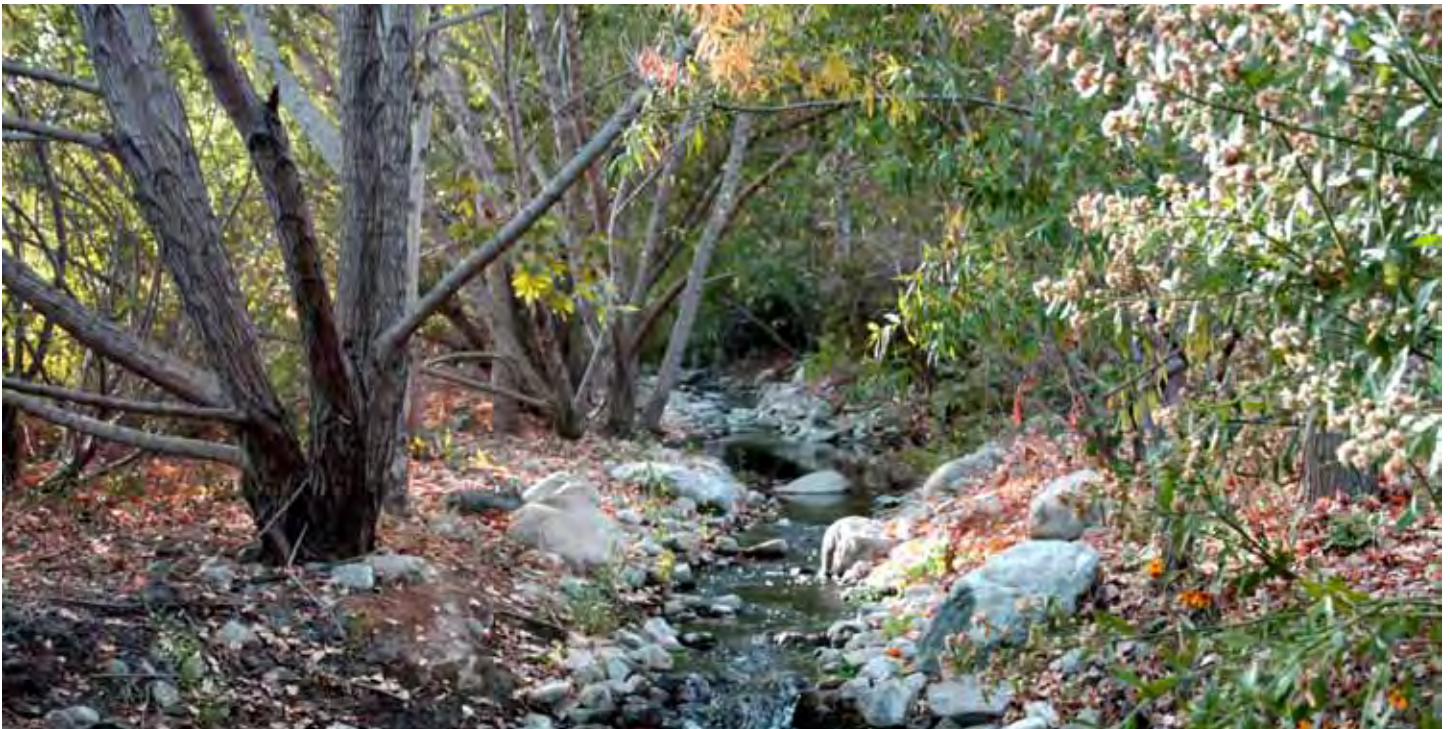


Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2013 June 30, 2012 to July 1, 2013



Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District



About the Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District

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Man-made stream at the LandUse Learning Center

The Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District (RCRCD) is a local government agency that works to conserve the natural resources (soil, water, native plants and wildlife) of areas within western Riverside and San Bernardino Counties in southern California.

RCRCD provides resource management assistance to private and public land users and conducts land treatment, education, and volunteer programs. The District works to sustain natural resources in a variety of ways, including:

- Providing onsite technical assistance, such as irrigation system evaluation
- Restoring habitat through the removal of invasive species and reestablishment of native species
- **Providing stewardship information and educating broad audiences about natural, urban and agricultural ecosystems.**

RCRCD is non-regulatory and self-governing with a five member Board of Directors. The Board retains local administration and direction over programs. The District achieves its conservation goals by coordinating public and private resources and by partnering with “cooperators”, land owners who are interested in conserving natural resources while using or developing property. A cooperator may be an individual land owner, a group, such as Home Owner Association, a business and/or agency. The District enters into Memorandums of Understanding (MOU’s) with cooperating agencies, which spell out working relationships.

The District advocates that each acre of land be managed according to its needs. RCRCD promotes the sustainable use of natural resources for each land-use, including native habitats, urban/suburban areas, and agriculture.

Beginning in 2013, the Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District (RCRCD) began a year-long celebration of its 60th anniversary.

RCRCD's 60th Anniversary was recognized by the Inland Urban Forest Council who presented a beautiful hand-built bench to Shelli Lamb, District Manager. The plaque reads: "Presented to the Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District June 13, 2013 on the occasion of its 60th anniversary with great appreciation for RCRCD's support, from the Inland Urban Forest Council. Made with locally recycled urban lumber. Handcrafted by Dr. Fred Roth."



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Dr. Fred Roth and District Manager Shelli Lamb

During 2013, RCRCD also celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Board's president Alfred B. Bonnett Jr. 'Bud' has expertly supervised RCRCD's conservation efforts, budgets, and investments. Last November he was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award and Director of the Year from the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts. Bud is a community leader and role model of volunteerism. He was a pioneer in the use of drip irrigation in southern California. After studying citrus production at Cal Poly (then at San Dimas, later the campus moved to Pomona) he became a grower, an agricultural engineer and owner of Bonnett Pipe and Supply. As an ag engineer, Bud was on the cutting edge of water-use efficiency. He developed a computer program that designed irrigation systems, so they would be more uniform to conserve water. He was an early-adopter in the use of automatic clocks (timers), sensors and plastic pipe. He designed systems that used some of the first micro-sprinklers from 1965-67. His designs were used in many of our large blocks of citrus that were planted in from the 1960s through 1970s.



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Jolyn Murphy and Bud Bonnett Jr. 'Bud'

Jolyn Murphy, aide to Congressman Ken Calvert, presented a congressional award to Bud Bonnett, the president of RCRCD's Board of Directors, on April 3, 2013 at the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts' (CARCD) South Coast Area meeting.

ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year 2013

This report of accomplishments for the period from June 30, 2012 through July 1, 2013 (Fiscal Year 2013) is organized to follow the three main RCRCDD program areas:

Assisting Land Users with Resource Management

Habitat Land Management and Preservation

Education, Volunteer and Outreach Programs



Assisting Land Users with Resource Management

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RCRCDD provides technical assistance to land users, “cooperators”, who are interested in conserving natural resources while using or developing property.

Services provided to cooperators might include:

- onsite evaluation of a problem, such as an inefficient irrigation system;
- conservation planning based on resource data such as soil type and crop water needs; and
- specifications for the installation of conservation measures, such as erosion control structures.

The RCRCDD office provides resource data and planning tools, including soil and water testing, soil survey maps, and other technical information.

Some natural resource management and conservation planning information is provided to RCRCDD’s cooperators by technical partner: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).



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Irrigation evaluations are conducted for turf and agricultural areas.

Water Conservation

RCRCD's Irrigation Water Management (IWM) Mobile Lab evaluates irrigation systems for efficiency and uniformity in applying water. The Mobile Lab auditor travels to cropland, homes, and large turf areas at parks, schools, and golf courses to test irrigation systems. The auditor then develops a report with recommendations for system improvements to help irrigators conserve water and save money. During Fiscal Year 2013, the IWM mobile lab performed a total of 24 evaluations on 298 acres, which included 3 agricultural evaluations on 43 acres and 21 turf evaluations on 255 acres.

Soil and Water Testing

RCRCD continued providing low-cost soil and water testing for private landowners and home owners. The lab completed twelve soil tests and one irrigation water test during fiscal year 2013. Soil tests evaluate macronutrients and micronutrients, soil texture, conductivity, and pH level. Water tests evaluate nitrate-nitrogen, phosphorus, pH level and conductivity.

Technical Advice and Organizational Support

RCRCD staff works on committees and provides information about sustaining natural resources in cooperation with a variety of entities including:

- Santa Ana Sucker Recovery Team
- Native Freshwater Fauna Working Group
- Alluvial Fan Task Force
- Riverside Green Action Plan (GAP)
- Santa Ana River Task Force
- Inland Urban Forestry Council (IUFC)
- Santa Ana River and Orange County Weed Management Area
- Riverside County-City Arroyo Watershed Committee (CCAC)
- California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC)
- Irvine Ranch Conservancy.



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Checking irrigation line pressure.



Habitat Land Management and Preservation

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RCRCD Lee Lake Conservation Easement in Temescal Canyon

Conserving Critical Habitat

The Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District (RCRCD) is a non-regulatory local agency that works to permanently protect land that has habitat, scenic, and/or agricultural values. RCRCD works to connect blocks of habitat by preserving and restoring corridors or linkages for wildlife movement and migration.

RCRCD conserves open space through habitat restoration, management, and land preservation.

Restoration: The Conservation District improves degraded habitat by removing invasive species and trash, replanting native plants, restocking native animals, protecting soil from erosion, protecting water from pollutants, and more.

Management: RCRCD continues to maintain and monitor restored habitat for water quality, critical wildlife species, invasion of exotic weeds, trash dumping, Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) intrusion, noise, and other impacts.

Preservation: The District protects important areas from future development by accepting donations of land (fee title) and conservation easements.

Habitat Restoration

Restoration projects may be cooperative efforts between RCRC, private landowners and other agencies on private and/or public lands, including the District's conservation easements. The amount of restoration is determined by permit requirements (by regulatory agencies) and other field assessments.

RCRC restores habitat in natural areas by re-establishing local native plant species for a variety of plant communities: riparian, upland, wetland, grassland, oak woodland and more. Restoration efforts provide habitat for sensitive species including the Coastal California Gnatcatcher, Stephen's Kangaroo Rat, San Diego Horned Lizard, Red-sided Garter Snake, Least Bell's Vireo, Willow Flycatcher and other birds, mammals, and amphibians.



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Western Bluebird

Conservation Easements

The District continued to work to obtain land and conservation easements: 16 easements during Fiscal Year 2013. Restoration work on four easements has been completed: two in Temescal Wash, one in the Alessandro Arroyo and one in Highgrove. Agencies, individual landowners, and Home Owners Associations have given conservation easements to RCRC. Most of the conservation lands have required restoration, including removal of exotic weeds and replanting with native species.

Easement Name	Acreage
Temescal Wash	13.0
Lee Lake Water District	30.0
Chandler	7.8
Tagorada	0.3
Mission Ranch	3.0
Alicante	3.0
Munaretto	1.5
McBride (proposed)	19.0
Boulder Basins & Drainages (in progress)	8.7
DWR Bedford Basin (in progress)	15.0
DWR Slope	4.9
Shinkle - Highgrove	0.6
Cajalco Wetlands (in progress)	10.2
Sycamore Creek Preserve	72.66



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Lower Springbrook restoration area at Fairmount Park



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Temescal Wildlife Corridor

Wildlife Corridors

RCRCD manages valuable conservation lands that are important to the region’s plants and animals. The habitat lands provide corridors which link larger blocks of habitat for wildlife movement and migration. They also help improve water quality, provide beautiful vistas, and stabilize eroding waterways. Many of these conservation lands have required extensive restoration.

Most of RCRCD’s conserved and managed lands are located within three main areas: Temescal Corridor, Cajalco Corridor, and Riverside Area Arroyos.

Temescal Corridor

One of RCRCD’s long-term goals is to preserve habitat lands that extend from the Cleveland National Forest through Temescal Canyon to the Gavilan Plateau and Lake Mathews. The District has obtained, or is working on obtaining, the following conservation easements in Temescal Canyon:

- Bedford Conservation Easement (in progress)
- Chandler Conservation Easement
- Department of Water Resources (DWR) Easement
- Lee Lake Conservation Easement
- Main St. Conservation Easement
- McBride Canyon Conservation Easement
- Sycamore Creek Conservation Easement
- Temescal Wash Conservation Easement
- Trilogy Conservation Easement
- Deleo Property

The District also owns natural lands (fee title) in the Temescal Open Space Conservation Area, (135 acres of upland habitat) and the Deleo Conservation Area, which includes 26 acres of riparian, alluvial, and upland habitat.

Cajalco Corridor

The Temescal Corridor connects to the Cajalco Corridor. The Cajalco floodplain and adjacent Gavilan Hills support a variety of important habitats, including: wetlands, waterways, oak woodlands, juniper woodlands, and alkali plant communities.

RCRCD is in the process of gaining Cajalco Wetlands, Alexander Street, Dailey Ranch, and Boulder Heights water quality basins and wetland.

Restoration and habitat creation have been completed at Boulder Heights Basins. Restoration began at the Cajalco Wetlands during 2013.



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Craig Mogi helps with maintenance of Boulder Basin.



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Tesquesquite Alkalai Meadow Restoration

Many of RCRC D's conservation easements are along beautiful and important arroyos (waterways) that flow through unincorporated parts of Riverside County and across adjoining portions of the City of Riverside. RCRC D has worked to help educate homeowners, land users and local groups about stewardship at the wildland-urban interface.

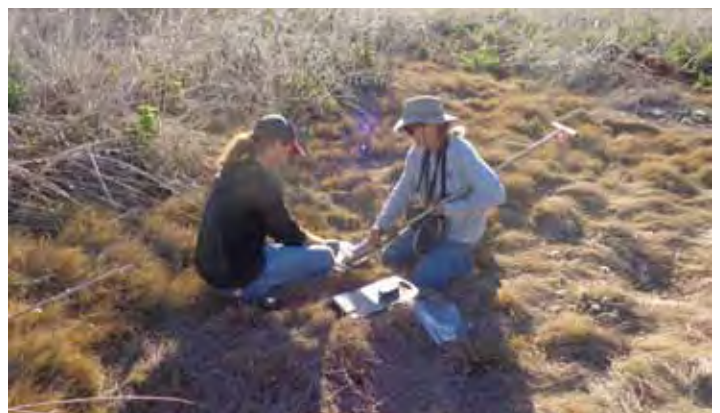
RCRC D has projects in the following waterways:

- Mission Ranch Development in Woodcrest
- Tagorda, a tributary to Mockingbird Canyon
- Munaretto Easement, a tributary to Alessandro Arroyo
- Shinkle Easement at Springbrook Wash
- Spring Mountain Ranch Easement in Springbrook Wash
- Hole Creek, a tributary to the Santa Ana River
- Lower Tequesquite, a tributary to the Santa Ana River
- Tequesquite Arroyo Alkali Meadow Project
- Anza Creek, a tributary to the Santa Ana River
- Alicante Easement, a tributary to Mockingbird Canyon.

Monitoring of Habitat Restoration Projects

RCRC D staff conducted monthly monitoring of 18 restoration projects during FY 2013. Staff measured vegetation cover and species diversity within seeded sites of shrubland as part of the annual monitoring program within the Temescal Open Space.

As part of ongoing stewardship, RCRC D coordinates the cleanup of trash and debris and conducts water quality testing and wildlife monitoring on easements. RCRC D blocks illegal Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) routes and replants disturbed soil with native vegetation.



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Assessing soil condition on habitat lands.



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Working with DFW to electroshock non-native fish from the RCRC Lee Lake Pond easement.

Mitigation Projects for Loss of Habitat

RCRCD continued to work with over 23 developers and the City of Riverside to actively restore and monitor habitat to compensate for development impacts and land use changes. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Army Corps of Engineers and Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board allow RCRCD to work in waterways through Permits 1601, 1603, 404 and 401. Restoration projects were installed at three new mitigation sites this year. This included restoration of alkali meadow habitat and native fish habitat in the lower Tequesquite Arroyo and alkali meadow habitat in the Cajalco Creek flood plain. Restoration of alluvial scrub and riparian habitat was planned for areas along Temescal Wash.

In-Lieu Fee Program

RCRCD worked with the Army Corps of Engineers to develop an “In-Lieu Fee” program in response to increasing demand for mitigation opportunities to help offset impacts due to urban development in, and around, the inland region.

In-Lieu-Fee (ILF) is an approach to habitat mitigation in which a “permittee” (i.e.: land developer or public agency project proponent) pays a fee to a third party “in lieu of” conducting project-specific mitigation. ILF mitigation is used to compensate for unavoidable impacts to wetlands or other waters when it is in the best interest of the environment, and when other approaches to compensation are not available or practical.

Santa Ana Watershed Association (SAWA)

RCRCD is a member of the Santa Ana Watershed Association. SAWA is a nonprofit organization that works to restore native habitats within the Santa Ana River watershed by removing invasive plants and animals from waterways and monitoring wildlife populations.

Santa Ana River and Orange County Weed Management Area

RCRCD continued as a partner with the Santa Ana River and Orange County Weed Management Area (SAROCWMA), which works to eradicate non-native weeds on both private and public lands in portions of Riverside, San Bernardino and Orange Counties. The Weed Management Area has been successful in controlling common invasive weeds, especially *Arundo donax* (giant reed), perennial pepperweed, Tamarisk (salt cedar) and castor bean. The group works to control populations of invasive plants but also targets smaller populations of weeds and removes them before they become a problem. Funding was not received for 2013, which reduced accomplishments.



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Biofilters clean water in the native fish stream at the LandUse Learning Center

Fish and Amphibian Programs

RCRCD conducted a variety of restoration and research projects in an effort to increase fish and amphibian populations in their native ranges of the Santa Ana Watershed.

Native fish and amphibian species are impacted by loss or degradation of stream habitat, water pollution, drought, non-native fish and aquatic animals, flood control structures, water diversion, sand and gravel mining, and changes in the watershed that result in erosion, sediment and debris flows.



©PHOTO BY JOE FERREIRA

Endangered Santa Ana Sucker

Native Fish Rescues, Reintroductions and Studies

During FY 2013, the RCRCD's stream supported a native fish population of Speckled Dace, Arroyo Chub, and Santa Ana Sucker, a threatened species. The number of fish varies from year to year, depending on natural reproduction. The recirculating, 300-foot long stream was constructed to support and propagate native fish.

Four of RCRCD's 100 foot-long raceways were used for the breeding and study of native fish, in a project conducted with the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG)- Region 6, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The US Geological Survey (USGS) is conducting the analysis for the results.



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Lower Santa Ana river below Prado

Riverside Waterways

RCRCD continued to work with local water districts, US Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the City of Riverside on the restoration of the lower Tequesquite Arroyo for the benefit of the Santa Ana sucker. The creek has been degraded due to trash, exotic plants and lack of connectivity to the river. The five-year project involves removing exotic species, controlling erosion on channel banks, placing substrate onto the channel bottoms for spawning, and planting of native vegetation.

RCRCD also restored riparian areas adjacent to Anza Drain and Hole Creek in collaboration with the County and City of Riverside. The District received \$125,000 from the Santa Ana River Restoration/ Recovery Trust Fund held by San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District to restore native fish habitat in the lower Tequesquite Arroyo.



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Restoration at Lower Tesquesquite Creek

Water Quality Testing

During Fiscal Year 2013 staff monitored water quality monthly at Lee Lake Conservation Easement pond, other sites in Temescal Canyon, RCRCD's native fish stream and raceways; periodically in Coldwater Canyon and occasionally at other sites. The testing provides data for RCRCD and the Regional Water Quality Control Board to help keep track of water quality fluctuation and trends.

Amphibian Restoration

RCRCD and partners worked to foster and reintroduce amphibian populations into restored conservation areas. Some species include the Western pond turtle, California salamander, West coast newt and California tree frog.



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Gathering water quality and flow data at Tesquesquite Creek



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RCRCD staff collect and grow native plant materials for its restoration programs.

Plant Programs and Projects

The Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District (RCRCD) provides native plants for habitat restoration, landscaping and other types of planting projects. RCRCD propagates plants at its native plant nursery for a variety of re-vegetation projects and uses refrigerated seed storage facilities to store locally-collected seed. Staff helps train others in production and use of native plants in ways that are beneficial to the natural biological diversity of southern California.

Native Plant Nursery

At the native plant nursery, staff continued to propagate plants from the local watershed and eco-region for current and future planting projects. RCRCD grew 70 native species with an inventory ranging from about 7,500 to 10,500 container plants during the fiscal year. In addition, RCRCD maintains a “cutting” nursery of mule fat and five species of willow. The plants were started from wild-collected seeds and rhizomes. 4,363 of these plants were installed into two alkali wetland restoration projects.

In addition, staff propagated plants for an alluvial scrub restoration project to be planted in the fall.

During Fiscal Year 2013, RCRCD supplied 586 plants for landscaping projects. From FY 2005-2013, the nursery has supplied more than 23,305 local native plants for restoration, erosion control, and water quality projects and 4,365 for landscaping.

Plant Restoration Ecologist Arlee Montalvo attended a field trip to the Los Lunas Plant Materials Center and learned about the use of very deep pots to propagate and plant riparian species. The deep plantings allow roots to reach water so that projects can be less dependent on irrigation during plant establishment. This summer, the nursery started propagating *willow baccharis* in the 3-foot deep pots for use in RCRCD projects.



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Native Seed Farm at Irvine Ranch Conservancy



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Seed Collections

RCRCD continued the renovation of two seed processing rooms and one walk-in cold room at its facility.

Staff continued to store special collections of seeds and to propagate plants from seed for future restoration, water quality, and bank stabilization projects. Staff also worked with the native seed industry to collect seed from local, native populations in an effort to maintain the genetic diversity of our area. Fall-dispersing seeds of several species were collected from November to December prior to a severe drought. Seeds were not collected in spring and summer because of the drought.

RCRCD stored seed for the Irvine Ranch Conservancy in refrigerated storage rooms. The native plant seeds will be used for the Conservancy's future restoration projects.

Alluvial Scrub Native Plant Materials Project

Plant Restoration Ecologist Dr. Arlee Montalvo continued work on a collaborative project which was funded by the USDA Forest Service Native Plant Materials Program. Montalvo continued to collect information about native plants that will be used to prepare plant profiles that focus on use of plants for habitat restoration. Additional funding was received to carry this project through to Fall 2015, so that Dr. Montalvo can add recommendations for seed transfer to the native plant profiles. In addition, she attended the National Native Seed Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico in April and presented a project paper entitled "Development of Science-Based Restoration Plant Lists for Sensitive Plant Communities: Patterns in Alluvial Scrub Vegetation and Seed Availability". An annual report on the project was provided to the Forest Service in August.



Education, Outreach, Citizen Science and Partnerships

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Hikes at Nature Fest took visitors to heirloom oaks and Munz's onion.

The Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District (RCRCD) provides a variety of educational and public relations programs and services concerning natural resources and their stewardship. This section details some of our accomplishments for Fiscal Year 2012-2013 with information about education programs, materials, outreach, volunteer efforts, citizen science, and collaboration with other organizations.

Education Projects

Corona Water Education Program

RCRCD conducts water education programs for schools and youth groups on behalf of the City of Corona's Department of Water and Power. The presentations include information about Corona's water supply and hands-on activities about keeping storm water clean. Resource Educator Erin Snyder conducted 71 classroom presentations for 2,144 elementary school students from July, 2012 through June, 2013. The presentations were supplemented

with educational materials including the booklet *Water Is Life* and "Santa Ana River Steward" bookmarks. An additional 100 students at four schools were provided materials, but no presentations. Teachers were provided the Educators' Guide for *Water Is Life* and posters of the Santa Ana River Watershed.



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Kids learn about keeping stormwater clean.



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California School for the Deaf students helped with gardening at RCRC.

California School for the Deaf Service Learning

Throughout the academic year, California School for the Deaf (CSDR) students completed a variety of projects. The students helped in the Land Use Learning Center creating compost, working the garden plots, spreading mulch, etc. During the 2012-2013 school year, the students helped package and distribute publications door-to-door to 166 homeowners along the Alessandro Arroyo near the Munaretto easement and to 372 at Boulder Creek. More than 800 packets were delivered to Sycamore Creek residents whose properties border the Sycamore/Temescal conservation easement. CSDR students also monitored bluebird nest boxes at their school site and at Olivewood Memorial Park.

Envirothon

RCRCD sponsored two Envirothon teams during FY 2013, both from Arlington High School. At the California state competition the Mountain Lions placed third overall. RCRCD provided some training for the local teams.

Student Interns and Volunteers

RCRCD employed one student intern from Riverside Community College. Former intern Rick returned to work again during winter and summer breaks. On occasion, individuals or groups assist RCRCD with specific projects. Fifteen foreign exchange students from Tohoku University, Sendai Japan (a Riverside sister city) visited RCRCD and learned about natural resources through a UC Extension travel/training course. The students worked three service days with us helping with habitat restoration, landscaping at the Sycamore Creek sub-office, and improvements at the LandUse Learning Center.



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Educational Material Distribution

Free educational materials are offered annually to all elementary, middle and high school teachers, who work or reside within the RCRCD's boundaries, via a "Materials Order Form". This year our offerings included the 2013 NACD stewardship education materials: *Soil to Spoon*. For the 2012-2013 school year, we distributed more than 17,775 publications for 3,697 students in six school districts. Materials were provided for:

- 87 elementary teachers/classes
- 12 middle school teachers/classes
- 10 high school teachers/classes

Twenty-five students completed the Soil Saver Club. RCRCD also provided resource information to the Science Olympiad students from Martin Luther King High School.



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Nature Fest Open House Tour 2013

Outreach Efforts

Events

As part of our 60 Years of Conservation celebration, RCRCD hosted a first local NestWatch meeting. Erin Snyder explained Cornell University's Project NestWatch and talked about bluebird nest box monitoring. Volunteers learned to install nest boxes and report data. The educational program was repeated for Wild Birds Unlimited's New Beginnings-Nesting Day and for the Norco Valley Bird Club.

RCRCD conducted NatureFest: an open house and educational event at our new Sycamore Creek sub-office on April 13. The event offered crafts, hikes, and short presentations about conserving water, wildlife, habitat and more.



RCRCD helped promote community sustainability events and provided materials at events. Cumulatively, thousands of people attended the events and were offered educational materials. 2012-2013 events included:

- Boy Scout Roundtable
- Sherman Indian Museum's Open House
- University of California, Riverside's Climate and Sustainability Fair
- Santa Ana Watershed Association's Bird Festival
- University of California, Riverside's Community Garden Opening
- Citizen Science Day at Riverside Metropolitan Museum
- Riverside Community College's (RCC) Eco Faire
- Demonstration Garden Opening at Corona City Hall
- Earth Night in the Garden
- Grand Terrace Community Day
- Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency's Community Day

Publications

Website and Social Media

RCRCD uses its Facebook page: www.facebook.com/RCRCD and website, www.RCRCD.com to promote sustainable practices and upcoming events.

Educational Publications

RCRCD creates localized educational publications about stewardship and resource management and distributes them at outreach events, workshops, and at partners' programs.

The publication *Waterway Conservation: Preventing Impacts from Human Activity* was distributed to more than 400 local municipal leaders. It can be seen on our website at <http://www.rcrcd.com/Publications/ConservingWaterways.pdf>. The publication was developed by

RCRCD for the Riverside County/ City Arroyo-Watershed Committee (CCAC).

The CCAC worked from 2003-2011 to protect local waterways, adjoining wildlife habitat and water quality. The unique committee, comprised of city and county representatives and community volunteers, sought to improve coordination between the City and County, reviewed development standards, and worked to educate the community about the value and care of watercourses. The committee developed the Riverside Arroyo Watershed Policy Study and Recommendations, which was provided to the County Board of Supervisors and Riverside City Council.



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We continue to sell the enhanced, second edition of *Backyard Birds of the Inland Empire* by Sheila Kee, which was developed by the Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District and published by Heyday Books in collaboration with Inlandia Institute. Interested businesses may purchase the book wholesale from Heyday Books for resale to the public. The book provides descriptions and tips for identifying over 50 of the most common birds that visit yards in Southern California's inland region. Each bird is identified by color, then described by its behavioral traits, calls, food preferences, and nesting patterns. The guide sells for \$14.95 at bookstores, local museums, and at RCRCD. The first edition, published in 2004, won the National Association of Conservation Districts' Outreach Award.

We also continue to sell the reprinted book *Flora of the Santa Ana River and Environs* by Oscar Clarke, Greg Ballmer, Danielle Sveta and Arlee Montalvo (our plant restoration ecologist). RCRCD helped sponsor the first edition, and sells copies for \$25.00. The book is used as a reference for training work-shops, such as the California Rapid Assessment Method (CRAM) training. Sadly, botanist extraordinaire Oscar Clarke passed away last spring.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CALIFORNIA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF (CSDR)
Bluebird Nest Box Monitoring Program



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Nature Fest at Sycamore Creek 2013

Bluebird Nestbox Monitoring

During the 2013 nesting season, February through July, more than 153 baby bluebirds fledged. Twenty volunteer citizen-scientists hung and monitored 61 nest boxes for native birds including Western Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Bewick's Wrens and Ash-throated Flycatchers. The results were submitted to Cornell University Birdhouse Network, the California Bluebird Recovery Program, the North American Bluebird Society, and Southern California Bluebird Club.

As a result of the NestWatch training, some RCRC D volunteers are now directly submitting their data online. RCRC D volunteers manage the longest running, most prolific Bluebird Trail in Riverside County.

Riverside Citizen Science

RCRC D has been working with the Riverside Metropolitan Museum and partners to develop a strategic plan and partnership model for a Citizen Science program for the City of Riverside. Partners include:



- University of California, Riverside's Center for Conservation Biology and the Natural Reserve System;
- City of Riverside's Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services;
- US Forest Service-Fire Lab; and
- Smithsonian Institute's National Museum of Natural History.

A Citizen Science Nature Center building is being built at Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Park, and two part-time staff members will be hired.

Partnerships and Collaboration

RCRCD partners with numerous organizations to provide education and outreach programs. Through these synergistic partnerships we are able to reach broader audiences. Some of our educational partners include the Inland Urban Forest Council, California Native Plant Society (CNPS), Inlandia Institute, California Urban Forest Council, California ReLeaf, UC Riverside, Preserve the Plateau, Friends of the Entomology Museum at UCR (FERM), and the Riverside Municipal Museum.

Inland Urban Forest Council

RCRCD's Public Affairs Manager Diana Ruiz helped the Inland Urban Forest Council (IUFC) with the planning of their educational programs, newsletter and website. RCRCD hosted the first part of a plant appraisal workshop in June called: "Trees Make Dollars and \$ence".

Also during the 2013 fiscal year, RCRCD hosted trainings for the Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) Toolkit, which helped 25 groups/ municipalities develop UFM Plans for their areas. The toolkit is an online system that guides decision makers in developing a plan that is unique to each location. Typical users might include urban foresters, environmental planners, and managers of large landscapes such as golf courses. The training was supported by a Prop 84 educational grant through the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE).

California Native Plant Society

RCRCD continued to support and collaborate with the California Native Plant Society's (CNPS) local Riverside-San Bernardino chapter. Staff assisted with development of their newsletter, Facebook page, and hosted two fall lectures by speakers from Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Gardens :

- *Reimagining the California Lawn* by author/ botanist Bart O'Brien, and
- *Biology, Taxonomy and Conservation of Monkeyflowers* by author Naomi Fraga.

Also, the RCRCD nursery supplied some of the plants for the annual CNPS Fall Plant Sale in November.



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Transporting native plants.

Sims Tree Learning Center

Susan Sims of Sims Tree Learning Center provided an assessment of oaks at Sycamore Creek and training to staff at Sycamore Creek free of charge. Sims also started a program to train arborists and tree care professionals about protecting birds during nesting season, called Wildlife Aware. Much of our staff was trained in the program. RCRCDD helped with program content and promotion.

www.tlcwildlifeawareness.org

California Naturalist

RCRCDD worked with the Santa Ana Watershed Association (SAWA) and partners to bring the California Naturalist program to the Inland Empire. The new state program, through the University of California Cooperative Extension, is conducted similarly to Master Gardeners. Volunteers participate in a 40-hour course to become certified naturalists.

www.facebook.com/InlandEmpireNaturalist



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LLC Facility Tour

NACD Annual Meeting

Preparations were underway for the annual meeting of the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD): “Conservation: Locally Grown-Nationally Known”, which was to be held in Anaheim Feb 2-5, 2014. RCRCDD assisted with planning and will host a tour of our facility and habitat restoration sites.

More Collaborative Efforts

- The publication *Living on the Edge* was highlighted on KVCR public television for its approach to fire-scaping. Some of the native plants at the Land Use Learning Center were reviewed on air. Also, Jae Lee was interviewed about NRCS’s efforts after fire. To view the publication, see <http://www.rcrcdd.com/Publications/LivingontheEdge.pdf>
- Public Affairs Manager Diana Ruiz served on the City’s Green Accountability and Performance Committee, an outgrowth of the Green Action Plan. The committee meets quarterly to review the City’s progress toward sustainability. The City of Riverside has received numerous awards for its efforts, and has been designated as California’s first Emerald City.
- Ruiz also worked with Riverside Unified School District on its Conservation Committee for Nutritional Services.
- RCRCDD hosted the Southern California Pest Council’s meeting in April.
- Volunteers and staff helped get the word out about the infestation of the Asian Citrus Psyllid. Newsletters and flyers were distributed to homes in outer lying areas and along waterways.
- Staff participated in Cultural Relevancy in Outdoor Youth Programs and the Bureau of Land Management’s Outdoor Summit for Youth.
- Dr. Arlee Montalvo reviewed tree species recommendations for the Tequesquite Community Garden at Bonaminio Park and provided hedgerow information to the Tequesquite Community Garden planning committee.



Resource Conservation Center

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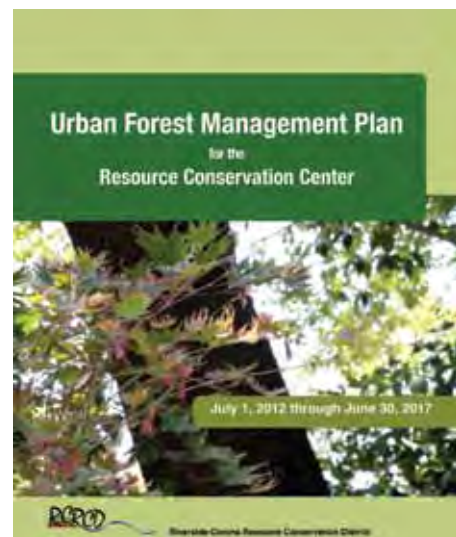
Lawn Alternatives with Native Plants

RCRCD manages the Resource Conservation Center, a 9-acre facility that includes the Land-Use Learning Center demonstration garden and native plant nursery.

The facility and buildings house:

- the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Area Office,
- the California Department of Fish and Game's monitoring unit for the Riverside County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP), and
- the California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA's) facility for research and control of the Glassy-winged Sharpshooter. CDFA rears a parasitic wasp to help control the sharpshooter, which spreads Pierce's Disease to crops and ornamental plants.

During 2012-2013, RCRCD developed an Urban Forest Management Plan and tree inventory for the Resource Conservation Center facility.





Land-Use Learning Center

The Land Use Learning Center (LLC) is a 3-acre demonstration of sustainable practices for the three main land uses of southern California: native habitats, urban areas, and agriculture. To date, the Native Habitat and Urban Areas have been developed with trails, plantings and some interpretive signs.

The Urban Area includes an Arbor Trail and four water-wise backyards from natural to formal: a habitat garden, native landscape, Mediterranean-courtyard garden, and a sustainable backyard. Together, the Urban Area showcases plants suited to the local climate and soils that are used to attract wildlife, provide food, and replace high-water use plants. Interpretive signs about urban forestry have been installed throughout the Arbor Trail portion of the Urban Area.

During FY 2013, additions to the Urban Area included two native hedge demonstrations and alternative lawn demonstrations. Native grasses were donated by Delta Bluegrass through distributor S & S Seeds and native sedges were propagated by the RCRCDD nursery. The plantings were designed and installed by RCRCDD staff.

The Agricultural Area was planted with a variety of citrus and other fruit trees and vines. A native plant hedgerow demonstration was also planted to support beneficial insects.

In the Native Habitat Area, a created stream is used to study and raise Arroyo Chub, Speckled Dace and the Santa Ana Sucker, a threatened fish. The fish reproduce in the stream, are tagged, counted, measured and released into the Santa Ana River or watershed streams as conditions permit. Four locally important plant communities are depicted with plantings. An artist has created posters and interpretive signs of the habitats, which include the plant and animal species that are usually found in those areas.





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View of the Field Office at Sycamore Creek Preserve.

Administration

Although restricted by budget cutbacks, RCRCDD was able to continue its programming with a small staff of seven full time and five part time employees. During FY 2013, the District continued to seek funding sources, create partnerships, and manage the Resource Conservation Center at 4500 Glenwood Dr., Riverside.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

RCRCDD worked with the University of Redlands to develop a cost-benefit analysis of district programs during 2012. Economics professor Dr. Jill Harris and students surveyed residents then compiled and analyzed data. Dr. Harris completed the RCDs cost-benefit analysis, and those findings were shared at the CARCD conference in San Diego during November.

Sycamore Creek Preserve and Field Office

During Fiscal Year 2013, RCRCDD acquired a new sub-office next to its conservation easement at Sycamore Creek/Indian Truck Trail in Temescal Canyon. A former sales office trailer, the building now serves as a field office, meeting facility and education center. The building was repaired, and landscaping was converted to native, low water-use plants. Four interpretive signs were installed.

The Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District (RCRCDD) is an independent, special district, enabled under Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code. As defined in Division 9, Resource Conservation Districts are given broad abilities to help sustain natural resources and to protect resources from preventable damage and waste. The scope of work at RCRCDD reflects local issues and focuses on sustainable ecosystem management. RCRCDD programs specifically address water conservation, soil erosion, storm water quality, habitat restoration, conservation education, and more. RCRCDD was created by a vote of the people in 1953.

For more information about RCRCDD, please contact Public Affairs Manager Diana Ruiz at (909) 238-8338.