

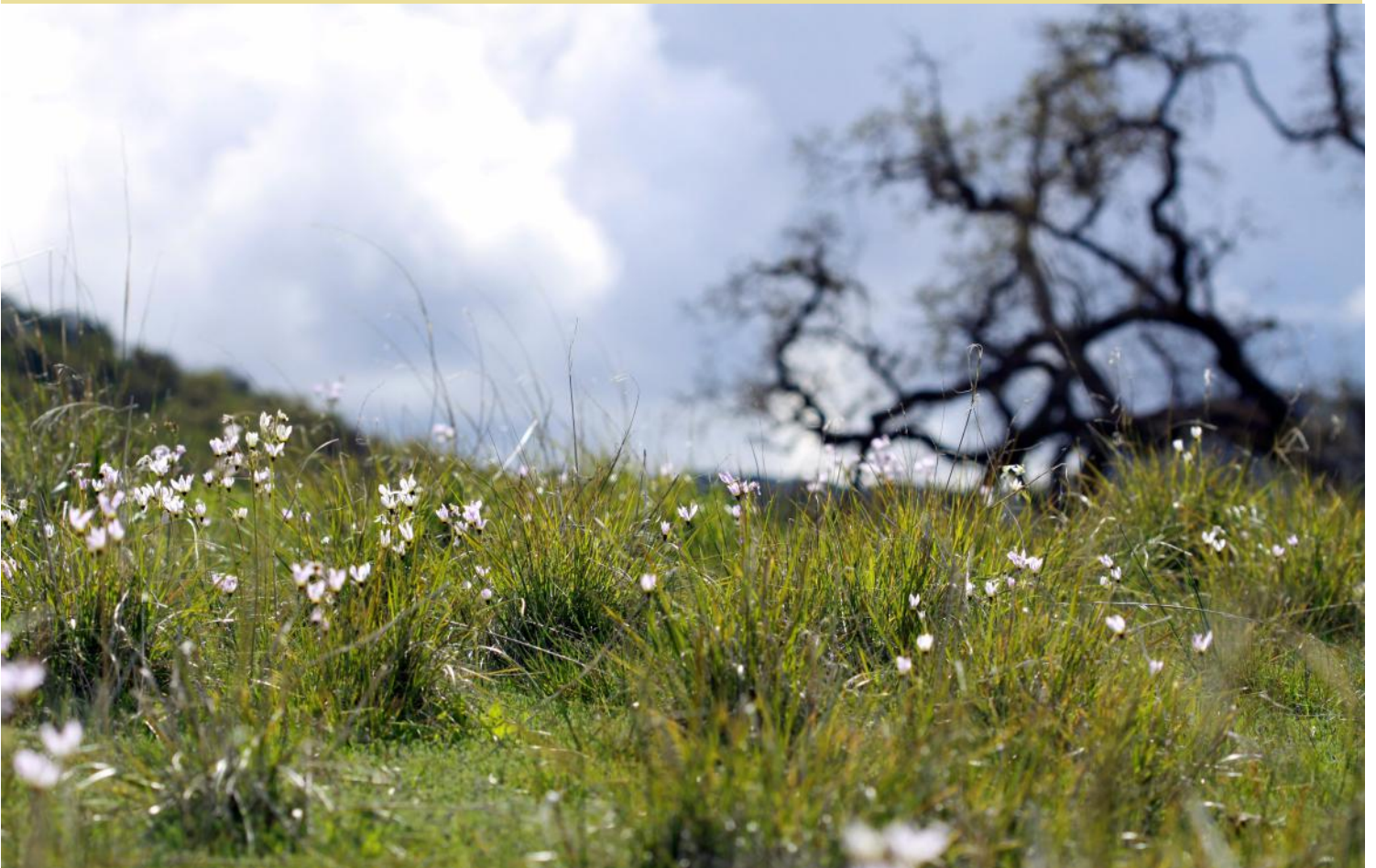


Annual Report 2017/2018



Our Mission:

To provide services and education to landowners supporting their management and stewardship of soil, water and natural resources.





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A Letter From Our Director



*US-LT RCD Staff from left to right: **Erin White**, Assistant Executive Director; **Devin Best**, Executive Director; **Audrey Weichert**, Conservation Biologist; **Andrew Johnson**, Project Manager*

Dear Friends,

I have come to accept the four seasons in California are: droughts, fires, floods, and mudslides. I think I can speak for many of us in saying we are fortunate to not have had any major catastrophes in our county this year. The disasters faced in other parts of the state serve as a reminder that having good resource management practices in place minimizes the impacts of any of these events and highlights the important and vital role that our organization plays in our community.

In 2017 and 2018 we continued our partnership with the AmeriCorps Watershed Stewards Program (WSP) and we were fortunate to have had Sal Zaragoza working with us. Sal has been involved in project implementation, biological monitoring, maintenance of projects, outreach, education, and project development. He has been instrumental in getting science-based watershed curriculum in to our local elementary schools. We've also partnered with SLO County Public Works to share WSP members time to assist with projects throughout the county.

Sal got his hands dirty early on by helping to implement several riparian restoration projects in the Paso Robles area. Two projects occurred on Centennial Creek with planting over 100 native riparian trees and shrubs. Another project extended the work on Adelaide Creek implemented by the RCD in 2016, providing a contiguous corridor of riparian vegetation. As the sites mature, they will help reduce erosion and sedimentation into our local streams, provide habitat for native wildlife, and reduce channel instability.

Next year looks promising with several new programs. The RCD has partnered with Central Coast Salmon Enhancement to request funds to explore ways to increase streamflow in Santa Rosa Creek working with local agricultural landowners. This is a rare and unique opportunity to showcase collaboration for a cumulative positive effect for the community, for sensitive species, and for the health of the watershed.

We are also pleased to be the recipients of the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Healthy Soils Demonstration grant. The program looks at how conservation practices will influence soil health by improving soil organic matter, carbon sequestration, biotic communities, and water retention. This project will take place on four separate vineyards in North County which will provide an opportunity to assess the feasibility and best outcome of individual conservation practices.

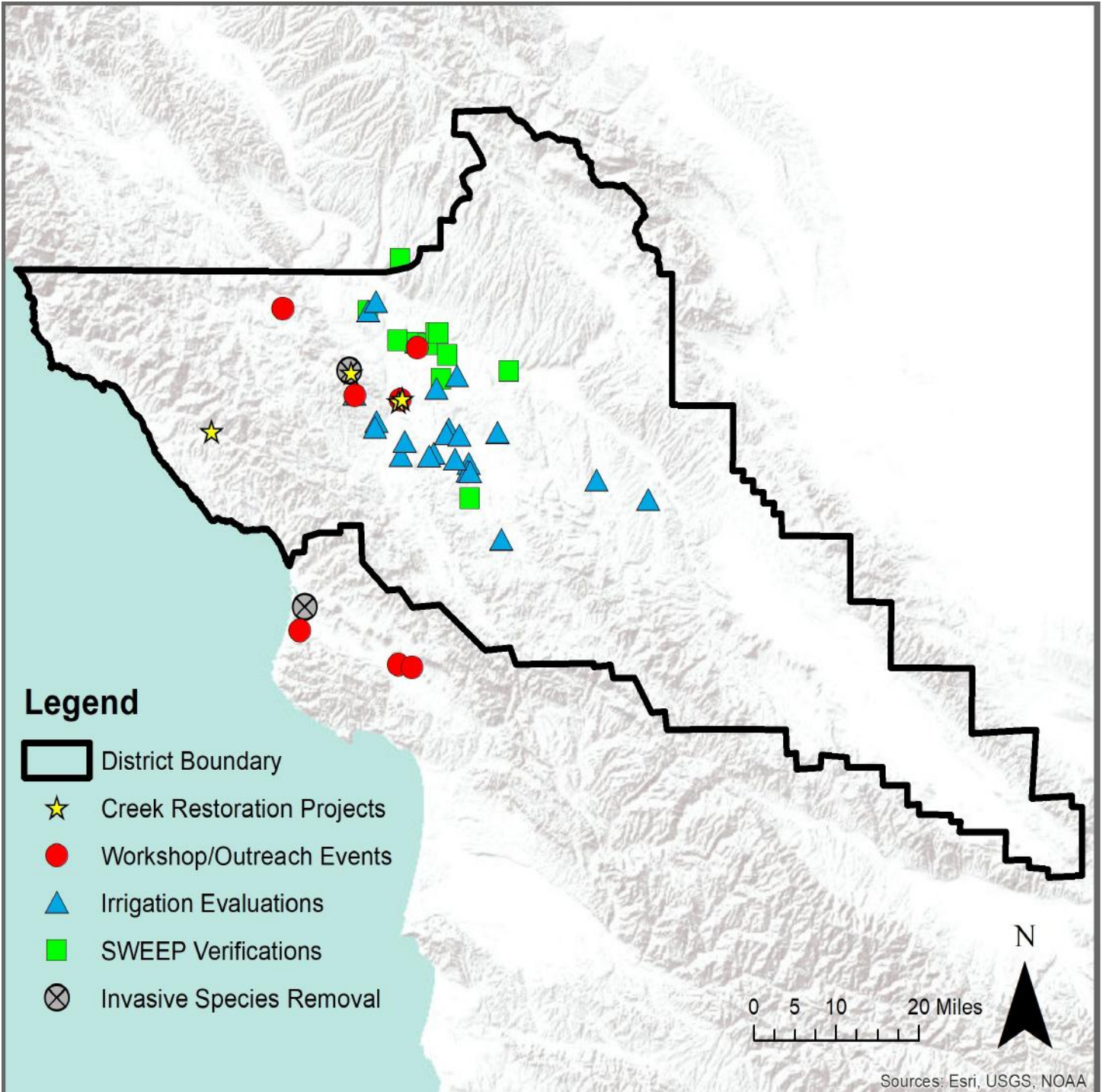
Lastly, the RCD received funds to hire a Salinas River Watershed Coordinator. The Watershed Coordinator will bring community members from SLO and Monterey counties together to identify resource issues and develop plans to find win-win solutions. This effort has been in the making for many years and marks the turning point for a river system that has been challenging to manage due to its scale, multiple jurisdictional boundaries, and varied resource perspectives.

As we look forward to the year ahead, we see significant potential and opportunities to further the mission of the US-LTRCD by building on the partnerships and experiences of the past several years.

-Devin Best, Executive Director

Annual Snapshot

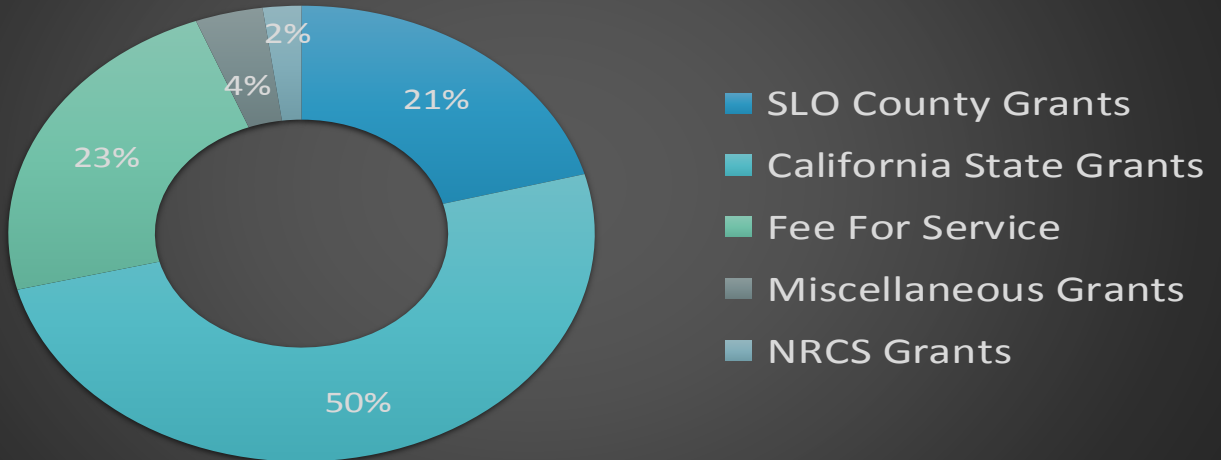
Mapping Our Impact



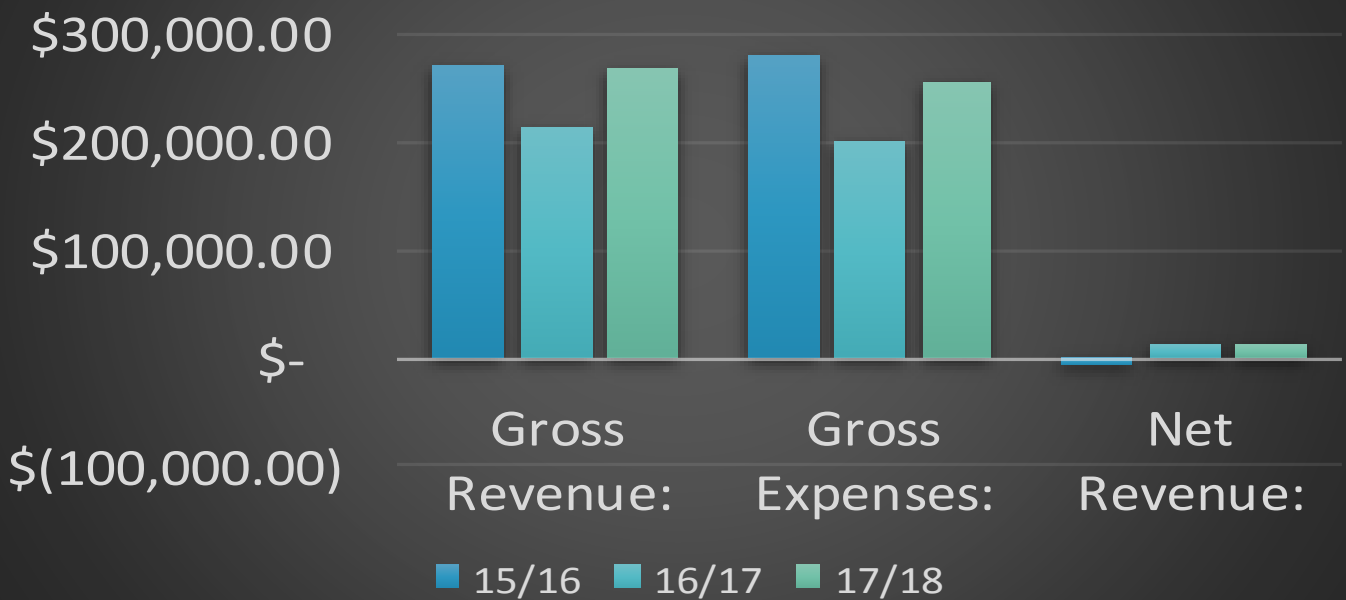
Financial Health

Revenue, Expenses and Funding

Sources of Revenue



Revenue and Expenses



Climate Smart Agriculture



RCD Brings “Healthy Soils” to North SLO County

The beginning of 2018 was an exciting time for developments involving our RCD and a statewide Healthy Soils Initiative. For the past several years, the state of California has funded this multi-faceted approach to soil health. The program provides financial assistance for implementation of conservation management practices to improve soil health, sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Having heard of successful implementation projects throughout the state, staff at the US-LTRCD went searching for ways to bring these funds and practices to our district. We applied and received funding for several different components of the program.

“Land, then, is not merely soil; it is a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals.”

-Aldo Leopold

Funded By:



The first grant we received was a \$5,000 technical assistance grant, allowing us to hold a workshop to educate local landowners about the benefits of improving soil health and funded staff time to help seven landowners complete their Healthy Soils Implementation applications, resulting in over \$90,000 in projects on land in our district

The opportunity to assist landowners with their soil health projects was fulfilling, but we felt that we could have an even greater impact through a demonstration project. This led to the successful acquisition of three years of \$90,000 in grant funding through the CDFA Healthy Soils Demonstration Grant.



The Healthy Soils workshop was held on a spectacular April day at Calcareous Vineyard in Paso Robles and was a rousing success. Over 40 attendees were treated to four informative talks and a beautiful setting.

The RCD is partnering with Vineyard Professional Services to implement conservation practices (i.e. no-till and cover crops) on multiple ranches in our district. The goal of this project is to develop a better understanding of the outcomes of different soil health conservation practices based on feasibility, cost, and ecological benefit.

Moving forward, our RCD will have the opportunity to share important soil health information with the community through three annual workshops. The workshops will include site visits to display the effects of the management techniques utilized on the land.

Partnership Spotlight

Watershed Stewards Program



Accomplishments

Miles of Stream Habitat Surveyed	6.5 Miles
Wetland and Riparian Acres Restored	14 Acres
Students Educated about Watersheds	65 Students
Volunteers recruited to participate in conservation	63 Volunteers
Community members educated through outreach	390 Community Members

This year US-LT RCD partnered with the Watershed Stewards Program (WSP) to mentor two WSP members. Members of this program dedicate 10.5 months of AmeriCorps national service towards promoting the conservation, restoration, and enhancement of salmon and trout-bearing watersheds.

Our WSP members, Sal Zaragoza and Sarah Jonathan implemented ecological restoration projects, provided services to landowners, developed a community creek clean-up project, educated elementary classrooms about the importance of watershed stewardship, and collected data for ecological research.

In addition, Sal and Sarah volunteered within the community to assist in efforts ranging from cooking meals to planting trees. The partnership between our RCD and WSP provides benefits to the local community, the environment, and the participating WSP members who gained valuable career experience.



Project Spotlight

Toad Creek Watershed Stewards

This spring we launched our Toad Creek Watershed Stewards Program in Templeton, California. Our 2016-17 WSP Member, Britta Dornfeld, created the framework for this Program and we were thrilled to unveil it at several Templeton Farmer's Market events this spring.

Funded by the County of San Luis Obispo, the Toad Creek Watershed Stewardship Program is designed to promote awareness about Templeton's main watershed and provide local landowners and businesses with the necessary information to reduce their footprints. This program asks businesses and individuals to participate in self-assessments to evaluate the water conservation and storm water mitigation improvements on their property, and the conservation behaviors they practice.

Through this program, we are able to offer yard signs with our program logo and a limited number of free conservation consultations to landowners and businesses who would like to improve their stewardship practices.





www.us-ltrcd.org