

COLUSA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT



2019 ANNUAL

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RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

**100 Sunrise Blvd., Suite B
Colusa, CA 95932
Phone: (530)458-5131**

info@colusarc.org

2019 Directors

Ben Felt-President
Beth Nall-Vice President
Kim Gallagher
Jay Dee Garr
Tom Hickok

2019 Staff

Liz Harper- Executive Director (January 2019)
Emily Harmon-Natural Resource Coordinator (May 2018)
Patti Turner – Financial and Administrative Consultant

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2019 ANNUAL REPORT

OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR

2019 was defined by Colusa County Resource Conservation District stepping into service opportunities with a focus on sustainable growth. This was possible from the prior years' work of preparing and positioning the agency to be more visible and relevant in the community. Growth included adding a fee-for-service contract with Glenn County RCD along with other projects that explored regional collaborations with University of California Cooperative Extension and other Sacramento Valley RCDs. In addition to facilitating two planning projects: a carbon farm plan and a community wildfire protection plan. In the course of a year, CCRCD was awarded funding for 3 new projects while meeting deliverables for 4 existing projects.

BOARD AND STAFF

In 2019 the CCRCD Board included Ben Felt-President, Beth Nall-Vice President, Kim Gallagher, Jay Dee Garr, Tom Hickok and two vacancies. The CCRCD was able to maintain a quorum at all meetings during the year. Associate Directors active in 2019 included Jim LaGrande and George Green both of which ended their terms within the year. In September, the CCRCD Directors appointed Jennifer Sanders as an Assistant Director. The CCRCD Board of Directors also signed a resolution with Colusa County to have the Board of Supervisors appoint directors in lieu of elections.

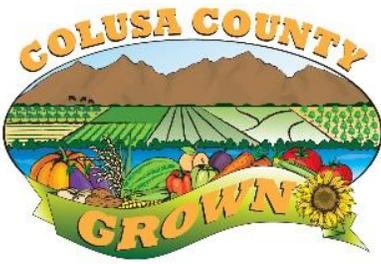
The new Executive Director, Elizabeth Harper, stepped into her position January 1st. True to all firsts, the year flew by with many lessons learned. Harper not only took on the financial and administrative management of the agency but also worked part-time on projects such as carbon farm planning, facilitating the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, beginning a Healthy Soils Demonstration Site, and participating in a regional collaboration with other RCDs in the Sacramento Valley.

Emily Harmon continued working as the Natural Resource Coordinator in both Colusa and Glenn counties. 2019 was a year of growth for Harmon as she received training provided through the Natural Resource Conservation Service and RCD events allowing her to work beyond the scope of her position. Initially, Harmon supported the Colusa Field Office with making sure producers in NRCS programs were implementing practices and assisting producers with technical information. In addition to accomplishing those tasks, Harmon began to assist with conservation plans and was able to step in and support Glenn county's office while their Soil Conservationist took maternity leave.

Patti Turner returned in an advisory position assisting with finances and administration in the year of transition. The CCRCD was grateful for more of Turner's time and dedication to conservation in the county. Turner's assistance during the transitional year ended December 31, 2019 helping with audit preparation and fine-tuning grant financial reports.

CCRCD GRANTS & PROJECTS

COLUSA COUNTY GROWN remained an active project for the CCRCD in 2019. Staff attended and participated in CCG committee meetings, planned the CCG Producers Programs 101 meeting and maintained the website page. The CCG board decided to become a committee of volunteers. Committee members include: Ben Felt, Jennifer Diaz, Elizabeth Harper and Alyssa Lindman from the Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust. The board



actively solicited new committee members throughout the year. Harper and Diaz both spoke at the Farm to Fork Dinner in Colusa promoting Colusa County Grown producers. In the fall of 2019, Gerry Hernandez with the University of California Cooperative Extension proposed partnering to create a “Farm Trail” for Colusa County. CCG is looking forward to taking on this creative endeavour in 2020.

The 2018 NRCS COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT (OCTOBER 2018- JULY 2021, \$180,000): The new agreement had enough funding to hire a full time person for almost three years to work in both Colusa and Glenn counties to assist with Farm Bill programs. Harmon continued to work in the position and received training from NRCS for the remainder of the year.

The DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT (MAY 2017- FEBRUARY 2019, \$46,209) was completed by the end of February. The capacity building grant tasks were directed towards hiring and training a new Executive Director and completing other project deliverables such as increasing the RCD’s visibility through new online platforms and regular attendance to community meetings.

The CALIFORNIA FIRE SAFE COUNCIL (FEBRUARY 2019- DECEMBER 2020, \$10,000) to create a Wildfire Protection Plan for Western Colusa County. The CCRCD spearheaded the development of the document by facilitating community meetings, pulling together a Technical Advisory Committee and subcontracting with the RCD of Tehama County to write the plan. The grant required a 50% match. The CCRCD brought together the proper Federal, State and Local entities to create the community-based plan. During the proposal writing period the Ranch Fire burned through Colusa County and destroyed the majority of the Mendocino National Forest within the county and private inholdings within the forest boundaries. This fire made the need for wildfire prevention planning and recovery more critical than ever.

The 50% match required for the Fire Safe Council project was requested from TITLE III FUNDING UNDER THE SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY SELF-DETERMINATION ACT OF 2002. An application was submitted to the Colusa County Board of Supervisors for \$10,000 of the County’s available Title III funding. After following the protocol required by the act the funding was awarded to the CCRCD. On December 18, 2018 the CCRCD entered an agreement with the County of Colusa to receive this funding. The CCRCD sends quarterly reports and invoices to both the county and CA Fire Safe Council. The CWPP encompasses all areas in the county at risk for wildfire and was presented to the community in November for review, public comment and prioritization. The plans will be available on the CCRCD’s website.

The CA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE STATE WATER EFFICIENCY AND ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (SWEEP) and HEALTHY SOILS INCENTIVE PROGRAM (HSP) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANT (DECEMBER 2018- DECEMBER 2019, received \$17,970.00) allowed for the CCRCD to continue offer support to producers applying for CDFA grant programs. Staff provided outreach and workshops for each program’s solicitation period. Staff assisted 30 producers over the course of the year and two SWEEP solicitations. CCRCD contracted with the RCD of Tehama County to provide project design and application assistance for the second SWEEP application increasing the reach 5 times than the first solicitation. Staff assisted 10 producers for the HSP solicitation. In total, this program brought the CCRCD face-to-face with 40 producers discussing what conservation would look like on their respective farms.

FEE-FOR-SERVICE AGREEMENT WITH GLENN COUNTY RCD for the Colusa Glenn Subwatershed Program under the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (DECEMBER 2018-JUNE 2019, up to \$7000 in fee-for-service; renewed

JULY 2019-JUNE 2020, \$17,000 in fee-for-service). GCRCO renewed the contract with CCRCO following the fiscal year (JULY 2019 TO JUNE 2020). In both cases the Scope of Work includes reimbursement for hours and mileage for CCRCO staff. Staff acts as a subwatershed coordinator for members in Colusa and Glenn counties assisting in outreach and education events and reporting compliance. Staff also participates in meetings for the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition, Subwatershed Coordinator training, and Colusa Glenn Subwatershed Board.

The CA ASSOCIATION OF RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICTS AND CARBON CYCLE INSTITUTE (\$15,000) funded the CCRCO to create a Carbon Farm Plan for a producer in the county. It was the first conservation plan that quantified carbon dynamics (storage and savings) through farm practices in Colusa County. The plan suggests that practices such as composting, cover crops and hedgerows effectively sequester carbon in the soil. CCRCO worked with Davis Ranches, a leader in natural resource management and conservation agriculture in the Sacramento Valley, and NRCS District Conservationist, Wendy Krebeil, to create a whole farm carbon plan. Krebeil brought years of planning experience and extensive knowledge of practice implementation. She also created the GIS mapping for the plan which were vital visuals showing aspects of the land, current carbon beneficial practices and proposed practices. The plan includes a baseline inventory of current and historical management practices, delineation of ecological areas, soil reports and hydrology of the landscape. Then recommendations were created through three on-farm meetings with Davis Ranch management team to discuss and select conservation practices. Carbon sequestration was measured through an online tool, CometPlanner, by entering in the practices and acreage. The plan is undergoing the final stage of peer-review by The Freshwater Trust, Center for Regenerative Agriculture and Resilient Systems (CSU, Chico) and the Carbon Cycle Institute. Once the plan is complete, the farm management team will review and prioritize projects. Funding sources for projects are outlined in the plan. The CCRCO finds value in the Carbon Farm Plan and planning process because it brings clarity to producer-lead conservation and allows the RCD to connect the producer with many funding and information sources. It is also valuable because the CCRCO anticipates more funding opportunities to farms from carbon credits and/or climate change mitigation.

The CARBON CYCLE INSTITUTE (\$3,250) funded CCRCO to assist in creating a Sacramento Valley Regional Carbon Farm Hub Plan. This project was in collaboration with Yolo County RCD, Glenn County RCD and RCD of Tehama County. The hub plan included additional regional RCDs such as Sutter, Butte, Feather River, and Western Shasta. The plan's main goal was to create a regional resource (hub) for individual districts to increase carbon farm planning capacity. The hub includes a regional coordinator, technical information, grant writing assistance, and program enrichment training. The goal is to bring high quality technical services to each district interested in carbon farm planning and implementation. Yolo County RCD provided a staff grant writer who facilitated meetings between district managers. The grant writer also brought carbon farm planning experience and brought together a cohesive plan that included each districts' needs.



The XERCES SOCIETY awarded the CCRCDC with a pollinator kit consisting of 1600 perennial pollinator plants for three planting projects in Colusa County. Colusa High School Graduate, Chloe Ferraiolo, spent her senior project focused on promoting and planting habitat, specifically for the declining monarch population. Chloe applied for the Xerces' Pollinator Kit in hopes that creating monarch habitats would continue in Colusa County long after her senior project ended. Her application was awarded and one of the planting sites went alongside her pollinator patch at the Oak Woodland Demonstration Site at the County Office of Education, a part of the Farm to School program. Colusa High School students assisted with two of the plantings. CCRCDC co-hosted two outdoor education and restoration days with the

Environmental Science Academy, a program at CHS. The students were enthused to be outside and do their part to save a favorite species from their childhood, the monarch butterfly.

CONSERVATION EDUCATION & OUTREACH

In 2019 the CCRCDC's website was up-to-date on reporting projects, program announcements and adhering to transparency regulations for special districts. A quarterly newsletter was published using MailChimp highlighting conservation activities throughout the county reaching 234 subscribers. In addition, the CCRCDC facebook page continues to reach the community with 150 likes and 182 followers.

The District's 2019 COLUSA FARM SHOW EXHIBIT featured general information about California Resource Conservation Districts and specific projects happening at the CCRCDC. It was also used to gather information from the producers concerning their natural resource concerns. The most exciting addition to this year's farm show was NRCS' Soil Health Tunnel. The tunnel was an inflatable walk-through tunnel for show-goers to experience what goes on in the soil underneath their feet. The eye-catching exhibit replaced the annual workshop introducing new and updated conservation programs offered through NRCS and CCRCDC. The soil tunnel seemed more impactful because it was interactive and invited discussions between staff and show attendees.





The CCRCD and Colusa County Grown hosted a workshop during the summer featuring many agencies that offer assistance programs to farmers and ranchers within the county. Colusa County Farm Show called “NRCS, RCD, FSA-101” and invited partners to participate in the presentation. Presenters included Audubon, Sutter Buttes Land Trust, Xerces Society, CAFF, County Air Pollution, County Water Resource, NRCS, RCD and Colusa County Grown.

The CCRCD was listed as a partner in the FARM 2 SCHOOL proposal submitted by the Colusa County Superintendent of Schools requesting funding to create an on-campus agriculture learning laboratory at the Williams’ Education Village facility. CCRCD actively participated as a stakeholder in the development of the portion of the school grounds for the oak woodland demonstration site and butterfly way station, an acre to highlight native plant and species diversity of California. CCRCD was able to bring together Colusa High School students from the Environmental Science Academy to assist with planting and maintenance of the site.

As in past years the CCRCD applied for and received a \$1,000 GOLDEN STATE RISK MANAGEMENT SCHOLARSHIP to help provide risk management training for district staff. The CCRCD applied this year’s scholarship towards staff and one associate director travel expenses to attend the 2019 CARCD Annual Conference in Redding. Harper, Harmon and Sanders attended valuable training sessions and engaged in conversations with experienced peers.

In early 2019 the CCRCD received funding from the Premier Mushroom Local Grant Program to support stipends for updated CCRCD “swag” for directors and staff. Harper used the \$250 to purchase new hats and two professional work shirts for each staff member. This increases the CCRCD’s visibility and professionalism when conducting and attending outreach and educational events.

CCRCD was asked to participate in speaking at the Farm to Fork dinner, Xerces’ Bee Better Certification workshop, and UCCE’s Almond and Walnut Day at the Nickles’ Soil Lab.

ANNUAL SPEAK-OFF CONTEST

The CCRCD’s Annual Speak-Off contest, held in conjunction with the CARCD Regional and State Contest, took place on October 2nd at the Colusa Industrial Park Conference Room. The 2019 theme was “How can RCDs help save the monarch butterfly?”. First place went to Abigail Dunlap from Maxwell High School. Dunlap went on to compete in the CARCD Sacramento Valley Regional Contest in Orland where she received third place.



OTHER STAFF CAPACITY BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES

During 2019 staff attended many workshops and webinars to further their knowledge about in the field resource management. A few of the training events included carbon farm planning, soil health workshop hosted by Chico State, federal grant management workshop, and the communication academy offered through CARCD's capacity building grant.

The SACRAMENTO VALLEY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICTS DURABLE COLLABORATION was a program facilitated by the CARCD and Solid Ground Consulting to create lasting regional partnerships between RCDs. The process included two one-day retreats and monthly conference calls with District Managers/Executive Directors. From this effort a Memorandum of Understanding was created, vetted and signed by all RCDs in the region further legally backing the agencies' ability to partner on programs and projects. Programs and projects that were identified as being able to scale to the regional level were carbon farming, watershed health, and outreach/education. Through this MOU, CCRCD was able to efficiently contract a technical writer for the Community Wildfire Protection Plan from RCD of Tehama County and also be hired through Glenn County RCD as a subwatershed coordinator for the Colusa Glenn Subwatershed Program. In addition, CCRCD was able to participate in a multi-RCD proposal for a Carbon Farm Hub in the Sacramento Valley.

Harper attended the GOLDEN STATE RISK MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY CONFERENCE (GSRMA) annual conference in Colusa, CA for two days of training on how to limit risk and address liabilities common with special districts. Training included how to conduct worker safety meetings, interviews, and annual performance reviews. The keynote speaker highlighted key leadership qualities and time management skills one could adopt to make work flow easier throughout the day/week/month. Finally, staff and directors attended required ethics and harassment training provided in the spring of 2019 through GSRMA.

The CCRCD participated in the 2019 CARCD SACRAMENTO VALLEY REGION FALL AND SPRING MEETINGS. The spring meeting was hosted by RCD of Tehama County in Orland. The Fall meeting was hosted by the Glenn County RCD in Willows and included the regional Speak-Off contest. These meetings are incredibly valuable because partner agencies give reports and in turn hear what each individual RCD is doing within their district. Agencies include California Department of Conservation (DOC), state and regional leadership from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and CARCD. In both meetings, the durable collaboration efforts were discussed with three main regional programs presented: carbon farming, outreach and education, and

watershed health. These programs reflect CCRCD's priorities and would greatly benefit from regional resources to build better programs and bring effective project funding into the county.

CARCD ANNUAL CONFERENCE was in Redding California, November 12th through 15th. The CCRCD's Executive Director (ED), Natural Resource Coordinator (NRC) and one Associate Director took full advantage of the pre-conference training held on November 12th along with the formal conference held November 13th and 15th. The pre-conference had two training tracks. The ED attended leadership and capacity building workshops while the NRC and Associate Director attended the Healthy Soils Terrace. The ED attended RCD Management training on Intentional Approaches to Organizational Culture, Project Management A-Z, and Mastering Indirect Costs. The ED spent the rest of the conference following the "Partnerships and Programs for Relevant, Excellent, and Visible RCDs" which included seminars on Turning Statewide Vision into Local Action, Model of a Sustainable RCD, and Counting Counties as Conservation Partners. In addition, training on how to create and enhance diversity, inclusion and equality in each district was a theme throughout the conference. Meanwhile, the NRC and Associate Director attended training focused on conservation project management including: range land conservation, forest fire prevention and recovery, healthy soils, and watershed resilience. Learning the successes and failures of others limits risk by bringing awareness to what projects entail. This year's conference was rich with learning and networking opportunities. The ED and NRC feel better equipped to handle the tasks in the coming year and look forward to applying the newly acquired knowledge. Finally, the fire-centric training rose to the top as being vital to our staff and community. RCDs throughout the state were able to share real life scenarios of devastation, hope and RCDs essential role in recovery.

The Executive Director was asked to participate in a District Council cohort that would offer input on CARCD's strategic planning. Harper attended the first cohort meeting with a diverse group of district managers at the CARCD Conference. Through this cohort, Harper was able to participate in an upcoming leadership training in 2020 revolving around equity, diversity and inclusion.

CCRCD ADMINISTRATION

In 2019 the CCRCD received BASIC OPERATING EXPENSES from the Colusa County General Fund in the amount of \$26,644. This funding is vital to support costs of mandatory items such as staff salary devoted to administration and financial management of the CCRCD, liability insurance and annual audits. The CCRCD's ability to generate adequate annual revenue to sustain the basic operating expenses of the District and maintaining staff remains a top priority. The CCRCD deposits their funds with the Colusa County Treasurer and submits claims for payment to the Colusa County Auditor.

COLUSA TAX SERVICE continues to do an excellent job providing payroll and tax reporting services for the CCRCD.

GOLDEN STATE RISK MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY provides Liability and Property coverage and Workers' Compensation Insurance for the CCRCD.

The CCRCD's Audit for the year ending June 30, 2019 was completed by Larry Bain, CPA. The CPA's opinion was that the basic financial statements presented fairly in all material respects and conformity with the modified cash basis of accounting. In 2019 a Request for Proposals was sent out seeking the next three-year contact for 2019, 2020 and 2021 audits. Larry Bain, CPA was the most competitive and received the 3-year contract.

