



Sonoma County RCDs Forest Conservation Programming 2022-23

Forest Conservation Programming

The Sonoma Resource Conservation District and Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (collectively, the Sonoma County Resource Conservation Districts) forest conservation programs provide non-industrial forestland managers with assistance to support conservation activities. The RCDs provide assistance through technical education, site visits, planning services, project funding and project management.

Priority resource concerns:

- Forest susceptibility to drought, pest, disease, and wildfire
- Post-fire damage
- Community susceptibility to wildfire
- Inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife
- Water quality degradation

How to Access Support

Land managers can reach out to their RCD directly with concerns. Specialized staff can provide technical advice over the phone or via a site visit. If the property has multiple resource concerns, it may benefit from a holistic forest management plan. We recommend that land managers receive training in preparing forest management plans through UCANR's Forest Stewardship Workshop series to prepare them for working with an RCD or NRCS forester. Once a forest management plan is prepared, the land manager can apply for financial support to accomplish the planned activities through a variety of funding programs.

Landowner Educational Resources

Forest Stewardship is an approach to managing forest properties that takes into consideration the goals and objectives of the landowner and works to manipulate the growth of vegetation to meet those objectives while ensuring that these activities do not degrade beneficial uses of forests. This requires an understanding of the current property condition, including roads, infrastructure, soils, hydrology, and ecology, and it requires that the landowners have a firm understanding of what they are trying to manage the property for.

- [UCANR's Forest Stewardship Programming](#): Contains access to workshops, planning assistance, educational publications and more.
- [UCCE's Your Family Forest](#): A great resource for landowners to begin the process of developing a forest management plan.
- [Sonoma County Forest Conservation Working Group Learning Library](#): Provides local resources to Sonoma County residents.

About Technical and Funding Assistance Opportunities

The benefits to having a forest management plan aren't just intrinsic; although there are substantial benefits to having a goal, and a measured plan to achieve the goal, especially when dealing with a subject as large as managing acres of forest land. There are existing government cost-share programs that were developed to help landowners better manage their forests, by providing incentives payments for implementing non-commercial forest practices that are beneficial to the land. Examples of these practices are: non-commercial thinning, pruning, planting, chipping, and pile burning. Many of these practices benefit the growth of residual trees on the land and have the added benefit of reducing fuel hazards on the landscape. The two major programs for this purpose are the Environmental Quality Incentives Program ([EQIP](#)) provided by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), which is an agency within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the California Forest Improvements Program ([CFIP](#)) which is provided by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). These programs require that landowners have an approved forest management plan before they will enter into cost-share agreements with landowners. The management plans that the RCDs work with landowners to create qualify for both programs.

Management plans also provide much of the information that is required for compliance with environmental laws such as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Because these plans have this information identified, it makes compliance with other government programs simpler. An example of this is CAL FIRE's Vegetation Management Program ([VMP](#)) which is a prescribed fire program where the department will fund and execute prescribed fire operations for fuels reduction on private land. This information could also be used by RCDs to apply for specific competitive grants to address natural resource concerns which are identified in the planning process. Management plans can be tailored to fit the needs of the landowner. The RCDs hope to be able to provide prescribed burn planning in the near future, which would help facilitate VMP projects, as well as any projects undertaken through Prescribed Burn Associations ([PBA](#)) such as Sonoma/Marin's [Good Fire Alliance](#).

RCD Forest Conservation Programs

For FY 2022-23, the RCDs have several forest conservation programs the public can participate in.

- **Free technical assistance:** Specialized staff can provide technical advice over the phone or via a site visit to address concerns such as hazard trees, erosion control, invasive species control, replanting, fire fuels management, and more.
- **LandSmart Forest Management Planning Assistance for Individual Properties:** A forest management plan is prepared by the land manager and a professional forester. It describes the natural and agricultural resources of the property, documents the practices used to protect natural resources, identifies opportunities to maintain or improve the quality of existing natural resources, and prioritizes management practices. The plan is compatible with funding programs administered by RCDs, NRCS, CAL FIRE and others.
- **LandSmart Forest Management Planning Assistance for Multiple Properties:** Planning support is encouraged and available for collaborative groups of landowners. The process develops shared goals and objectives through education and consensus building. The plan facilitates larger landscape-level planning including cross-property projects.

- **North Bay Forest Improvement Program:** This incentive program supports beneficial forest management activities performed on-the-ground, such as forest thinning, planting, pruning, and fuels management. Priority applicants have a developed forest management plan.
- **LandSmart Grazing for Community Resilience Program:** This incentive program supports interested neighbors or community groups to utilize grazing as a way of reducing fuel load and enhancing wildfire resilience. This project also aims to support previously burned properties to remove invasive weeds and reduce fuel load in preparation for future post-fire recovery activities.
- **Fee-for-service:** The RCDs provide additional fee-based services of project planning, permitting, design, management and oversight.

RCD Assistance for Non-RCD Programs

Sonoma and Gold Ridge RCDs can provide this assistance through grant funded programs. There are existing government cost-share programs that were developed to help landowners better manage their forests, by providing incentives payments for implementing non-commercial forest practices that are beneficial to the land.

- **Regional Conservation Partners Program (RCPP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS):** RCPP and EQIP are two incentives programs supporting conservation activities such as forest stand improvements, prescribed grazing, brush management, fence building, fire break installation, and more. Through NRCS, financial aid is provided in the form of incentive payments. Incentive payment rates are specific to treatment activities and are reimbursed after implementation.
- **CA Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) from CAL FIRE:** Incentives program supports preparation of a Forest Management Plan by a Registered Professional Forester and implementation of beneficial forest management activities performed on-the-ground, such as tree thinning, planting, fuels management.
- **Fire Prevention Grants Program (FPGP) from CAL FIRE:** The RCDs assist the public in developing, funding and managing Fire Prevention Grant projects when they have a clear nexus with natural resource conservation. Projects may include public education, planning, protection of infrastructure, fuels management, and forest management activities if they show a direct benefit to community safety and carbon sequestration.
- **Forest Health Grant Program (FHGP) from CAL FIRE:** The RCDs assist the public in developing, funding and managing Forest Health Grant projects. CAL FIRE's Forest Health Program funds active restoration and reforestation activities aimed at providing for more resilient and sustained forests. Through grants to regionally-based partners and collaboratives, CAL FIRE seeks to significantly increase fuels management, fire reintroduction, treatment of degraded areas, and conservation of forests.
- **Sonoma County Vegetation Management Program (VMP) from County of Sonoma:** The RCDs assist the public in developing, funding, permitting, and managing Vegetation Management Program projects. The County of Sonoma has created the Vegetation Management Grant Program to support the work of organizations and communities to achieve vegetation management activities in high-risk areas and near key ecosystems.

We are more than happy to answer any questions you may have. We encourage you to check out the links provided, there is great information there, especially in the forest stewardship page that UCANR put together.

Ready to Get Started?

Take our [Forest Landowner Interest Form](#).

Contact your local RCD.

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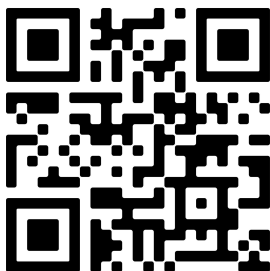
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