

https://www.coastsidenews.com/magazine/the-san-mateo-resource-conservation-district/article_fc75d556-5cf0-11ef-9061-33756e5aa9ce.html

Feature

The San Mateo Resource Conservation District

A little-known public agency on the coast

By Peter Tokofsky

Aug 24, 2024



Members of the RCD team take a look at a waterfall in the district.

Courtesy San Mateo County RCD

According to Kellyx Nelson, executive director of the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District, the agency she runs could be “the best kept secret” around.

Indeed, not many people know that a government agency with a \$17 million annual budget and a staff of 25 is housed in offices in Half Moon Bay.



The RCD helps monitor the Pescadero marsh for various water quality parameters to understand past projects and plan for future work.

Courtesy San Mateo County RCD

Nelson describes the RCD as “a public agency that exists for the purpose of helping people manage the land.” Most of the RCD’s work takes place in the western half of the county, that is, on the Coastsides, where it helps farms, ranches, cities and others to manage resources by providing “comprehensive, integrated services for all aspects of natural resource management” in San Mateo County, according to its website.

ADVERTISEMENT

The 96 resource conservation districts in California are authorized by the state’s public resources code to conserve soil and water, control runoff, prevent and control soil erosion, manage watersheds, protect water quality and develop water storage and distribution.

The San Mateo RCD fulfills this mission by participating in various projects. It has helped maintain the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve by working with partners to implement stormwater management practices, water quality studies and develop outreach to local communities about gardening practices that can make runoff cleaner.

The agency also received a grant from the state to work with San Mateo County to remove hazardous trees along fire roads in El Granada's Quarry Park, a project that should wrap up this summer.

Other projects that the RCD has participated in along with other agencies and organizations address wetland restoration, explore development of a farmers cooperative, help the region prevent and recover from wildfires, and contribute to improving conditions for steelhead and coho salmon to migrate upstream. In one project, members of the RCD helped complete pathways at the headquarters of Puente de la Costa Sur, a nonprofit organization in Pescadero.

Recently the RCD has also tried to deepen "thinking and practice regarding justice, equity, diversity and inclusion." Barb Kipreos, who was hired last year as the engagement officer for the agency, describes her role as "helping to deepen relationships, broaden engagement, and continue the RCD's weaving of JEDI ... principles into their work." (Kipreos has not responded to Coastside Magazine's request for more information about these efforts.)

ADVERTISEMENT



Staff from the Resource Conservation District help build a path at the headquarters of Puente, the south coast nonprofit organization.

Courtesy San Mateo County RCD



Courtesy San Mateo County RCD



What appears to be ladder in the creek is actually a scanner that monitors when the Steelhead and Coho that have been micro-tagged pass by.

Courtesy San Mateo County RCD

The San Mateo County RCD prides itself in being a nimble form of local government that provides on-the-ground environmental protection. Its newsletter is even called “Boots on the Ground.” By serving as a hub for conservation, the agency says, it works toward a “vision that Coastal San Mateo County will be environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.”

Peter Tokofsky

Editor