



Photo by Michael "Mike" L. Baird bairdphotos.com

Summer 2023

CSLRCD Celebrates Its 70th Anniversary

My goodness, what a surprise to find the District has 70 candles on its 'birthday' cake this year. Led by local landowners in 1953, the Arroyo Grande RCD was established to find a solution for creek flooding affecting that area's agricultural lands. By 1978, a new name, Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District (CSLRCD) was adopted, reflecting the District's growing boundary; the district stretched from the Highway 41 corridor north of Morro Bay, down the coastal valleys to the Nipomo Mesa and Oso Flaco Lake in the south.



1952 Charter Board of Directors (left to right)
Manuel F. Silva, Ed Campodonico, Keith A. Rapp (Secretary),
Edwin M. Taylor (President), Lester C. Sullivan.

The devastating drought-plagued, multi-year Dust Bowl event that swept across the Great Plains in the 1930s was an agricultural, ecological and economic disaster for our country. Federal and state laws established natural resource conservation districts, and CSLRCD is one of the 95 in California today.

In the 1990s, our work focused on projects to reduce sediment transport into Morro Bay. That included the restoration of the 129-acre Chorro Flats flood plain to capture sediment from Chorro Creek. Farm and ranch land projects in the watershed were initiated to provide erosion control, reduce sediment transport and improve water quality in creeks entering the Bay.

CSLRCD projects and programs have evolved and developed over time to provide services to meet today's land management needs and regulatory requirements. Our programs have grown to provide technical assistance to growers, ranchers, municipalities and other land users from Morro Bay to Nipomo. We manage the county's Mobile Irrigation Lab audits. Projects include on-farm sediment reduction, fencing, improving water quality, irrigation efficiency for crop nutrient budgeting, rainwater catchment, woodchip bioreactors, waterway stabilization and steelhead recovery projects. We work on solutions for agricultural and climate resilience with Carbon Farm Plans, the CDFA Healthy Soils and Water Efficiency Programs.

Important habitat restoration projects continue district wide. The Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Park has a multi-year effort planting native plants and seed, and removing invasive species for dust control; a remediation effort addressing pesticides in Osos Flaco Creek is under way; a 90-acre Los Osos Creek Wetland restoration to capture sediment before entering Morro Bay is almost complete; a pollinator-friendly habitat was planted along Prefumo Creek; a watershed enhancement project is

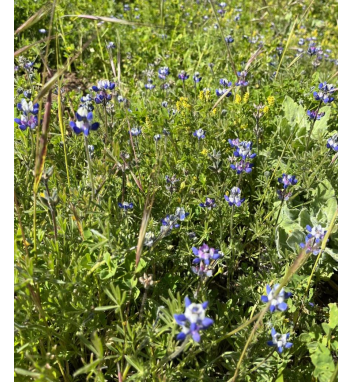
underway in Stenner Creek; and, we continue to move the Tally Ho Stream restoration project forward.

It is said that ‘the more things change, the more they remain the same,’ and lands are constantly changing. This year’s winter storms bore that out. Agriculturalists, ranchers and other landowners experience continuing challenges in the management of their lands.

Seventy years. A testament to our commitment to protect, enhance and restore natural resources with local stakeholders. CSLRCD’s increased capacity to do this over the years is reflected on our website. [Take a look at it.](#) See the interconnected diversity of the programs and projects carried on by our knowledgeable 11 staff members as they engage with you, the county residents of our district.

Article by Linda Chipping, CSLRCD Board Member

Removal (c. 3180 pounds) & Revegetation (29 native plants) Collaborative Event Took Place at the Los Osos Wetland



Upcoming Events

Friday, July 28, noon
Board of Directors Meeting
Library Conference Room
City/County Library
995 Palm Street

Friday, August 25, noon
Board of Directors Meeting
Library Conference Room
City/County Library
995 Palm Street

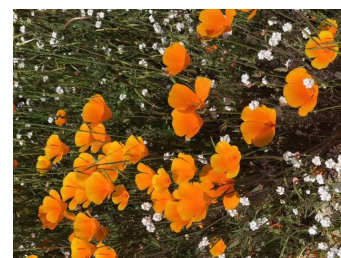
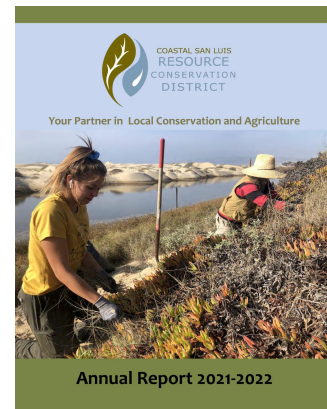
On Saturday, June 10, CSLRCD partnered with the Watershed Stewards Program (WSP) on a volunteer restoration event at Los Osos Wetland to remove invasive species and reintroduce native vegetation in the property’s coastal dune scrub zone.

Invasive species, such as ice plant (*Carpobrotus edulis*), take over landscapes by outcompeting native plant species, which may reduce food sources for wildlife, decrease diversity, and alter historic water and fire regimes. Unlike many native species, ice plants have shallow, intertwining roots that grow into thick mats. With time, the mats can become heavy and slump off of steeper slopes, taking topsoil and other plants with them. Its ability to negatively impact native plants, animals and landscapes makes managing the invasive species all the more important.

Thirty-seven enthusiastic individuals helped to improve the health of the Los Osos Watershed by removing approximately 3,180 pounds of ice plant and planting 29 native plants in the wetland’s upland zone. Planted species included coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), twinberry (*Lonicera involucrata*), lizard tail (*Eriophyllum staechadifolium*), suffrutescent wallflower (*Erysimum suffrutescens*), and bee plant (*Scrophularia californica*).

The work accomplished helped to build upon years of restoration work by the RCD, including the removal of the levees that prohibited the connection of Los Osos and Warden creeks. A huge thank you to all our volunteers and everyone who helped make the event possible. Special thanks to the Morro Bay National Estuary Program and the California

[2021–2022 Annual Report](#)





An enthusiastic team of 37 removed about 3,180 pounds of iceplant and planted 29 native species in the Los Osos Wetland.

Board of Directors

Neil Havlik
President

Expertise: botany and natural resource management

Jean-Pierre Wolff
Vice President

Expertise: vineyard management and engineering

Dan Chesini

Expertise: agricultural and natural resources management

Linda Chipping

Expertise: community development

Jessica Crutchfield

Expertise: environmental law

Ron Munds

Expertise: water

Dominic Roques

Expertise: environmental and water quality management

Chris Bersbach

Associate Director
Expertise: environmental science

Jeana Cadby

Associate Director
Expertise: sustainable agriculture and natural resources conservation

Learn More About CSLRCD at www.coastalrccd.org

Construction Season Has Arrived!



This summer and fall, CSLRCD staff will be out at restoration sites across the district implementing the long-awaited construction phases of several restoration projects.

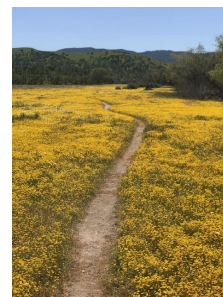
- 'Remediation of Pesticides in Oso Flaco Creek' project, funded by the State Water Resources Control Board

(SWRCB), broke ground July 17 and runs through the end of August.

- Construction of bioswales on Camp San Luis Obispo, another SWRCB-funded project, begins July 27 and runs through August.
- The Tally Ho stream restoration project, funded by the Department of Water Resources and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, takes place in late September.

These projects and a scattering of other small-scale implementation projects will keep staff busy in the field, overseeing construction, revegetation and permit compliance. If you don't find us in the office, or if it takes us a few days to respond to emails, now you know why!

Construction season for stream restoration projects, especially in our coastal watersheds, traditionally runs from July 1, when California Red-legged Frogs (above) have metamorphosed from tadpoles to juveniles, through October 31, when the chance of rain is more likely. RCD staff are busy in the months leading up to the start of the season getting contracts ready, ensuring permits are secured and generally getting ready for a whirlwind few months of field time.



Staff

Jennifer Szeliga
Executive Director

Hallie Richard
Conservation Programs Manager

Hayley Barnes
Conservation Projects Manager

Niki Eschler

Welcome, New Board and Staff Members!

Board Member

Dan Chesini

Dan, who moved to San Luis Obispo in 2018, is the Director of Agricultural Operations at Cal Poly State University for the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences. Dan became an CSLRCD Board Member in early 2023 and is honored to serve the organization. Dan is married to his wife of 11 years, Jenni Chesini, and they have three children, Colt, Kase and Brock. Dan and his family enjoy going to the beach, camping and other outdoor activities in their free time.



Board Member Dominic Roques

Dominic joined the CSLRCD Board in 2023 to continue his longstanding commitment to protecting the environment through good stewardship of the land and natural resources under human management. He devoted his professional career to environmental management in both public and private roles, including two decades developing and implementing water quality policies and regulations for the California Water Boards. He received a Bachelor of Science in Geology from University of Texas at Austin and a Master of Science in Wildland Resources; and a Master of Landscape Architecture from University of California Berkeley. Dominic and his wife feel very lucky to call San Luis Obispo home and treasure every chance to step outside.



Executive Director Jennifer Szeliga

Jennifer is a native of the East Coast, who landed in California after following her passion for service to the West Coast. Prior to working at the Coastal San Luis RCD (CSLRCD), Jennifer worked for seven years at Sacramento Tree Foundation in several roles, including her last position as Director of Operations.

Prior to the Tree Foundation, Jennifer spent more than 18 years working with the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps. While this work was not directly related to her environmentally focused undergraduate studies, Jennifer found her way back to working full-time in the environmental arena through her work with urban wood utilization and the urban forest.

Jennifer is excited to continue her environmentally focused journey through her work in natural resource management and conservation with the CSLRCD. Jennifer holds a B.S. in Environmental Studies from Allegheny College and an M.A. in Organizational Management from the University of Phoenix.

In her non-work time, Jennifer enjoys reading, the great outdoors—especially the beach or any other place that has water

Conservation Projects
Manager

Joe Murphy
District Engineer

Megan Widle
Conservation Coordinator

Maurica Anderson
Vegetation Mapping
Coordinator

Samantha Alvarez
Restoration Coordinator

Mark Skinner
Restoration Specialist II

Alanna Kiefer
Restoration Specialist I

Ramon Contreras IV
Conservation Intern

Shelly Rachels
Accounting Manager

Job Opening
Board Secretary

—traveling and snuggling with her fur babies.



Conservation Intern

Ramon James Contreras IV

Ramon began work with the CSLRCD in summer 2023. He is a third-year Environmental Engineering major, currently studying at Cal Poly. He grew up in San Antonio, Texas, and started working in state parks during summers in high school. These jobs influenced him to seek education in natural resources alongside engineering. Originally a Forestry and Fire Science major, he is now interested in studying conservation and natural resources with an engineering mindset. In his free time, he likes to dance, play dungeons and dragons, go hiking, camping, travel and bake!



RCD Services

Call us today at (805) 772-4391 for help with all of the following:

- Irrigation Evaluations
- Engineer Design
- Alternative Agricultural Grading Review (ARP)
- Erosion & Stormwater Control
- Conservation Easements
- Conservation Planning
- Permit Coordination
- Watershed & Habitat Restoration

Conservation Clip List is a weekly collection of articles distributed by NACD (National Association of Conservation Districts). This link discusses CDFA's Healthy Soils Program in all 10 California RCD regions:

<http://www.nacdnet.org/2017/06/15/california-rcds-cdfas-healthy-soils-program-leading-way-climate-smart-ag/>



The Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District is committed to protecting and enhancing natural resources through education, restoration and collaboration with local stakeholders.

93442

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