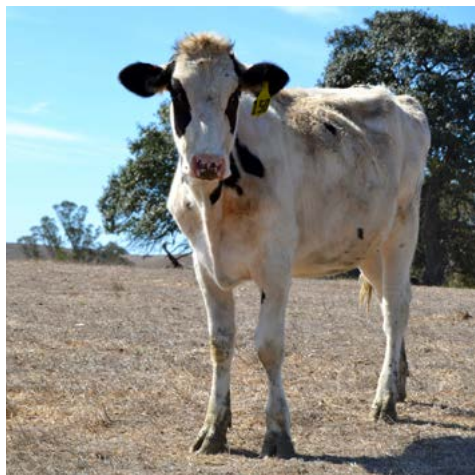




 **GOLD RIDGE** YEAR 2018 VOL 18
RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

STEWARDS OF THE LAND



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A LOVE LETTER TO OUR FARMERS
LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



PHOTO: PAIGE GREEN PHOTOGRAPHY

DEAR FARMERS AND RANCHERS,

Thank you. In these times of increased regulations, dismal profits and climate change, I want to let you know how much I appreciate you. I want to honor you for managing your land to feed us, provide us with clean water to drink and wildlife to marvel. I want to thank you for your commitment to your work and for innovating in this time of great change. Most of all, I thank you for not giving up.

You may think I am biased because I married a sheep rancher, and that might be true. But it's because I get to witness day in and day out the effort, relationship, and living embodiment of heritage that a farmer lives. The time and effort farmers take to make decisions that will improve the environment for the next generation and for their community is stunning.

Farmers, I love you for your integrity, for the way you make decisions, because you are dependent on and beholden to your land, your neighbors and your

customers. As my friend and past RCD employee Patricia Hickey said, "Supporting local agriculture and farming families is more than an economic consideration, it is a moral imperative for those of us who care about the future."

I am honored that the RCD is invited to your land and that we can discuss ideas and challenges and learn from one another.

But farmers don't work alone, and that is why community matters. It's important to say that I am really proud of all our community and appreciate all of the environmental, government, non-profit, and community partners that safeguard the health of our land.

With Admiration,
BRITTANY JENSEN

FINANCIAL REPORT: HOW FUNDING MEETS OUR RCD STRATEGIC GOALS

What are Gold Ridge RCD's strategic goals to enhance the community, and how are they funded?

Last year's budget was just over \$2.7 million. Our work is funded through federal, state and local grants, a private foundation, and donations from our community. Here's how those dollars were spent:

OUR STRATEGIC PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND PLANNED ACTIONS:

CLIMATE RESILIENCY AND CARBON FARMING: We work with our partners to develop and fund programs which reduce greenhouse gases, increase carbon sequestration, improve agricultural and residential water security, and enhance wildlife habitat.

ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE: In partnership with our community, we help landowners understand and voluntarily comply with or exceed federal, state and local regulations.

STREAMFLOW ENHANCEMENT AND WATER CONSERVATION: We work cooperatively with landowners and land managers to meet domestic and agricultural water needs, while ensuring that streams in district watersheds have sufficient flow to support aquatic and riparian ecosystems.

CLEAN WATER: We work to enhance water quality, prevent non-point source pollution, and protect aquatic ecosystems.

SCIENCE, MONITORING AND PLANNING: With many partners, we assess and document environmental conditions and trends, and use this information to guide activities and evaluate proposed management projects and strategies.

WILDLIFE HABITAT ENHANCEMENT: We collaborate with and educate partners and landowners to restore and enhance habitat for native wildlife, including riparian and wetland habitat restoration, instream improvements, and promotion of on-farm biodiversity.

AGRICULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION: We create educational experiences for our community,

TOTAL EXPENSES 2017-18 FISCAL YEAR

\$2,726,452.77



which inspire and encourage a connection to and an appreciation for the conservation of land and its agricultural and natural resources.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY: With 77 years of experience, we strive to be relevant, excellent and visible as an organization so that we can provide service to our community for decades to come.

Read our entire 2016-19 Strategic Plan for more information on our mission, vision, priorities, and major strategies and objectives planned for the 2016-19 period, online at <http://goldridgercd.org/html/StrategicPlan.htm>

SEE THE BREADTH OF RCD WORK



Gallons of water, number of trees, cubic feet of soil, miles of road, tons of greenhouse gases... If you've ever been curious about the many metrics of RCD work, and what work has been done in your neighborhood and beyond, you will enjoy the newly created RCD Project Tracker Tool. Launched in July 2017, the RCD Project Tracker Tool has already become an essential innovation to California RCDs. The tool is an online database designed to publicly showcase the vital conservation work of participating Resource Conservation Districts across the state in an accessible format.

In June, California RCDs had catalogued over 100 projects and over \$21.8 million in investments into the database, many of them in the North Bay. And that number continues to grow. The districts aim to input all projects currently in progress by the end of the year. In the coming years, historic projects will be entered as well, providing a look at how RCDs' priorities, partnerships and capacity have grown over time. With the Project Tracker Tool, RCDs are finding a new way to tell their story, streamline collaborative requests for project funding, and, most importantly, engage with you, our stewards of the land.

Look online to search projects by performance metric, location, type, theme, funding source, year, and more. www.RCDprojects.org

Endangered Species

Projects that directly support protection of state or federal listed species.



LOOK ONLINE TO SEARCH PROJECTS BY PERFORMANCE METRIC, LOCATION, TYPE, THEME, FUNDING SOURCE, YEAR, AND MORE.

WWW.RCDPROJECTS.ORG

Project Name	Primary RCD	Lead Implementer	Project Stage	Planning / Design Start Year	Implementation Start Year	Completion Year	Funding Type
101 Freeway Liberty Canyon Interchange Wildlife Passage	Santa Monica Mountains RCD	Santa Monica Mountains RCD	Implementation	2014	2017	2020	One-time
Azuleiro Reserve Off-Channel Habitat Enhancement Ph	Gold Ridge RCD	Gold Ridge RCD	Planning/Design	2017	2020		One-time
Bale Slough/Bear Creek Sediment Reduction and Habitat	Napa County RCD	Napa County RCD	Planning/Design	2016	2019	2022	One-time
Black Mountain Creek Sediment Reduction	Marin RCD	Marin RCD	Post-Implements	2014	2015	2016	One-time
Bodega Water Company Large Storage Tank Project	Gold Ridge RCD	Gold Ridge RCD	Implementation	2014			One-time
Bones Road Farm (Campbell) Rainwater Catchment Project	Gold Ridge RCD	Gold Ridge RCD	Completed	2016	2017	2017	One-time



OVER 100 PROJECTS & OVER \$21.8 MILLION IN INVESTMENTS TRACKED ONLINE!



LIFE BETWEEN THE ROWS



Learn more about your vineyard's soil health at SoilHub.org!

Beginning in January 2017, the Sonoma, Napa and Mendocino County RCDs created a forum for vineyards to engage on soil health called the North Coast Soil Health Hub. Nearly two years later, the hub has provided a valued network between winegrowers, RCDs and researchers to discuss, experiment and implement improved soil health practices. To date, over 100 growers have engaged with the Hub across the three counties.

John Hervey, a farmer growing Pinot Noir on ten acres in west Sebastopol, engaged the Hub to test his vineyard's soil quality, prepare a Carbon Farm Plan and attend two educational workshops. He's passionate about the changes he can make to improve his vineyard's soil health. He says some conventions used in the vineyard that impact soil health, like tilling every other row, have gained popularity but lost their original purpose. "If you ask around, folks may not be able to explain why they do what they do," he says, and adds that there is room for change, especially if the alternative is better for the ecosystem and if it reduces labor and fuel costs.

On March 9th, Hervey and more than 70 of his fellow farmers and industry professionals attended a symposium hosted by the Hub at the Sonoma County Farm Bureau to hear from four panels of researchers, growers, and technical service providers. The panelists discussed the major practices known to increase the health of vineyard soils: reducing tillage, cover cropping, applying compost, and integrating hedgerows in the vineyard.

In August, winegrowers were invited out with the Hub again, this time to tour Ridge Vineyard in Healdsburg.

Vineyard manager and CalCAN Farmer Advisor David Gates toured growers through the rows, talked about his choice of cover crops and how he changed operations to reduce tillage with low-impact equipment and less passes through the rows. Even in the heat of August and in hard clay, the north county vineyard showed life between the rows in the form of wild carrot, lacy phacelia, and Queen Anne's lace. He also discussed the property's twenty-year-old hedgerow, planted along a drainage ditch. Flowers and bright foliage in the hedge added color and forage for wildlife to the landscape: red penstemon, purple coyote mint, glossy green rushes, baccharis, ceanothus, and willow.

NEARLY TWO YEARS LATER, THE HUB HAS PROVIDED A VALUED NETWORK BETWEEN WINEGROWERS, RCDs AND RESEARCHERS TO DISCUSS, EXPERIMENT AND IMPLEMENT IMPROVED SOIL HEALTH PRACTICES.

Stay tuned for future events like these hosted by the North Coast Soil Health Hub by visiting www.SoilHub.org

Funding provided by CDFA Specialty Crop Block Grant





VALLEY FORD DAIRY DEMONSTRATES CARBON FARMING SOLUTION TO INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE

THIS SEPTEMBER, Governor Jerry Brown held an international event in San Francisco to bring attention and renew commitment to solutions to the climate crisis. The Global Climate Action Summit touched on all sectors of society that send greenhouse gas emissions into the air. The California Department of Food and Agriculture hosted a two-day affiliate event in Sonoma County to highlight the role that working lands play in reversing the emissions of harmful greenhouse gases.

In the first day, agricultural producers, business leaders and policy makers from around the world gathered at La Crema Estate at Saralee's Vineyard in Windsor. Attendees learned about the need to scale up climate smart agricultural practices that cut greenhouse gas emissions, capture carbon from the atmosphere, and store it in the soil. Scaling up means that farmers and ranchers need partnership, investment, research and technical assistance to achieve the climate goals that the global community has established. In the words of the Secretary of California Department of Agriculture, Karen Ross: "These collaborations are essential for progress, and they must cut across the food chain, all the way from farms to consumers."

Partnerships were on display for day two of the event when attendees traveled to the coast to visit Ocean Breeze Dairy in Valley Ford and Stemple Creek Ranch in Tomales, CA. Ocean Breeze Dairy and the Gary Bordessa Dairy make up the multi-generational Bordessa Family Dairy, whose business model focuses on grass-fed, certified organic milk production. Jarrid and Jackie Bordessa, owners of Ocean Breeze Dairy, have decided to take their commitment to the land another step further. They recently partnered with the Gold Ridge RCD and the Carbon Cycle Institute to write a Carbon Farm Plan,

a guiding document to managing carbon resources.

Changes to the Bordessa's operation—like applying compost, planting vegetation along the creeks, and alternative manure management practices—can remove carbon from the atmosphere where it can do harm warming the planet and build carbon stores in the soil and in vegetation. These practices also provide multiple benefits to the dairy operation as they advance soil health, improve riparian habitat, increase range production and boost soil water holding capacity.



"These collaborations... must cut across the food chain, all the way from farms to consumers"— CDFA Secretary Karen Ross

Organic Valley, the dairy company that Ocean Breeze Dairy sells its milk to, also has their focus on climate. At the affiliate event, Organic Valley announced the company's deepened commitment to climate smart agriculture. "As leaders in food and farming, it is our responsibility to pioneer change for good," says Jonathan Reinbold, the company's head of sustainability. Committed to being part of the climate solution, Organic Valley, in partnership with Annie's Organics, has already financed the development of three Carbon Farm Plans in Sonoma and Mendocino Counties, but in 2018, this initiative will be expanded to other California farmers. From there, Organic Valley can explore how to bring Carbon Farm Planning to their other farmers across the country.

CARBON FARM PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION FUNDING PROVIDED BY USDA'S NRCS REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM AND CDFA'S HEALTHY SOILS INITIATIVE
PHOTO CREDIT: ISABEL FRENCH PHOTOGRAPHY

CIDER APPLE FARM REVIVES HEIRLOOM ORCHARD AND PLANS FOR A CHANGING FUTURE

On August 8, members of the apple farming community gathered in Sebastopol around a vanguard in the local movement for innovative orchard management: **APPLE BOTTOM FARM**.

Ned Lawton, owner of Apple Bottom Farm and Founder of Ethic Ciders, was excited to greet the group of 45 or so attendees at the Farmer-to-Farmer Field Day event organized by the Farmers Guild. The attendees, many of whom were either apple farmers or cider industry professionals, were eager to hear from Apple Bottom Farm's team about their explorations in climate-adapted cider apple varieties. The management team strives for "farming as stewardship." This effort is supported by a Carbon Farm Plan, recently completed in partnership with the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District.

With the support of a close friend and consultant, August York of Intuit Ag Consulting, the Ethic Ciders team began their inspired work to make Apple Bottom Farm a flagship operation centered on principles of regenerative land management.

"To grow healthy trees, we have to make sure the building blocks of health are present," orchard manager Ryan Johnston explains, and that means healthy soils. With York's guidance, they pull soil samples each summer that inform the management team's decisions around adding fertility amendments in autumn to the orchard's floor. In the spring, leaf tissue samples are analyzed to determine if the trees are up-taking the nutrients. Subsequent foliar sprays are applied to correct for any deficiencies. Compost tea, rich in beneficial microbes, is applied to the orchard floor after each spring mowing.

Johnston says the hypothesis they are testing is that "a healthy orchard ecosystem actually produces more complex and desirable flavors in its fruit." Practices that support healthy soil, build wildlife habitat, reduce fossil fuel use, and promote the long-term adaptiveness of the operation are all elements of the orchard's Carbon Farm Plan. Through the planning process, the Apple Bottom Farm identified additional practices that could earn them increased carbon sequestration on site. These include spreading compost in the orchard rows, planting a hedgerow, mulching, and reducing tillage.

When it comes to climate change, Johnston said his work is energized by the idea that action dispels despair. "Climate change is happening. But we can do something about it," he said. With climate solutions growing under our feet, farmers can help lead the way.

Read the full article online: <http://goldridgercd.org/html/AppleBottomAugust2018.htm>

Funding provided by USDA's NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program

"a healthy orchard ecosystem actually produces more complex and desirable flavors in its fruit."



APPLE BOTTOM FARM ORCHARD MANAGER RYAN JOHNSTON AND ATTENDEES OF THE FARMER-TO-FARMER FIELD DAY EVENT. PHOTO: THE FARMERS GUILD

A LITTLE FLOW GOES A LONG WAY



For the fourth summer in a row, the Gold Ridge RCD and our partner Trout Unlimited worked with the Camp Meeker Recreation and Park District (CMRPD) to release water into Dutch Bill Creek during times of extremely low flow for the benefit of young salmon living in the creek. Starting in late August, CMRPD has released roughly 35 gallons per minute (just under 0.1 cubic feet per second) into the creek from their water treatment facility at the Alliance Redwoods Conference Grounds. Although this is a very small amount of water, it is enough to ensure that pools downstream of the conference grounds – a vital rearing area for juvenile coho salmon and steelhead trout – remain connected by surface flow. Connected flow aerates water and lowers water temperature, which is crucial to the survival of these fish. We expect the water release to continue until streamflows rise in response to fall and winter rains.

Funding provided by National Fish & Wildlife Foundation

WATER WISE SIGNS APPEAR IN THE WATERSHED



A picture is worth a thousand words – or in this case, many thousands of gallons. Our new Water Wise signage acknowledges landowners who have conserved precious water resources in Salmon, Dutch Bill and Green

RCD TEAM GAINS A FORESTER



THE SONOMA AND GOLD RIDGE RCDs RECENTLY JOINTLY HIRED A FORESTER TO SERVE THE ENTIRE COUNTY OF SONOMA. THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE IS FROM SONOMA RCD'S JUNE NEWSLETTER.



THE RCD is excited to welcome Jason Wells, a Registered Professional Forester (RPF), to our staff team. Since the wildfires of October 2017, it has become increasingly apparent that the landowners and communities of Sonoma County need more resources to assist with forest and fuel load management. The Sonoma and Gold Ridge RCDs teamed up to garner funding from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, through the National Association of Conservation Districts, to launch a new position focused on providing forestry technical assistance.

Jason Wells, a California Registered Professional Forester (RPF), comes to us with six years of experience in private industry throughout Humboldt and Mendocino Counties. His experience includes writing CEQA equivalent Timber Harvest Plan documents, integrating knowledge of forest operations with environmental impact mitigations, silviculture (applied forest ecology), forest health and protection, economics of forest management, and road design and layout. Jason has also been certified by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CALFIRE) to conduct archaeological surveys for plans in which CALFIRE is the lead agency. Born and raised in Petaluma, he graduated from Humboldt State University with a B.S. in Forestry with an emphasis in Forest Conservation.

At the RCD, Jason will provide technical and planning assistance to landowners, help build a forestry program capable of addressing vegetation and fuels management concerns throughout the county, as well as address post-fire recovery efforts. If you are an owner of forestland in Sonoma County with questions about forest management, Jason wants to hear from you! He can provide as-needed technical advice, forest management planning, and will also be looking to identify potential forest management and fuel load reduction projects for future grant funding.

Jason can be reached at 707-569-1448 x107, or jwells@sonomarcd.org.

SPECIAL NOTICE: WE ARE LOOKING TO SUPPORT NEIGHBORHOODS IN DESIGNING COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PREVENTION PLANS. THESE PLANS EFFECTIVELY ADDRESS LOCAL FOREST AND RANGE CONDITIONS, VALUES-AT-RISK, AND PRIORITIES FOR ACTION. NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS WITH A COLLECTIVE SIZE GREATER THAN 30 ACRES OR LOCATED IN HIGH-RISK AREAS ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO CONTACT GOLD RIDGE RCD TO BEGIN THE PLANNING PROCESS. LEARN MORE ABOUT A CWPP: [HTTP://WWW.CAFIRESAFECOUNCIL.ORG/RESOURCES/CWPP/](http://www.cafiresafecouncil.org/resources/cwpp/)

ATASCADERO SUBWATERSHED COHO HABITAT ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Lying just west of Sebastopol is the Atascadero-Green Valley Creek watershed. This important watershed starts in the coastal hills, flows through Graton and Forestville, and continues north to empty into the Russian River. It has been identified as critical and restorable habitat for the endangered Central California Coast coho salmon, and it regularly supports the Russian's most robust wild coho population.

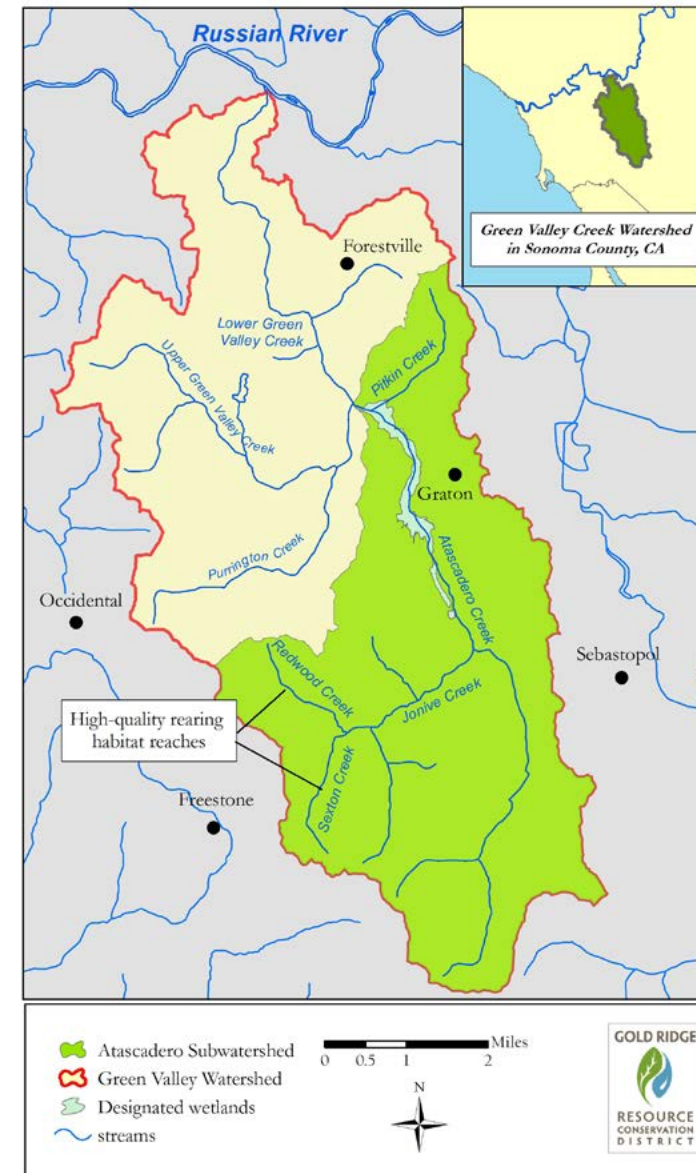
However, for reasons that have never been identified, the Atascadero Creek subwatershed, which is the system's largest subwatershed, hasn't shown evidence of coho since the California Department of Fish and Wildlife started monitoring the creek in the 1960s. The lack of coho is puzzling since the upper tributaries—particularly Redwood and Jonive Creeks—appear to have high-quality salmon rearing reaches, which are known to contain steelhead trout. Without coho present, the area hasn't been a high priority for restoration efforts. The lack of attention to this critical subwatershed has also been in part a problem of inaccessibility, due both to the highly parcelized ownership of the Atascadero's upper stream reaches and to the access challenges imposed by the braided wetland complex comprising its lower reach (known as the Atascadero marsh, located in the vicinity of Graton). However, with the Russian River's coho recovery program releasing coho juveniles into the Atascadero's upper tributaries as of last fall, a comprehensive planning effort to support their survival has never been more pressing.

In September 2018, the Gold Ridge RCD received a grant from the Department of Fish and Wildlife's Proposition 1 program to work with the Atascadero watershed community to perform an assessment of the Atascadero subwatershed, to identify potential limiting factors to

coho passage and survival, and to identify and prioritize site-specific projects to address them. In addition, the assessment includes a stormwater analysis, as high winter stormflow has been identified as a primary limiting factor to coho in lower Green Valley, with the Atascadero subwatershed contributing significantly. Additionally, the RCD's work in Atascadero will coincide with and support Sonoma Water's work reshaping the mainstem of the Green Valley Creek to alleviate winter flooding across Green Valley Road.

The Atascadero subwatershed is sizeable; it comprises 60% of Green Valley's blue-line streams and contains 21 stream-miles. The assessment work will require extensive collaboration from over 180 private landowners throughout the stream network. Over the next several months, Gold Ridge RCD staff will be contacting Atascadero Creek landowners to request limited access for the on-the-ground stream habitat assessments and identification of potential fish passage barriers, as well as learn from the Atascadero Creek community what resource issues they have that we may be able to help address.

FUNDING PROVIDED BY CA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE'S PROPOSITION 1 PROGRAM, WITH MATCHING FUNDS FROM SONOMA WATER COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT.



The Atascadero subwatershed map and image of the Atascadero marsh.

THE GOLD RIDGE RCD WILL SOON BEGIN CONDUCTING EXTENSIVE OUTREACH EFFORTS TO GARNER LANDOWNER SUPPORT FOR THIS IMPORTANT WORK. IF YOU LIVE ALONG A STREAM CORRIDOR IN THE SUBWATERSHED (SHOWN IN GREEN), INCLUDING SEXTON, JONIVE, REDWOOD, PITKIN, OR ONE OF THE MANY UNNAMED TRIBUTARIES, AND ARE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING, PLEASE CONTACT SIERRA CANTOR AT: SIERRA@GOLDRIDGERCD.ORG OR 707-823-5244.

SANTA ROSA PLAIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY AGENCY

With the encouragement of our constituents, the Gold Ridge and Sonoma RCDs elected to take a seat on the board of the Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SRPGSA) last year. The SRPGSA formed its 9-member board, appointed its 18-member advisory committee, and hired administrative staff, financial consultants, legal services and facilitators to get the agency off the ground. In this current phase, the agency is working to meet the requirements of drafting a Groundwater Sustainability Plan, propose a fee structure for future funding of the Agency and engage the community in public workshops. The goal of the GSP is to establish a standard for "sustainability" of groundwater management and use, and to determine how the basin will achieve this standard. The RCD has been active in listening to concerns and ideas from the community, and we welcome your thoughts. By January 2022, the agency will submit the Groundwater Sustainability Plan to the state Department of Water Resources. Ultimately, the agency and stakeholders must implement the plan and achieve sustainability by 2042.

You can learn more and engage with this process by visiting www.santarosaplaingroundwater.org, signing up for the Agency's e-newsletter at <http://santarosaplaingroundwater.org/email-updates>, or by attending any of these public meetings:

SRPGSA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING DATES	SRPGSA ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING DATES
1-3PM AT THE CITY OF SANTA ROSA UTILITIES FIELD OFFICE:	3-5PM AT THE CITY OF SANTA ROSA UTILITIES FIELD OFFICE:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 13 • February 14 • April 11 • June 13 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 14 • March 11 • May 13 • July 8



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Jason Hoorn *Project Manager*

Michele Harris *Bookkeeper*

Erica Mikesh *Engineer*

Jason Wells *Forester*

Mare O'Connell *Financial Manager*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Third Thursday of every month

3:30-5:30PM (*unless otherwise posted*)

Gold Ridge RCD Office

2776 Sullivan Road,

Sebastopol, CA 95472

Meetings are open to the public

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Natural Resources Conservation Service

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