

## THE STEWARDS NEWSLETTER

### What to expect

“Stewards of the land.” This term has been used to describe farmers and ranchers for as long as we can remember. They are the ones who not only manage the land, but conserve and protect it as well. This newsletter will be useful for anyone in Colusa County who consider themselves “stewards of the land.”

Ever hear of an agricultural event or something happening in the county that you missed? Do you farm or ranch in Colusa County and miss out on grant program deadlines? Or maybe you just want to keep up on what’s happening in the agricultural world in our community! Well now you can find that all in one spot! The Stewards Newsletter is the



Colusa County Resource Conservation Districts new bi-annual newsletter that contains current information on upcoming ag-related news and events.

The Steward was created through the use of a grant awarded to the CCRCDD from the

Department of Conservation, aimed towards improving the visibility of the RCD in the community. The Colusa County RCD has been one of the

best kept secrets in the county—but not anymore! With this grant money they hope to teach the community more about the RCD, what it has done, and what it can do! So be sure to grab a copy of The Steward to keep learning about who we are and how we can help you!

## DUST BOWL ROOTS

The Colusa County Resource Conservation District

In 1937, during the aftermath of the Dust Bowl, the federal government passed legislation establishing the Soil Conservation

Service. Today this agency is called the Natural Resources Conservation Service, or NRCS. At the time, they realized a

## THE NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

The Natural Resources Conservation Service or simply “NRCS” is a US Department of Agriculture Agency that provides financial and technical assistance to farmers and landowners. They have many different programs that farmers and ranchers voluntarily apply for to put conservation on the ground. This could include implementing hedgerows, providing fencing, upgrading irrigation systems cover crops, and more! For more information call the Colusa Field Office at 530-458-2931 today!

federal agency based out of Washington DC was not going to be sufficiently responsive to local needs. And so local organizations were created, called "Soil Conservation Districts." The SCD's were responsible for creating the local connection from the federal programs and technical assistance to the farmer and ranchers.

Following the NRCS's name change, SCD's changed their names to Resource Conservation districts to better fit all natural resource concerns. They are "special districts" of the state of California, set up to be locally governed and have close ties with local government agencies, but are not themselves government entities.

Today, all RCDs are a little different. They address the resource concerns of their community, which can range

from forestry, marine life, erosion, fire, etc. All RCDs are also funded differently, which also dictates what an RCD can or cannot do.

**At the end of the day, the Colusa County RCD addresses the natural resource concerns of the community.**

So with all this in mind, who is the Colusa County RCD? The District is governed by a seven-member board that is made up of local landowners and managers that are familiar with the needs and conditions of Colusa County.

Today, the CCRCD works closely with NRCS to connect landowners with financial and technical assistance. They also find other forms of funding to help farmers implement

conservation on their lands, as well as put on workshops, organize stakeholder meetings, put together watershed management plans, educate the public on natural resources and agriculture, and much more! They have also created the **Colusa County Grown Program**, which promotes local growers and connects their product to the community!

At the end of the day, the Colusa County RCD addresses the natural resource concerns of the community. They encourage residents to contact them with ideas and suggestions on what agriculture and conservation projects they would like to see done in the county. If you would like to contact the CCRCD, you can find their phone number and email at the bottom of the newsletter.



## Winter and Spring Conservation



### **Soils**

Soil conservation in the winter in our county is important. We have a lot of clay soils that soak up water and hold onto it for a long time. In these cases, it's important to stay out of your field or garden! Working in wet soils causes compaction, which causes water to runoff, plant roots to suffocate, and makes it so that you have to till in the spring.

### **Plants**

The end of December to the end of January is a good time to plant native perennial trees and bushes, such as oaks, willows, redbuds, manzanitas, toyon, and much more. This is because most species are dormant and can tolerate the transplant process. This also gives the roots time to grow and become established before the majority of the plants energy goes into growing aboveground mass.

### **Wildlife**

It might be tempting to take advantage of the cool, wet weather to get rid of those brush piles and clean up in your garden. However, those messy areas often provide shelter and food for lots of wildlife species. Many birds use brush piles for shelter, while some pollinator species and beneficial insects may be using those left over broccoli plants.

## 2017/18 Waterfowl Season in Review

Ben Martin, NRCS Biologist and Sac Valley Hunter

What can be said about the 2017/2018 waterfowl season/migration? From my perspective it was a season of inconsistency. With warmer than average temperatures, an abundance of forage resources, and many areas of habitat for the birds to distribute amongst, many waterfowl hunters found themselves fighting an uphill battle from the get-go. Ducks, of all species, were by far the most difficult to pinpoint on a consistent basis. We are all used to the, "November doldrums", but even in December and January the ducks would rarely cooperate. They would be all over your pond one day and then the next day there wouldn't be a bird in the sky. Even favorable weather events wouldn't make the hunting lights out, on some occasions. I personally believe a lot of these ducks were utilizing many different parts of the state, especially the northeastern section, for a majority of the season. Without freezing conditions, or snow, these birds had the entire western section of the United States to winter in. Plus, with warm weather conditions, their metabolisms were allowed to operate at a slow rate thus forcing them to feed minimally.

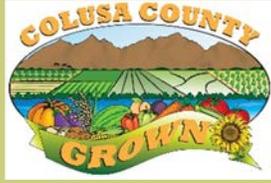


"...MANY WATERFOWL HUNTERS FOUND THEMSELVES FIGHTING AN UPHILL BATTLE..."

While ducks were slow for most of the state, both white-fronted and snow goose migrations were some of the best I have ever seen. From day one geese have been present as far as the eye could see, as record breeding numbers continue to increase annually. Many hunters around the Sacramento Valley have been experiencing banner goose seasons with these increased population numbers and a lot of waste grain forage around the valley, due to significant lodging during the growing season. When all is said and done, 9 out of 10 hunters will tell you it has definitely been a goose year. But as with every year, we will hang up our waders and jackets here in the next few weeks wondering what the 2018/2019 season will bring us.



## Colusa County Grown



Colusa County Grown (CCG) is a program created by the Colusa County Resource Conservation District in 2012, with the goal of promoting local agriculture and strengthening the farm to fork connection. CCG also promotes farmers and educates consumers. Some of the current and future activities that help it achieve this goal includes workshops, farm tours, printing local farm and food guides, sponsoring local agricultural events, and much more.

If you would like to benefit from the Colusa County Grown program, please consider becoming a member! The CCG membership provides many benefits and opportunities, ranging from logo use, supporter acknowledgement, listings on the CCG website, Facebook, and other publications, advertisement discounts, farmer to consumer/restaurant connections, and much more.

Local pecan producer and Colusa County Grown president Theresa Bright has been using the CCG logo since it began, and has seen an increase in loyalty from her customers. She says she loves using the logo because, "I am proud of my home county, and want people to know what wonderful things grow here." Many other local producers who have become members express the same sentiment, noting that the logo makes their product recognizable and attracts customers who are supportive of the local food movement.

Colusa County Grown is not just for farmers or ranchers. This organization encourages and welcomes anyone who is interested in showing their support for local agriculture. By becoming members and displaying support, people show their local farmer that they and their business are validated and appreciated. More information and membership applications can be found at [colusacountygrown.org](http://colusacountygrown.org), or by contacting the Colusa County Resource Conservation District.

## CCG Spring Membership Meeting

Monday March 12<sup>th</sup> 5:30 PM @  
CIP Conference Room, 100  
Sunrise Blvd, Colusa

Guest speakers from **Guinevere's Café & Bistro** from Woodland will be coming to speak about the **farm to restaurant** connection and how restaurant owners and farmers can foster strong relationships within their community. This will be a great opportunity for farmers to find new customers, and for restauranteurs to find what they need to put that "locally grown" label on their menus.

Colusa County Resource Conservation District

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