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Marin Resource Conservation District's mission is to conserve and enhance Marin County's natural resources including its soils, water, plants and wildlife and to preserve and protect our agricultural heritage



WHERE WE WORK

Our projects are located primarily on farms across Marin County, from the Point Reyes National Seashore to the rolling rangelands of Chileno Valley.



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Sally Gale and her grandson.

CELEBRATING SALLY GALE

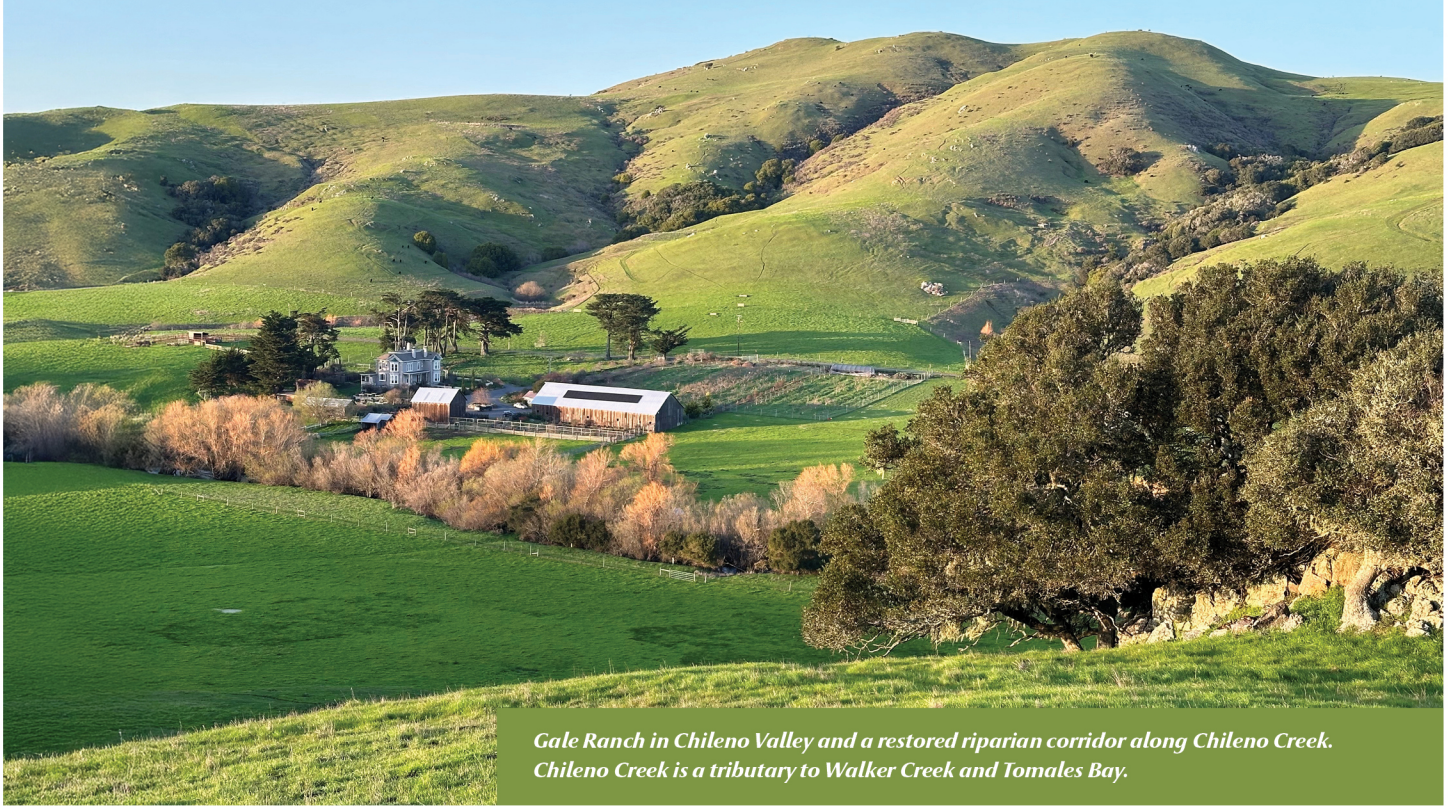
Rancher & Restorationist

AS THE SUN RISES OVER Chileno Valley in northern Marin County, the garden at Sally and Mike Gale's ranch hums with life — birds chattering in trees and bees drifting between blossoms - as the first light catches on the cow dotted hills they've spent decades restoring. It's the kind of scene that perfectly reflects the care and dedication that Sally has poured into her land — and her community.

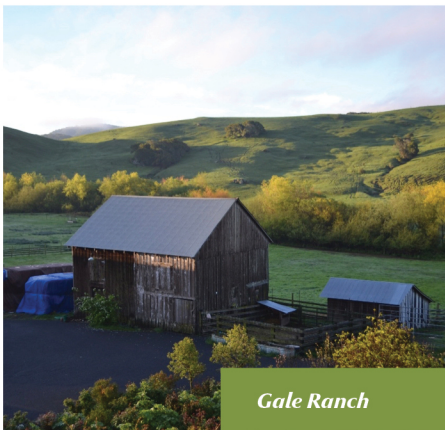
After nearly 30 years of service, Sally Gale has hung up her hat as President of the Marin Resource

Conservation District. Sally's story is proof that one person, armed with passion and persistence, can make a lasting difference.

When Sally and her husband Mike moved back to her family ranch in 1993, they rolled up their sleeves and set out to restore the land. The creeks were in rough shape, but with help from the Marin RCD and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, they got busy planting native trees and shrubs of every kind. Fast forward to today, and the Gale Ranch is a shining example



Gale Ranch in Chileno Valley and a restored riparian corridor along Chileno Creek. Chileno Creek is a tributary to Walker Creek and Tomales Bay.



Gale Ranch



A newt looks for help from the Chileno Valley Newt Brigade as she crosses Chileno Valley Road

of ecological restoration in action — a place where lush riparian corridors and pollinator hedgerows coexist beautifully with a direct-to-consumer beef business and a U-Pick apple and pear orchard.

Sally also poured her energy into helping other land stewards do the same. As a Director, she helped guide Marin RCD into a new era — expanding programs, championing habitat restoration, and making sure every conservation dollar worked double duty for both agriculture

and wildlife. Under Sally's watch, fencing projects got an upgrade: not just for cattle management, but designed to be wildlife-friendly, giving deer and other wildlife a clear path through their habitats. For this work Sally has been named California's RCD Director of the Year by the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts.

Sally is also the founder of the now-famous Chileno Valley Newt Brigade, a band of more than 70 volunteers who, on rainy nights, don their headlamps and gently

escort migrating newts and other amphibians across the road to safety. The Brigade is also working to make lasting changes to Chileno Valley Road, so these tiny travelers can one day cross under the road safely, no escorts required.

Thanks to Sally's leadership, creativity, and big heart, Marin's landscapes are in much better shape. We're endlessly grateful for her two decades of service, her tireless volunteerism, and her unwavering belief that every creature (human or amphibian) deserves a safe and thriving home.

Praise from the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

WE RECENTLY RECEIVED A THOUGHTFUL NOTE

from an engineer at the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board recognizing the Marin RCD's collaborative efforts to improve water quality across Marin County. The engineer highlighted the effectiveness of using Environmental Protection Agency funds administered through the State Water Resources Control Board in helping protect local waterways from potential sediment, nutrient, and pathogen runoff from dairies.

"As someone who works closely with dairy communities in your region, I've seen firsthand the positive impact these grants can have. Marin County's success in securing EPA Section 319(h) grant funding and channeling it toward local dairy operations has been especially inspiring—it's a great example of how these resources can support sustainable agriculture and water quality improvements."

Since 2008, the Marin RCD has worked with local partners to secure and manage seven Section 319(h) grant funds supporting the Conserving Our Watersheds Program. Through voluntary collaboration with local dairies and ranches, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the State Coastal Conservancy, the California Department of Water Resources, Marin County's Measure A, and the Marin Agricultural Land Trust, more than 156 high-priority best management practices have been implemented at over 35 sites to help improve water quality and support the recovery of impaired waterways draining into Tomales Bay. Tomales Bay water quality data is showing a steady trend toward meeting state water quality standards, with 75% of water monitoring sites being in compliance.

We appreciate this recognition. We are currently implementing more projects to conserve our watersheds.





WEST MARIN COMPOST

WEST MARIN RESIDENTS driving along Nicasio Valley Road have probably noticed that there is a roadside facility that accepts organic material to be turned into compost. This facility is just north of the village of Nicasio. Organic material such as tree trimmings, brush, logs and stumps are accepted by the facility. They are then ground down, mixed with dairy and horse manure to make compost, and made available for sale to anyone who wishes to buy it.

The Marin RCD helped create the West Marin Compost facility, with funding from a 2006 US Department of Agriculture Conservation Innovation grant. It was designed to address nonpoint source pollution by processing

nearby dairy and equestrian waste streams in addition to providing West Marin residents with a local facility to drop off green waste and purchase compost and mulch. The project goals were to improve water quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by processing organic materials locally rather than hauling them to the east side of the county and dumping them in a landfill.

West Marin Compost is an important soil amendment, improving soil quality, increasing soil water holding capacity, and recycling nutrients from local soils.

UC Berkeley studies in Marin soils show that when applied to grazed rangelands, compost accelerates

plant community photosynthetic capture of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, enabling Marin agriculture to play a significant role in helping the County meet its greenhouse gas reduction goals.

West Marin Compost provides our community with a means to both reduce its greenhouse gas footprint through avoided transport and landfill emissions, and engage our soils as significant carbon sinks, all while enhancing the fertility and water holding capacity of our agricultural and urban landscapes. The role of soils in climate change mitigation is increasingly recognized, and compost offers a particularly potent strategy for engaging our soils as a significant carbon sink.



Mary Collins Elementary School 4th grade students planting native valley oaks back in 2019 at the Corda Ranch along San Antonio Creek.



STRAW's Isaiah Thalmayer, Senior Project Manager and ecologist, assists one of the children with his glove before planting. Isaiah has been with STRAW since 2011.

GETTING KIDS DIRTY FOR 30+ YEARS

Students & Teachers Restoring a Watershed (STRAW)

IN 1992, A CLASSROOM OF fourth graders sat low in their seats in stunned silence as a video about endangered species flickered to an end. Then one small voice broke through: "Ms. Rogers... what can we do to help endangered species?"

Their teacher, Laurette Rogers of Brookside Elementary School, felt the weight of that question. "I knew I couldn't just say, 'Let's write letters,' or 'Let's do a study'" she later recalled. "We needed to do something big."

For two weeks, Laurette couldn't sleep. The question had awakened an idea—what if her students could leave the classroom and

take action right here in their own community? What if they could restore habitat for an endangered species—the California freshwater shrimp (*Syncaris pacifica*)—and learn, hands-on, what it means to care for the land?

And so, the Shrimp Club was born.

That small classroom idea grew into a groundbreaking program called Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed (STRAW). Over the past 30 years, STRAW has inspired thousands of students to trade their pencils for shovels and "get dirty for a cause." Together with the Marin Resource Conservation

District (Marin RCD) and countless local ranchers and landowners, they've transformed degraded streambanks into thriving riparian corridors teeming with life.

The concept is simple—and powerful. Students first learn in the classroom about watersheds, erosion, and how native plants support both wildlife and working lands. Then, under the guidance of professional restoration staff, they head out into the field. There, on ranches and public lands, they plant native trees and shrubs, stabilize eroding banks, and witness firsthand how their efforts can heal the land.

Marin RCD has been a partner since the very beginning, helping STRAW move from classroom dreams to on-the-ground success. The Marin RCD had funding for restoration projects and relationships with farmers and ranchers, which opened the doors to restoration sites that would otherwise be inaccessible. By connecting STRAW's educational mission with local land stewardship, the Marin RCD ensures these projects benefit both the environment and the agricultural community.

For decades, this partnership has made it possible for STRAW to install the majority of Marin RCD's riparian restoration projects on local ranches—often funded through Marin County's Measure A and various state and federal grants. Together, these efforts have slowed erosion, shaded creeks for salmon, and created vital food and shelter for a diversity of wildlife.

Quietly and persistently, STRAW and Marin RCD have restored more than 20 miles of stream habitat across western Marin County—proof of what can happen when community, science, and education come together.

Today, STRAW is operated by Point Blue Conservation Science (formerly the Point Reyes Bird Observatory), and the work continues. As the rainy season approaches, STRAW staff and Marin RCD are already collaborating with local ranchers to plan the next round of planting days.

Each shovel of soil turned, each native seedling planted, carries forward that same spirit from one curious fourth grader's question all those years ago: "What can we do to help?"

MARIN RCD IS COMING TO INVERNESS!

AFTER THE DISASTROUS FLOOD IN 1982, Marin County set up a flood control district in Inverness to try to avoid the effects of any future floods. A small amount of money was raised through an assessment of Inverness residents to try to implement flood control improvements. However, a subsequent vote to continue the flood control assessment failed and very little was done over the ensuing years.



Recently the Marin County Board of Supervisors dissolved the flood control district and transferred the remaining funds to the Marin Resource Conservation District (Marin RCD). They asked the Marin RCD to spend the remaining funds to improve flood management in Inverness. The amount of funds are small, approximately \$30,000, but the district is determined to leverage these local funds to secure outside state or federal dollars to help alleviate future flooding in Inverness.





**Thanks for being part of this
place we all call home.
We're glad to be on your radar.**



To learn more visit: www.marinrcd.org
Keep up to date about our stewardship projects that
protect water quality, improve soil health, sequester
atmospheric carbon, and enhance wildlife habitat.

WINTER IS COMING!

THE RAINY SEASON IS ALMOST HERE,
and property owners are urged to make sure
their culverts are cleaned out, and their water
drainage ditch are not clogged. Everything
should be prepared for heavy winter rains.

For technical advice about water drainage,
**FEEL FREE TO CONTACT THE MARIN RCD
ABOUT DRAINAGE ON PRIVATE PROPERTY**

marinrcd@marinrcd.org • (415) 663-1170

or the Marin County Department of Public Works
for drainages associated with public roads.

Making these improvements now could save a
lot of problems in the winter if water overflows
a culvert or drainage ditch and invades your
property or your neighbor's property.

Thanks for your good water management,
which will pay dividends in the short run and
the long run.

