

# 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

## Our Mission:

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

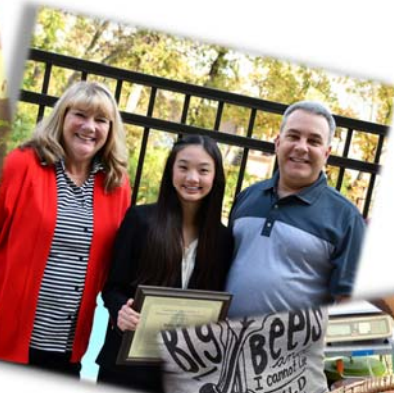


Photo by Lisa Cox, USFWS



**RESOURCE  
CONSERVATION  
DISTRICT**  
Greater San Diego County  
[www.rcdsandiego.org](http://www.rcdsandiego.org)

# A Message from Our Executive Director

As I write this message in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, isolated at home and social distancing from my staff, I think back over this past year and the old adage "what a difference a year makes" seems inadequate to say the least. A year ago, none of us could have imagined that this would be our new normal, and yet here we are. Despite the stress and uncertainty that life in the time of COVID brings, I find myself smiling as I read this annual report and reflect on all of our accomplishments in 2019. Through our efforts and programs, we were able to expand our impact to so many San Diego communities last year; and in the face of this current crisis, we are busy creating new and innovative ways to continue helping these communities thrive. As always, I credit our innovative, creative, and hardworking staff — they truly are super stars!

One of our biggest undertakings in 2019 was adding Wild Willow Farm & Education Center to our program roster. Wild Willow is the only regenerative educational farm in Southern California, and this beautiful 5.5 acre space allows us the opportunity to teach environmental stewardship, food growing, holistic health, and subsistent living skills to thousands of children, adults, and families from all walks of life and experience levels.

Other notable accomplishments in 2019 include: donating nearly 6,000 pounds of produce from our carbon farming demonstration plot to local food banks; making significant strides toward creating the first local source of native milkweed seed to support San Diego pollinators; opening the new Sweetwater Community Garden in Bonita; and launching a new carbon farming demo project, using prescribed grazing at the Rancho Jamul Ecological Preserve. Details about all these projects – along with those of our other programs – can be found in the pages of this Annual Report.

As always, fire prevention and forest health continues to be one of our largest programs. Our RCD was very excited to be a recipient of a five million dollar CALFIRE Forest Health grant in partnership with the Cleveland National Forest, CALTECH, Bergman Ranch, the La Jolla band of Luiseno Indians, and the Pauma Band of Mission Indians. This grant is the perfect complement to the 1.5 million dollar DOC grant we received last year that delegated our region to work with fire agency partners to develop a regional fire priority plan in San Diego County.

Looking forward, our biggest challenge is going to be navigating the COVID pandemic by creating new and innovative ways to continue delivering these programs

to the communities we serve. But, we are up to the challenge! Whether through practicing social distancing, creating virtual trainings, shooting videos to replace in-person tours, providing online resources for teachers, and delivering on-demand workshops, we are committed to serving our communities during this crisis.

With thriving and expanding programs, our organization has grown as well. As I write this, our RCD has eighteen staff members. We have done an organizational restructuring, and staff and board members are currently collaborating on our long-term strategic plan. As a Board member of our California Association of RCDs (CARCD), I spent eleven days last year in training on our statewide goal of bringing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) into our state organization, and into our San Diego RCD as well. I am so pleased to share that Donald H. Butz, who is Board President for both the San Diego RCD and the CARCD, is also going through this important training.

Please take a moment to read this Annual Report and learn more about who we are as an organization, and how our programs and priorities benefit the residents and communities we are committed to serving. My thanks go to the wonderful team that makes this all happen—the staff and the Board of the RCD of Greater San Diego. Thank you all!

Stay well and stay safe. All our best from everyone here at the RCDGSDC.



Sheryl Landrum, RCD Executive Director

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sheryl Landrum".

# Who We Are ... What We Do



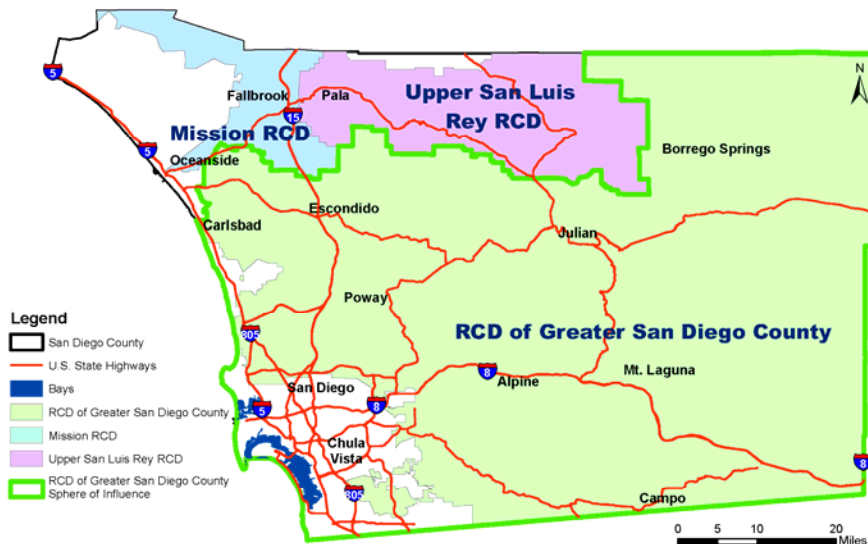
Protecting, conserving, and restoring natural resources across 1.8 million acres, the Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County (RCDGSDC) is a non-regulatory Special District organized under Division 9 of the California State Public Resources code.

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 98 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 host the largest number of small scale farms in the nation.



At the close of 2019, the  
RCD was managing **26 grants**,  
totaling more than **\$3,000,000**

## RCD 2019 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| Total net assets of the district for 2019  | \$2,362,078 |
| Net assets not invested in buildings, land or equipment (i.e. unrestricted assets) | \$474,492   |
| Total tax assessment dollars deposited to the District                             | \$345,763   |
| Projected operating budget 2018-2019   | \$1,762,550 |
| Projected operating budget 2019-2020   | \$2,858,586 |

**O**ur 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 2018 – 2019 and is available to view in full on our company website. The audit shows the RCD to be solvent and stable.

# Tijuana River Valley Community Garden

## *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 garden continued to thrive in 2019, allowing the RCD to bring more gardening, small-scale farming, workshops, and fun events to serve our South Bay community.

We were thrilled to be prominently featured in the TV show “A Growing Passion,” which explores the way plants power our world. Host Nan Sterman toured the site and spoke with many of our gardeners. The show

highlighted the beauty and diversity of the garden and resulted in the doubling of our waiting list!

Unfortunately, Mother Nature unleashed some havoc at the garden, in the form of heavy rains that led to serious flooding. This was devastating to garden members and our ten small-scale farm plot holders. The RCD continuously monitored the soil conditions to ensure the health and safety of our gardeners and farmers.

As Longfellow said, “Into each life some rain must fall.” The flooding was tough, but the garden has fully recovered and continues to be a wonderful destination for gardeners and park guests alike.



*Left: Quarter-acre plots allow small-scale farming at the garden.*



*Right: San Diego Councilmember Vivian Moreno (second from left) visits the Garden and enjoys some of its bounty. She is with RCD staff members, Ann Baldrige and Heather Marlow, plus our gardener, Rolando Samson.*

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

|   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| 22 new gardeners received plots in 2019                         | 10 quarter-acre plots allow beginning farmers the opportunity to learn new techniques, while growing produce for themselves & local residents | Two cleanup days drew 192 volunteers with 570 hours of volunteer time   | Serving the local community for nearly 20 years  |
| 210 30' x 30' plots serve more than 600 local community members |   | Workshops held for gardeners and local residents, with topics including beginning vegetable gardening and vermicomposting | <b>Thanks Go Out To:</b><br>San Diego Co. Dept. of Parks & Recreation, our garden partner, - and -<br>Our gardeners & volunteers, who keep the garden thriving |

# Why We Garden...

{How a sampling of our gardeners feel about their community garden}

"Having a plot in a community garden is more than just a place to grow plants. It is also a calming place that provides peace, happiness, and a sense of relaxation."

"It is the most relaxing, uplifting place. Me and my husband really enjoy it. We feel so lucky to be part of the community garden."

"It means a lot! It is a great opportunity to work with the land and plant my food that I eat and that I share with my family and other people who do not have access."

"A place of my own to relax and connect nature and also an escape from the turmoil of real life."

"It is an outlet for creativity and stress relief for me and my family. It is an outlet for my 92 year old grandparents to do what they love most which is gardening."

"Without it I think I would lose a part of myself and my sanity. Keep up the good work. Working together we will make this one of the happiest places in San Diego."

"Where the city meets the country by the beach."

"The garden means an escape to me. It is an essential marriage therapy tool, the importance of which cannot be overstated."

"I am a 40% disabled veteran, and have a ¼ acre incubator farm plot. I grow vegetables using organic methods, and am also learning resilience in the face of crop failures and weather-related mini disasters. Regardless of the tribulations, I truly enjoy working outside in the weather. I bring my grandkids out to experience what it is like to grow your own food. They now know what a carrot plant looks like and where tomatoes come from."

"The joy of just being alone by yourself...I just sit and stare at my vegetables and relieve some of my stress building inside my head."

"I feel the beauty of [a] simple life in the barrio... Watching your plants grow and bear fruit naturally. And most of all, sharing your harvest with friends and relatives."

"It's like being in your native country & having a small farm you visit every day. The enjoyment you feel is priceless."

"It is a place where I can spend time under the lens of nature as well as caring for the future. It is a place where it can teach others about saving, sharing, donating, preserving, setting limits, and reducing consumption."

"The perfect escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life."

"Having our own garden plot is probably the best investment we've ever made! Everything in my chicken soup is homegrown except the chicken! Even the spices! No shopping at grocery stores, because mine tastes better, and I can guarantee you they are more nutritional!"

"My plot in the community garden means the world to me. It gives me a sense of purpose, and I love planting and harvesting from my garden with my kids. I love the garden comradery we share."

"My plot is really a place where I forget my worries and frustration of my daily life. The joy I get when I see a good robust harvest is really a good feeling."

"I'm a retired, disabled vet. My plot provides me therapy, and being able to tend, grow and consume my own fruit and vegetables from the garden is a blessing."

"It means the world to me! It instills peace, is my sanctuary, exercise, therapy, a clean air coastal birder and equine paradise, with challenging projects and a fun place to be."

"It means everything to me... food that I can grow myself to feed my family... peacefulness and tranquility while trying to take care of my plants... helping to save the environment by growing a small plot for myself instead of it being shipped to me."

# Sweetwater Community Garden

*Bringing New Gardening Options to the Bonita Area*

Once again, we have teamed up with the County of San Diego to manage a new community garden: the Sweetwater Community Garden in Bonita. The garden, which opened in August 2019, is located within the Sweetwater Regional Park and boasts 200 garden plots.

Full plots measure 20' x 20' and half-sized plots are 10' x 20'. In addition two ADA accessible plots with pre-installed raised beds are available for lease. Hose bibs are included for all plots.

We have taken our nearly 20 years of experience managing the Tijuana River Valley Community Garden — the largest community garden in San Diego County — and are putting our expertise to work in helping the new Sweetwater Garden grow and thrive in the same way.

Plots are reserved for residents who live in Bonita and the surrounding communities. We are looking forward to filling all the plots in 2020, and watching the Sweetwater Garden community flourish.

## Sweetwater Community Garden Ribbon Cutting Ceremony!



San Diego County Supervisor, Greg Cox, is joined by representatives from the RCD, San Diego County Parks & Recreation, and members from the community planning group and bicycle club.

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

Offering 200 garden plots to residents of Bonita & the surrounding communities

Creating and nurturing a garden is a therapeutic activity on many levels. In addition to the emotional and mental benefits of being outdoors and working the land in a community setting, there are the health and money-saving benefits of growing and consuming your own fruits and vegetables.

Two ADA-compliant plots help make gardening more accessible to all

**Thanks Go Out To:**  
San Diego Co. Dept. of Parks & Recreation, our garden partner



# Supporting Carbon Farming in San Diego

## An Effective Local Solution to Address Climate Change

Carbon farming is a collective term for practices that increase organic matter contents in soil. These practices promote carbon storage in soil, which over time reduce greenhouse gases by removing accumulated carbon in the atmosphere. Carbon farming practices ultimately deliver healthier soils and more productive lands.

Beginning with one staff member in 2016, our carbon farming work grew in 2019 to include more than five team members. In an effort to spread the benefits of carbon farming, we continue to share our expertise with other RCDs, and present our successes at conferences throughout the state.

The RCD provides sustained carbon farming support to farmers and ranchers in the following ways:

We provide **Technical Assistance** to farmers and ranchers to apply for CDFA grants to help them fund

and implement carbon farming practices, which over time improve yields and overall farm/ranch productivity. These practices also increase biodiversity, creating a land system that is more resilient to the effects of climate change.

Through outreach events, the **Carbon Farming Demo Plot** at our community garden highlights how compost application, mulching, and cover crops improve soil health and moisture as well as crop yields.

As **Carbon Farming Advocates**, the RCD supports local, regional, and statewide initiatives to continue offering technical assistance, increasing the number and type of demonstration projects, and providing outreach. New funding allows us to coordinate with other Southern California RCDs to increase our capacity for implementing carbon farming practices, throughout an even wider region.



We registered our thriving Carbon Farming Demo Plot as a **Certified Producer**, allowing us to sell at the nearby Imperial Beach Farmer's Market, an area that often lacks access to affordable and nutritious food.



Staff members, Andy Williamson & Gregg Cady, with our new carbon farming interpretive panel, which educates visitors about the importance of these practices.

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

|  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| One Carbon Farming plan in the implementation and monitoring stage                               | 753 acres directly treated thanks to CDFA Demonstration Project grants: both at the Rancho Jamul Ecological Preserve and at our Carbon Farming Demo Plot | Provided technical assistance to 30 farmers and ranchers in our region  | Donated nearly 6,000 pounds of produce from our demo plot to local food banks                 |
| Organized three outreach workshops to educate local producers about the CDFA Demo Project grants |  | 793 acres treated resulting from our carbon farming technical assistance efforts at two San Diego sites: one farm and one ranch | Our "Certified Producer" status provides local community members more access to fresh produce |

# Wild Willow Farm & Education Center

*Learn About Farming In a Way That Respects People, Wildlife, and the Planet*

**In** 2019, the RCD took over the operations of Wild Willow Farm & Education Center, a beloved South Bay urban farm just a block away from our thriving community garden. The RCD and Wild Willow Farm have collaborated on projects for years, so we were excited when the opportunity arose for us to take on the farm as our newest community project.

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.

**Wild Willow offers community members the following hands-on farming opportunities:**

**Farm-to-Families** In 2019, ten low-income, South Bay families participated in this bilingual food justice program that teaches the connection between food, health, and well-being. Each family received free produce boxes, plus cooking, nutrition, and garden education classes, culminating with a free garden built at their home!

**CSA Farmshare (Community Supported Agriculture)** More than thirty CSA subscribers received weekly or bi-weekly produce boxes, which contain a variety of healthy, seasonal produce.

**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. Taste fresh picked produce, pet a goat, and connect to nature!

**Workshops & Courses** From cheese making and beekeeping, to canning and soap making, we teach a diverse array of fun, educational workshops. For the more serious minded, we offer **Farming 101**, a seven-week course teaching the fundamentals of regenerative farming.

**Internships** Our 12-week internship program develops individuals into budding new farmers and/or good food community advocates, and includes Farming 101 tuition and discounted workshops.

**Volunteering** Individuals, clubs, and corporate groups are all welcome to get their hands dirty by volunteering at the Farm.

**Community Functions & Event Space Rental** The Farm throws the annual **Soil Shindig**, San Diego's fun & educational celebration of soil, and is also available to host weddings, meetings, and workshops.

**Food2Soil Program** We participate in this composting collective that benefits the local community by turning food waste into a resource.

**Chula Vista High School** The Berry Good Foundation awarded a grant to CVHS to address their neighborhood's food insecurity issues. We assisted them in utilizing environmentally responsive farming practices to provide a food-secure campus where families gather in the garden to harvest healthy food and share healthy recipes.



# Fire Safe Council of San Diego County

*Keeping San Diego Fire-safe for 23 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. Through free chipping, defensible space assistance, fire-safety workshops, and support of the County's 44 community fire safe councils, the FSCSDC works diligently to keep San Diego residents fire-safe.

In recent years, the Fire Safe Council has been working on more large-scale, multi-year projects,

leveraging collaborations with area partners and agencies. Through a \$1.425 million grant from the CA Department of Conservation, we are collaborating with local fire/forestry partners to create a **Regional Fire Priority Plan (RFPP)**. The RFPP will take into account all the agencies' priorities, see where they overlap, and create a plan that identifies high-level, at-risk areas to optimize our County's resources and help make San Diego more fire resilient.

## RCD Awarded Five Million Dollars to Restore and Maintain Healthy Forests

We spent countless hours in 2019 working on a multi-agency application for CAL FIRE's Forest Health Grant Program. All that hard work paid off with a \$5 million grant to help our partnership restore and protect Palomar Mountain, San Diego's last mixed conifer forest. Our multi-agency collaboration includes: the Fire Safe Council of San Diego County, RCD of Greater San Diego County, USFS Cleveland National Forest, La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians, Pauma Band of Mission Indians, Caltech, and Palomar Land & Cattle Company. Utilizing each agency's unique expertise, we seek to collaboratively manage and protect the health of San Diego's forests and watersheds to ensure their resilience against future wildfires, all while promoting increased carbon storage across ~1,575 acres on Palomar Mountain.



## COMMUNITY IMPACT

2,323 acres of brush reduced to improve fire safety

802 homes protected thanks to brush thinning and chipping

132 residents trained at fire safety workshops

Bimonthly meetings bring together more than 50 community members – as well as local, state, and federal fire agency officials, tribal leaders and fire experts – to share news and information

Increased the number of Community Wildfire Protection Plans to 33, helping protect residents by addressing issues such as wildfire response, hazard mitigation, community preparedness, and structure protection

Supporting 44 local Fire Safe Councils that serve as the “neighborhood watch” for fire safety

Community volunteers are honored at annual Fire Safe Council Volunteer Awards

# A Few Words of Thanks from Our Community Members

*Free Services — Chipping and Defensible Space Assistance Program (DSAP) — Help Keep Residents Safe*

"I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the Defensible Space Assistance Program / Weed Abatement Program. I am very appreciative to the FSCSDC to have made this program possible for me. It took a lot of people to get this job done.

I will never forget the kindness that has been shown me. I could not have done it without everyone involved. Thank you again so very much. I now have pride in my yard; which has never look better and I have never felt safer."

**Dan from Descanso**



"I was very pleased with the work performed. The employees worked hard and completed all of chipping before leaving. They communicated well and acted professionally. I am very appreciative of this service."

**Charles from Julian**



**Praise for Our Chipping Contractor,  
Pope Tree Service:**

"Pope Tree Service took care of all my needs at my property. They showed up when expected and performed a meticulous service. I've had them come in years past, and they seem to always be very professional and efficient as a crew. I appreciate working with a company like Pope Tree Service, and I look forward to having their help in the future."

**Jake from Ramona**



# 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.



Photo by Jessa Kay Cruz

## Proposition 84

The RCD is managing a multi-year, multi-million dollar Proposition 84 Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Implementation Grant to eliminate invasive plants, weeds, and wildlife species along the El Capitan Reservoir to limit their deleterious effects on water

supply and quality and reduce the fuel load. The removal of six prolific and highly flammable invasive plants, including Arundo and Tamarisk, will restore flow, minimize erosion, and stabilize hillsides along the watershed. Moreover, feral pig eradication will limit the spread of disease to other animals, livestock, and humans, ultimately benefiting human health and conservation efforts.

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

Thirty-five acres treated for weed removal and management

Held three restoration meetings with project partners

This project is a collaboration with several local, state, and national stakeholders, and tribal entities across 93 acres within unincorporated San Diego County.

Sixty-two acres of impacted habitat restored

Three RCD Staff members dedicated to this service

# The “Watershed Connection” Education Program

## Reducing Pollution and Protecting San Diego Bay

For 25 years, the RCD has partnered with the Port of San Diego to educate thousands of elementary students about how critical it is to protect the integrity of the San Diego Bay Watershed. Students learn all about watersheds, including how pollution travels from

urban areas, through creeks and rivers, into bays and the ocean. This hands-on, science-based learning program also teaches students what they themselves can do to reduce pollution in their communities and become environmental stewards.



Students engage with 3D watershed model

“I think the program is an excellent way for students to see how rivers, creeks, SD Bay and the ocean become polluted.”

5th grade educator at Olivewood Elementary



Students see first-hand the negative impact pollution has on our waterways

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

81% of educators said the program experience and educator delivery was excellent

Pre- and post-tests report every participating class had an increase in understanding the connection between pollution & watershed health

In 2019, we educated 2,357 students through 84 presentations at 26 participating elementary schools

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

Interns add over \$10,000 in match funding and in-kind contributions from 296 volunteer hours

In the last 10 years, 21,963 students have been educated about how pollution impacts the watershed, and in turn, all of us

Hundreds of additional students are educated at community outreach events

# Watershed Connection — Students & Teachers Speak Out



I appreciate you teaching me about pollution. I will be responsible and help make it clean so we can make the planet number one."

Diego G.

"It clearly shows how pollution affects animals and the ocean. I really enjoyed the visuals for the students."

Educator at Avocado Elementary

"The kids absolutely love the presentation and it is very informative."

Educator at NYE Elementary

"I learned that if we don't reduce, reuse and recycle and pick up after our self the ecosystem will be destroyed."

Victoria Z.

"I like the 3D display of the watershed and the fun activities that capture the student's attention. Good curriculum!"

Educator at Silver Gate Elementary

"I learned to cut up the plastic rings from soda cans before throwing them away to help save animals." Chloe C.

"That together we can all make a difference!"

Gabriel F.

"I learned that you shouldn't wash your car in the driveway because the chemicals in the soap could make the animals sick."

- Chloe V.

"I like the entire group participation, it really shows students the dangers at their level. It was perfect, the presenter was great!"

Educator at St. Charles School

"The presentation is very hands-on while continually engaging the students and it allows for great participation from all students!" Educator at Santa Sophia Academy

One important thing I learned in the Watershed Education Program is to clean your dog's poo, pick up trash and clean up after yourself!"

Carlos P.

"Very appropriate with an excellent visual model! It was wonderful for the kids to actually see what's happening."

Educator at Fuerte Elementary

"I like the pace of the program, the presenter's knowledge and the activities. We love your program, the presenters are amazing!"

Educator at Santa Sophia Academy

"It is important to not drop trash because it goes to the ocean and animals can eat trash." Valeria C.

"I love that the model gives kids a visual that helps them to understand how their actions are affecting our environment."

Educator at NYE Elementary

# 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.

In 2019 our SLEWS program took off. SLEWS — Student & Landowner Education & Watershed Stewardship — gets high school students out into nature, working on real-world conservation projects. It complements classroom learning and gives students career exposure

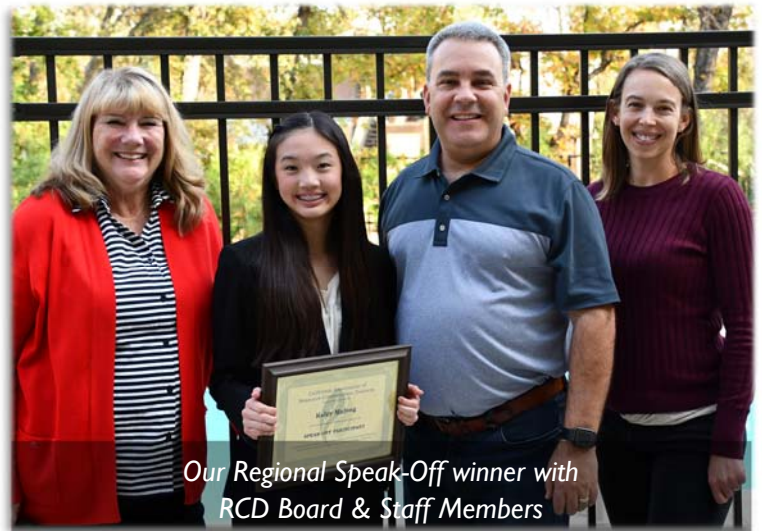
by working with mentors in the environmental field. We were thrilled to bring this state-wide program to San Diego.

Another highlight of 2019 was the re-launch of our Speak-Off competition, which was on hiatus for a number of years. High school students with an interest in resource conservation prepare a speech on a given environmental topic and compete at the regional and state level for valuable experience and cash prizes. The theme of this year's competition was a topic close to our hearts: conserving the iconic monarch butterfly.

As always, we are committed to honoring conservation-minded high school seniors with college scholarships; a program we have proudly maintained for thirty-two years running!



SLEWS Students planting seedlings in the RCD Carbon Farming Demo Plot.



Our Regional Speak-Off winner with RCD Board & Staff Members

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

Six environmentally-conscious high school seniors received \$1,000 college scholarships to pursue degrees in conservation-related fields in 2019

SLEWS launched in 2019 with 26 Southbay high-schoolers, contributing to conservation projects on our carbon farming demo plot. Led by professional mentors, the students also learned about careers in conservation.

The Speak-Off allows students to compete in a state-wide speaking competition to earn valuable public speaking experience & cash awards

123 scholarships awarded since 1989

We sponsored two high school students to attend Range Camp, a week-long environmental science & resource management camp, for a one-of-a-kind learning adventure



# School Garden Support

## Outdoor Classrooms for Creating Life-long Learners

A school garden can be used as a space for learning about nutrition and agriculture, for experiencing and exploring nature, and for teaching school subjects such as science, math, writing, reading, art, and music. 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.



Creating a love of outdoor learning through gardening

“Thank you so so much!!! We have just a tiny little garden at our school, and the students were SO excited to plant these! They will fill it out beautifully. Thank you again for this wonderful program.

Kris Rudolph from Museum School



Our annual plant giveaway supports hundreds of school gardens throughout the county

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

2,568 vegetable & herb seedlings given away to support 214 school gardens in 2019

Two School Garden Newsletters sent to educate teachers about the latest ideas for school gardens and funding opportunities

Providing 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 15,090 vegetable & herb seedlings, in support of hundreds of school gardens

# Pollinator Health

## *We Need Pollinators . . . And They Need Us!*

**P**ollinators 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.**

The good news is, we can all help! The RCD is committed to doing our part to make a difference. You can help as well, by creating pollinator habitat in your yard or school garden.

We are on our way to achieving a long-term goal: creating a San Diego source of native milkweed seed. The San Diego Native Milkweed project received starter funds in fall of 2019, and the San Diego Pollinator Alliance is working with several local growers to plant narrowleaf milkweed seed collected at sites across the county. Over time, our objective is to develop a source of native milkweed seed for local pollinator habitat creation at both the garden and restoration project level.

### Milkweed for Monarchs

By planting butterfly host plants — such as milkweed and a diverse array of flowering plants — in school gardens, community gardens, and front and back yards, we create new habitat for Monarch butterflies and other pollinators.



Photo by Lisa Cox, USFWS

### 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.



### The Pollinator Pathway

For the fifth year running, the SDPA hosted a pollinator exhibit at the San Diego County Fair. Now a permanent exhibit in the Infield Farm, the Pollinator Pathway features native host and nectar plants and provides a calm oasis where visitors can relax and learn more about how to create habitat at home.



Photo by J, Snapp-Cook, USFWS

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

80,000 visitors toured the Pollinator Pathway exhibit at the 2019 San Diego County Fair

Two new demonstration pollinator gardens built, one at Lafayette Elementary and one at Scripps Ranch High, featuring native milkweed and native flowering plants, as well as swales to capture rain water.

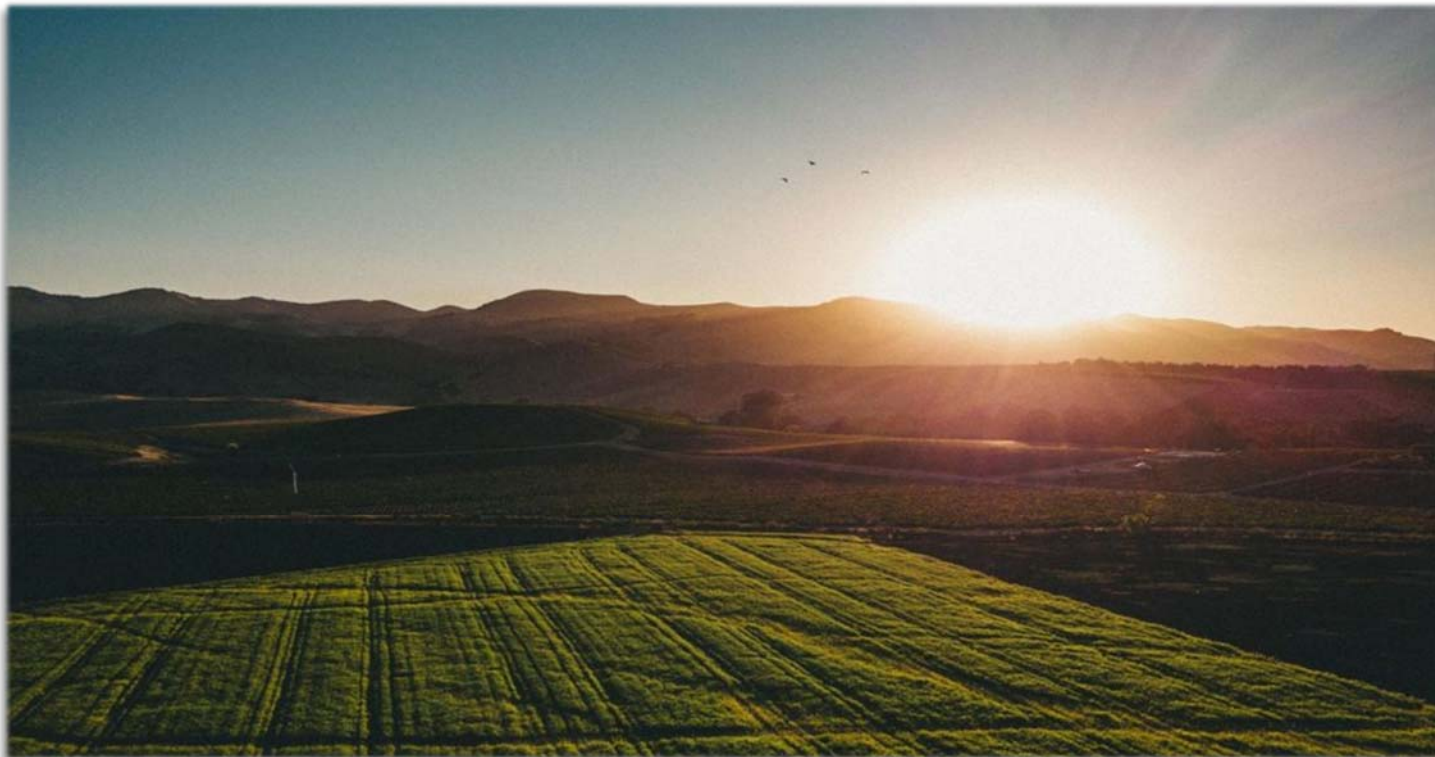
Thousands of “Plant, Grow, Eat” students visited Pollinator Pathway at San Diego Fair

RCD shares information and resources to schools and local residents who want to help pollinators

Hundreds of native wildflower and milkweed seed packs distributed to schools & residents

# 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.

## Resource Conservation Foundation Board Members:

**Donald Butz**, Board President

**Marilyn Huntamer**, Board Vice President

**Cody Petterson**, Director

**James Thompson**, Board Secretary/Treasurer

**Jo MacKenzie**, Associate Director

**Jordan Gascon**, Director

**DK Nasland**, Associate Director



**RESOURCE  
CONSERVATION  
FOUNDATION**  
Greater San Diego

# Our People

*Dedicated to Serving San Diego County Residents*

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**Donald Butz**, Board President

**Marilyn Huntamer**, Board Vice President

**James Thompson**, Board Secretary/Treasurer

**Jordan Gascon**, Director

**Cody Petterson**, Director

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**D.K. Nasland**, Associate Director

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**Cheyenne Piacenza**, Wild Willow Farm: Farmer

**Erik Rodriguez**, Wild Willow Farm: Farmer



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