

Nevada County Resource
Conservation District

Annual Report

(530) 798-5529
113 Presley Way, Suite 1
Grass Valley, CA 95945
manager@ncrcd.org
www.ncrcd.org

"The welfare of the farmer is vital to that of the whole country. The prosperity of the country rests peculiarly upon the prosperity of agriculture."
— President William Taft

Every year we report a summary of the enriching community agricultural highlights of the last fiscal year. This year, I would like the readers to look beyond the numbers and the impact, though they are impressive in their own right. I would like the reader to see the incredible resource that Agriculture provides to our community, year-round, 365 days a year, without rest. There have been a lot of changes in administrative priorities and funding, however, what has not changed, has been the importance of agriculture education. As you will see in this report, the NCRCD has been involved in many different facets of education and implementation across the county. We have had numerous partnerships in fuel reduction projects, conservation projects, prescribed fire trainings, community enrichment classes, agricultural policy work and most importantly youth education and youth support.



In this edition, you will notice new faces, new programs, new ideas, new funding, and new collaborations that are showcasing the importance of our vision statement at work: to educate and assist landowners and land managers in establishing a balance between a high quality rural environment, a biologically diverse landscape, and a healthy economy for the community. I am very proud of the work we have accomplished in these last three years, and we will continue to be a strong community partner in agriculture across the region.

Executive Director
Briana Bacon



About Us

The 1862 Homestead Act sped up western settlement by giving citizens 160 acres of public land if they built a home and farmed it for five years. This brought many new farmers to the Great Plains, where prairie grasses were plowed under, removing the roots that held soil and moisture in place.

During World War I, demand for wheat soared, and farmers expanded production using new tractors that rapidly stripped more grassland. When a severe drought struck in 1931, crops failed and massive “black blizzards” of loose soil swept across the Plains. A huge 1934 dust storm even reached Washington, D.C., prompting Congress to label soil erosion a national crisis. The Soil Conservation Act established the Soil Conservation Service (now the NRCS) to help protect farmland.

By 1936, however, around 850 million tons of topsoil had already blown away. In 1937, new laws created local Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) to manage soil and water conservation with farmer-led leadership. In 1944, the Nevada County branch was formed.

For over 81 years, the Nevada County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD) has worked with land managers to restore natural resources, support agriculture, and serve the community by:

Assisting farmers, ranchers, and land stewards through free advisory programs and prescribed burn guidance.

Offering resources such as manure exchange, equipment loans, a no-till drill, and educational workshops.

Providing youth education through events like the Annual Farm Day, reaching over 1,000 students each year.



RCD Awarded Bear Yuba Land Trust 2025 Conservation Award



Bear Yuba Land Trust exists to conserve and protect the natural, working, and cultural lands in the Bear and Yuba River watersheds and empower a healthy, resilient community through nature access and education.

Bear Yuba Land Trust (BYLT) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, community-supported organization that works to promote voluntary conservation of the region's natural, historical and agricultural legacy. BYLT stewards a lasting community heritage by protecting and enhancing meadows, watersheds, forests, farms and ranches, trails and parks.



*BYLT Board of Directors and
Community Committee Members*

The Bear Yuba Land Trust announced that the **Nevada County Resource Conservation District has been selected as the 2025 recipient of the Bear Yuba Land Trust's Partner of the Year Award.**

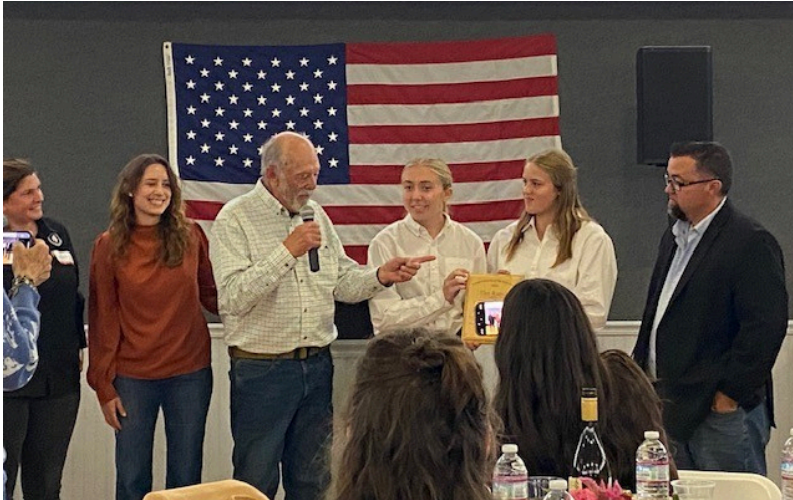
This award is given to a local, regional, or national agency or nonprofit who demonstrates meaningful support of BYLT through donation, partnership, and/or engagement. **Nevada County Resource Conservation District's assistance with fuels management and wildfire safety on BYLT properties proved many benefits to the community and widely applauded by neighbors and community leaders.** The RCD's leadership with the SALC Planning Grant helped to solidify conservation in Nevada County.



*Briana Bacon after accepting the
Conservation Partner of the Year Award*

RCD attended the BYLT Conservation Award and Gratitude Breakfast. Briana Bacon proudly accepts this prestigious award on behalf of the Board and Staff. It is a great honor to be recognized for this award, and the Nevada County Resource Conservation District is deeply grateful.

Strengthening Agricultural Partnerships and Supporting the Next Generation of Land Stewards



Briana Bacon, Ellen Van Noy, Jim Drew, Taylor Browning, _____, Luke Browning

leaders, and partners to celebrate the strength and resilience of Nevada County's agricultural community.

The evening featured locally sourced food, fundraising activities, and Farm Bureau Board elections. Guest Speaker Supervisor Sue Hoek delivered remarks on the expanding agricultural economy in Nevada County and the collaborative spirit that has emerged around the development of the District Ranch School. Her comments underscored the importance of partnerships in advancing agricultural education and resource stewardship.

During the event, NCRCD presented its annual Conservationist of the Year Award to the District School Ranch, recognizing its leadership in hands-on, career-focused agricultural education.

In 2025, the Nevada County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD) deepened its commitment to local agriculture and youth education through strategic partnerships and targeted investments. ***A highlight of the year was the District's sponsorship of the Nevada County Farm Bureau's 106th Annual Membership Dinner***, held on October 4, 2025. The event brought together producers, educators, community



Nevada County Farm Bureau
106TH MEMBERSHIP DINNER

OCTOBER 4TH
Saturday

LOCAL FOOD • FUNDRAISING
BOARD ELECTION • AWARDS
• GUEST SPEAKER

Tri Tip & Chicken Dinner \$45
5pm Social followed by dinner at 6:30pm
Nevada County Fairgrounds, Ponderosa Hall
Gate 2, 11228 McCourtney Road, Grass Valley

Reservations are limited
Purchase online by Oct 1st at
nevadacountyfarmbureau.com



Growing Opportunities for Student Learning

The 86-acre District Ranch continues to expand hands-on agricultural training for students across livestock, forestry, and land management programs.

Highlights:

- Students gained practical swine-care experience, including vaccinations and other essential management skills.
- Ranch intern Greyson Sinclair earned 1st Place in the 2025–2026 California Youth Section Project Competition and continues to build industry skills operating the district sawmill.
- The Ranch welcomed its first district-owned calves, supporting new learning in beef production and herd management.



NCRCD Donation of a Portable Sawmill

NCRCD strengthened these programs with the donation of a portable sawmill, enhancing forestry and wood-processing education and supporting responsible resource management across the district.



PRESCRIBED FIRE EDUCATION: SUPPORTING SAFE, INFORMED LAND STEWARDSHIP

As wildfire risk continues to rise across the region, the Nevada County Resource Conservation District expanded its prescribed-fire education services to help landowners safely and confidently use fire as a land-management tool. Prescribed fire, when planned and implemented correctly, reduces hazardous fuels, improves forest health, and supports resilient ecosystems.

On-Site Support for Landowners

The RCD provided free, personalized site visits to help landowners understand the steps required to conduct a safe and legal burn. These visits offered guidance on property suitability, site preparation, burn-plan development, permitting, smoke management, volunteer coordination, and equipment needs. Landowners were also connected to the Nevada County Prescribed Burn Association and online resources to deepen their understanding of fire ecology.



*Haley Coopergard
RX Fire Education Manager*

Free Community Workshops

To broaden community knowledge, the RCD hosted a series of free workshops covering topics such as burn preparation, writing burn plans, tools and equipment, fire behavior, live-fire operations, and post-fire effects. These workshops combined instruction with hands-on demonstrations, giving participants practical experience when conditions allowed.

Building a Fire-Literate Community

Through these no-cost programs, the RCD is helping cultivate a knowledgeable network of land stewards who can safely apply prescribed fire to reduce wildfire risk and restore ecological balance. This work strengthens community resilience and supports healthier forests across Nevada County.

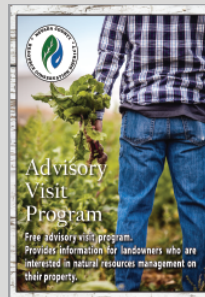


Our Programs

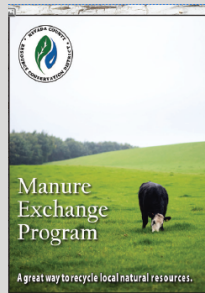
The RCD supports Nevada County landowners with free advisory visits, a community manure exchange, low-disturbance Min-Till Drill rentals, and a no-cost tool loan program—practical resources that help residents improve soil health, manage their land, and maintain resilient, productive properties.



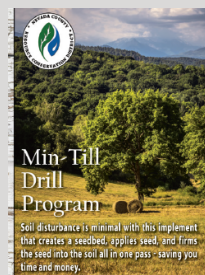
RCD Offers:



The Advisory Visit Program
Free, personalized support to Nevada County landowners on issues like erosion, forest health, ponds, drainage, wildlife habitat, roads, and pasture management, with hundreds of visits completed across thousands of acres.

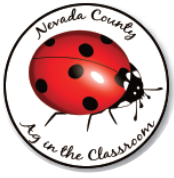


Manure Exchange Program
This program links gardeners and farmers with livestock owners who have extra manure, providing an easy, low-cost local source of fertilizer while recycling valuable nutrients.



Min-Till Drill Rental
This is a 6-foot seeder available for rent that reaches tight areas, minimizes soil disturbance, and quickly establishes pasture while reducing weeds, erosion, and water use.

The Tool Loan Program offers landowners free access to useful tools—like pond rakes, seed spreaders, and weed wrenches—to help manage invasive plants, maintain healthy land, and support fire-resilient property care



Farm Day 2025

Our Programs

More than 640 Nevada County second- and third-grade students came together on September 16, 2025, for another NCRCD hosted Farm Day at the Nevada County Fairgrounds—a milestone event that celebrated hands-on learning, community partnership, and the rich agricultural heritage of the region. What began as a simple field trip has grown into a signature educational achievement, giving young students a chance to explore the many layers of agriculture that sustain daily life.

A Day of Discovery and Connection

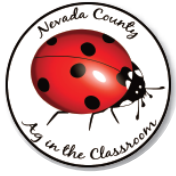
Farm Day has always been more than a showcase of animals, fruits, and vegetables. This year’s event highlighted the full spectrum of agricultural systems and the natural resources that make them possible. Students learned how water supports every aspect of farming, from growing crops to caring for livestock. They explored how trees become lumber and paper, how wool is spun into clothing, and how bats help farmers by controlling pests.

Interactive stations introduced children to the importance of pollinators, seed saving, soil health, worms, and the countless organisms that keep ecosystems thriving. Each activity was designed to spark curiosity and help students understand how interconnected agriculture is with the environment and their everyday lives.

Community partners played a central role in making Farm Day 2025 a success. Nevada County Ag in the Classroom brought together a strong network of organizations—including the Nevada County Resource Conservation District, Nevada County Farm Bureau, Placer Nevada Cattlewomen, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Nevada County Agricultural Commissioner, the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom, Sierra Foothills Research and Extension Center, and Sierra Harvest.

Alongside these groups, dozens of local volunteers contributed their time and expertise, creating an engaging, hands-on learning experience that connected students directly with the people and practices behind Nevada County agriculture.





Farm Day 2025



Our Projects

NCRCD secured \$349,936 in new grant funding for 2025, expanding its ability to support landowners, advance fire-safe projects, and strengthen community education. This new funding will help the District continue delivering essential technical assistance and conservation services across Nevada County for years to come.



NCRCD in 2025



**Sustainable Agriculture Lands
Conservation Grans (SALC)**



NRCS Technical Support



**CALFIRE
Fuels Reduction**



**Beginning Farmer and Rancher
Development Program**



**PointBlue Roots
PointBlue Wildlife Habitat Restoration**



Serene Lakes

NCRCD Projects in 2025



Nathan Alcorn, Program Director

Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Grant (SALC)

Funds for the Agricultural Working Landscape Conservation Planning grant were made available through the California Strategic Growth Council's Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) in collaboration with the Department of Conservation. SALC is part of California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment – particularly in disadvantaged communities. NCRCD is using the planning funds to work with collaborative partners to put together a community wide plan for agriculture for the next twenty years.

NEUNCORXFIRE (CAL FIRE)

The NCRCD awarded Wildfire Prevention Grant from CAL FIRE continues to use prescribed fire to reduce fuel hazards. Nevada County rangeland and fire managers need management practices that can protect property, wildlife habitat, and resources from wildfire. Over 60 acres will be treated with a series of complex late season burns to address invasive species management.

Livestock Fuels Reduction Program (OES)

In partnership with Nevada County OES, the NCRCD is working across 150 acres to implement targeted grazing on 5 locations within Nevada County. Targeted livestock grazing provides this type of management practice. NCRCD works with partners to implement targeted livestock grazing to create effective wildfire fuel breaks in Nevada County where 90% of the county lies within a very high or high fire hazard severity zone.



NCRCD Projects in 2025 continued...

NRCS Technical Support

In partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), NCRCD continues to provide technical assistance and project management across a range of natural resource conservation practices. These efforts support diverse land uses and promote sustainable resource management with a series of Advisory visit practices and the development of property management plans.



Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG)

The project purpose is to decrease hazardous fuels and restore frequent-fire ecosystems on private, residential lands through broadcast prescribed fire training. The goal to increase prescribed burn capacity of residents of Nevada County (NCO). With 90% of NCO in very high/high fire hazard, and recent, nearby, severe wildfires (e.g., Dixie, Caldor, & Mosquito), people are concerned, scared and motivated to reduce fuels.

Point Blue STRAW

The Nevada County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD) will lead the Dominguez Ranch Restoration, focusing on the Point Blue Planting and Habitat Project. This initiative will restore approximately 6.5 acres of land through native species planting, nonnative species removal, and ongoing site maintenance to ensure plant survival. The project will be conducted over two years, with major activities including site preparation, planting events, maintenance, and coordination with project partners.

Point Blue Roots

Point Blue Conservation Science, funded by the California Wildlife Conservation Board, is undertaking habitat restoration on approximately 40,000 acres across the state. Nevada County RCD was selected as a project partner due to its leadership in conservation across forests, farms, and ranches in Nevada and Sierra counties. This project focuses on enhancing pollinator and monarch habitats and improving soil health.

PG&E Serene Lakes

The Nevada County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD) has initiated key project management processes to prepare for fuels reduction work in the Serene Lakes area. The project is designed to improve wildfire mitigation and evacuation safety by establishing a shaded fuel break along Soda Springs Road.

NCRCD Projects in 2025 continued...

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program

The NCRCD, in partnership with Sierra Harvest, works to promote responsible resource management through education, leadership, technical assistance, and project facilitation. The partnership focuses on natural resource management and planning, utilizing resources and referrals as well as climate-smart agriculture and forestry solutions. As an organization, the vision is to educate and assist landowners and managers in establishing a balance between a high-quality rural environment, a biologically diverse landscape, and a healthy economy for the community.



Nevada County RCD Fuels Reduction / Fire Prevention Project Support (CAL FIRE)

The project includes support for fuel reduction and fire prevention projects, development of CEQA compliance documents, a forest management plan, technical support, and implementation of maintenance including Rx fire use, reforestation services, and project coordination and project support for the demonstration forest.



OUTREACH & PARTNERSHIPS

Micro-Grants for School Gardens

School gardens give students meaningful, hands-on learning experiences and help them connect with the environment.

To support these programs, **the NCRCD offers micro-grants of up to \$5,000 for Nevada County schools** to start or enhance their children’s gardens.

In 2025, NCRCD invested \$17,500 in schools in Nevada County to enhance their garden programs. Grants were awarded to Union Hill School, Grass Valley Charter School, Clear Creek Elementary School, and Living Wisdom School.



Jaya Bottaro and Jay Russell from the Living Wisdom School with Jim Drew from the NCRCD Board



Pam Torkeman and Scott Mikal-Heine from Union Hill School and Reed Hamilton from the NCRCD Board



Linda Miller and Jim Drew from the NCRCD Board and Clear Creek School Staff Eric Groo and Ariana Tibbets



Katie Forrette from Grass Valley Charter School, Jim Drew and Linda Miller from the NCRCD Board.



OUTREACH & PARTNERSHIPS



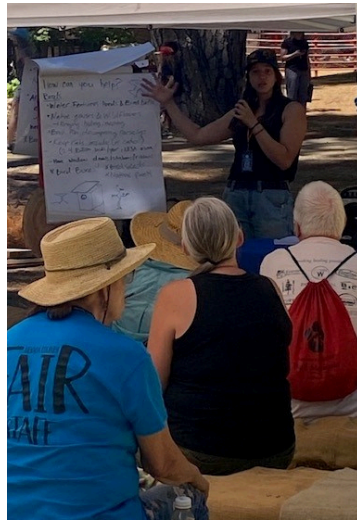
Every year, the Nevada County Resource Conservation District awards scholarships to local students pursuing agriculture and conservation fields. Students apply through their high school’s scholarship program.

In 2025, the NCRCD awarded seven students a total of \$7,000 to support their continued agricultural education. These scholarships aim to encourage future agriculturalists and conservation leaders who may one day bring their skills back to strengthen and steward the community.

NCRCD at the Nevada County Fair

The NCRCD continued its annual natural resource outreach at the Nevada County Fair. This year, we partnered with the Nevada County Ranch School, the Nevada County Ag Commissioner, and our board president to demonstrate a portable sawmill and showcase birdhouses built from the milled lumber. We also distributed birdhouse plans and offered workshops to encourage community participation in hands-on, conservation-focused projects.

Our fair presence remains a key platform for raising awareness about priority natural resource issues in Nevada County, including forest health and hazardous fuels reduction, erosion prevention and watershed protection, invasive species management, coexistence with local wildlife, and the ecological and community value of open space. This outreach strengthens public understanding of local resource challenges and supports the NCRCD’s mission to promote stewardship across the county.

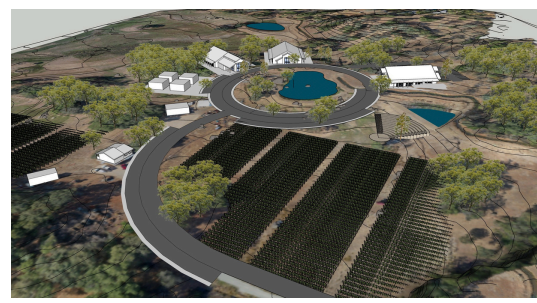


OUTREACH & PARTNERSHIPS

The District School Ranch

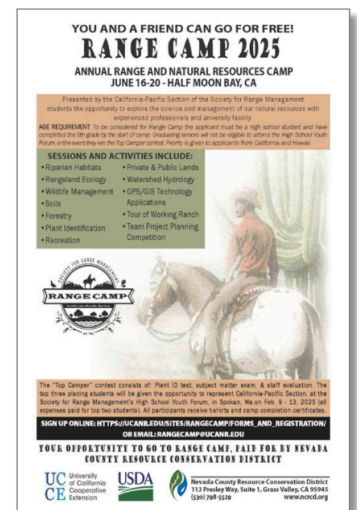
The Nevada Joint Union High School District received a donation of an 86-acre ranch to expand hands-on agricultural education for students. Located between Bear River and Nevada Union high schools, the property is being renovated into a modern learning site with support from the Jennings Foundation and strong community involvement. The District Ranch School gives students practical experience in animal care and ranch management, especially for those who may not have space at home to

participate in husbandry programs. In alignment with its mission to promote responsible resource management through education and technical assistance, the Nevada County Resource Conservation District continues to support the District Ranch School and works with the district to help sustain this valuable agricultural education resource.



Range Camp

Range Camp is a week-long environmental science and rangeland management program held at the University of California's Elkus Youth Ranch in Half Moon Bay. High school students from across California and Hawaii participate in a mix of lectures, field demonstrations, and hands-on activities, including digging soil pits, identifying plant families on local trails, assessing stream health, and practicing wildlife survey techniques. The program also includes group projects, a ranch tour, and both plant identification and final exams. Each year, the Nevada County Resource Conservation District provides full scholarships for up to four local juniors and seniors to attend, and the top three campers are selected to represent CalPac SRM at the Society for Range Management's High School Youth Forum.



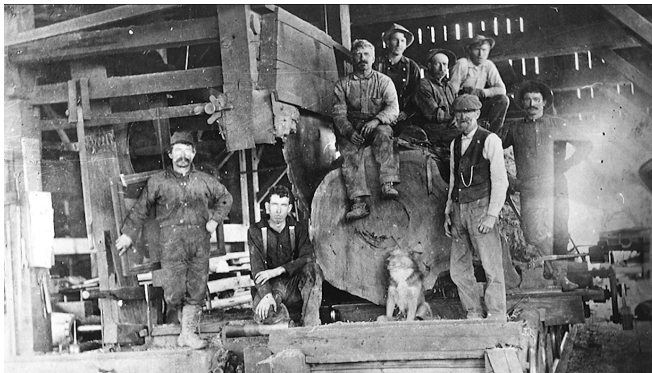
NCRCD Documentary Series

Working Lands Volume III

The NCRCD advanced its documentation of Nevada County’s timber history through Working Lands III, the third film in the series. Building on extensive research and interviews with timber fallers, mill workers, and others connected to the industry, the project captures both the legacy of a once-strong timber economy and the challenges shaping today’s forest sector.

The film traces the industry’s evolution—from early over-cutting and regulatory changes to the decline of rail infrastructure and other pressures that reshaped the Sierra landscape—while highlighting lessons that guide modern forest management and more resilient working lands.

Working Lands III is scheduled for release in early 2026.



The Nevada County RCD partners each year with the Nevada County Farm Bureau to support the annual Nevada County Agriculture Tour. The tour helps give residents a direct look at the issues facing farmers and ranchers.

This full-day event showcases a variety of operations that reflect the diversity and resilience of Nevada County agriculture.

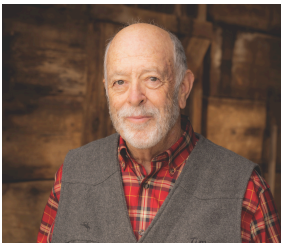
A poster for the 2025 Ag Tour. The top part features the Nevada County Farm Bureau logo and the text "experience Nevada County AG TOUR 2025". Below this, there is a list of participating farms and activities, including "New Life Nursery", "Four Seasons Garden Supply", "Starbright Family Farm", "Brush Bustin Boers & Restoration", and "Feeding Crane Farm". The poster also includes a "GENERAL TICKETS" section and a "Tour Includes" section. The bottom part of the poster features logos for the Nevada County RCD and other organizations.

Our Team

NCRCD is led by a board of local landowners who guide resource management and are appointed by the Nevada County Board of Supervisors.

The NCRCD staff is made up of conservation specialists, prescribed-fire experts, and business professionals who share a strong commitment to land stewardship and community engagement.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



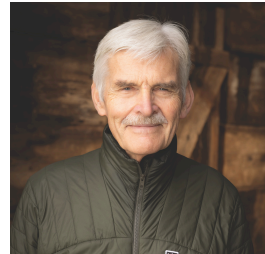
Jim Drew
President



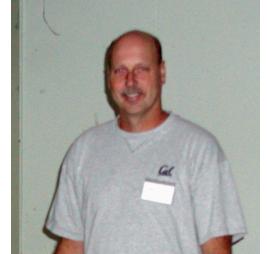
Alana Fowler
Vice-President



Linda Miller
Executive



Reed Hamilton
Executive



Robert Ingram
Associate Member

NCRCD STAFF



Briana Bacon
Executive
Director



Amanda Rodgers
Executive Assistant



Nathan Alcorn
Programs Director



Haley Coopergard
RX Fire Education
Manager



Anne Solik
Office Manager

Anne Solik retired in December 2025 after ten years as the NCRCD's Office Manager. She played a key role in supporting district operations and advancing conservation education throughout the community. Anne is now enjoying time with her family at their cabin in the woods, and the district is grateful for her dedicated service.



NCRCD Mission



Our mission is to promote responsible resource management within our jurisdiction through education, leadership, technical assistance, and project facilitation.

We offered a year-round series of conservation seminars for western Nevada County landowners and provided planning resources such as soil surveys to support informed land-use decisions. We also promoted grazing as a management tool and continued our free hand-tool loan program, which includes weed wrenches, soil samplers, pond rakes, and seed/fertilizer spreaders, along with maintaining rental access to the Minimum-Till Drill.

Our Partners

To our many partners, we offer a sincere “thank you!” for the ongoing support of NCRCD and its mission.



Contact Us

The NCRCD is housed with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NCRCD partners with the NRCS to assist landowners and land managers in improving and conserving their land. The NCRCD and the NRCS provide technical assistance regarding issues that include erosion control, pond management, invasive weed control, fuels management, wildlife habitat improvement, pasture, orchard and vineyard management, and rangeland management.

Visit our offices during business hours:

311 Presley Way, Suite 1
Grass Valley, CA 95945



Phone Number

530-798-5529



Email Address

manager@ncrcd.org



Website

www.ncrcd.org

