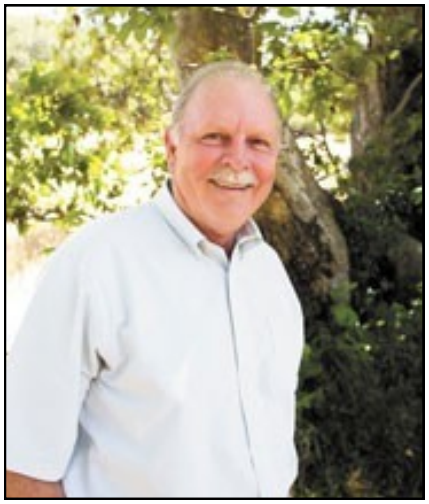
COASTAL SAN LUIS
RESOURCE
CONSERVATION
DISTRICT

Your Partner in Local Conservation and Agriculture

Annual Report 2021-2022

Executive Insights

To the constituents of the Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District, greetings!



We are pleased to share with you the accomplishments and progress of the Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District (District) for fiscal year 2021-22. The District launched into 2021-22 with three new watershed management projects. The Morro Bay Watershed project implements on-farm water quality improvement projects across the watershed. It will include riparian fencing, cattle water infrastructure, head-cut & gully repair, and irrigation system improvements. The Arroyo Grande Creek Watershed project is a coordination of water and land planning which will includes outreach, updating the Arroyo Grande Watershed Plan and collecting water quality data. The Stenner Creek Watershed planning project includes surveys to determine source of sedimentation, and an erosion treatment plans which includes engineer designs and permits.

This year we also wrapped up some multiple-year projects. Two projects involved invasive plant removal out at the Oceano Dunes State Parks (Russian wheatgrass) and Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes complex (perennial veldtgrass).

Sincerely,

Neil Havlik

In fall 2021 we planted 122,113 seedlings of native dune species covering some 56 acres to continue the Oceano Dunes stabilization efforts.

One of the biggest highlight for this year was the restoration kick-off for the Los Osos Wetland. Since the time of purchase of the property in 2015 a lot of work has gone into planning, designing permitting, etc. and now we see the benefits of our hard work. After the winter rains we observed the floodwater captured on our property. See page 3 for the details and pictures.

Looking forward to 2022-2023, We anticipate a major new initiative in cooperation with the Edna Valley growers to implement a major project to provide augmentation of the groundwater supply for the Edna Valley groundwater basin. Details will be forth coming over the next several months.

Cover photo of CSLRCD staff pulling invasive plants in the Oceano Dunes, taken by Samantha Alvarez.

Mission

The Coastal San Luis RCD is committed to protecting and enhancing natural resources through education, restoration and collaboration with local stakeholders.

Impact 2007 ~ Present

388 acres of land protected in perpetuity ~ 220 conservation plans developed ~ 171 irrigation water audits completed
466 conservation practices implemented ~ 2485 community members educated ~ 1937 acres restored
133 tons of CO_2 sequestered

Habitat Restoration

RCD staff provides technical assistance, restoration, engineering, design and permitting support to diverse habitat management projects that protect, enhance and improve upland, coastal, riparian, wetland and aquatic habitats.

Los Osos Creek Wetland Restoration: Implementation

Building on the RCD's planning efforts and restoration plan for the Los Osos Creek Wetland property, funding from the USFWS National Coastal Wetland Program, the State Coastal Conservancy, and the Wildlife Conservation Boards Habitat Enhancement and Restoration Program, the RCD completed initial restoration activities in fall 2021.

These initial restoration activities included reconnecting Los Osos and Warden creeks to their historic floodplains by breaching 400 feet of levee and replacing three perched culverts with fish-passage-friendly low-water crossing. Construction took place during four weeks and was completed days before the first rains of the season. During construction activities, RCD staff saw more than 60 California red-legged frogs, a pair of Cooper's hawks, a family of black-tailed deer and evidence of a mountain lion.

Restoration activities continue in 2022 with native riparian and upland plantings, including an outplanting of the Federally Endangered Marsh sandwort, supported by the USFWS, and removal of invasive cape ivy and iceplant.

Once complete, 50 acres of wetland and 16 acres of coastal dune scrub habitat will be restored, and a key barrier to fish passage will be removed, enhancing habitat for Steelhead, Tidewater goby, California redlegged frog, Morro shoulderband snail, Least Bell's vireo, Marsh sandwort and Morro manzanita.

Picture above after culverts removed . Picture to right same location and flood waters captured.

Habitat Restoration

NRCS National Water Quality Initiative for the Oso Flaco Watershed

The National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) is a partnership between NRCS and other federal, state and local partners focused on water-quality improvement in targeted agricultural watersheds.

Through the NWQI initiative, NRCS California identified the Oso Flaco Creek watershed as a high priority for investments in water quality and awarded the Cachuma and Coastal San Luis RCDs funding to conduct an initial Watershed Needs Assessment with growers in the watershed. Once the assessment is complete, NRCS can provide targeted technical and financial assistance for producers to implement conservation practices that address resource concerns identified across the watershed.

Remediation of Pesticides in Oso Flaco Lake

In 2020, CSLRCD was awarded the *Remediation of Pesticides in Oso Flaco Watershed* project, funded by the State Water Resource Control Board (SWRCB). Based on numerous studies, assessments and planning efforts undertaken by CSLRCD and partners over the past 20 years, the project proposes to remove and remediate sediment from 1.2 miles of Oso Flaco Creek where high concentrations of DDT persist. Excavated sediment is to be remediated on site, deploying a multi-layer remediation process that results in levels of DDT below thresholds protective of aquatic habitats and human health.

This project is part of a multi-phased remediation process and brings together a broad range of local partners, including private and public landowners, special interests groups and resource management agencies.

CSLRCD staff are currently developing design plans and securing permits for the project, which is anticipated to go to construction in 2022 or 2023.

Resource Management

RCD staff provides essential on-the-ground management of natural resources, including water quality and invasive species.

Dunes Protected Area

Since 2019, CSLRCD has worked closely with CA State Park and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff to protect the Federally Endangered Nipomo Lupine and Giant Coreopsis in the Nipomo Lupine and Big Coreopsis Hill Dune Protected Areas (DPAs) .

This project has been identified as a high priority in the Dune Protected Areas Conservation Strategy, which identifies critical areas and restoration opportunities to maintain the health of the Guadalupe Nipomo Dunes Complex (GNDC), and builds upon a legacy of work done at the site to ensure long-term success and prevent loss of effort.

Key restoration efforts include perennial veldtgrass control using chemical and manual removal methods, as well as protection and enhancement of naturally occurring populations of the Nipomo Lupine and Giant Coreopsis.

Water Quality and Flow Monitoring on Oso Flaco and Orcutt Creeks

The quality of water flowing through our creeks and into our estuaries is of crucial importance to wildlife and for human use. In the Santa Maria River watershed, there are few perennial creeks, and those creeks are characteristically human-modified, denuded of vegetation and fed by pollutant-laden agricultural runoff.

To better understand these creeks, the role they play in the ecosystem and how we can do better at protecting them, CSLRCD has partnered with landowners, CA State Parks and the Regional Water Quality Control Board to develop a monitoring program that improves our understanding of the flow and loading in Oso Flaco and Orcutt creeks.

CSLRCD installed and maintains continuous acoustic-doppler flow meters and electrical conductivity meters in each of these creeks, and also collects manual flow measurements and samples for a suite of salt pollutants twice a month. The data from these instruments are analyzed statistically to determine the loading of each individual pollutant, which improves our understanding of how these pollutants flow through our landscapes.

Resource Management

Morro Bay Watershed On-Farm Water Quality Enhancement

In 2021, CSLRCD was awarded funding through the SWRCB Nonpoint Source program to implement a suite of projects across the Morro Bay watershed that will result in water quality improvements, such as reduced sedimentation and nutrient loads. Projects will include riparian fencing, cattle water infrastructure, headcut and gully repair, and irrigation system improvements in the upper Chorro, Los Osos and Warden Creek subwatersheds.

This project builds upon a planning effort funded by the Morro Bay National Estuary and the Resources Legacy Fund in 2018 to identify opportunities and develop conceptual designs for projects that improve water quality in the watershed. In spring 2022, CSLRCD staff began work with a number of public and private landowners to permit and implement these projects.

The Morro Bay Estuary provides essential habitat and ecosystem functions to many sensitive species, as well as recreational opportunities. Accelerated rates of sedimentation resulting from upstream sources are currently impairing the health of the Estuary.

Russian Wheatgrass Management

The CA State Parks Oceano Dunes District has dedicated resources to eradicate Russian wheatgrass, a nonnative invasive weed that is found in the dunes. With additional resources from the CA Wildlife Conservation Board, the District was awarded five-year funding to help in their Russian wheatgrass eradication efforts under the ***South Central Coast Invasive Weed Eradication, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties, California***.

Russian wheatgrass crowds out and prevents the establishment of foredune native plants and it is also invasive in brackish marshes, crowding out *Jaumea carnosa* and *Carex* species. There is a high risk of this plant becoming invasive in California.
CSLRCD has assisted the District on this project with surveying, herbicide treatments, hand removal, monitoring, data collection, etc. The five-year project came to an end December 31, 2021, with 97.24 percent of the Russian wheatgrass eradicated.

Planning

For effective restoration projects, RCD staff supports planning activities by partnering with public and private landowners and other resources agencies to develop restoration and management plans that provide engineering, design, permitting, education and monitoring assistance.

Stenner Creek Watershed Enhancement

In 2022, CSLRCD was awarded funding from California's Department of Conservation Riparian Corridor Restoration program for the initial planning phase for the restoration of the Stenner Creek watershed within Cal Poly's boundaries. The project scope includes a robust set of surveys, both in-channel and up-slope, to determine primary sources of sedimentation into Stenner Creek. Erosion treatment plans will be developed for a suite of high-priority erosion sites, including engineered design plans and permits.

Upper Stenner Creek, a tributary to San Luis Obispo Creek and the geographic focus of the project, provides essential refugia habitat in the dry season for Steelhead in San Luis Obispo Creek, offering deep pools and riparian cover for over-summering Steelhead. Sediment from roads, trails and livestock grazing along Stenner Creek fill the pools, covering the gravel where Steelhead lay their eggs and increasing water temperatures.

Arroyo Grande Creek Watershed

The Bureau of Reclamation awarded CSLRCD grant funds from the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program for coordinated water and land planning in the Arroyo Grande Creek Watershed.

CSLRCD will work with longtime partners Creek Lands Conservation and County Flood Control District Zone 1/1a to implement this project, including conducting outreach, updating the Arroyo Grande Watershed plan and collecting water quality data.

The Arroyo Grande watershed is home to a diverse group of water users, including agriculture, municipal, recreational and fisheries. As we adapt to drought conditions and reduced water supplies, coordinated planning efforts will be essential to ensure equitable and sustainable use of water resources.

Climate Resilience

RCD staff provides local agricultural producers with on-the-ground technical assistance and support to increase resilience and adaptability in the face of a changing climate.

Carbon Farm Plans

In an effort to achieve carbon neutrality by 2035, the City of San Luis Obispo (City) has set ambitious goals across five key pillars that will form the basis of the City's Climate Action Plan Update. Included as one of these key pillars is carbon sequestration. The City owns many open spaces and an agricultural reserve that places them in a position to manage these landscapes for carbon sequestration to help achieve carbon neutrality.

Of the open spaces that were considered suitable, the Johnson Ranch Open Space (JROS) posed the greatest opportunity for carbon sequestration and education based on its size and access.

In addition to JROS, the City of SLO owns a 19-acre property of irrigated cropland called the Calle Joaquin Agricultural Reserve, operated by the nonprofit City Farm. Since cropland offers different strategies for carbon sequestration and could serve as an additional educational site, the City Farm is also included in the Carbon Farm Plan.

To support these efforts, CSLRCD and the City will collaborate to develop a CFP and pilot demonstration project for the City's Johnson Ranch Open Space and Calle Joaquin Agricultural Reserve, or "City Farm." This CFP will serve as a model for their other open spaces and as an educational tool for agriculturalists and the general public.

Johnson Ranch Open Space and City Farm courtesy of City of SLO

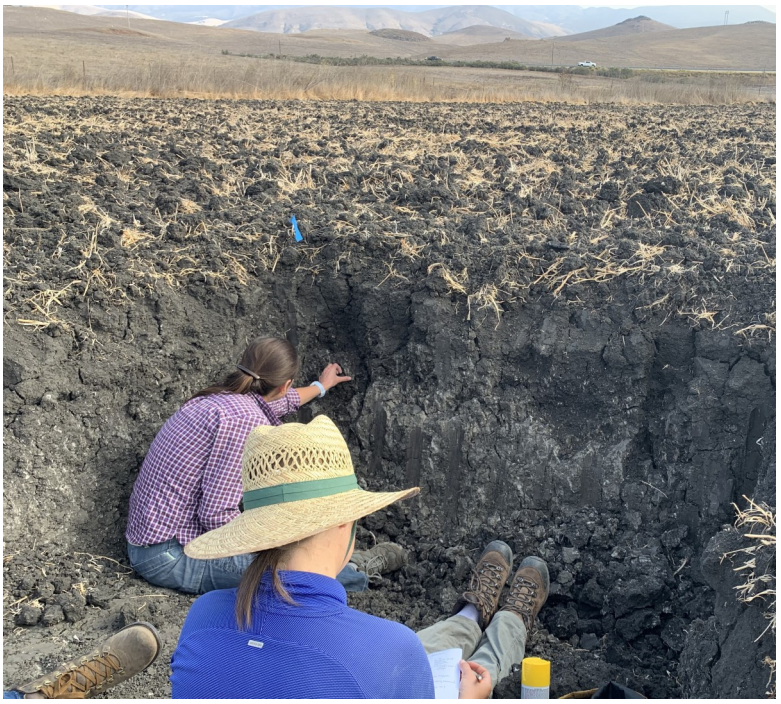
Climate Resilience

CDFA Healthy Soils Program Demonstration Projects

Avila Valley Barn and Cal Poly State University

Avila Valley Barn's demonstration project implements soil healthy practices in their organic apple orchard. The goal of the project is to provide an on-the-ground example of practices while building an understanding of the quantified soil health and soil microbial community outcomes from compost application over three years. Three demonstration events were held for farmers and ranchers and included soil sampling training and presentations on why soil health metrics are being tracked over time. Research partners such as Cal Poly professors and such soil health practitioners participated to help foster a strong local network of on-the-ground, on-farm soil health conservation practices. *Event out in the orchard above*

Cal Poly's demonstration project takes place on a 10 AC hayfield where they are comparing the use of compost and adoption of reduced tillage practices. This project has two experimental factors (compost or no compost and conventional tillage or reduced tillage) and looks at their individual and combined effects on soil and plant health as well as agronomic factors such as biomass. Cal Poly soil science professors and student researchers help with data collection and analysis and will present the findings during outreach events and conferences. *Soil testing to the right*



Community


RAIN BARREL BASICS
AT FARM SUPPLY CO. SAN LUIS OBISPO
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13TH
9:30AM - 11:00AM
A FREE community workshop covering:
• Rain barrel components & construction.
• Benefits of using harvested rainwater for irrigation.
• Mosquito prevention and troubleshooting.
Registration available through Eventbrite
or via email to stormwater@co.slo.ca.us
RAFFLE GIVEAWAYS!
Attendees will be entered into a raffle
for a chance to win a Bushman rain barrel!
PRESENTED BY:
FARM SUPPLY
COASTAL SAN LUIS RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
STORMWATER PROGRAM

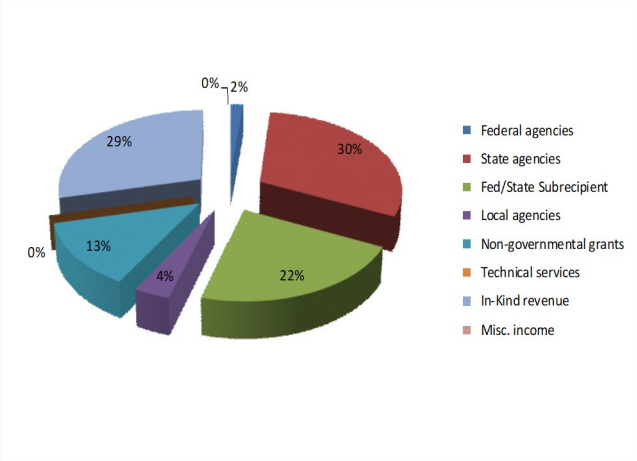
Financials

Grants and Private Contracts

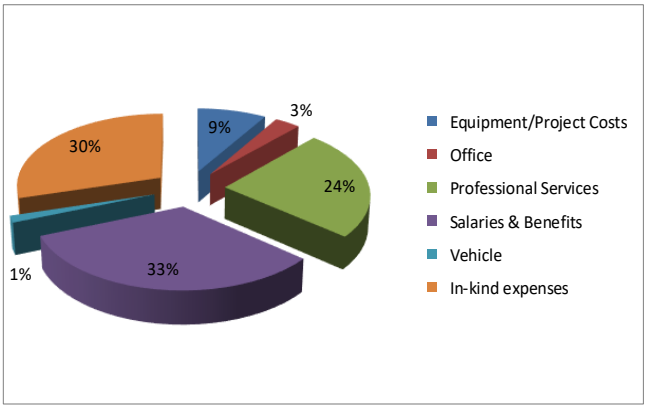
July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022

Our operations and community programs are supported by federal, state and local grants and contracts. We do not receive tax-base funding. These numbers are derived from audited financial statements for the year ending June 30, 2022.

Revenues		
Federal agencies	$	31,063
State agencies	$	591,266
Fed/State Subrecipient	$	429,832
Local agencies	$	70,355
Non-governmental grants	$	254,632
Technical services	$	-
In-Kind revenue	$	558,165
Misc. income	$	-
Total Revenues	***$***	***1,935,313***



Expenses		
Equipment/Project Costs	$	162,353
Office	$	60,381
Professional Services	$	459,940
Salaries & Benefits	$	618,522
Vehicle	$	28,407
In-kind expenses	$	558,165
Total Expenses	***$***	***1,887,768***



*Miscellaneous Income includes non-governmental grants and private contracts, some of which are connected to state or local funding sources.
**A complete audited financial statement is available upon request and is on our website at www.cslrcd.org.

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Alann Kiefer, Restoration Specialist I

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The CSLRCD may receive tax deductible donations under Internal Revenue Service Code Section 170 (b) and 170 (c) (1). This section says that contributions to a governmental entity are deductible up to 50% of the taxpayer's adjusted gross income. The CSLRCD may accept all forms of contributions including, but not limited to, gifts, property, cash, stocks and securities. California law also allows the CSLRCD to acquire and own land.

Your contributions can help the operations and projects of the CSLRCD.

COASTAL SAN LUIS
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