



SONOMA
RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT



Strategic Direction

2017-2020



Vision & Mission

Our **VISION** is of a future where the natural resources of Sonoma County are sustainably conserved for the benefit of humans and natural systems.

Our **MISSION** is to empower and partner with landowners and the community to address Sonoma County's most pressing natural resource concerns.



To our community

Dear Partners and Friends of the RCD,

As the current stewards of a long-standing local public agency (71 years and counting!), the RCD's Board and staff know what a great responsibility it is to chart our Strategic Direction for the future. We know that this Direction must strike a balance between honoring the past, working tirelessly in the present, and rising to the challenges of what's in store.



We are so grateful to the partners who participated in this strategic planning process. Dozens of you dedicated your time and wisdom to conversations with our team during this process, and from these conversations we gained new insight into our community, its natural resource needs, and the RCD itself.

One of the topics that came up most frequently during the planning process was the concept of the RCD as a bridge. A bridge between stakeholders who might not naturally understand one another's perspectives, who might not often sit around the same table together, who might share the same big-picture goals but not always agree on the means to achieve those goals. We are proud of the diverse partnerships and trusting relationships we've built over many years, and dedicated to continuing to serve as bridge to make conservation happen.

This unique role in the community, combined with our commitment to the natural resources of Sonoma County, forms the foundation of our Strategic Direction. The work ahead of us is significant: to address our most pressing natural resource issues in a way that respects and empowers the people who depend on those resources, and to keep the RCD strong so that we can continue to do this important work for generations to come.

If you have questions about the future direction of the RCD, please don't hesitate to reach out. We are honored to work side-by-side with you, now and into the future.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Valerie Q" with a long, sweeping underline.

Valerie Minton Quinto, Executive Director

Who we are

Established in 1946, serving 878,862 acres in Sonoma County

Over the past 11 years we have secured \$23 million for conservation in our district

Leveraged over \$28 dollars in state, federal or local funds for every \$1 of county tax base invested



Your Local Partner in Conservation Acting as a dot connector, a bridge builder, and innovative collaborator, we work to provide the best technical and educational resources to solve our most complex natural resource issues. We partner for conservation solutions.

Protecting Our Watersheds The RCD works tirelessly with rural, agricultural, and urban partners to support healthy ecosystems, habitat and biodiversity, and ensure sustainable, high-quality water supplies for people and wildlife.

Supporting Agriculture Our programs for farmers, ranchers, and local schools help ensure viable local agriculture while also helping agriculture to be of service to the environment.

Our process



This strategic planning process, launched in early 2017, was built upon engagement with staff, Board, landowners, and other partners who provided feedback on the RCD and the larger context in which we operate. Our team conducted interviews with dozens of internal and external stakeholders to gain insight into:

- ◆ **The landscape of natural resource issues and community needs in Sonoma County**
- ◆ **Internal and external perspectives on the RCD and its current programs**
- ◆ **The range of potential strategic opportunities available to the RCD in the next several years**
- ◆ **The capacity of the RCD staff and Board in relation to current and potential strategic opportunities.**

We are grateful for the thoughtful feedback we received during the engagement process—both praise of the RCD’s dedicated team and organizational strengths, and constructive advice on how we can continue to improve our effectiveness in serving our community.

In August 2018, after reviewing progress on our Strategic Goals, along with new priorities in light of the previous year’s events, the RCD Board voted to add another Strategic Goal (Goal #2) to this document.



Critical resource issues are solved on a watershed scale.

Action Strategies:

- a. Pro-actively identify and lead community conversations that are important to our constituents, the County and other partners.
- b. Conduct watershed-scale data collection and planning in watersheds where lack o information is a barrier to project development and implementation and community engagement.
- c. Use existing Watershed Plans as a framework to facilitate ongoing partner coordination in priority watersheds: Mark West, Petaluma River
- d. Participate in the Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA) in three Sonoma County basins to help develop parameters around use of this shared resource.
- e. Serve as a conduit of information from the GSA process to rural and agricultural landowners in particular, and from these landowners to the GSAs.
- f. Continue and expand groundwater monitoring efforts to support GSA activities and provide landowners with information regarding groundwater levels.



GOAL 2

Landowners and managers are empowered to manage their land in ways that promote resiliency to wildfires and other natural disasters. Communities are supported to come together and plan for natural disasters and emergencies in ways that protect natural resources in addition to human health & safety.

Action Strategies:

- a. Serve as a technical resource to support and promote fuel load management among landowners and policy makers.
- b. Participate in County-led Recovery & Resiliency efforts, and serve as a technical resource for landowners experiencing impacts of natural disasters on their land.
- c. Work to identify potential RCD roles in response and recovery to natural disasters beyond wildfire.
- d. Leverage and expand partnerships with organizations such as the Sonoma County Forest Conservation Working Group, Fire Safe Sonoma, Citizens Organized to Prepare for Emergencies (COPE), and neighborhood groups. Identify gaps that can best be filled by the RCD to bridge community and natural resource needs.



The water in Sonoma County's creeks, streams, rivers and aquifers is of adequate quality and quantity to support native salmonids, general ecosystem health, and human needs.

Action Strategies:

- a. Continue the LandSmart® planning program, expanding to include a focus on forested properties.
- b. Provide regulatory compliance assistance to vineyards and dairies.
- c. Put more conservation projects on the ground by leveraging landowner enthusiasm and initiative, and investing in cost-effective and impactful solutions.
- d. Increase the visibility of water issues and related RCD programs by convening landowners to learn from each other and gain first-hand knowledge of conservation practices and impacts.



Carbon farming and other soil conservation practices are widely adopted to protect and increase the intrinsically valuable asset of healthy soils for agriculture and the greater community.

Action Strategies:

- a. Continue to serve as a resource for landowners experiences soil erosion issues. Provide technical support to reduce soil loss and sediment pollution.
- b. Continue and expand focus on carbon farming and soil health improvement, with co-benefits including climate change mitigation and drought resiliency.
- c. Increase the visibility and metrics of soil health, restorative agriculture and related RCD programs by convening landowners to learn from each other and gain first-hand knowledge of conservation practices and impacts.



Students from kindergarten through high school understand Sonoma County’s important natural resource issues and the roles of the community, agriculture, and families in solving these issues.

Action Strategies:

- a. Continue the FARMS Leadership and TEAM programs, with a focus on working in partnership with schools that maintain a diverse and underserved student population.
- b. Develop and execute a FARMS Advanced program funded by a new, private fundraising effort to support students in identifying an internship, college program, or career within the field of agriculture or the environment.
- c. Evaluate the potential for creating a “LandUse Learning Center” to demonstrate best management practices and educational opportunities for all RCD programs.



The RCD has the capacity to serve Sonoma County's most pressing natural resource needs.

Action Strategies:

- a. Recruit, orient, and train an engaged and effective Board of Directors that is representative of the residents of Sonoma County and the stakeholders in critical natural resource issues and continue succession planning.
- b. Provide ongoing professional development for RCD staff.
- c. Maintain an open, supportive, and friendly workplace culture.
- d. Expand the visibility of the RCD by promoting its programs to partners, the community and various media outlets.
- e. Continue to leverage and expand coordination and communication with all RCD partners.

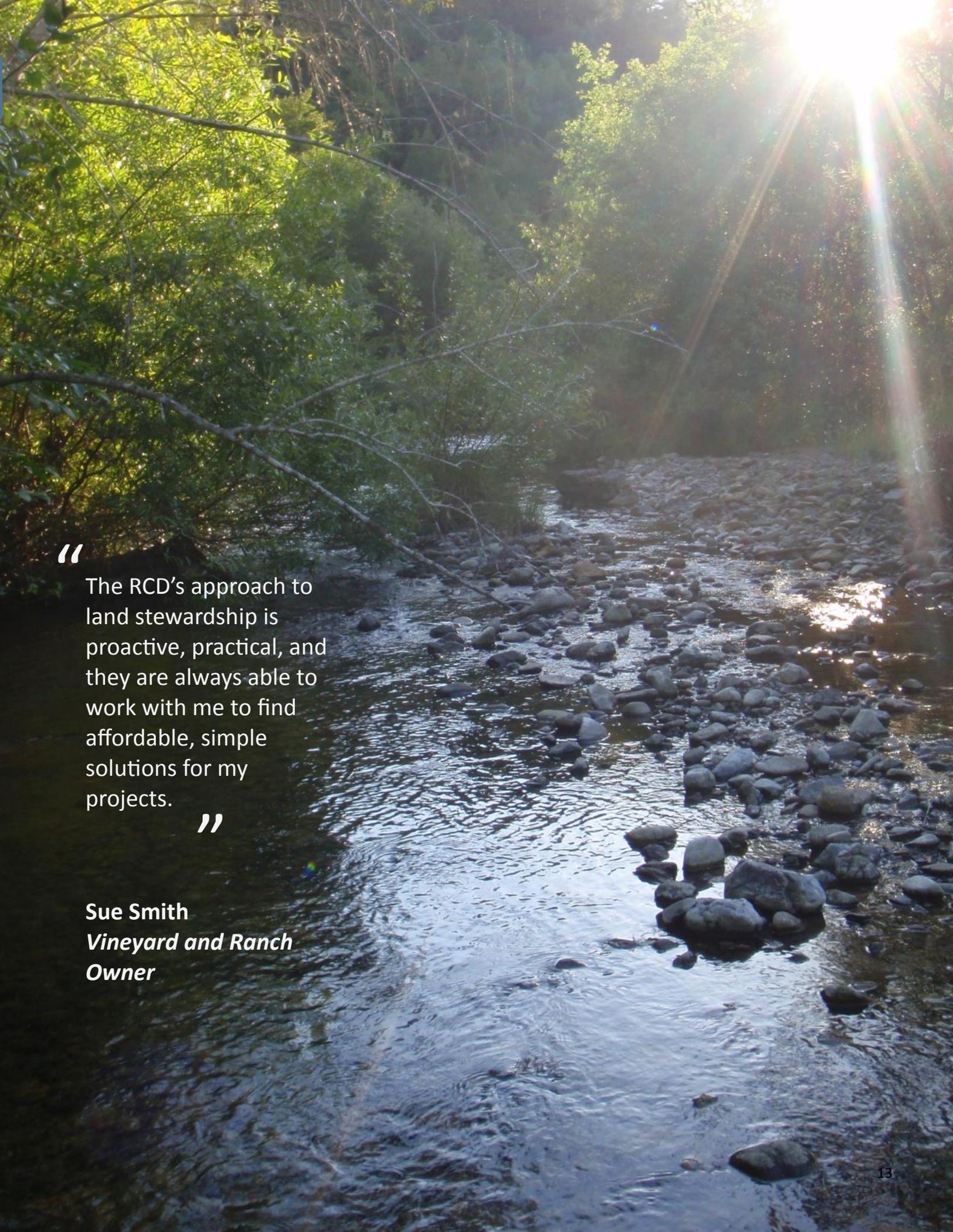


The RCD achieves greater financial sustainability to better serve its mission and constituents.

Action Strategies:

- a. Revisit and implement key recommendations from the RCD's Financial Sustainability Plan.
- b. Seek additional sources of unrestricted revenue.
- c. Consider a significant increase in the RCD's fee for service and landowner cost share revenue streams for better financial sustainability .





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The RCD's approach to land stewardship is proactive, practical, and they are always able to work with me to find affordable, simple solutions for my projects.

”

Sue Smith
*Vineyard and Ranch
Owner*

Get involved

PARTICIPATE

In developing a conservation plan or on the ground project to protect soil, water and wildlife habitat.

JOIN US

Attend a technical workshop to gain the latest information on resource conservation.

INVEST

In your local RCD with a tax deductible donation to support conservation programming.

SIGN UP

To receive our monthly e-newsletter to get the latest updates on RCD programs, funding opportunities and events.

SonomaRCD.org

FOLLOW



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