Changes, transitions, and accomplishments

Falling into the new fiscal year

Chris Rose, Executive Director

Fall is my favorite season of the year! Cooler fall temperatures mark a transition from summertime planning and project maintenance to implementing and managing them, in addition to holding our annual Fall Plant Sale.

We currently have over 30 separately funded projects to implement weed abatement, habitat restoration, environmental education, and watershed assessment. It’s easy to keep our heads down and stay focused on producing top quality results for the folks who fund us and forget to take the time to update the public about changes, transitions, and accomplishments, but we realize it’s critical for people to know about our efforts on their behalf. This ensures that our citizen and agency partners can understand and support our work, and that the work we do is valued enough to be extended and leveraged into other projects.

In this issue of Lay of the Land we’ll be sharing with you many of our successes in the 2018-2019 fiscal year as well as map out some of the road ahead. The impacts our habitat enhancement and education projects are having in Solano County are incredible, and we hope you will join us for our annual plant sale on October 5 to help support our activities on private and public lands.

It has been a fun and productive year, and we hope to keep up the momentum of great conservation and education work into the future. Please read more about our projects and check out our refreshed website, solanorcd.org, to see more of all the great things we are doing.

Stay up to date...

SolanoRCD.org

Visit our website between issues for the latest on:

Education
Restoration
Conservation & Planning Services
Water Quality & Flood Control
Boater Outreach

#SolanoRCD

A group of volunteers gather after a morning of plug planting at Pond C in Dixon.
Our education, restoration, and water quality programs are possible because of the great partners we work with to improve and enhance Solano County's natural resources. These partnerships are vital to making the District's tax base dollars go further and do more.

We are proud of the diverse, high quality programs we implement, our dedicated staff, and a mission focused Board of Directors that support conservation work in the District and throughout Solano County. Much of the work Solano RCD carries out on a daily basis would not be possible without the strong partnerships we have created.

Partnerships are paramount to Solano RCD's ability to provide services in the District and throughout the county. Local partnerships make up 43% of our funding not derived from tax base. That means that state, federal, and local partners such as Solano County Water Agency, Greater Vallejo Recreation District, Fairfield-Suisun Sewer District, Vallejo Flood and Wastewater District, and the cities and county of Solano support the RCD by funding services that include habitat restoration, community outreach and student education, landowner assistance, and water quality monitoring.
Revenue by Funding Sources
(FY 18/19)

Local & State Partners
$659,325
43%

State Grants
$635,795
42%

Tax Base
$222,642
15%

2018-2019
By the Numbers

35,000 native plants installed
19 acres seeded with native grass
4 miles of habitat planted
150 acres of habitat enhancement
13 miles of riparian exclusionary fence installed

5,000 acres weed controlled
9,800 K-12 students educated
3,000 clean-up volunteers
4,500 boaters educated
13 restoration volunteer events

Our annual budget for the 2018-2019 fiscal year exceeded $1.5 million. Over $220,000 of this amount, about 15% of the budget, comes from Solano RCD’s annual tax assessment. The remaining 85% is evenly split between County, State, and Federal competitive grants and directed action grants from various local partners.

We used these resources to take students out into the field to learn about their watersheds, eradicate noxious weeds on public and private lands, promote and carry out water quality testing, and plan and implement habitat restoration projects countywide.

We also utilized our resources by executing workshops and field days for the community as well as run the fall plant sale to support habitat enhancement projects on private and public lands.
Elevating environmental education in Solano County

Allison Martin, Education Program Manager

Over the past decade, the premise of our environmental education program has been simple: get Solano County’s youth outside to explore and connect with their local watershed. By diversifying our partnerships and funding sources, we managed to educate nearly 10 thousand students this past school year as well as nearly 8 thousand adults and their family members through three countywide cleanups and our boater outreach programs in Rio Vista, Suisun City, and at Lake Berryessa.

These successes have led to new opportunities: this school year we are working with The Freshwater Trust to develop and administer groundwater curriculum to schools in the Solano Sub-Basin; the Department of Water Resources to create and implement community building science curriculum in Rio Vista; and with additional funding from the Solano County Water Agency, we will be working towards a goal of taking 100 percent of third graders and sixth graders outside by 2024.

As our program grows, so do our goals. No longer is it just about getting students outside or getting boaters to install an oil absorbent in their boat’s bilge compartment – it’s about encouraging student learning while supporting curiosity and engagement in the outside world. It’s about making sure that our programs are culturally relevant, equitable, and inclusive. It’s about helping children and their families develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues and have the skills and resources to make informed and responsible decisions about them.

It sounds like a big endeavor, but we’re up for the challenge. In August 2019, our program became an official partner of the Lawrence Hall of Science BEETLES Project, which connects us to hundreds of organizations committed to elevating the field of environmental education here in the United States and internationally. We’re growing our program team and making headway on building our program capacity. Overall, great things are happening for us and for the residents and resources of Solano County.
Volunteer opportunities abound at Solano RCD

Katherine Holmes, Deputy Executive Director

Here at Solano RCD, we believe that people learn and understand the value of environmental stewardship best when they can actively participate in real projects that transform the landscapes in which they live. Getting outside and getting your hands dirty provides immediate, real-life involvement in conservation and supports us in getting the job done. Through propagating plants, pulling weeds, planting natives and participating in community cleanups, our volunteers get to know their communities better while having a real, positive impact on the environment.

How to get involved

1. Subscribe to our newsletter at SpecoRCD.org
2. Check out the Events page on our website
3. Contact our team:
   - Lake Dalwigk Project
     Sarah.McKibben@solanorcd.org
   - Pond C Project
     Katherine.Holmes@solanorcd.org
   - Community Cleanups
     Marianne.Butler@solanorcd.org
   - Youth Opportunities
     Katherine.Holmes@solanorcd.org
   - Education Opportunities
     Allison.Martin@solanorcd.org

Wildlife Habitat Restoration

We are implementing large wetland enhancement projects at two open space parks: one at Lake Dalwigk in Vallejo and one at Pond C in Dixon. We will be planting thousands of native plants around existing storm water ponds to create wildlife habitat, filter water, and improve recreational opportunities. Volunteers can help propagate and grow native trees, shrubs and sedges, or install these natives at the project sites. There will also be opportunities at Lake Dalwigk for volunteers to participate in bird surveys led by our partner, the Napa-Solano Audubon Society.

Solano County Waterway Cleanups

We coordinate three countywide community cleanups each year to help keep our waterways free from trash debris. Not only are they a great chance for volunteers to get to know Solano County’s waterways and open spaces better, it also helps protect our drinking water and keep wildlife and marine life safe from harmful plastic debris.

Student and Youth Opportunities

We offer a number of opportunities for students to participate in conservation activities, many of which support community service requirements. Scout groups regularly build bird nest boxes for our restoration sites. We also offer paid, one-day-per-week internships in the winter and spring for local college students who want to work on restoration projects in their communities.

Volunteer with the Education Program

From helping collect data to keeping supplies organized, volunteers are needed to support our education programs.
Save the Date

Upcoming events and activities

Coastal Cleanup Day at Lake Berryessa
- Saturday, September 21, 9AM to 12PM
- Register at cleanupsolano.org and receive a free lunch

Countywide Coastal Cleanup Day
- Saturday, September 21, 9AM to 12PM
- Find your cleanup at cleanupsolano.org

RCD Fall Plant Sale
- Saturday, October 5, 8AM to 12PM
- 6390 Lewis Road, Vacaville
- Info: SolanoRCD.org

Gardening to Attract Birds, Bees, and Butterflies
- Saturday, October 5, 11AM to 12PM
- 6390 Lewis Road, Vacaville
- Info: SolanoRCD.org

Salmon Festival
- Saturday, November 2, 11AM to 4PM
- Rotary Park, Winters
- Info: cityofwinters.org/winters-salmon-festival

Farming in the New Normal
- Saturday, January 7, 2020, 8AM to 5PM
- Ulatis Community Center
- Vacaville

As event details are finalized, updated information and online RSVP will be available on our website: https://www.dixonrcd.org/irrigated-lands

Dixon/Solano RCD Water Quality Coalition offers annual education events to assist irrigated agriculture coalition members in complying with water quality regulations. These education events are open to interested individuals as space is available.

November 2019 through April 2020 events will cover topics such as nitrogen and irrigation management, sediment and erosion control trainings and demonstration days. If you would like additional information on the events or the coalition program please contact: Kelly Huff, Dixon RCD (707) 678-1655 x102.
Plants: nature’s problem solver.

Amy King, Watershed Project Manager

It’s always nice when one simple solution can solve many problems at once. It’s even better when that solution is nice to look at! Putting plants in the ground at your home or on your farm is one of the best things you can do to address a number of environmental issues.

**Carbon sequestration:** Mitigating for climate change is a priority in every community, and something we can do in even the smallest back yard simply by growing a plant. As grasses, flowers, trees and shrubs grow and develop, they are pulling CO₂ out of the atmosphere. A complex suite of these plant types also facilitates the development of a robust soil microbial community, which stores large amounts of atmospheric carbon over time.

**Flood control and groundwater recharge:** Improving the rate at which storm water can infiltrate the soil, rather than run off into the nearest ditch or stream, is a great way to reduce flows in flood-prone channels and store clean water in our aquifers. Plant root systems help move water down through the soil profile to prevent it from running off to the nearest surface stream.

**Erosion and sediment control:** Those same root systems keep topsoil in place, protecting it from erosion by wind and storm water. This maintains cleaner water in our rivers and streams, and ultimately improves conditions for insects and fish in those streams.

**Wildlife habitat:** Urban and rural gardens can provide essential food and shelter for insect and bird species during the scarce winter months, and the maintenance of our pollinators will ensure the maintenance of healthy plant and wildlife populations as well. While all plant communities have some aesthetic qualities to boast, gardens filled with the flowers that attract pollinators (mostly birds, bees and butterflies) are also some of the most beautiful members of our farms and home gardens!

If you are interested in increasing the value of your home or farm gardening for pollinators, please join us at our upcoming Fall Plant Sale. At 11 am we will present a “Gardening to attract birds, bees, and butterflies” workshop, where we will introduce some of our favorite plants that provide year-round habitat for these important critters, as well as the best techniques for installing and maintaining them.

A honey bee approaches the flower of a purple sage to get a drink of nectar. In the process, she will get her head dusted with pollen and transfer it to neighboring flowers.

Majestic valley oaks can live for hundreds of years and remove 30-50 lbs of carbon from the atmosphere each year.

A diverse cover crop can provide habitat for pollinators, increase soil microbial activity and carbon storage, reduce erosion and runoff and increase groundwater infiltration.
Staff Directory

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Education and Restoration Staff:
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Niall Ogburn, Paula Pashby, Shiree Rezendes, Olivia Wang, Lynette Williams

Solano RCD is going digital! To conserve resources, we will begin publishing one
printed edition of Lay of the Land annually and will
begin sending quarterly email updates.
To begin receiving these updates, please
sign up at solanorcd.org or email
Caitlyn Morrissey at
Caitlyn.Morrissey@solanorcd.org.