

Sonoma County RCD Programs and Services for Vineyard Operations



What can the RCDs do for you?

Your local Resource Conservation Districts offer many programs and services to support wine grape growers in the sustainable use of natural resources, including:

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RCD Services for Vineyards

As local, non-regulatory special districts, the Sonoma and Gold Ridge Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) have a long history of providing services to Sonoma County's vineyard landowners and managers to aid them in voluntary conservation efforts and regulatory compliance. Current programs for winegrowers include:

LandSmart® Conservation Planning

For growers looking for a comprehensive farm plan for their property, RCD technical staff can assist vineyard owners and managers with the completion of a LandSmart Farm Plan. The development of a Farm Plan allows a grower to:

- Inventory and map the natural and agricultural resources present on the farm, as well as document current and historical management practices
- Identify and prioritize Best Management Practices (BMPs) based on the grower's priorities for their farm operation and for the natural resources present on the property
- Increase eligibility for cost share funding to implement BMP's identified in the Plan
- Comply with the requirements of current and future water quality regulations, such as the Vineyard General Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) adopted for Napa River and Sonoma Creek watershed vineyards in July 2017

Depending on the features of the property, Farm Plan elements may include: maps, water conservation, cover cropping, erosion control, streambank stabilization, road improvements, pest management, invasive plant removal, enhancement of native riparian vegetation, and other resource concerns and BMPs.

<http://landsmart.org/vineyard/>

Climate-Beneficial Vineyard Management

The RCDs are part of a regional effort aimed at promoting "Carbon Farming" vineyard practices. Winegrowers can elect to complete an additional chapter on Carbon Sequestration and Soil Health as part of their LandSmart Farm Plan. This section will help identify opportunities to sequester carbon while achieving multiple farm production goals. The RCDs are developing educational workshops, performing field soil health assessments and establishing demonstration sites at private vineyards and at Shone Farm. For more information, please visit <http://soilhub.org/>

Examples of climate-beneficial BMPs include: Cover cropping, non-tillage seeding, compost application, and woody hedgerow/windrow planting.

LandSmart® Water Resources

The RCDs provide workshops, written resources, and one-on-one technical assistance to help landowners identify opportunities to conserve water. Services include:

- Irrigation system evaluations including distribution uniformity, drip application flow rates, system pressures, and water quality, with recommendations on BMPs for irrigation scheduling and irrigation system improvements.
- Assist with developing ranch water management/conservation plan
- Assistance with water conservation project implementation
- Develop water storage projects that reduce dependence on riparian water

LandSmart® On-the-Ground

To implement BMPs identified in a Farm Plan or through general technical assistance, the RCDs can assist growers through grant funding or cost share programs such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and other funding sources.

General Technical Assistance

For growers who are not ready to undertake a comprehensive farm planning effort, but who have isolated resource needs on their property, RCD staff can provide assistance on a variety of topics including:

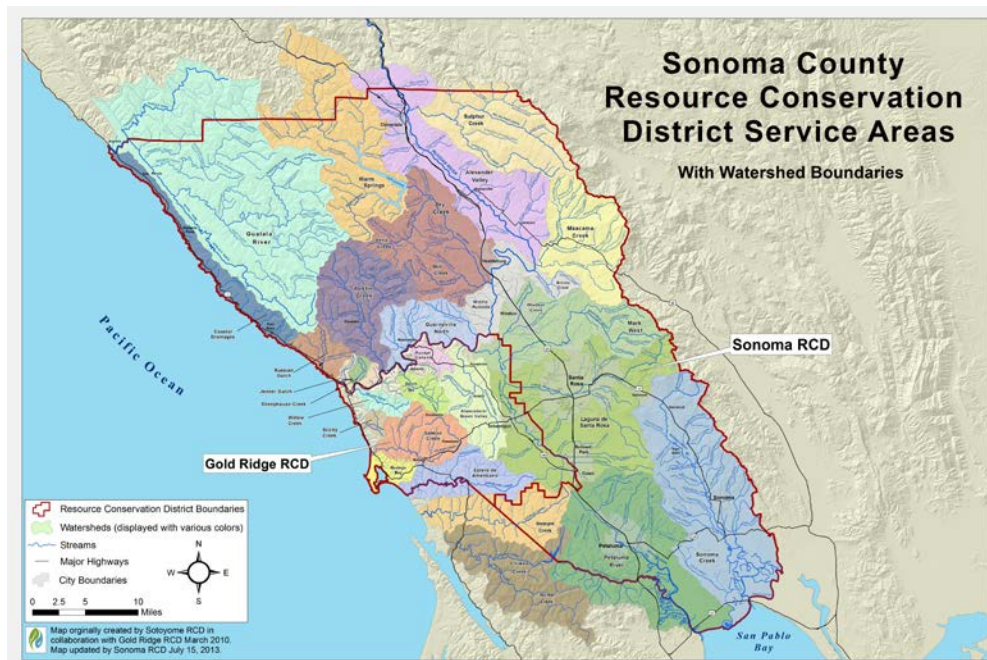
- Water conservation and source development
- Frost protection alternatives
- Irrigation Scheduling
- Erosion control
- Invasive plant removal
- Navigating the permitting process

LandSmart® Education

The RCDs host periodic events to provide information and field demonstrations on a variety of water management topics. Visit our website for a list of upcoming workshops:

<http://sonomarc.org/htm/get-involved.htm>

Contact us today to learn more about services and funding available in your area:



Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District

2776 Sullivan Road
Sebastopol, CA 95472
(707) 823-5244
Noelle@goldridgercd.org

Sonoma Resource Conservation District

1221 Farmers Lane, Suite F
Santa Rosa, California
(707) 569-1448
info@sonomarc.org

Vineyard Soil Health

Why is soil health important for vineyards?

Soil health (aka soil quality) is the capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans. Soil is a living system that provides essential ecosystem services such as improved water storage and carbon sequestration to keep vineyards healthy and productive. Soil health and vine health are closely linked.

Principles of Soil Health

- Keep soil covered as much as possible.
- Use plant diversity to increase diversity in the soil.
- Keep living roots in the soil as long as possible.
- Disturb the soil as little as possible.

How can soil health be improved?

Soil health can be improved by management practices that:

- Keep soil covered with vegetation
- Minimize soil disturbance
- Use plant diversity to improve diversity underground
- Keep living roots in the soil as long as possible

How can I assess soil health in my vineyard?

Soil health is measured through multi-factor assessments that can include biological, chemical, and physical characteristics. Your local RCD office can perform a soil health assessment in your vineyard by collecting soil samples and testing them for a standard suite of soil health parameters such as bulk density, total carbon, pH, and available water holding capacity. The assessment results can help you better understand where there may be room to improve the health of your soil through practices such as reduced tillage, cover cropping, and amending your vineyard soils.

Contact the RCD for more information:

Sonoma RCD: Anya Starovoytov, Astarovoytov@sonomarcld.org
Gold Ridge RCD : William Hart, William@goldridgercd.org

Visit [SoilHub.org](https://soilhub.org)

Attention, Grapegrowers:

North Coast Soil Health Hub Needs Your Input!

Please take this survey by **April 1st, 2018** to tell us:

- What types of soil health practices are you doing? (e.g. cover crop, compost application)
- What types of soil health practices do you want to do, but can't?
- What types of soil health practices are you curious to learn more about?

We know your time is precious. We ask for it so that we can tailor our workshops, demonstrations and SoilHub.org to meet your needs.

Take the Survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/northcoastsoilhealth>



For vineyards in the North Coast region of CA, what does soil health mean? Napa County, Sonoma, Gold Ridge, and Mendocino County RCDs, along with NRCS, and others across the region, are in the second year of a grant-funded project to generate discussion, demos, and science on soil health/soil carbon as it relates to vineyards in our region.

In 2018, these partnering RCDs will be setting up 3 soil health demo sites in each county, hosting workshops, and offering free soil health assessments to growers. Stay posted on these efforts via the new North Coast Soil Health Hub website.

Thank you for your time!



SAVE THE DATES

March 9, 2018: Vineyard Soil Health Symposium

9 am-12 Noon

Sonoma County Farm Bureau Office, 3589 Westwind Blvd., Santa Rosa, CA
Presentations from grower panels on practices that can help improve vineyard soil health and sequester carbon: cover crops, compost, alternative tillage practices, and planting hedgerows.

May 1, 2018: SCWC's Sustainable Winegrowing Field Day

8 am-1:30 pm

SRJC's Shone Farm, 7450 Steve Olson Lane, Forestville, CA 95436

As part of the Sonoma County Winegrape Commission's annual Sustainable Field Day Event, Gold Ridge and Sonoma RCD will host a seminar on cover crops and alternative tillage practices. An indoor presentation will be followed by field demonstrations of cover crops and low till/no till equipment.

Our websites <http://sonomarc.org/get-involved/> and <http://www.goldridgecd.org/> will be updated with workshop details and a registration link for the March symposium by January 2018.

CLIMATE
BENEFICIAL
PRACTICES

COVER CROPS

COMPOST

ALTERNATIVE
TILLAGE

HEDGEROWS

CONTACT

For more information contact
Keith Abeles
Water Resources Specialist
kabeles@sonomarc.org
or call 707-569-1448





GRANT FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR VINEYARD IMPROVEMENTS AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

A new regulatory program, impacting some Sonoma County vineyards, is on the horizon. The San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board adopted the General Waste Discharge Requirements (General WDRs) for vineyards in July 2017. This regulation applies to any vineyard property with 5 AC or more planted to grapes in the Sonoma Creek Watershed. This regulation will require vineyard owners or managers to develop a farm water quality plan that identifies potential soil erosion and water quality concerns on the vineyard property and defines ways to address those concerns by implementing Best Management Practices (BMPs). A similar regulatory program is also currently in development for vineyards in the Russian River watershed.

To assist with this regulatory burden, your local RCDs have developed the LandSmart® Program for Vineyards, with input from Regional Water Board staff, in order to assist local winegrowers with preparing farm plans and implementing BMPs to comply with this regulation.

Grant funding is currently available to cover up to 85% of the cost of developing a LandSmart conservation plan and additional funding may be available for implementing BMPs (after completing a plan) and performing Irrigation System Evaluations.

These grant funds are available for a limited time, so contact your local RCD today to learn more:

www.landsmart.org

Sonoma RCD

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Vineyard General WDRs Permit – What You Need to Know

The Vineyard General Waste Discharge Requirements (Vineyard Permit) were adopted by the Regional Water Board on July 12, 2017. With October wildfires occupying everyone's attention this fall, news of this new regulation hasn't spread broadly. However, you may be hearing more about this permit this winter and wondering – What do I do next? Below is a quick guide about this new regulation that may impact your vineyard property:

- All vineyard properties within Sonoma Creek watershed, with 5 acres or more planted to grapes, are required to comply with this new permit.
- Compliance means filing paperwork with the Regional Water Board and paying fees annually; developing a Farm Plan for your vineyard property that evaluates erosion and water quality risks and recommends appropriate actions to address those risks; and working through implementing recommendations in your Farm Plan. Learn more about the requirements here:
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay/water_issues/programs/TMDLs/vineyard/final_docs/Vineyard%20General%20WDRs%20-%202017-17.pdf
- The first required step is to submit a "Notice of Intent to Comply" to the Regional Board by July 12, 2018. The electronic form will be available here in early 2018:
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay/water_issues/programs/TMDLs/vineyard/index.shtml
- Compliance deadlines have been extended by one year for any vineyard properties located within the wildfire perimeters. More information on the extension here:
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay/water_issues/programs/TMDLs/vineyard/fire/LyrisMessageFireExtension%20-%202011-17.pdf
- Landowners are encouraged to work with approved Third Party Programs to develop their Farm Plan. The RCD's LandSmart® Program is expected to receive Third Party approval from the Regional Board in January 2018. Learn more here:
<http://landsmart.org/programs-services/landsmart-plans/>

If you have questions about this regulation, **stop by the Sonoma RCD table at Dollars and Sense Tradeshaw to learn more** about the permit and how our LandSmart Program can help or call Anya Starovoytov at (707) 569-1448 x109.



Technical Assistance for Post-Fire Natural Resource Concerns



In the aftermath of October's wildfires, Sonoma Resource Conservation District (Sonoma RCD) is offering free-of-charge technical assistance site visits to help impacted property owners identify critical erosion concerns and best actions to take for protecting their property through the winter. Sonoma RCD is also collaborating with various funding agencies to obtain emergency funding and connect impacted landowners with local resources. Grant funding is currently available to assist fire-impacted vineyard properties within the

Sonoma Creek watershed with implementing post-fire erosion control, revegetation along creek channels, and road repairs. Funding in other fire-impacted areas may also be available starting in January 2018.



Learn More

Read more about the ways we can help on our Fire Recovery page, and contact us to schedule a site visit to discuss your resource concerns:

<http://sonomarc.org/resources/fire-recovery/>

Sonoma RCD contact:

Jeff Schreiber (707) 569-1448 x110

JSchreiber@sonomarc.org

Vineyard Oak Planting

Interested in Planting Oaks on Your Vineyard Property?

The California Native Plant Society has collected hundreds of acorns from across the county this past fall. They are partnering with local organizations like the Sonoma and Gold Ridge RCDs to get area-specific acorns and oak seedlings planted by local landowners.



Why Plant Oaks?

This effort to promote oaks was inspired by the loss of oak trees during the October fires. However, the consortium of organizations working together to promote oak planting sees a value beyond simply replacing lost oaks: newly planted oaks can also be part of an effort to enhance existing and historic oak woodland, to help return landscapes to the native ecology, and to plant “legacy” trees that will be here for our families and community far into the future.

Direct-Seed Acorns

Acorns are being kept in cold storage, and many species are ready to be planted this winter. Receive acorn species that match your area.

Plant Seedlings

Several local nurseries are propagating oaks into seedlings. These seedlings will be available to landowners by Fall 2018.

Instructions

Advice for planting and protecting oaks can be found from our partner, Napa County RCD online here: http://naparcd.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/4-Planting-Native-Oaks_NapaRCD.pdf

And here from the CA Dept of Forestry: <http://naparcd.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/5-Guidelines-for-Planting-Native-Oaks.pdf>

Contact Us

If you would like to plant acorns or oak seedlings on your property, please contact Keith at KAbeles@SonomaRCD.org or call (707) 569-1448.