

# Contra Costa RCD

## Strategic Direction for 2018-2021

### **Our vision**

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*The vision of the Board of Directors and staff of the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District (RCD) is we that are an active agent that helps the communities of Contra Costa County thrive in balance with the natural systems that support clean water, clean air, healthy soils, and a healthy environment.*

To move towards our vision, we work with many partners to help our county's people, agencies and businesses acquire, develop and apply the tools and knowledge to live and work in balance with the natural world.

As a special district authorized by Division Nine of California's natural resource code, the RCD has the special ability to bring together private and public stakeholders: communities; landowners; local, state and federal government partners; and others to achieve shared goals. We are non-regulatory, so we do our work using relationships and support (technical, financial and procedural). We use science-based approaches to improve environmental health, productivity, habitat and aesthetics as well as to prevent problems such as erosion, landslides and flooding. We also help our clients navigate the regulatory and permit systems to get solutions implemented.

While there are many ways to connect healthy human communities and healthy ecosystems, the RCD has evolved to work in several specific priority areas for our county.

#### *Healthy watersheds*

Water is fundamental to life. The lands across which water flows are the watersheds that collect the water into streams. Healthy watersheds do this in ways hospitable to life. The CCRCD seeks to advance our community's understanding of how healthy watersheds work and to help everyone use this knowledge to live harmoniously within them. The creeks of Contra Costa County provide water for drinking and growing food; places for adults and children to learn and play; infrastructure to make us more resilient to extreme weather; and habitat for all sorts of plants and animals. Living near creeks helps even those of us who live in dense urban areas stay in touch with nature. Our watersheds connect us across boundaries and demographics—from the farms and ranches of eastern Contra Costa County to urban neighborhoods to industrial areas and to suburbia - from mountain tops and ridgelines to valleys and tidal wetlands along the shoreline. We are inextricably tied together by the water that flows from the foothills into the creeks and eventually to the Bay and on to the ocean which we share with the watersheds of the world.

#### *Thriving farms and ranches*

Farms, ranches, and other agricultural operations are an essential part of our community, providing food and jobs for the people of Contra Costa County and beyond. Agricultural lands



also provide habitat for animals and plants as well as watershed services and open space. Agriculture is changing: economic shifts, urban development, and generational changes are influencing the viability of farms and ranches in the county; at the same time, there are exciting changes including growing interest and investment in urban agriculture as well as technological developments. The growing role of agriculture in providing services such as carbon sequestration and aquifer recharge is an evolving and exciting opportunity. The RCD works with our partners to strengthen agricultural viability, to combine agricultural productivity and profitability with conserving water, reducing erosion, keeping soils healthy, carbon sequestration and more. We also work to educate the community about the importance of working lands, the needs of producers, and new developments in agriculture. We connect people to learn about each other and work together towards shared goals.

### *Engaged communities*

Understanding how to live and work in balance with the natural world is fundamental to our collective future. Understanding how the natural world works and applying this knowledge to help us all prosper and thrive within the natural system is a major challenge of our times as well as an unprecedented opportunity. The stakes are high and the opportunities are great. New understandings, tools and approaches are continually evolving. The RCD works to engage adults in tried and true knowledge as well as new and exciting insights and techniques in natural resource conservation, and to inspire today's young people to continue this work beyond the span of our own lifetimes.

## **CCRCD Goals and strategies for 2018-2021:**

*Goal 1: Healthy local watersheds provide the communities of Contra Costa County with clean water, healthy habitat, flood protection, and connection to the natural world.*

*Goal 2: Agriculture in Contra Costa County thrives in balance with healthy watersheds and communities.*

*Goal 3: Increase Public awareness among residents and community leaders in Contra Costa County to understand the importance of conservation, with an emphasis on working lands, watershed health, and climate change.*

*Goal 4: The Contra Costa RCD is recognized as a go-to resource for conservation in the county.*

*Goal 5: The Contra Costa RCD has stable financial resources with which to conduct its work.*

*Goal 6: The Contra Costa RCD is a great place to work and serve.*

