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# Strategic Plan

2025-2030



## Our Mission

Bridging the needs of the community and natural resources by empowering people through reliable expertise and action to strengthen the resilience of Sonoma County.



# Introduction

Sonoma RCD is committed to a future where the natural resources of Sonoma County are abundant and available for the benefit of all people, agriculture, ecosystems, and the economy.

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to guide the RCD's high-level decisions for the next five years. Our approach with the Plan was not to identify every activity the RCD will carry out in service to our mission, but rather to identify the greatest opportunities to grow and improve how we deliver on that mission.

This Plan builds on our trusted services delivered since 1946 while scaling conservation efforts to meet the evolving needs of our community and region. Our goals include accelerating the pace and scale of conservation actions, diversifying our funding model, and strengthening our internal capacity to secure the resources needed to address complex natural resource challenges.

Everything we do is in partnership with others, harnessing the power of collaboration to amplify our collective impact. Together with our community, we aim to address critical conservation issues such as drought, wildfire, and biodiversity loss. Guided by our values and principles of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, we are committed to fostering a culture of stewardship, ensuring a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable Sonoma County for future generations.



## Who We Are

Since 1946, the Sonoma Resource Conservation District (Sonoma RCD) has served as a trusted hub for voluntary conservation focused problem-solving across nearly 900,000 acres of Sonoma County. Rooted in the vision of local farmers and ranchers, we continue to unite diverse perspectives, advance shared goals, and deliver practical solutions for healthy lands and thriving communities.

RCDs are among the nation's earliest grassroots conservation organizations. The catastrophic soil losses of the Dust Bowl era in the 1930s sparked national recognition that conserving natural resources—particularly agricultural soils—required coordinated action and the establishment of conservation agencies at all levels of government. From the Dust Bowl to today's climate challenges, RCDs have continued to serve adaptive, community-based roles, responding to the most pressing natural resource concerns of their time.



## How We Work

We facilitate stewardship projects to address climate change, biodiversity, ecosystem health, and water quality and quantity on private and public lands by providing technical assistance, outreach, education, and implementation oversight. Our team provides non-regulatory, free assistance to our community.

Our work is grounded in the belief that landscape-scale conservation is essential for sustaining healthy and productive natural and working lands, securing clean and abundant water, recharging aquifers, and supporting rich biodiversity. We incorporate science-based conservation practices into RCD projects that enhance adaptability and ecological impact.

The Sonoma RCD is governed by a locally appointed, independent board of directors. Our leaders are also your neighbors and members of the community in which we work. Our staff team are skilled at developing, implementing, and monitoring the impacts of conservation across our watersheds.



# Goal 1: Collaborate with partners and the community to address natural resource concerns, accelerating landscape-scale conservation and advancing climate change resiliency.

Sonoma County and the North Coast face increasing climate pressures—from drought and wildfire to flooding and rising temperatures—threatening our natural resources, communities, and local economy. The Sonoma RCD advances long-term landscape resilience by providing free technical assistance, strong partnerships, and science-based tools that help land stewards care for our land, water, and wildlife. Scaling climate-smart practices requires sustained investment in conservation programs that support producers, forest managers, and the broader community. Together, we can steward a more resilient, equitable, and thriving Sonoma County for generations to come.

## Strategies

Strategy 1.1 - Expand landscape-scale planning and strengthen partnerships with multiple organizations to maximize coordinated conservation efforts and amplify collective impact across Sonoma County.

Strategy 1.2 - Collaborate at the regional level to build collective capacity, identify shared opportunities and challenges, and develop solutions tailored to the unique needs of the region.

Strategy 1.3 - Utilize the North Coast Soil Hub to catalyze action and enable all regional RCDs to be more effective.

Strategy 1.4 - Identify and implement projects that advance local and statewide goals for wildfire resilience, biodiversity, water conservation, and climate adaptation.

Strategy 1.5 - Prioritize providing technical and financial assistance to emerging farmers, ranchers, and forest managers, support high-needs communities, and focus efforts on key watersheds and ecological corridors to advance equitable and effective conservation outcomes.

Strategy 1.6 - Increase support for Groundwater Sustainability Agencies to drive groundwater sustainability approaches that enhance ecosystem function and recharge groundwater.

Strategy 1.7 - Advocate for permitting and regulatory reforms that simplify and accelerate the approval process, enabling timely and efficient implementation of on-the-ground conservation projects.

Strategy 1.8 - Respect Tribal sovereignty and local knowledge of cultural resources and integrate Tribal perspectives into conservation planning and implementation.



## Goal 2: Promote a shared culture of conservation, reciprocity, and respect that recognizes the interdependence of people and the land.

For over 80 years, the Sonoma RCD has been a trusted hub for creative, conservation-focused problem-solving across the nearly 900,000 acres of Sonoma County. Born from the vision of local farmers and ranchers, we continue to serve as bridge builders—uniting diverse perspectives, advancing shared goals, and delivering lasting solutions for healthy lands and thriving communities. We combine comprehensive planning with on-the-ground action, removing barriers to conservation and responding quickly to emerging needs. Connecting youth, new farmers, and early-career professionals to the land to ensure the next generation of conservationists will carry this work forward.

Through the lens of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion we will evaluate, enhance, and expand our programming, deepen our connections with community partners, and strive to better serve our entire District. By empowering people through education, technical support, science, and financial resources, we foster a culture of stewardship.

### Strategies

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Strategy 2.1 - Craft and share a hopeful, inclusive vision that resonates across Sonoma County's diverse communities—building shared purpose, optimism, and collective commitment to conservation and resilience.

Strategy 2.2 - Prioritize meaningful engagement with local Tribes early and consistently by fostering respectful relationships, honoring sovereignty, and supporting cultural resource protection.

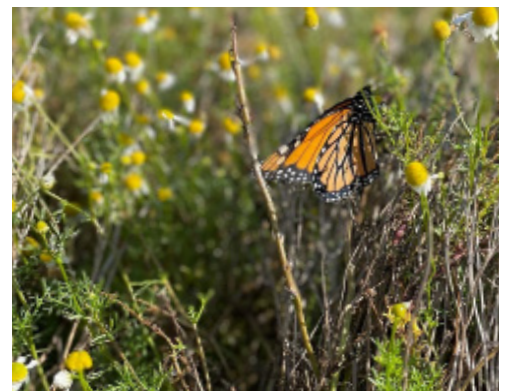
Strategy 2.3 - Develop and implement tailored messaging, outreach materials, and engagement plans for specific audiences to inspire the adoption of conservation practices and increase community participation.

Strategy 2.4 - Empower local community and neighborhood groups to identify, organize, and act on their unique conservation priorities by providing technical assistance, facilitation support, and access to resources that build local capacity for stewardship.

Strategy 2.5 - Identify strategies to engage and support non-landowning residents, providing increased access to resources.

Strategy 2.6 - Ensure all RCD communications materials are clear, inclusive, and accessible to effectively reach all communities.

Strategy 2.7 - Collaborate to support local conservation workforce development and training to meet the needs of our future.



## **Goal 3:** Grow the Sonoma RCD's position as a trusted conservation leader, supported by strong organizational capacity and long-term financial sustainability.

From the Dust Bowl to today's climate challenges, RCDs have served as conservation leaders, and the Sonoma RCD continues this legacy as a trusted resource for landowners, producers, residents, and community partners. Each year, we leverage a small portion of property tax revenue into millions of dollars in grants and contracts that directly benefit Sonoma County, upheld by our commitment to transparency and accountability.

Looking ahead, we are focused on diversifying and growing our funding model to meet rising demand and deepen our impact.

### Strategies

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Strategy 3.1 - Collect, compile, and translate data into accessible insights that measure the RCD's impact and effectively communicate our conservation story to stakeholders and the public.

Strategy 3.2 - Enhance public and partner understanding of the RCD's expertise, services, and potential impact through clear communication and active outreach.

Strategy 3.3 - Proactively investigate, monitor, and pursue new funding opportunities to diversify and strengthen the RCD's financial sustainability.

Strategy 3.4 - Collaborate with North Coast and Inner Coast regional RCDs and partners to secure large-scale funding that supports coordinated conservation initiatives.

Strategy 3.5 - Evaluate and pursue baseline funding opportunities from the County of Sonoma to support ongoing technical assistance, advance local Climate Action Plan Goals, and ensure rapid response capacity during natural disasters.

Strategy 3.6 - Collaborate with the California Association of RCDs to advance baseline funding from the State of California.

Strategy 3.7 - Continuously monitor relevant legislation and proactively respond to policies that affect the RCD's ability to fulfill



## Goal 4: Cultivate a high-performing, resilient, and connected team that collaborates effectively to serve our district.

Conservation is about people as much as natural resources, and the Sonoma RCD is powered by a skilled, multidisciplinary team dedicated to serving our community. We foster a culture of respect, collaboration, adaptability, and continual learning. Strengthening unrestricted operating revenue remains essential to sustaining high-impact work, retaining talented staff, and ensuring we remain a reliable resource for our community. A connected, resilient, and well-supported team is the foundation of everything we deliver.

### Strategies

Strategy 4.1 - Foster regular communication, shared learning, and collaboration between board and staff to build trust, alignment, and a unified organizational culture.

Strategy 4.2 - Continue building the RCD's operating reserve to enhance organizational adaptability, maintain stability during funding fluctuations, and remain responsive to emerging needs.

Strategy 4.3 - Enhance collaboration across programs to align efforts, share resources, and deliver conservation outcomes.

Strategy 4.4 - Optimize internal systems and technology to increase efficiency, enhance service delivery, and support the RCD's growing operational and programmatic needs.

Strategy 4.5 - Invest in fiscal and administrative capacity, robust systems that support effective conservation delivery, sound financial management, and uphold public transparency and accountability.

Strategy 4.6 - Regularly update policies and procedures to reinforce effective internal controls, ensure regulatory compliance, and support transparent, accountable operations.

Strategy 4.7 - Prioritize staff and board recruitment efforts to reflect the diversity of the communities we serve, promote representation, equity, and broader perspectives in our work.

Strategy 4.8 - Support employee orientation, retention, and professional growth by creating a positive and healthy workplace that sustains a skilled, resilient, and mission-driven team.





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Sonoma Resource Conservation District was established in 1946 as a special district under Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code.

