



NEWSLETTER

MAY 2025

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The mission of the Marin Resource Conservation District 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



A WARM HELLO FROM OUR DIRECTOR!

DEAR MARIN COUNTY NEIGHBOR,

We're excited to introduce ourselves!

The Marin Resource Conservation District (MRCD) has been quietly working for more than 50 years to protect and enhance the natural and agricultural landscapes that make Marin such a special place. Thanks to a recently passed local sales tax measure, a portion of your tax dollars now helps support our conservation work—and that makes you an important partner in our mission.

Enclosed is our very first public newsletter, sharing a glimpse into what we do: restoring streams, preventing wildfires, supporting local farmers, protecting wildlife, and building a healthier, more resilient Marin for generations to come.

We invite you to learn more, get involved, and join us in caring for this beautiful corner of the world we all call home.

Thank you for being part of our shared future.

Warmly,

Nancy Scolari | Executive Director
MARIN RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

P.S. We'd love to hear from you!

Visit www.marinrcd.org to find out more or attend one of our monthly board meetings.

OUR ROOTS

Conservation Born from Crisis

THE MARIN RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT was established in 1959, but our story began much earlier. The Dust Bowl of the 1930s devastated American agriculture, stripping away millions of tons of topsoil due to unsustainable farming practices. In response, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Congress created the Soil Conservation Service as part of the New Deal programs, aiming to restore ecological health and prevent future disasters.

Roosevelt strongly believed in conservation as a cornerstone of national recovery, famously stating, "The nation that destroys its soil destroys itself." Under his leadership, states were encouraged to form local Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) to bring conservation efforts directly to communities.

Today, nearly 3,000 RCDs work nationwide, including 95 here in California. We exist to ensure that future generations inherit a landscape rich in life, beauty, and productivity.

Our elected Board of Directors reflects the heart of our community, blending agricultural and environmental perspectives to guide our mission.

Current directors include:

Sally Gale, Chileno Valley
Terry Sawyer, Point Reyes
David Sherwood, Marshall
Jerry Meral, Inverness
Mike Moretti, Tomales



Tenant farmers in Imperial Valley, California. March 1937. Photo: Dorothea Lange/ Farm Security Administration via Library of Congress/Wikimedia Commons



1930s in Springfield, Colorado during the Dust Bowl—an agricultural, ecological, and economic disaster.



Large scale agriculture near Meloland, Imperial Valley. February 1939. Photo: Dorothea Lange, Wikimedia Commons



Marin RCD and partners fixed an eroding gully using bioengineered repairs. This reduced sediment and pathogen runoff and boosted wildlife habitat.

We work in partnership with agencies, organizations and landowners, not as regulators, but as collaborators. Resource Conservation Districts have extraordinary powers to preserve agriculture and the natural environment. We can do projects to:

- ✓ **Reduce soil erosion**
- ✓ **Improve water quality**
- ✓ **Promote farming practices which result in carbon sequestration**
- ✓ **Undertake land practices to store carbon in trees and other vegetation**
- ✓ **Protect and enhance wildlife habitat**
- ✓ **Educate young people about conservation**
- ✓ **Improve pollinator habitat**
- ✓ **Restore streamside riparian habitat through fencing and planting of native plants**
- ✓ **Prevent uncontrolled wildfire by doing controlled burns**
- ✓ **Create shaded fuel breaks**
- ✓ **Restore fisheries, including native salmon and steelhead**
- ✓ **Promote no-till planting by renting out a seed drill**
- ✓ **Create demonstration gardens**
- ✓ **Plant trees, windbreaks and native plants**
- ✓ **Promote wildlife friendly fencing**
- ✓ **Restore wetlands**
- ✓ **Construct wildlife crossings**
- ✓ **Acquire easements to protect farmland and wildlife habitat**

Our work is rooted in voluntary cooperation with landowners. Cost-sharing programs make it easier for land managers to implement conservation practices that benefit all of Marin County.

CONTACT US

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Marin RCD's Sarah Phillips stands on a large woody debris structure which has been placed in San Geronimo Creek to provide salmon habitat.



Marin RCD rents a no-till drill and seeder to small farmers to reduce soil erosion and nutrient runoff into nearby waterways.

OUR IMPACT

Transforming Landscapes and Lives



BEFORE: This streambank, located in the Lagunitas watershed, shows a steep vertical bank that is unstable. The repair stops erosion, promotes biodiversity, and provides habitat for native wildlife.



AFTER: A steep vertical streambank is sloped back with construction equipment. A willow wall is placed at the toe and the entire site is blanketed with native seed, mulch and erosion control fabric. Willow sprigs are then placed along the entire reach.

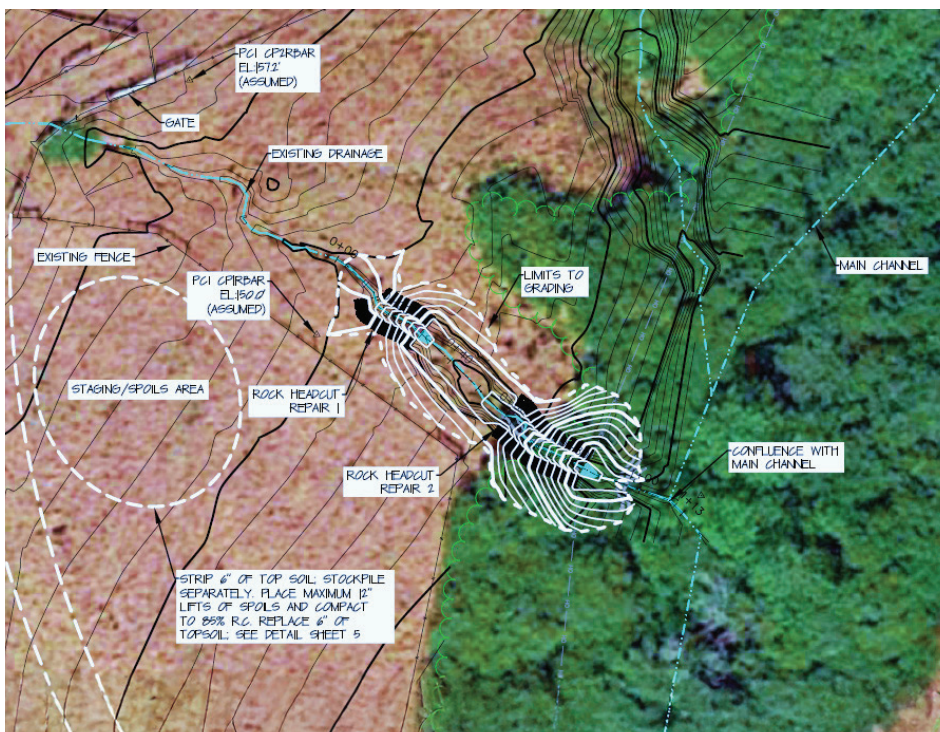
Stream and Riparian Restoration

ONE OF OUR MOST VISIBLE successes is stream restoration. In the last 35 years, we have fenced off and planted over 25 miles of streams with Point Blue STRAW (Students and Teachers Restoring A Watershed) to protect them from livestock. We use wildlife friendly

fencing and native plants that provide shade that cools the water, supports fish and amphibians, and stabilizes banks against erosion.

Riparian trees grow quickly, often reaching 20-30 feet in just a few years. Riparian habitat is incredibly important to a huge

host of animals: songbirds, newts and other amphibians, deer, and especially the fish that reside in the stream. Healthy riparian zones slow runoff, recharge groundwater, and extend stream flows well into the dry season, benefiting wildlife, ranchers, and communities alike.



Grade Stabilization

SEDIMENTATION THREATENS water quality. We have completed hundreds of projects in partnership with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and local ranches since the 1980s to stabilize vulnerable areas, preventing sediment from smothering fish eggs and killing invertebrates, which are a vital source of nutrition for fish. These low-cost interventions protect both the environment and agricultural productivity.

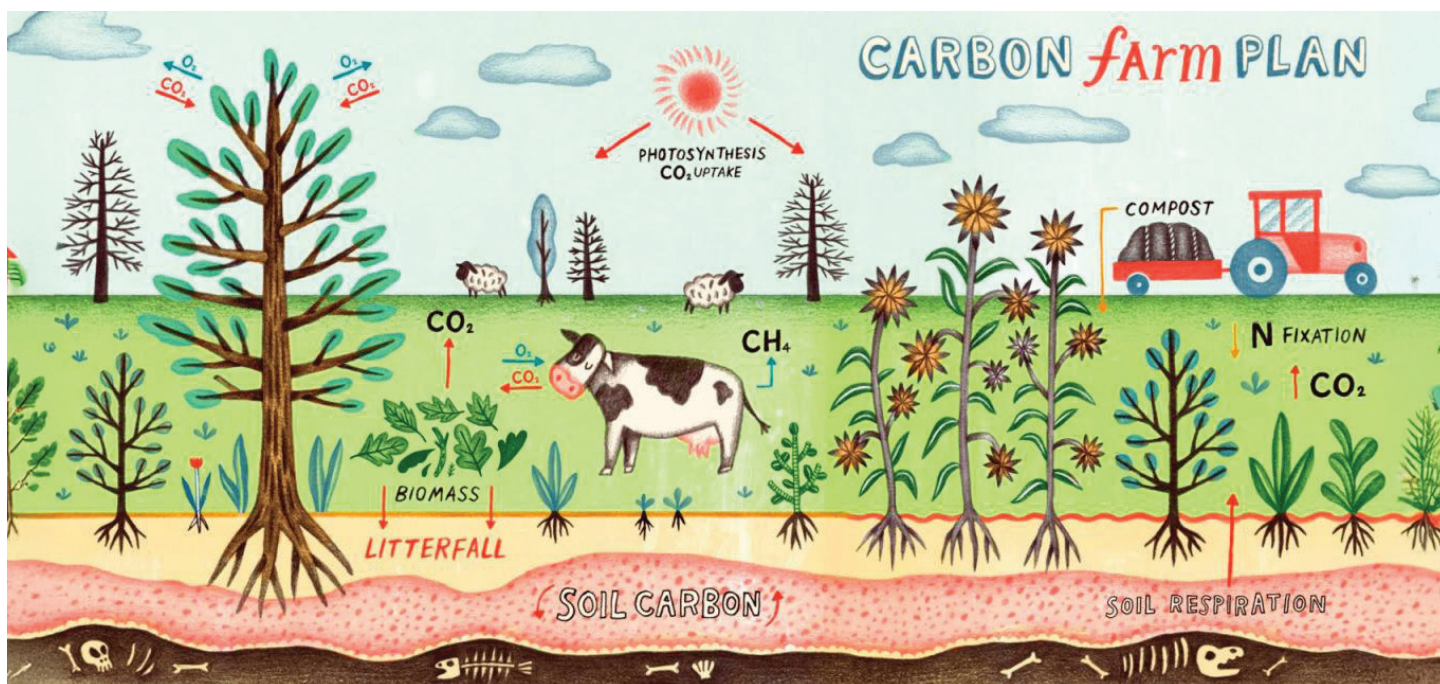
Engineered design plans show detailed plans to repair an eroded gully before entering Keyes Creek in Tomales.



Wildfire Resiliency

OUR TEAM IS JUST GETTING started in our work with key partners, such as Audubon Canyon Ranch, in planning for wildfire prevention and implementation by using tools such as shaded fuel breaks and controlled burns that will help reduce wildfire risks, protect lives, property, and wildlife habitats.

*Audubon Canyon Ranch prescribed fire practitioners ignite coyote brush on a hillside overlooking Bolinas Lagoon.
Photo: Sashwa Burrous*



Carbon Farming

OUR CARBON FARMING PROGRAM is one of the most popular among ranchers. We have developed 27 customized carbon farm plans across 10,000 acres that promote practices like compost application, creek restoration, rotational grazing,

and agroforestry. These strategies sequester carbon, enrich soils, and improve agricultural resilience. One rancher recently shared: "Working with the MRCD changed how we think about our land. Our soil is healthier, our pastures are

more productive, and we know we're helping the planet." We round out our planning teams by including staff from UC Cooperative Extension Service and Marin Agricultural Land Trust.



*An adult coho salmon can lay about 2000 eggs. Last year, Marin Water reported 117 coho salmon redds (nests) observed in a single day.
Photo: NOAA Fisheries*

SAVING SALMON & STEELHEAD

A Shared Commitment

LAGUNITAS AND WALKER CREEKS provide vital habitat for endangered coho salmon and threatened steelhead. Stream ecologist Sarah Phillips chairs the Lagunitas Technical Advisory Committee. The District has also completed

many miles of creek restoration and recently completed a Lower Walker Salmon Enhancement study in cooperation with several ranches. Our staff work alongside many partners such as State Water Board, Marin Water, Department

of Fish and Wildlife, Salmon Protection Watershed Network and Point Reyes National Seashore to complete this work.

Thanks to these collective efforts, coho numbers have shown significant improvement this year.

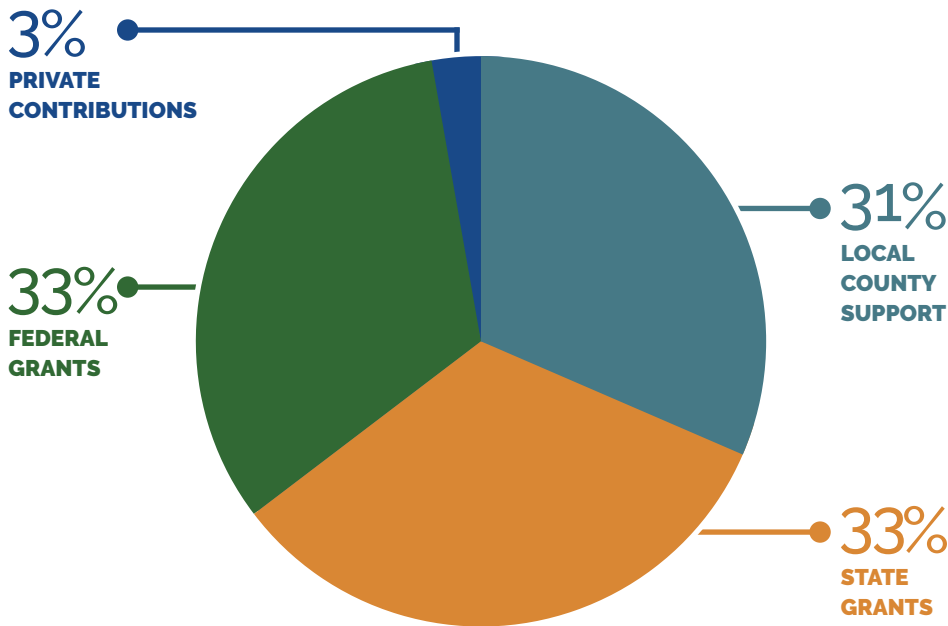
EDUCATION

Inspiring the Next Generation

THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS, our 25-year partnership with Point Blue Students and Teachers Restoring A Watershed (STRAW), is helping to inspire the next generation of environmental stewards. Students from diverse communities come to the field to plant native species, monitor stream health, and learn about sustainable land management. These hands-on experiences foster lifelong connections to the land.

A classroom of students is listening to a rancher talk about their farm before planting hundreds of native plants at a nearby creek draining into Tomales Bay.





FUNDING OUR WORK

A Delicate Balance

OUR PROGRAMS IN THIS YEAR are funded through a combination of donations, competitive grants and county sources including the following:

31% LOCAL COUNTY SUPPORT

from the Marin County Board of Supervisors, Measure A, Marin Water District.

33% STATE GRANTS

from agencies like the Coastal Conservancy and Wildlife Conservation Board. Voters recently approved additional funding for these and other environmental agencies when they approved Proposition 4 in November of last year.

33% FEDERAL GRANTS

from the Environmental Protection Agency and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Both these funding sources are threatened by the current federal administration.

3% PRIVATE CONTRIBUTIONS

from foundations and generous individuals.

Thanks to our Partners!

TO MARIN FARMERS AND RANCHERS, we extend A BIG THANK YOU for making a difference by implementing conservation practices to improve water quality, address climate change, enhance wildlife habitat and increase agricultural viability.

Also DEEP APPRECIATION to our local natural resource partners. We have a fabulous work community of dedicated professionals. All conservation work wouldn't have been possible without the following funders and partners who have contributed to Marin RCD's programs:

- Ag Institute of Marin
- Audubon Canyon Ranch
- Carbon Cycle Institute
- Charitable Donors
- County of Marin
- CA Department of Food and Ag
- CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
- CA State Coastal Conservancy
- CA Department of Conservation
- CA Wildlife Conservation Board
- Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria
- Marin Agricultural Land Trust
- Marin Biomass Steering Committee
- Marin Community Foundation
- Marin Water
- North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Point Blue Conservation Science
- Point Reyes National Seashore
- San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Turtle Island Restoration Network SPAWN
- UC Cooperative Extension, Marin
- US Environmental Protection Agency
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Voters of Marin!

Recent shifts in federal policy have placed some funding streams at risk—even for projects that have already been approved. One \$2 million dollar US Department of Agriculture contract for 5 years of climate-smart farming projects is already canceled.

We are actively seeking new funding opportunities and will keep our community informed about how you can help support our mission.



SCAN THE QR CODE TO **DONATE TODAY**

OR CLICK THE BUTTON ON THE BOTTOM RIGHT CORNER AT WWW.MARINRCD.ORG



**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.

WHERE WE WORK

Our projects are located primarily on farms across Marin County, from the Point Reyes National Seashore to the rolling rangelands of Chleno Valley. We provide assistance with stream protection, riparian restoration, erosion control, and sustainable land management.

