

# 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

### Our Mission:

To protect, conserve, and restore natural resources through education, information & technical assistance programs.







### A Message from Our Executive Director

**2018** was a wonderful year for advancing some great work with our projects and for venturing into new endeavors as well. Our Tijuana River Valley Community Garden was the hub for many of these activities. Under the tutelage of our new head gardener, Gregg Cady, our carbon farm demonstration plot at the garden is thriving, allowing us to donate thousands of pounds of fresh produce to local charities and food banks; something we are very proud of.

We have also added Martina Skjellerudsveen to our healthy soils team. She and Dr. Chandra Richards are helping local farmers and ranchers learn about carbon farming and other practices and potential funding to help their enterprises grow.

Our Community Garden neighbor, San Diego Roots, approached us in 2018 with the idea of merging their very popular Wild Willow Farm and Education Center with the RCD. We are very excited to keep this worthwhile program running, and feel the synergy between our two organizations will bring healthy food and gardening practices to the South Bay and beyond.

Pollinator health continues to be a priority for the RCD. As active members of the San Diego Pollinator Alliance (SDPA), we are proud to promote and provide pollinator protection efforts throughout the county. We are working closely with U.S. Fish & Wildlife and other agencies to develop program guidelines for grants that are slated to roll out in 2019. Nearly 80,000 visitors toured the SDPA's Pollinator Pathway exhibit at the San Diego Fair, helping to spread the word about what local residents can do to help support pollinators.

Of course, wildfire remains a major focus for the RCD and the Fire Safe Council of San Diego County. I have been actively working with both the California State Senate and Assembly Natural Resources Committees, as well as other lawmakers, on legislation to make California communities more fire resilient and increase funding for fuels reduction treatments and healthy forests. We were fortunate to have legislative representatives join us in San Diego for our tree mortality tour this year, where we were able to showcase our work on the invasive beetles that are destroying our trees, showing them first-hand why these beetles must be stopped. Throughout the state in 2018, an important shift in focus from fire suppression to fire prevention was taking place. This means a greater emphasis on making CA communities more fire resilient, by focusing on forestry health and collaborations between communities and fire agencies. That is exactly the work that the RCD/FSC has been doing for years! We are working on a Regional Fire Protection Plan for San Diego County through collaborations between our fire agency partners: CALFIRE, Cleveland National Forest, State Parks, the SD Water Conservancy, as well as tribes, to do healthy forest projects here in our County.

2018 was a great year for the RCD, and set us up for an even more fruitful 2019. In tribute to one of our beloved Board members, Kurt Streule, who passed away last fall, I would like to say we are primed to do our best! Thank you, Kurt, for all your support in our growth.



Sheryl Landrum, RCD Executive Director

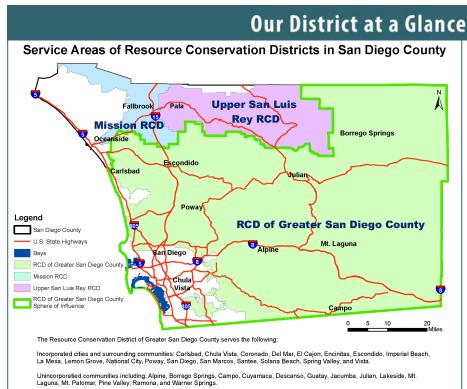
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Protecting, conserving, and restoring natural resources across 1.8 million acres, the Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County (RCDGSDC) is a non-regulatory Special District organized under Division 9 of the California State Public Resources code.

The RCD administers programs to restore and protect San Diego County watersheds, prevent

wildfire damage through education and fuel reduction, promote nutrition and stewardship through sustainable agriculture, and revitalize pollinator habitats. As stewards of the regional environment, we partner with a diverse group of landowners, public and private institutions, and concerned citizens to address the diverse conservation and environmental concerns that are unique to San Diego County.



The northern boundary extends into the Bonsal community; the southern boundary extends to the United States-Mexico border; the western boundary extends to the Pacific Ocean; and the eastern boundary extends to the Imperial County line.

#### **Our Service Area:**

• 1,847,300 acres or 2,886 square miles

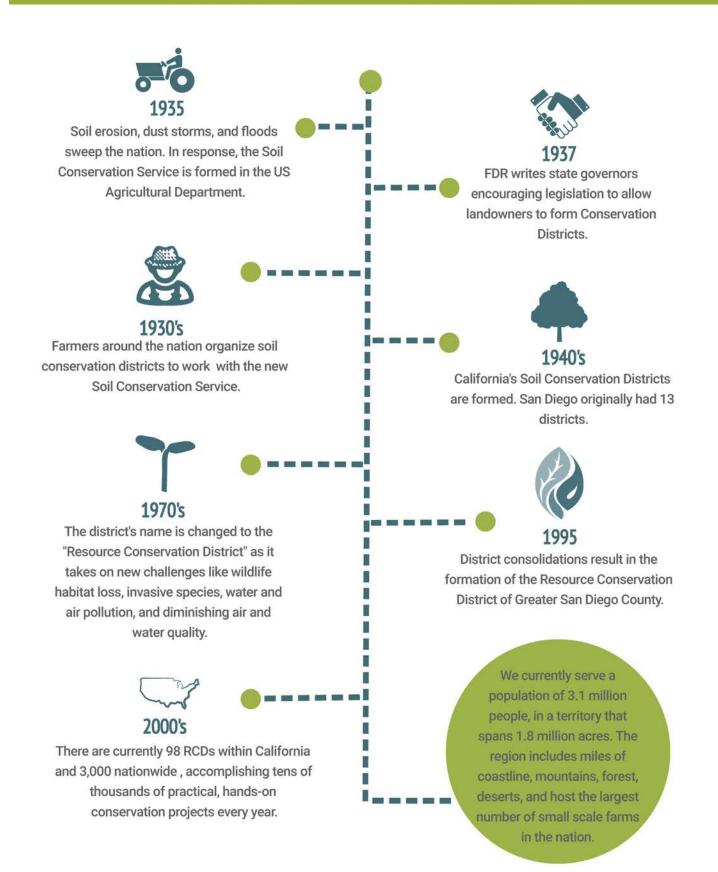
#### San Diego County Population:

- 3.32 million
- Fifth highest populated county in US
- 19th largest agricultural economy in US
- Largest number of small farms (6,687) in US

#### San Diego County Topography:

- Contains more than 30 types of vegetative communities.
- Encompasses mountains, deserts, forest, and coastal resources
- Includes 11 watersheds with streams, rivers, sloughs, lakes, beaches and bays, as well as urban, agricultural, and suburban areas.

### OUR HISTORY — 1940s TO TODAY



# At the close of 2018, the RCD was managing 25 grants, totaling more than \$788,000

### **RCD 2018 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS**

Total net assets of the district for 2018	\$2,534,023
Net assets not invested in buildings, land or equipment (i.e. unrestricted assets)	\$1,577,300
Total tax assessment dollars deposited to the District	\$327,490
Projected operating budget 2017-2018	\$1,109,444
Projected operating budget 2018-2019	\$1,762,550

Our district programs, projects, and services are primarily funded by local, state, and federal grants and donations. In addition, we receive income in the form of lease rentals from the Tijuana River Valley Community Garden, which we manage. The RCD receives annual tax apportionment funds in the amount of 1% of unimproved properties (assessed land values only).

As a local governmental entity, the RCD is tax-exempt under IRS rules. We conduct annual financial audits by an independent auditing firm. Our most recent audit was conducted by Wilkinson Hadley King & Co. LLP. It covers fiscal year 2016 – 2017 and is available to view in full on our company website. The audit shows the RCD to be solvent and stable.

### **Tijuana River Valley Community Garden**

### The Benefits of Fresh Produce, Open Air, and a Vibrant Gardening Community

cr nearly two decades, our Community Garden located in the beautiful Tijuana River Valley Regional Park, has been serving the residents of the South Bay, offering them the ability to grow fresh produce for themselves and their families. The garden boasts a

wide diversity of gardeners and crops and offers local residents – many of whom are apartment dwellers – the opportunity to have access to healthy produce. Gardeners and their families also enjoy the added benefits of outdoor exercise and the social networking the garden promotes.



Lush garden facades in full bloom

"We are excited to have ongoing sustainable production coming from the Community Garden and increased access to good-quality produce for our community in the South Bay. The experiences at the TRV have really inspired me to start growing on my own to be more self-sustaining and independent."

A quarter-acre plot holder

"We've had our garden plot for nearly three years and aside from growing our own food, we enjoy the surrounding nature and comradery amongst gardeners."

A 30' x 30' plot holder



32 new gardeners received plots in 2018

Hundreds of community members attended our 4th annual Soil Shindig event, celebrating healthy soil, sustainability & food

8 quarter-acre plots allow beginning farmers the opportunity to learn new techniques, while growing produce for themselves & local residents

**COMMUNITY IMPACT** 

5 workshops held for gardeners and local residents, with topics including: drip irrigation, garden planning, plant selection & soil prep, plant habitat, and harvesting & storage

210 30' x 30' plots serve more than 600 local community members

#### Thanks Go Out To:

San Diego Co. Dept. of Parks & Recreation, our garden partner, - and -Our gardeners & volunteers, who keep the garden thriving

### **Carbon Farming in San Diego**

### An Effective Local Solution to Address Climate Change

Carbon Farming utilizes a group of agricultural practices that store carbon in soil and vegetation, ultimately reducing greenhouse gas accumulations by removing Carbon from the atmosphere. The RCD is supporting carbon farming practices in San Diego County through several projects:

The **Carbon Farming Demo Plot** at our community garden highlights how compost application, mulching, and





cover crops improve soil health/moisture and improve crop yields.

**Hedgerow Planting** – we planted 300' of native hedgerows at our Community Garden to attract pollinators, provide habitat for wildlife, and offer wind protection.

We provide **Technical Assistance** to local farmers and ranchers to implement carbon farming practices on their properties.

"Find a way to marry a climate-smart agricultural practice - find out what your one thing is that you can do really well - and run with it!"

#### Ellee Igoe, Solidarity Farms in Pauma Valley

Gardeners & volunteers pitch in to plant 300' of native hedgerows in support of Carbon Farming at the Community Garden



One carbon farm plan written for 40-acre farm in Campo, the second carbon farm plan in the County

Successfully assisted a local farmer in securing \$26,000 grant for the CDFA Healthy Soils Incentives Program Seven metric tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent sequestered from the TRVCG carbon farming activities, including demo plot practices, hedgerow planting, and mulching

**COMMUNITY IMPACT** 

#### Field days for local farmers teach carbon farming practices

100 farmers and ranchers have joined our growing database to learn about new opportunities and techniques to run a successful farming business. 300' of native hedgerows were planted, comprised of 200 native plants, increasing the beauty, productivity, and biodiversity of the garden

## **Fire Safe Council of San Diego County**

#### Keeping San Diego Fire-safe for 22 Years.

**2018** was another devastating year for wildfire throughout California. Experts warn that many areas in San Diego are just a spark away from another devastating wildfire. Since 1997, the RCD has managed the programs and funds of the Fire Safe Council of San Diego County (FSCSDC), whose mission is to foster fire prevention and safety throughout the San Diego region. Through free chipping, defensible space assistance, fire-safety workshops, and supporting the

"The RCD/Fire Safe Council of San Diego County continues to be an invaluable partner to the Cleveland National Forest (CNF) and its stakeholders. Since 2016, the CNF has been able to leverage almost 2 million dollars in pass-through funding to the RCD/FSCSDC – creating widespread impact in wildfire risk reduction to the citizens of San Diego County. Their professionalism and diligent approach to this extremely important work is truly inspiring. The CNF looks forward to working with the RCD/FSCSDC for many more years to come!"

> William Metz, Forest Supervisor, Cleveland National Forest

county's 38 community Fire Safe Councils, the FSCSDC works diligently to keep San Diego residents fire-safe. We are uniquely able to bring together key stakeholders – local residents, fire agencies, tribal governments, private / public forest landowners and managers, community organizations, etc. – with the common goal of increasing fire resiliency in San Diego County, protecting against loss of life, property, natural resources, and wildlife.



1,897 acres of brush cleared to improve fire resiliency

423 residents in 162 homes protected thanks to brush thinning and chipping

132 residents trained at fire safety workshops

Bimonthly meetings bring together more than 50 community members – as well as local, state, and federal fire agency officials and fire experts – to share news and information

**COMMUNITY IMPACT** 

#### Increased the number of Community Wildfire Protection Plans to 28, helping protect residents by addressing issues such as wildfire response, hazard mitigation, community preparedness, and structure protection

Supporting 38 local Fire Safe Councils that serve as the "neighborhood watch" for fire safety

Hosted a Tree Mortality tour to show first-hand the devastation caused by invasive beetles throughout the County

### A Few Words of Thanks from Our Community Members

#### Free Services — Chipping and Defensible Space Assistance Program (DSAP) — Help Keep Residents Safe

"This is a superb program for those of us who retired 30 years ago to a rural and affordable wooded area, never anticipating that a little beetle would kill our trees, causing considerable expense and labor that we are no longer able to do ourselves. My family's fire danger has been significantly reduced as a result of your work. Thanks to you, your staff and those who provide grants that fund this program."

Jim Resetco, from Santa Ysabel



"With these dry winters, it's hard to pull a burn permit and dangerous even under the best of circumstances. The number of dead trees and brush only seems to increase each year (from GSOB and drought). This free service not only reduces fuel and fire danger, but it helps keep important biomass on the land. I greatly appreciate this service and think it is one of the most important things the RCDGSDC/Fire Safe Council offers!"

Mary Duffy, from Jamul





"Your contractor was excellent and professional. There was a lot of brush, ivy, and bougainvillea, and they got it all cleared in two days. Now, 1 intend to keep it up better. This exceeded my best hopes of what would be done in just two days."

Roy Eckert, from San Marcos



"Thank you and everyone connected with the RCD/FSCSDC who has so enormously helped us with the GSOB oak tree die off and the chipping of brush cleared. Heaven only knows how we could have kept up with the costs had you not been there to assist. Your program has played a key role in achieving the 100' of defensible space around our property."

Rancho Palomar Resident

### **Habitat Restoration Through Invasive Species Removal**



The RCD of Greater San Diego County is committed to habitat restoration, especially along the riparian corridors of our reservoirs and rivers. Water is an essential resource, yet its quality and quantity are strained each year due to longstanding drought periods coupled with high temperatures. San Diego County imports the majority (80%) of its water supply from the Bay Delta and the Colorado River and the remainder from local surface

### Sycamore Creek

The RCD works with the San Diego River Conservancy and Lakeside River Park Conservancy to perform riparian restoration and invasive species removal along the San Diego River and its tributaries. These waterways are frequented by millions of residents and visitors annually, yet they are plagued by water quality and flow issues. Sycamore Creek in Santee, CA is severely impaired by Arundo that has displaced the native habitat, halted water flow, and impaired the creek's use for recreation.

> "To a thirsty man, a drop of water is worth more than a sack of gold."

> > Author Unknown

and groundwater supplies and conservation efforts. We are committed to managing water sources efficiently and improve the water supply for future generations. We believe that our diversified regional water efforts will make our communities more resilient against drought, flooding, population growth, and climate changes.

In 2018, we focused our efforts on the following two projects:

#### Prop 84

The RCD is managing a multi-year, multi-million dollar Proposition 84 Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Implementation Grant to eliminate invasive plants, weeds, and wildlife species along the El Capitan Reservoir to limit their deleterious effects on water supply and quality and reduce the fuel load. The removal of six prolific and highly flammable invasive plants, including Arundo and Tamarisk, will restore flow, minimize erosion, and stabilize hillsides along the watershed. Moreover, feral pig eradication will limit the spread of disease to other animals, livestock, and humans, ultimately benefiting human health and conservation efforts. This project is a collaboration with several local, state, and national stakeholders, and tribal entities across 93 acres within unincorporated San Diego County.

### The "Watershed Connection" Education Program

### Reducing Pollution and Protecting San Diego Bay

F or 24 years, the RCD has partnered with the Port of San Diego to educate thousands of elementary students about how critical it is to protect the integrity of the San Diego Bay Watershed. Students learn all about watersheds, including how pollution travels from



urban areas, through creeks and rivers, into bays and the ocean. This hands-on, science-based learning program also teaches students what they themselves can do to reduce pollution in their communities and become environmental stewards.

### "Thank you for this interactive, hands on presentation. My students were so enthusiastic! You are awesome!"

Second Grade Educator at Audubon Elementary



85% of educators said the program experience and educator delivery was excellent

Pre- and post-tests report every participating class had an increase in understanding the connection between pollution & watershed health

# **COMMUNITY IMPACT**

In 2018, we educated 2,706 students through 104 presentations at 27 participating elementary schools Students "pay it forward," by sharing their new-found knowledge with family members

Interns add over \$10,000 in match funding and in-kind contributions from 296 volunteer hours In the last 10 years, 21,322 students have been educated about how pollution impacts the watershed, and in turn, all of us

Hundreds of additional students are educated at community outreach events

### Watershed Connection — Students & Teachers Speak Out

"I learned that it is important to recycle, throw away your trash, and pick up after your pets." – Maryam Z



"Thank you! Such a great program – so thankful that our students can take part!" – Educator at Museum School, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes

"I learned that you should never litter because it can cause a lot of damage to the animals." – Isa V

perfect because we are currently learning about the water cycle in science." — Educator at St. Pius X School, 5<sup>th</sup> grade class

"The timing for this program was

"I learned that the pollution that flows into the storm drain harms marine life and can possibly harm us as well." – Aviva D

"The presenters were wonderful and worked well with the students!" – Educator at Avondale Elementary, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class

"Never pollute so San Diego and other bays, oceans, lakes and rivers stay clean." — Andrea Y "I learned that we have to help our community so animals and people can be safe." — Genesis A

"One important thing that I learned is that it is very important to care for our environment." — Audrey S

"I have learned how all the acts of littering combined can cause catastrophic problems." – Nate H

"Excellent presentation. Students loved it!" – Educator at St. Pius X School, 5<sup>th</sup> grade class

"I learned that a small change can make a big difference!" – Jaren A "One important thing I learned was about non-point source pollution — that litter doesn't have only one starting point." — Melia H

"I love the program and I look forward to using it every year!" – Educator at Museum School, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes

"I learned that pollution can harm the ocean really badly and that I should use all the strategies I learned to help the environment." – Valeria P

### **Supporting High School Conservationists**

#### Creating Environmental Stewards for the Future

The future of conservation lies in the hands of today's youth. That's why the RCD is committed to supporting high school students who have a love of agriculture and environmental sciences and a desire to learn more about conservation. Through college scholarships, Range Camp sponsorships, speaking competitions, and hands-on, land-based learning programs, we encourage high school students to learn about conservation, and even consider a future in a conservation-related field.

In 2018, RCD staff members attended the SLEWS Academy and became certified trainers, allowing us to officially launch the program in 2019. SLEWS (Student & Landowner Education & Watershed Stewardship) gets high school students out into nature, working on realworld conservation projects. It complements classroom learning and gives students career exposure by working with mentors in the environmental field. We are excited to bring this state-wide program to San Diego.

"Thank you so much for selecting me to receive this scholarship and investing in my future. Coming from a low-income family and a first generation college student background, the opportunity of attending a university is certainly a dream come true. This scholarship means so much to my family and my college career. I will proudly attend UC Santa Barbara to pursue a degree in Environmental Science to one day make a difference in this world."



Gina Milan – 2018 scholarship winner, Monte Vista High School

Seven environmentallyconscious high school seniors received \$1,000 college scholarships to pursue degrees in conservation-related fields in 2018

# COMMUNITY IMPACT

In 2018, RCD staff became certified as SLEWS trainers (Student & Landowner Education & Watershed Stewardship) paving the way for a 2019 program launch of this engaging, hands-on environmental stewardship program Our Speak-Off opportunity allows students to compete in a state-wide speaking competition to earn valuable experience and cash awards

117 scholarships awarded since 1989

RCD sponsors a high schooler to attend Range Camp, a week-long environmental science & resource management camp, for a one-of-a-kind learning adventure

## **School Garden Support**

### **Outdoor Classrooms for Creating Life-long Learners**

A school garden can be used as a space for learning about nutrition and agriculture, for experiencing and exploring nature, and for teaching school subjects such as science, math, writing, reading, art, and music. Since 1999, the RCD has provided resources, training, and information to K-12 educators interested in teaching in

the garden and encouraging students to appreciate fresh food and learn about the food cycle. From newsletters and teacher education, to free plant and seed giveaways, the RCD is helping to create a love of outdoor learning in San Diego County's students.



"It is so rewarding to see the impact a school garden can have on the students' ability to incorporate concepts rooted in STEM and Lit into their hands-on learning experience. Donations like these allow us to offer so much more to the students." **Deborah Comisky from Lakeside Farms Elementary**  "Thank you very much for the plants! The kids will be so excited to plant them next week. I loved how easy it was to pick up them up and the variety of plants that were offered." - Heidi Connolly from Jamul Primary School



"You know, I didn't used to like peas, but I started eating them at Gardening after school, and now I really like them." *First grader from <u>Lafayette School</u>* 

## **COMMUNITY IMPACT**

2,400 vegetable & herb seedlings given away to support 187 school gardens in 2018 Two School Garden Newsletters sent to educate teachers about the latest ideas for school gardens and funding opportunities Hundreds of native wildflower and milkweed seed packs distributed to school gardens

RCD Staff available to offer gardening advice to teachers and parent volunteers Since 2010, we have distributed 12,522 vegetable & herb seedlings, in support of hundreds of school gardens

## **Pollinator Health**

### We Need Pollinators . . . And They Need Us!

Pollinators like bees, butterflies, and birds are responsible for 75% of the world's flowering plants and one of every three bites of food we eat! Pollinators are critical to the food supply and the plant diversity we find in nature, **yet**  across the nation, they are disappearing. The good news is, we can all help! The RCD is committed to doing our part to make a difference. You can help as well, by creating pollinator habitat in your yard or school garden.

#### **Milkweed for Monarchs**

By planting butterfly host plants — such as milkweed and a diverse array of flowering plants — in school gardens, community gardens, and front and back yards, we create new habitat for Monarch butterflies and other pollinators.



#### San Diego Pollinator Alliance

The RCD is a founding member of the San Diego Pollinator Alliance (SDPA), a network of agencies and organizations working together to raise awareness about the plight of pollinators, while empowering local residents to take action to support pollinators.

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#### **The Pollinator Pathway**

The SDPA hosts a thriving demonstration pollinator habitat at the San Diego County Fair called the Pollinator Pathway. Visitors learn about low-water-use California native plants that provide essential habitat for our hardworking pollinators.



"If we want to successfully conserve and restore pollinators, we need to address all the facets involved with pollinator conservation. There's the science of pollinator conservation, the skills needed to raise native plants and responsibly rear butterflies, and the ability to connect with the public. The San Diego Pollinator Alliance is made up of members that specialize in each of these aspects. When we work together and pool our knowledge and resources, we can accomplish more for pollinators than each of our organizations can do alone. Together, our goal is to create a landscape that helps pollinators thrive, across San Diego County."

Jonathan Snapp-Cook, U.S. Fish and Wildlife

## **COMMUNITY IMPACT**

80,000 visitors toured the Pollinator Pathway exhibit at the 2018 San Diego County Fair USFWS Schoolyard Habitat program provided funding to create four pollinator gardens in at least four San Diego County schools

Thousands of "Plant, Grow, Eat" students visited Pollinator Pathway at San Diego Fair

RCD shares information and resources to schools and local residents who want to help Pollinators Hundreds of native wildflower and milkweed seed packs distributed to schools & residents

### **Resource Conservation Foundation of Greater San Diego**

Expanding the Reach and Impact of the RCD



The Resource Conservation Foundation of Greater San Diego — a 501(c)(3) non-profit — was created in 2016 to help us expand the RCD's programs and capabilities. Like the RCD, the Foundation's mission is to protect, conserve, and restore our County's natural resources through education and technical assistance.

The Foundation allows us more flexibility in pursuing

Funding opportunities. Diversifying our funding sources enables us to better serve our community and bring greater conservation benefits to San Diego County.

In partnership, the RCD and its Foundation administer programs to restore and protect the county's watersheds, promote nutrition and stewardship through sustainable agriculture, and revitalize pollinator habitats.

#### **RCF Board Members:**

<b>Donald Butz</b> , Board President	Jordan Gascon, Director
Marilyn Huntamer, Board Vice President	Cody Petterson, Director
James Thompson, Board Secretary/Treasurer	Jo MacKenzie, Associate Director
Alexander S. Balkin, Director	<b>DK Nasland</b> , Associate Director



### **Our People**

**Dedicated to Serving San Diego County Residents** 

#### **RCD Board of Directors**

Donald Butz, Board President Marilyn Huntamer, Board Vice President James Thompson, Board Secretary/Treasurer Jordan Gascon, Director Alexander S. Balkin, Director Cody Petterson, Director

D.K. Nasland, Associate Director

Jo MacKenzie, Associate Director

#### **RCD Staff**

Sheryl Landrum, Executive Director
Chris Kelley, Accountant
Heather Marlowe, Assistant Accountant
Ann Baldridge, Program Manager
Chandra Richards, Conservation Ecologist
Chris Foran, Development & Communication
Britney Munoz, Fire Safe Council Coordinator & Community Outreach Specialist
Martina Skjellerudsveen, Agricultural Outreach Specialist
Sierra Reiss, Education Coordinator
Gregg Cady, Head Gardener
Andy Williamson, Farming & Gardening Program Assistant
Evan Pishny, Watershed Education Intern



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