



# NEWSLETTER

JULY 2025

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*Photo by Richard James - Coastodian.org*



*ScottHessPhoto.com*

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

## MARIN RESOURCE

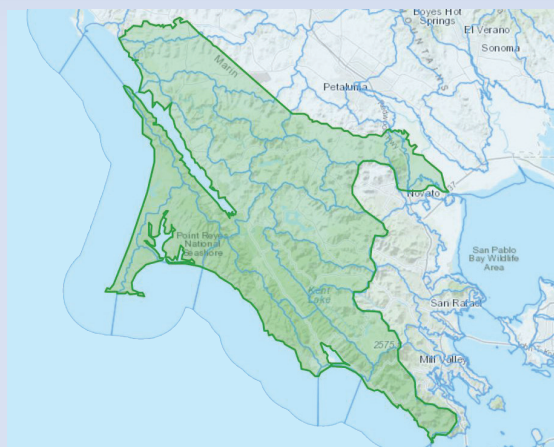


## CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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.

### WHERE WE WORK

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



### CONTACT US

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*Nancy Scolari assessing an active eroding gully after a storm event. These gullies can form over night when unstable, highly erodible soils interact with heavy storm events, releasing tons of sediment into nearby streams.*

## Executive Director Nancy Scolari Receives Public Service Award

### MARIN RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

(Marin RCD) Executive Director Nancy Scolari was honored by the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin with their annual Public Service Award at the EAC annual meeting on June 21, held at the Point Reyes National Seashore.

The award reads: "Nancy Scolari is a true example of a public servant who makes protecting and restoring the environment her top priority."

For over 27 years, Nancy has led the Marin RCD with dedication and vision, earning the trust of public agencies and private landowners throughout Marin County. Under her leadership, the District has expanded its mission to address large-scale,

*Nancy is installing rock with a tractor to stop a gully from eroding further. Ranch stewardship project such as these help reduce soil erosion and protect water quality.*



*Nancy Scolari is standing outside a fenced gully at a ranch holding a photo of the site before construction, showing how car parts were used for stabilization in the '70s.*



*Marin RCD's Nancy Scolari accepting award on June 21, 2025 from Environmental Action Committee of West Marin. Photo by Sarah Killingsworth*

critically important environmental issues such as water quality improvement, erosion control, gully repair, and habitat restoration.

Recognizing that ranches and dairies around Marin often do not generate enough profit to tackle environmental projects like erosion on their property, Nancy pioneered a cooperative program to help landowners engage in large-scale stewardship work. With help from the consulting firm, Prunuske Chatham Inc. and NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) Engineer, Paul Sheffer, she went door to door asking ranch and dairy owners if they would be willing to implement environmental projects on their land, if given help with permitting and construction. These efforts marked a turning point for the District, setting a new standard for conservation impact.

The majority of the conservation practices that Marin RCD has funded use biological methods where native plants heal the land. The results are lasting—cleaner water, more productive habitats, and greater biodiversity.

Nancy's collaborative spirit has built a strong conservation network across Marin County. The Marin RCD works hand-in-hand with partners such as the USDA NRCS, UC Cooperative Extension, Point Blue Conservation Science, Marin County Parks, Marin Agricultural Land Trust, Audubon Canyon Ranch, Point Reyes National Seashore and many others. Nearly every project is a joint effort reflecting Nancy's belief that "we are better together."

Under Nancy's guidance, the District has skillfully secured private, local, state and federal funds to implement programs that protect water quality, enhance habitat and sequester carbon in farm soils. Her fundraising skills have allowed the expansion of Marin RCD's professional staff, with new expertise in rangeland ecology, fisheries, hydrology, water quality, soil science, permitting and program management.

Thanks to Nancy and District staff, many miles of riparian habitat along West Marin streams have been restored, and water quality in Tomales Bay has been improved and protected.



*View of tire erosion control structure at Marconi Cove, Tomales Bay.  
All Photos by Richard James • Coastodian.org*



*Removing tires by kayak.*



# Get the Tires Out of Tomales Bay

**MARIN RESOURCE CONSERVATION** District (Marin RCD) is responding to a problem that has plagued Tomales Bay for years: tires polluting the Bay.

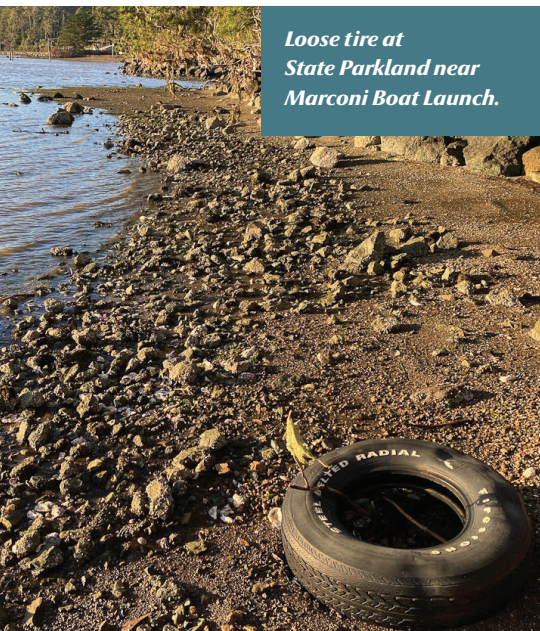
Many years ago, in a misguided attempt to control erosion, someone locked many tires together and anchored them in the Bay. The tires are gradually decomposing. Tires give off many harmful substances, such as organic compounds like benzothiazole phthalates,

bisphenols and polyaromatic hydrocarbons, as well as heavy metals like zinc, iron, and cobalt. One particularly concerning chemical is 6PPD-quinone, a product of the anti-degradation chemical 6PPD, which is highly toxic to fish, including coho salmon.

Of course, tires are ugly and degrade the visual quality of Tomales Bay. Inverness resident Richard James, the Coastodian, discovered these tires using drone technology, and has been

personally removing those that are most accessible. He alerted a number of agencies to the problem.

The bed of Tomales Bay is largely owned by the California State Lands Commission, as well as being part of the Point Reyes National Seashore and the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. As such, it deserves a high level of protection. The tire structures are also impeding the growth of eel grass, which is a prized habitat for many aquatic species.



*Loose tire at State Parkland near Marconi Boat Launch.*



*A tire structure initially installed to reduce erosion is falling apart on State Land near Marconi Boat Launch.*

In addition, many oysters are grown in Tomales Bay, and they need the highest possible water quality.

The District is working with Supervisor Dennis Rodoni to determine the areas suffering the worst tire pollution, in preparation for a project to remove the tires. Our effort is being led by Marin RCD staff, Sarah Phillips and Gerhard Epke with initial funding from the County. A long-term goal would be to remove all tires from the Bay, but we are starting with the worst areas.



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

## Good Fire on the Land

**DUE TO SEVERAL DISASTROUS FIRES IN THE STATE,** fire prevention and preparedness have been at the top of people's minds. Both urban and rural landscapes must equally be prepared in the event of wildfire. In West Marin, The Marin RCD has partnered with Audubon Canyon Ranch to promote greater use of managed fire (controlled burns) to reduce fire risk in West Marin, and restore ecological processes that rely on frequent, low intensity fires.

So far, the District has helped provide the environmental documentation needed to allow these fires to proceed and we have a lot to learn from our Audubon Canyon Ranch partners when it comes to prescribed burns.

The District, by training its staff and working with other partners, could create a larger fire prevention and preparedness program, working collaboratively on a program of managed fire on agricultural and wildlands lands. These lands are not near urban areas, but pose a fire risk in rural areas of West Marin. While federal funding has been cut back, there is quite a bit of state funding available for this purpose.

We would be careful not to duplicate or overlap the work of any other fire agencies.

*Dear reader, what do you think: should we become involved in this kind of work? Let us know through our Marin Resource Conservation District website under "contact" at the top of our home page or scan the QR Code. Thanks!*





## A THRIVING PARTNERSHIP: MALT & Marin RCD

**THE MARIN RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT** (Marin RCD) partners with many local, state, and federal agencies and nonprofits. Sometimes it is hard to tell them apart or understand who does what. Here's a quick overview of one of our most important partners, the Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT).

MALT was founded in 1980 by environmentalist Phyllis Faber and rancher Ellen Straus to protect farmland in Marin County. MALT was the first agricultural land trust in the Nation and has now protected almost 60,000 acres of working and natural lands in Marin County. MALT is a nonprofit organization that applies for grant funding to protect and steward land, through public funding sources like Measure A in Marin County and the State of California's Department of Conservation. Over the last several years, MALT has developed grant programs that support agricultural operations for soil and water quality on MALT easements as well as a competitive small grants program for all Marin County agriculturalists. MALT's mission is to permanently protect Marin's agricultural land for agricultural use.

The Marin RCD is a special district of the State and does not purchase development rights on agricultural land but secures grant funding (federal, state and local) to work directly with agricultural landowners to reduce water pollution, improve soil conditions, restore streams, and develop climate-smart farm plans.

Both organizations benefit from Marin County Measure A, which was approved by the Marin County voters in 2022. Measure A is a quarter cent sales tax. The Marin RCD receives 4 percent of the revenue to implement climate-smart farm plans and enhance water, soils, biodiversity, wildlife and pollinator habitat. MALT applies to the Marin County Farmland Preservation program for funding for their easement program.

Both organizations work closely together with ranchers and dairies to encourage the best environmental practices on Marin County agricultural lands.

## RANCHER SPOTLIGHT: Tamara Hicks

**TAMARA IS CO-OWNER OF TOLUMA Farms**, a 160-acre goat and sheep dairy and educational farm in Marin County, a few miles from the Pacific Coast, on the ancestral homeland of the Coast Miwoks. Toluma Farms is home to 40 sheep and 120 goats that are rotated regularly to graze and roam. The farm is co-managed by Julia Brandt.

Tamara, who is a Clinical Psychologist, co-owns the farm with husband, David Jablons, a retired thoracic surgeon and scientist. Tamara and David have restored the land, which was an abandoned cow dairy farm. They repaired the barn and other outbuildings, and they give special attention to restoring the land, including protecting streams, filling in eroded gullies, and adopting a carbon sequestration plan for their soils.



*Photo by Emmy Hicks Jablons*



*David Jablons and Tamara Hicks  
Co-owners of Toluma Farms.  
Photo by Paige Green*

Tamara served on the MALT Board for 9 years, including as chair and continues to serve on their Advisory Committee. She also served on the Agricultural Institute of Marin board for 9 years, 3 as chair and continues on their committee for a permanent farmers market at Marin Civic Center.

Tamara also operates Tomales Farmstead Creamery, which produces artisanal, farmstead goat and sheep cheeses. The head cheesemaker, Nick Campbell, makes six seasonal cheeses which are produced with milk from an Animal Welfare Approved herd grazing on certified organic pastures.

Toluma Farms raises sheep for wool and fiber. They have won numerous Good Food Awards as well as awards from the American Cheese Society. Many cheeses proudly bear Coast Miwok names, which provides Tamara and her staff an opportunity to discuss the past

and present work of the tribe with those that visit the farm each week.

In 2022, Toluma Farms embarked upon a collaborative planting project with the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria (FIGR), Marin RCD, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Point Blue Conservation Science's Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed program (STRAW).

Tamara says: "Without the significant technical and financial support from MRCD over the last two decades, we are confident that Toluma Farms would not still be

in operation. As first time farmers, we rely on the deep knowledge base from MRCD's team to guide us through various conservation projects. They support us each step of the way, which makes these important soil and water improvement projects possible."

"Additionally, we value their collaborative approach to each project, layering in Point Blue, STRAW, FIGR, NRCS and MALT. Because of their support we have planted thousands of native trees and bushes, restored streams, improved our soil, increased the biodiversity and so much more!"



*Photo by Emmy Hicks Jablons*



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

*Photo by Elise Suronen*



## Learn More About the District

**THE MARIN RCD IS UNIQUE** among Resource Conservation Districts in California in that its Board of Directors is directly elected by the voters of West Marin. Other districts have their boards appointed by the Board of Supervisors.

This means our Directors are directly accountable to you, the voters of West Marin. We try to be as transparent as possible. All our meetings

are open to the public, both in person and on-line. We publish our agenda, along with all agenda materials, on our website prior to board meetings, and minutes are published there as well. Our website was cited by the Marin County Grand Jury as one of the best among Marin public agencies. We include a great deal of material about our projects on the website: [www.marinrcd.org](http://www.marinrcd.org).

Our Directors follow a strict conflict of interest policy, as well as taking ethics and other training. All District projects requiring environmental review are approved by the Directors, after the public has had a chance to comment.

Please feel free to attend a board meeting. Public comment is welcome on all agenda items, as well as on general subject matter.