCS and Cooperative Extension and engaged both ranchers and conservation professionals.

All webinars were recorded and are publically available online to continue our support.

The RCD also maintained the Carbon Farming Demonstration plot and pollinator hedgerow in the TRV Community Garden, and educated visiting groups about practice implementation. Results demonstrate that compost is undoubtedly an effective and affordable means of sequestering carbon and developing healthy soil. Produce from our demonstration plot was sold to Foodshed, which distributes local produce to underserved communities.



Left John Austel's herd for prescribed grazing
Right: Andy Williamson at demonstration site



COMMUNITY IMPACT

Held two Prescribed Grazing webinars with 99 attendees	Organized 8 technical and application workshops to educate local producers, farmers, and ranchers	Provided technical assistance to 31 farmers and ranchers	Educated 18 ranchers about the importance of prescribed grazing
1,224 acres were cleared through prescribed grazing demonstration project		1,226 acres implemented with carbon farming demonstration practices	Two grazing field days attended by 40 people total

Wild Willow Farm & Education Center

Feeding the local community & educating through hands on learning

Located in the Tijuana River Valley Regional Park, Wild Willow offers visitors of all ages a beautiful and peaceful place to unwind and connect to nature, while learning about regenerative farming practices that grow soil, food, and community.

In 2021, Wild Willow Farm was able to welcome back community members to participate in volunteer days, workshops, and field trips. This provided outdoor activities for the local community and an opportunity to learn and meet like-minded people.

This year, we debuted a new “Growing Garden Boxes Program” that taught the community how to grow food and create pollinator habitat in their backyard or other small spaces. We also offered optional garden box kits for those who wanted to develop small home gardens.

Field Trips: We welcome schools, groups, and clubs of all kinds to visit the Farm and see first-hand how a small working farm operates. This learning opportunity teaches students about compost, seeds, organic agriculture, and the roles that animals play on a farm. In 2021, we taught over 30 field trips to local schools and groups.

Workshops: From sauce making and beekeeping, to canning and tree pruning, we teach a diverse array of fun, educational workshops. We hosted 33 workshops over the course of the year and sold 317 tickets.

Farming 101: For the more serious minded, we offer an eight-week course teaching the fundamentals of regenerative farming. In 2021, we taught five sessions of Farming 101 and educated around 75 students about the importance of sustainable farming.

Internships: Our 12-week internship program develops individuals into budding new farmers and/or good food community advocates. Interns work alongside staff in tending the fields, harvesting and packaging produce, and supporting all other on farm activities. In 2021, we had 7 interns.

Community Impact: In 2021, Wild Willow donated roughly 3,500 pounds of organic produce to local organizations.

In the fields, we increased production to continue to provide the community with fresh fruits and vegetables. We were able to add new CSA members and open up our strawberry fields during the summer to welcome visitors to the farm for a U-pick opportunity. This created new connections between the farm and local community members which in turn has led to new volunteers, interns, and staff members to bring in fresh perspectives and wisdom.

Wild Willow was able to give back to our community this year by donating to the San Diego Food Bank and We all We Got.

Below you can read about the various programs that were running at the farm in 2021.



Wild Willow Farm & Education Center

Learn about farming in a way that respects people & wildlife

Growing Garden Boxes: In 2021, we premiered a new program that educated students on how to plant your own small scale garden no matter where you live. Through this program, we distributed 40 garden boxes, soil, and vegetables plants to underprivileged communities.

CSA Farmshare (Community Supported Agriculture): 64 CSA subscribers received weekly produce boxes, which contained a variety of healthy, seasonal produce. In 2021, we delivered a total of 1,489 CSA bags.

Volunteers: Wild Willow was open to the public two days a week to give community members a taste of the things a farmer does while preparing and growing seasonal produce in San Diego. In 2021, the farm welcomed 1,381 volunteers who provided 4,643 hours of labor and assisted with animal care, CSA harvest, weeding, and planting.

Community Functions & Events: Individuals, clubs, and corporate groups are all welcome to get their hands dirty by volunteering at the Farm. The farm is also available to host weddings, meetings, birthday parties and outside workshops.

Food2Soil Program: We participate in this composting collective that benefits the local community by turning food waste into a resource. In 2021, Food2Soil transformed 114 tons of food scraps into 2,850 cubic feet of compost.



Forest Health & Fire Prevention

Working to make our region more resilient to wildfire

In 2021, the RCD implemented fuels reduction projects, improved ecosystem health, and strengthened community wildfire preparedness to increase our region's resilience to wildfire.

We continued with our Regional Forest and Fire Capacity (RFFC) project funded through the California Natural Resources Agency, managed by Department of Conservation. Through this program, we are working to build partner capacity, collaboration, and landscape-level wildfire resilience. We are working to develop a Regional Priority Plan (RPP) for San Diego County, promoting healthy forest practices through demonstration projects, and developing a coordinated effort to reduce the Gold Spotted Oak Borer (GSOB) threat. We are also helping to build partner capacity by providing fire management, and pest management resources to local communities and

partners, and developing a Community Wildfire Protection (CWPP) training course.

This year, we launched the Native American Conservation Corps (NACC) program workforce training program! This two year collaboration between RCDGSDC, San Diego River Conservancy, State Parks, Kumeyaay Diegueno Land Conservancy, and Santa Ysabel Lipay Nation provides training on fuels reduction and forestry skills, basic firefighting, first aid, and chainsaw work with on the job training.

In addition, we implemented a targeted GSOB mitigation project in the community of Oak Grove, through a collaboration with FSCSDC, local homeowners, Dr. Thomas Scott, and Green Tree Forest Service where we treated and monitored over 2,700 oak trees.



Morgan Hill Burn



Checking for GSOB larvae

This year was also spent working on the CAL FIRE Forest Health Project. Our project "Saving San Diego's Last Mixed Conifer Forest" continued its collaborative approach to manage and protect the health of our forests and watersheds to ensure their resilience against future wildfires, while promoting increased carbon storage across ~1,575 acres on Palomar Mountain. Our group of 5 state, federal, tribal, and private landowners are implementing active fuels reduction, and forest reforestation. This unique project has multiple sustainable benefits to Palomar Mountain that improve forest health, wildlife habitat, and community protection.



GSOB larvae in oak

Fire Safe Council of San Diego County

Keeping San Diego Fire-safe for 24 years

Since 1997, the RCD has managed the programs and funds of the Fire Safe Council of San Diego County (FSCSDC), whose mission is to foster fire prevention and safety throughout the San Diego region. The FSCSDC serves as the “umbrella organization” for the 40+ fire safe councils in San Diego County by providing support, resources, and education to existing councils.

In 2021, we utilized grants from SDG&E, San Diego River Conservancy, and USFS State Fire Assistance, to increase the impact of our community-level fuels reduction programs: no-cost chipping and defensible space assistance program (DSAP). Our DSAP program is designed to assist homeowners with creating mandatory defensible space who are not able to themselves due to physical, economic, or other barriers. Our no-cost chipping program is a free service that assists homeowners who have completed mandatory brush thinning and defensible space work, by chipping the cleared vegetation, and leaving mulch in it’s

place. We were able to provide service to 610 homes this year.

In collaboration with our agency partner educators and community FSCs we facilitated several unique education opportunities to promote fire safety and preparedness. This included one full length Wildland Urban Interface Course (WUI), two abridged WUI workshops, and one Last Chance Survival Simulation workshop (LCSS).

We supported community Fire Safe Councils to create Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) through technical assistance, workshops, and templates. These comprehensive living documents outline geography, evacuation routes, action plans, and priority projects for each community, and are supported and approved by the FSCSDC Board and the CAL FIRE Unit Chief.

We continued our outreach campaigns this year by participating in five safety fairs and other community events.



Abridged WUI Workshop at a Monastery



LCSS Workshop

COMMUNITY IMPACT

6,434,021 cu ft. of fuels treated at 610 home through DSAP and Chipping programs

5 safety fair outreach events, 3 of which were in partnership with SDG&E

Bimonthly meetings brought together more than 40 community members – as well as local, state, and federal fire agency officials, and fire experts – to share news and information

Supported two new Community Wildfire Protection Plans, helping to protect residents by addressing issues such as wildfire response, community preparedness, and structure protection

Supported 42 local Fire Safe Councils that serve as the “neighborhood watch” of fire safety

Launched 6 new demonstration projects to help reduce the threat of the Gold Spotted Oak Borer

Habitat Restoration

Through Invasive Species Removal

The RCD of Greater San Diego County is committed to habitat restoration, especially along the riparian corridors of our reservoirs and rivers. Water is an essential resource, yet its quality and quantity are strained each year due to longstanding drought periods coupled with high temperatures. San Diego County imports the majority (80%) of its water supply from the Bay Delta and

the Colorado River and the remainder from local surface and groundwater supplies and conservation efforts. We are committed to managing water sources efficiently and improving the water supply for future generations. We believe that our diversified regional water efforts will make our communities more resilient against drought, flooding, population growth, and climate changes.



Proposition 84

The RCD is managing a multi-year, multi-million dollar Proposition 84 Integrated Regional Water Management Implementation Grant to control invasive plants and erosion upstream of the El Capitan Reservoir. RCD coordinated project partners for the Healthy Headwaters program, who treated more than 8 acres of

invasive plants and installed 115 riparian plants in the San Diego River Watershed this year.

In addition, to these activities, Back County Land Trust also obtains right of entry permits from private homeowners, the San Diego River Park Foundation trains and engages volunteers in invasive plant removal and expeditions called headwaters assessments, and the Forest Service is installing educational signs and repairing trails including the three Sisters Waterfall trail.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

8.2 acres treated for invasives including 5 acres initial treatment	This project is a collaboration with several local, state, and national stakeholders across 93 acres within unincorporated San Diego County.	Funders awarded a one year extension to complete work that was delayed in 2020 due to COVID
115 riparian plants installed		Three RCD Staff members dedicated to this service

Supporting High School Conservationists

Creating Environmental Stewards for the Future

The future of conservation lies in the hands of today's youth. That's why the RCD is committed to supporting high school students who have a love of agriculture and environmental sciences and a desire to learn more about conservation. Through college scholarships, Range Camp sponsorships, speaking competitions, and hands-on, land-based learning programs, we encourage high school students to learn about conservation and even consider a future in a conservation-related field.

A highlight of 2021 was our Conservation Scholarship program which received the highest number of applicants since we began the program in 1989. Students needed

financial support more than ever this year and we stayed committed to honoring conservation-minded high school seniors with college scholarships, a program we have proudly maintained for 34 years running!

In 2021, the RCD started working with Chula Vista High School and other partners to create a self-guided tour at Wild Willow Farm. Students were asked to research agricultural topics and create content for plaques for a walking tour. This encouraged students to learn about their local environments and dive deep into the importance of sustainable farming. We are planning to host 80 CVHS students early next year to plant trees at the farm and learn about agriculture.



Scholarship winner Chrysanthe Frangos

It is a blessing to receive your college aid! I am so grateful to you and your team for helping me reach my goals! These funds will allow me to focus on my education and work to fight climate change!

*- Nathan Lu
2021 Conservation
Scholarship Winner*



Scholarship winner Samantha Low

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Six environmentally-conscious high school seniors received \$1,000 college scholarships to pursue degrees in conservation-related fields in 2021

Received 27 Conservation Scholarship applicants—the most we have ever received!

Supported two high school interns at Wild Willow Farm

137 scholarships awarded since 1989

Began working with 80 Chula Vista High School students to help us create content for the new self-guided tour at Wild Willow Farm

The “Watershed Connection” Education Program

Reducing Pollution and Protecting San Diego Bay

For over 25 years, the RCD has partnered with the Port of San Diego to educate thousands of elementary students about watersheds and the importance of protecting them.

This year we made the program completely virtual in order to continue this educational opportunity during a challenging time. Students learned all about watersheds, including how pollution travels from urban areas, through creeks and rivers, into bays and the ocean. This

interactive, science-based learning program also teaches students what they themselves can do to reduce pollution in their communities and become environmental stewards.

Students are presented with real world problems and solutions to these issues that they can implement in their every day lives. Below are examples of some photos that students view to realize the importance and severity of pollution in the San Diego Bay Watershed.



COMMUNITY IMPACT

83% of educators rated the program experience and educator delivery as excellent

In 2021, we educated 1,693 students through 68 virtual presentations at 26 participating elementary schools

Pre- and post-test records indicated that every participating class had an increase in understanding the connection between pollution & watershed health

Students “pay it forward,” by sharing their new-found knowledge with family members

Interns added over \$6,500 in match funding and in-kind contributions from 249 volunteer hours

In the last 10 years, 23,656 students have been educated about how pollution impacts the watershed, and in turn, all of us

New virtual resources were provided to schools to further their education

Watershed Connection — Student & Teachers Feedback



"I love how the demonstration model shows the effects of pollution and it gave the students a better understanding"
- Educator at Casillas Elementary

"I learned that every piece of trash you see in the street will eventually end up in the ocean if it doesn't get picked up." - Clarence U.

"I learned about the main types of pollutions in our everyday lives and ways to stop this pollution."
- Lily M.

"One important thing I learned is how much we are hurting our environment and how we need to help!"
- O'Bryan I.

Students commented that they all loved the presentation! GREAT interest level and the virtual game was a hit." - Educator at Village Elementary

"It was a great visual for our students, the pictures of sea life affected by trash in the ocean were extremely effective."
-Educator at Dewey Elementary

I learned that my actions affect animals and their homes."
Valerie C.

"It is important to not litter and to make sure you don't put things into storm drains otherwise it will hurt animals" - Kaylie O.

"It exposes kids to watersheds and how they effect all of us. I thought it was great especially considering it was all virtual!" - Ecuador at San Altos Elementary

"I learned about non-point source pollution and why it makes it harder to clean up trash" - Niv J.

"I learned the importance of reducing, reusing, and recycling. I want to start recycling at home!"
- Veronica G.

"The visuals of pollution going everywhere after the rain was very impactful!"
- Educator at Halecrest Elementary

"I learned what a watershed is and certain ways that I can protect it and the animals that live there." - Chloe S.

"I learned to pay attention to the waste I make and what I throw away." - Ben H.

"I learned that I should try and pick up at least one piece of trash every day. It might not be my trash but it's my home!"
- James. L

School Garden Support

Outdoor Classrooms for Creating Life-long Learners

School gardens are an incredible resource to teach students about their connection to land, where our food comes from, and how to properly nourish our bodies. During the pandemic, many students were not able to work in their school gardens or experience beneficial outdoor learning. This year, our school garden support was incredibly important because it allowed students and families to learn from the dirt both in and out of the classroom.

Since 1999, the RCD has provided resources,

training, and information to K-12 educators interested in teaching in the garden and encouraging students to appreciate fresh food and learn about the food cycle. From newsletters and teacher education, to free plant and seed giveaways, the RCD is helping to create a love of outdoor learning in San Diego County's students.

In 2021, we worked hard to bring free plants to schools and families who were working to reintroduce gardening into their curriculum and had the most successful Plant Giveaway to date.



Our annual plant giveaway supports hundreds of school gardens throughout the county. Above are students from Winter Gardens Elementary who planted their vegetables from the event..

COMMUNITY IMPACT

2,500 vegetable & herb seedlings were given away to support 250 school gardens and local backyards

Two School Garden Newsletters sent to provide school garden resources and funding opportunities

Provided children with access to fresh vegetables and garden-learning activities

RCD Staff available to offer gardening advice to teachers and parent volunteers

Since 2010, we have distributed 20,090 vegetable & herb seedlings to hundreds of school gardens

Pollinator Health

We Need Pollinators . . . And They Need Us!

Pollinators like bees, butterflies, and birds are responsible for 75% of the world's flowering plants and one of every three bites of food we eat! Pollinators are critical to the food supply and plant diversity we find in nature, yet across the nation, they are disappearing. We are working hard to provide education and habitat to protect these beneficial pollinators.

2021 marked year 3 of the San Diego Native Milkweed Project, working towards a long-term goal to create a San Diego source of native milkweed seed. Through this project, the San Diego Pollinator Alliance is working with several local growers to plant native milkweed seed collected at sites across the county. Each year, native milkweeds have been collected, with permission, from wild populations. In 2021, 157 grams of *Asclepias fascicularis*

(narrowleaf milkweed) and *A. eriocarpa* (woollypod milkweed) was collected and distributed to local nurseries and seed growers. Over time, our objective is to develop a source of native milkweed seed and plants for local pollinator habitat creation at both the garden and restoration project levels.

This year we identified the need for a guide for farmers and ranchers to educate them on farming practices that can benefit pollinators. In partnership with US Fish and Wildlife Service and NRCS the RCD began the development of a new program called working lands for pollinators which will provide support and resources that help farmers and ranchers create pollinator habitat on their land.

San Diego Pollinator Alliance

The RCD is a founding member of the San Diego Pollinator Alliance (SDPA), a network of agencies and organizations working together to raise awareness about the plight of pollinators, while empowering local residents to take action to support pollinators.



Photo by Christine Beck

SoCal Pollinator Network

This year the RCD started co-managing the SoCal Pollinator Network which is a new group that strives to connect pollinator efforts. The group was created by a graduate student who realized that most efforts were disconnected and wanted to unify organizations.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

The RCD and its partners gave 7 presentations at the local and state level to share information about monarch health and habitat creation

By encouraging the planting of butterfly host plants - such as milkweed - in school gardens, community gardens, and homes, we created new habitat for beneficial pollinators.

We collaboratively organized a virtual 3-workshop series on pollinator gardening

RCD shared information and resources to local residents who want to help pollinators

Hundreds of native pollinator plants were distributed to local residents through our Growing Garden Boxes Program

Resource Conservation Foundation of Greater San Diego

Expanding the Reach and Impact of the RCD



The Resource Conservation Foundation of Greater San Diego — a 501(c)(3) non-profit — was created in 2016 to help us expand the RCD’s programs and capabilities. Like the RCD, the Foundation’s mission is to protect, conserve, and restore our County’s natural resources through education and technical assistance.

The Foundation allows us more flexibility in pursuing funding opportunities. Diversifying our funding sources

enables us to better serve our community and bring greater conservation benefits to San Diego County.

In partnership, the RCD and its Foundation administer programs to restore and protect the county’s watersheds, promote nutrition and stewardship through sustainable agriculture, and revitalize pollinator habitats.

The Resource Conservation Foundation supports the work that the RCD accomplishes; especially the work at Wild Willow Farm and Education Center

Resource Conservation Foundation Board Members:

Donald Butz, Board President

Maggie Sleeper, Director

Marilyn Huntamer, Board Vice President

Jo MacKenzie, Associate Director

Jordan Gascon, Secretary/Treasurer

DK Nasland, Associate Director

Odette Gonzalez, Director

Lance Rodgers, Associate Director

Neil Meyer, Director



**RESOURCE
CONSERVATION
FOUNDATION**
Greater San Diego

Our Funders

Who Supports our work at the RCD, FSC & RCF

Funders & Donors

Boochcraft

California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) - Block grants from CDFA, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, and the Wildlife Conservation Board

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) - Healthy Soils Program

CAL FIRE - Cal FIRE's Forest Health Program, as part of California Climate Investments

California Fire Safe Council - USFS State Fire Assistance (SFA) administered by CAFSC

County of San Diego - Tax assessments

Department of Conservation - Regional Forest and Fire Capacity (RFFC) & Sustainable Lands Conservation (SALC) Program

Marguerite Tyrell - Donation to Wild Willow Farm

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Port of San Diego

Private Donors

Proposition 84 - Department of Water Resources

San Diego Foundation - Through a collaborative Opening the Outdoors grant

San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) - Environmental Champions & Wildfire Funds Program

San Diego River Conservancy - The Governors Wildfire Early Action Plan

Sunrise Powerlink Fire Mitigation Grants Program

US Fish & Wildlife Service - Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program

Zero Foodprint - Restore CA



Our People

Dedicated to Serving San Diego County Residents

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Jim Thompson

We would like to remember Jim Thompson, who served on the RCD Board of Directors from December 2015 to November 2021. Jim was a dedicated advocate for the work of the RCD and the force behind that work - the staff. He was also passionate about supporting the next generation of conservationists through the RCD Conservation Scholarship, which has been renamed the Jim Thompson Memorial Scholarship. Jim was long involved in conservation at the community level, both through his career as an arborist and by serving on RCD boards prior to the Greater San Diego RCD. Jim passed away in December 2021 and his presence is missed by all.



RCD Staff

Andy Williamson, Farming & Gardening Program Coordinator

Ann Baldrige, Executive Director

Cheyenne Piacenza, Wild Willow Farm: Assistant Farm Manager

Chris Kelley, Financial Director

Codi Hale, Agricultural Outreach Assistant

Erik Rodriguez, Wild Willow Farm: Farmer

Gregg Cady, Wild Willow Farm: Farm Manager

Heather Marlow, Director of Forestry & Fire Prevention

JJ Tidwell, Wild Willow Farm: Farmer

Joanna Parra, Wild Willow Farm: Farmer

Joanne Sauerman, Office Coordinator

Joel Kramer, Regional Agricultural Specialist

Kim Hanson, Field Trip Coordinator

Morgan Graves, Fire Prevention & Forestry Coordinator

Paul Maschka, Wild Willow Farm: Regenerative Farming Educator

Rachel Lloyd, Accounting / CSA

Sierra Reiss, Education Coordinator

Stan Hill, Forestry & Fire Prevention Project Manager

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