



# RCD Outlook 2010

NOVEMBER 2010

## Fuels Management & Pest Eradication in San Diego County

Between 2000 and 2009 over 6,824,977 acres burned in California. (CALFIRE) The potential for catastrophic fire is ever present in California. Fire threatens the health of watersheds, habitat, homes, and more. Fires continue to be larger and more dangerous. Eleven of top twenty largest California wildfires (by acreage burned) have occurred between 2002-2008. (CALFIRE) In terms of structures burned nine of the top twenty fires have occurred between 2003-2008. California's Mediterranean climate helps create an ideal environment for wildfires. "In fiscal year 2008, half of the \$1.4 billion that the U.S. Forest Service spent nationally on wildfire suppression was spent in California alone. State fire expenditures topped \$1 billion." (Bettina Boxall, Los Angeles Times, December 31, 2009) Fire is definitely a significant natural resource issue in California and with lower budgets for USFS and Calfire, local communities are taking an increased role in fuels management. Many California RCDs are already leading local fuels management efforts.



October 2007 Southern California Wildfire

### Fuels Management: RCD of Greater San Diego

The RCD of Greater San Diego County (RCDGSDC) has a long history of innovative fuels management and fire safety projects. The RCD is a founding member of the Fire Safe Council of San Diego County (FSCSDC) which was formed in 1997 as a partnership between a wide variety of agencies and stakeholders. The RCDGSDC, in partnership with the FSCSDC, is on the forefront of fuels management with fuel reduction projects and homeowner education efforts.

As a result of the partnership between the RCDGSDC and the FSCSDC, the *Fire Safe San Diego Regional Support Center* has evolved to become a hub of information and central to the support for and development of community fire safe councils and partnership efforts throughout San Diego County. The *Fire Safe San Diego Regional Support Center* provides training, guidance and support for local FSCs through a wide variety of services, including a speakers' bureau, workshops, training, educational materials, administration of both the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) program and Pre-Qualification of Vegetation Management Contractors program, and other levels of support and networking central to the successes of local pre-fire management efforts throughout San Diego County.

### Fire Safe Councils

The cornerstone of fire safe programs offered in San Diego County is accomplished through

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## Watershed Portal

The Department of Conservation is introducing the new

[California Watershed Portal](http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/watershedportal) :

<http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/watershedportal>. The Portal began its life as a joint effort of the Natural Resources Agency and CAL EPA. It has been transferred to DOC's Statewide Watershed Program where it is being updated and redesigned. The Portal is envisioned as a library of information on California's watersheds and their management, arranged under Tabs and Quick Links. From maps to grant programs; from agency contacts to data, the Portal provides watershed information and resources to agencies, organizations, and the public interested in watershed protection and management.



The Portal is a work in progress and will be updated on a frequent basis. Please feel free to contact us at [watershed@conservation.ca.gov](mailto:watershed@conservation.ca.gov) with suggested additions and improvements to the Portal.

## RCD of Greater San Diego Continued

the *Fire Safe San Diego Regional Support Center* to encourage pre-fire management and promote fire safety education. The local fire safe councils provide members with fire safety information and empower them to manage their properties to prevent/reduce fire dangers. The RCDGSDC supports the goals of the fire safe councils by providing chipping services, assisting with homeowner education and helping communities start their own local councils. Since then, under the leadership of the RCD, the FSCSDC program staff have helped start 86 community fire safe councils, with 70 still active today.

### ***Chipping - Fuel Reduction On Private Properties***

To support the Fire Safe Council program, the RCDGSDC has provided a *No-Cost Chipping Program* to communities throughout northern and eastern San Diego County since 1998. This ongoing program has been funded by a variety of sources, including CAL FIRE, Bureau of Land Management, US Fish & Wildlife Services, US Forest Service, County Office of Emergency Services/Allstate Insurance, San Diego Foundation and several private sources.

This hugely popular program helps land users to comply with brush abatement codes and defensible space codes. Residents trim brush and limbs, stack the resulting debris and the RCD contracts with tree and chipping service contractors to chip the piles of brush. The chippings are usually left on site to be used as road cover or mulch as residents prefer.

Since 1998, over 4,000 structures have been protected by chipping of vegetative fuels, 26,600 acres treated, 605.6 million cubic feet of brush chipped, and \$1.5 billion dollar value

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## Increasing Water Use Efficiency with Mobile Irrigation Labs

Irrigation and water districts statewide are encouraging water conservation. Spring storms helped improve California's water outlook however, the water supply is still below normal in most of California. Additionally less water is available from the Delta as a result of the need to protect native fish species making water conservation an even more critical need. RCDs are helping landowners improve their water conservation with Mobile Irrigation Lab services.

Mobile Irrigation Labs involve evaluating irrigation systems, measuring their current performance, then providing recommendations of improvements. Some potential benefits include: Increased water application efficiency, improved water quality, a decrease in the amount of water applied, increase crop yields, and more. RCDs such as Northwest Kern, Coachella Valley, Tehama, and many others have been providing Mobile Irrigation Lab services for decades.

**Northwest Kern:** Northwest Kern RCD (formerly Pond-Shafter-Wasco RCD) has been running the Mobile Lab in Kern County since 1988. Last year alone they conducted 118 evaluations and have already provided 57 evaluations this year. The goal of the evaluations is to help landowners increase the efficiency of their irrigation water. Water is the most expensive part of agricultural production in Kern County. As a result the on-farm irrigation systems evaluations provided by the RCD are in demand.

The evaluations identify potential problems and provide recommendations for system improvements and maintenance. The Mobile Lab has brought about a greater focus on water use efficiency, assisting growers in the optimized use of both systems and management. In addition to on farm evaluations the RCD works with University of California Cooperative Extension and landowners to conduct irrigation efficiency workshops. The mobile lab and the workshops have contributed to a reduction in drainage runoff and optimized use of irrigation systems within the district.

The Northwest Kern Mobile Lab is funded through contributions from local water districts, grants from the Bureau of Reclamation and the NRCS, and a nominal fee for service to the land owner. Although funding resources have been cut back, the lab is still going strong.

**Coachella Valley:** The Coachella Valley RCD Mobile lab has been in operation since 1985. Like the Northwest Kern Mobile Lab the CVRCD helps farmers increase the effectiveness of their irrigation. Additionally, they also provide assistance to homeowner association, golf courses, and others. The mobile lab conducts on-site evaluations to measure the uniformity of the irrigation system and application rates then suggests system modifications and improved scheduling. Scheduling recommendations are developed using data provided by CIMIS stations located throughout the Coachella Valley. The scheduling recommendations can help landowners operate their systems based on the actual daily



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## New Employees at the Department of Conservation Watershed Program

We have recently added two new employees to help with the implementation and administration of the Watershed Coordinator Grant Program. Barbara Dellamarie comes to the Division of Land Resource Protection from CalRecycle where she worked as a grant manager for market expansion of recycling manufacturers. Prior to that she was assigned to CalRecycle's Comprehensive Recycling Community, a program that formed liaisons with community leaders, businesses and schools to increase recycling. Barbara also worked as a grant manager at the California Department of Insurance and has written grants for various nonprofits. Her telephone number is (916) 324-9020 and her email address is:

[barbara.dellamarie@conservation.ca.gov](mailto:barbara.dellamarie@conservation.ca.gov).

Jan Holder's background has been in education and art, including teaching digital art and electronic imaging at Sierra College. Most recently, she worked at the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, coordinating various grant programs to meet the needs of underrepresented and disadvantaged student populations. With a love of nature and photography, Jan looks forward to assisting our watershed coordinator grantees to protect and restore our natural resources so vital to California's wellbeing. Her telephone number is (916) 445-0096 and her email address is [jan.holder@conservation.ca.gov](mailto:jan.holder@conservation.ca.gov).

## Getting the Word Out: RCDs and Social Networking Websites

Social Networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace allow users to reach a broad audience all at once by posting information on their pages.

RCDs are starting to use social networking websites such as Facebook to reach out to their constituents. A recent search on Facebook found that Napa, San Joaquin, Shasta Valley, Tahoe, and Tehama had all developed Facebook pages. The pages allow them to post news, pictures, contact information and more. Facebook and other social networking sites are a great way to reach people in the community, region, state and beyond.

Facebook pages are relatively easy to set up and maintain. Social networking sites are another outlet for RCDs to advertise their great work and garner support for district efforts. Setting up a Facebook page is fairly straightforward. Just go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), click create a page (for celebrity, business, organization) and follow the instructions on the next page. Then be sure to let your constituents know they can find you on facebook!



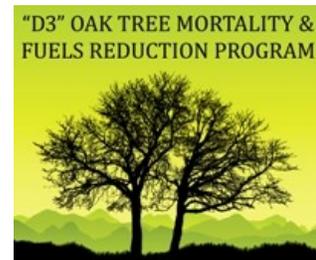
Picture of Napa River from Napa RCD's facebook page

## RCD of Greater San Diego Continued

of properties protected. The annual fuel reduction resulting from this program has directly helped to reduce flame lengths and fire intensity during fire events, increased emergency access to at-risk properties by fire responders, and further reduced fire hazards to lives, properties and habitat.

### ***Goldspotted Oak Borer and the D3 Program***

In 2008 the US Forest Service determined that mature oak trees in San Diego County were dying prematurely due to the invasive pest Goldspotted Oak Borer (GSOB). These dead and dying trees make an even greater fuel source for fire. Coast live oak, canyon live oak, and California black oak have been most affected by the GSOB. In the mountain community of Descanso in the eastern portion of San Diego County, a 90% mortality rate has been documented in oak trees resulting from GSOB infestation and drought- and fire-related causes and the infestation is spreading rapidly to other areas of the County and the State. Working with the US Forest Service and the County of San Diego, the RCD developed the *D3 (Dead/Dying and Diseased) Tree Removal Program* and *My Home Zone Program* to address the ever-present concern of vegetative fuels management in San Diego County. The program is funded through a grant from the USFS and addresses the infestation through removal of the dead/dying trees and through educational efforts.



Initial project work entailed site inspections to determine specific number of trees impacted and identifying the areas most affected by the GSOB. The entire area of Descanso was divided into four areas for treatment based on current levels of infestation. Tree removal has been prioritized by project areas according to the overall level of infestation/hazard. After identifying and prioritizing the treatment areas, the RCD met with landowners to evaluate individual properties. The RCD's forester works with landowners to identify trees affected by the GSOB. Landowners were encouraged to contact the RCD through outreach efforts. As of July 2010, 300 parcels have enrolled in the program totaling 1,233 acres. On these parcels 1,288 trees have been marked for removal. Removal efforts will begin this summer and continue in to 2011. The RCD contracted the services of a biologist and archaeologist to conduct site inspections and worked directly with California Fish & Game and US Fish & Wildlife Service to ensure that the program addresses all environmentally and archaeologically sensitive areas of concern.

Once trees have been cut down, the landowners have the option of retaining some of the wood, as determined in consultation with CAL FIRE and US Forest Service. All of the wood kept by landowners must remain on the property to avoid spreading the beetle larvae. The rest of the wood will be taken to a processing site where it will be chipped into 2.5 cm pieces. This method has been proven to drastically reduce insect survival in cut logs.

## Mobile Irrigation Lab continued from page 6

water needs of specific crops. The result is increased irrigation efficiency, reduced water loss, increased crop health and decreased water, power and fertilizer costs. The Coachella Valley lab is funded through a partnership between CVRCD, NRCS, Coachella Valley Water District, the Desert Water Agency, and the US Bureau of Reclamation.

**Tehama County:** “The goal of Mobile Lab is to give the grower an overall snapshot of their irrigation system”. (Tehama County RCD website) Tehama County RCD has designed a very successful mobile lab program that involves spending from 4-6 hours on each farm evaluating the current system. In partnership with neighboring RCDs, the lab conducts evaluations in Tehama, Glenn, Butte, Shasta, and Sutter Counties.

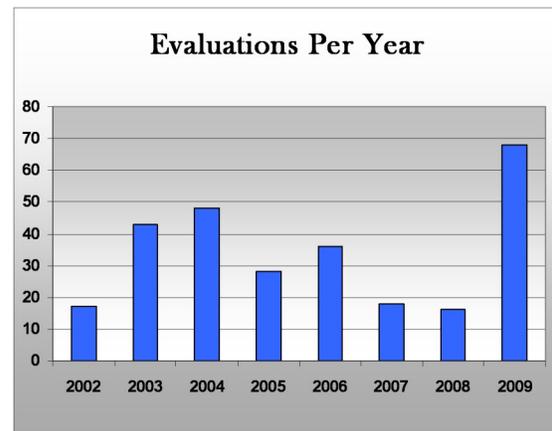
After the evaluation, landowners are provided with a confidential write up that includes: a summary report, suggested irrigation run times, a soil report, evaluation results, Distribution Uniformity rating, suggestions, and an evaluation map. This is a free service to landowners. Obtaining funding for the program is always a challenge but the RCD has managed to keep it going.

The lab has been operating since 2001 and has conducted approximately 300 evaluations. Last year they conducted 70 and this year they are on track to conduct 50 evaluations. Water in Tehama county is relatively inexpensive. When I spoke with Kevin Greer, Tehama County RCD Mobile Lab Project Manager, he said that because of the inexpensive water marketing the evaluation services was critical to making the program successful. The RCD advertises their services at various community events. The program has also gained popularity through word of mouth.

Sometimes a landowner will see reports produced by the lab for their neighbors and want the same thing for their land. The RCD has also received a lot of repeat business from larger landowners who have evaluations conducted on one parcel then want additional evaluations for their other crops. This is a program that has been growing year by year. And has proven to be a useful service to help landowners understand their current water use and develop strategies to maximize their water use efficiency.

### **Riverside Corona RCD**

Riverside Corona RCD also provides onsite irrigation evaluations for rural and urban landowners. They have been offering irrigation evaluation services to landowners and



Graph showing evaluations conducted year by year

## RCD of Greater San Diego Continued

Another important aspect of this project is to educate landowners about the dangers of moving firewood. The GSOB is thought to have arrived in San Diego County in firewood imported from Mexico. The goal is to contain the infestation within the currently affected areas. In California it is currently only found in San Diego County. The RCD and its partners have published several advisory brochures, websites, and handouts encouraging homeowners to keep firewood on their property. There is also a voluntary quarantine in place.



Oak tree with  
GSOB damage

Through treatment efforts to eliminate current infestations and educational efforts to prevent the further spread of GSOB, this project has the potential to reduce the fuel loads in San Diego County while at the same time stopping the spread of an invasive pest. The RCD's involvement has been critical to connecting private landowners with resources to address the problem on their own properties. This important effort is possible because of the leadership role in and high value placed on partnership efforts by the RCD of Greater San Diego County.

### ***My Home Zone***

In June 2009 the RCD started the *My Home Zone Face to Face Awareness Program*. This program is open at no charge to home owners in portions of high fire risk rural areas within the district. This program actively works with individual landowners to help them increase the safety of their properties.

The RCD's Fire Risk Assessment Officer meets with home owners one-on-one to provide an on-site assessment of their property, bringing more than 30 years experience in fire service and technology. Assessments include analysis of buildings, vegetation, access and evacuation routes, and emergency preparation within the required 100 foot defensible space and beyond. To date nearly 20 individual property assessments have been completed. Several more landowners have expressed interest and the waiting list continues to grow.

### ***R3 (Replant, Re-grow, Re-forest) Tree Replacement Program***

In June 2009 the RCDGSDC started the R3 Tree Replacement Program. The "R3" *Tree Replacement Program* works hand-in-hand with community fire safe councils and the fuel reduction program and helps to accomplish the mission of the RCD by re-planting, re-growing, and re-foresting areas that have lost trees through drought, wild fires, and the goldspotted oak borer (GSOB) in the Descanso area. The goldspotted oak borer alone is responsible for destroying thousands of trees in San Diego County. The ecological, economical, and cultural value of these trees lost deserves attention. Not only does the *R3 Program* help restore these treasured trees, it provides educational opportunities to teach local residences how to properly care and maintain their trees.

The objectives of the program are to replace dead/dying trees, enhance wildlife habi-

## Fuels Management Continued

tat, protect Native American Indian culture and ceremony revolving around the oaks, reduce erosion maintain property values, offset the decrease in carbon storage lost by trees removed or destroyed, promote community involvement, and educate the community on proper tree care and maintenance. Through community participation and volunteers from other organizations, the "R3" Program planted over 1,000 trees and hosted a Tree Planting and Maintenance Workshop in 2010. Funding for this program was awarded to the RCDGSDC on behalf of San Diego Gas & Electric.

For more information about programs of the Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County, please see their websites: [www.rcdsandiego.org](http://www.rcdsandiego.org), [www.firesafesdcounty.org](http://www.firesafesdcounty.org), or call the office at 619-562-0096. If you are in the area, please stop in to see the RCD's new facility located in Lakeside, CA, where they are proud to display a demonstration garden showcasing native and drought-tolerant plants.

## Mojave Desert RCD Helps With Fire Restoration

### ***Mountain Communities Wildlife ReLeaf***

Many of us remember the devastating wildfires that ravaged parts of Southern California in 2003. In 2004 the Mojave Desert RCD helped create a partnership with CALFIRE to begin replanting the burned area. The partnership is overseeing the reforestation in portions of the San Bernardino forest burned by the fires and decimated by Bark Beetle infestations. The initial partnership also included NRCS, Arrowhead Lake Association, Mountain Rim Fire Safe Council, Arrowhead Communities Fire Safe Council, Big Bear Valley FSC, the local Chambers of Commerce, Inland Empire RCD, American Forest, California ReLeaf, MAST, Lake Arrowhead CSD, Southern California Edison, Sempra Energy, Hearts & Lives, and Mojave Desert-Mountain RC&D. The partnership became known as Mountain Communities Wildlife ReLeaf.

To date they have planted nearly 300,000 native seedlings across several hundred acres of land in the San Bernardino Mountains and additional areas located in San Diego and Riverside counties. The primary goal of the program is "to educate the public and create a mixed conifer/hardwood forest with all native species, spaced in a fashion that provides for a healthy forest". (ReLeaf website) The planting has improved erosion control resulting in protection of the waterways and other natural resources.



Planting area in San Bernardino Mountains

The ReLeaf program uses seeds previously collected in the burned areas as well as current crops of cones to propagate native tree seedlings for plantings. These seedlings are grown at the CalFire Magalia Reforestation Nursery and delivered to the sites for direct plantings as weather and climate conditions permit. In 2009 CALFIRE announced that they would be closing the Magalia Nursery in 2011. This is definitely a challenge but the

## Mountain Communities ReLeaf Project continued

RCD is optimistic that the program will continue. The 2010-2011 planting season is fine. Cheryl Nagy, the RCD's ReLeaf program project coordinator, says, "We will be getting the last of our seedlings from Magalia before Feb. 2011". After that, Cheryl says that they are planning to use their own seedbank and have an outside source do the growing.

One of the unique aspects of this program is the heavy involvement of volunteers. Citizen and student volunteers conduct the plantings on much of the larger burned areas, and conservation crews in the more hazardous areas. They typically have 200-300 volunteers a planting season. This includes 50-75 volunteers for 4 planting dates. Cheryl estimates that they have used 1150 volunteers in six seasons, a sure sign that the project has community support. During the 2009-2010 planting season the RCD partnered with Disney participating in the "Give a Day – Get a Day" volunteer program. Disney's program provided volunteers with a free ticket to Disneyland for volunteering. Over 300 volunteers participated, helping plant seedlings. As volunteers helping restore the area they are learning how to plant trees, what types of trees are native to the region, what makes a healthy forest, and more. Their volunteer experience will no doubt continue to benefit the region for years to come as they take what they learned apply to their own properties.



Volunteers working to plant trees in burned area it



Funding for the project has always been a challenge. However grant organizations such as American Forest were willing to support the project due to the condition of the area they are planting. The project is helping the San Bernardino Mountains begin recovering from the 2003 Bark Beetle Epidemic, the 2003 wildland fire that claimed thousands of acres. By 2005 the project was well established and the first two planting seasons demonstrated progress and success. When the 2007 Wildland Fires occurred it

became even more evident to granting organizations and agencies that funding for the project was necessary. Their success has also resulting in donations from local community partners and continued technical support from CALFIRE. Cheryl says, "There are still thousands of acres needing reforestation so all of our partners know that we will continue to move forward to better the mountain communities".

For more information about the Mountain Communities Wildlife ReLeaf project visit their website at <http://mountaincommunitieswildlifereleaf.org>

Many RCDs such as the RCD of Greater San Diego and Mojave Desert RCD are an important part of addressing the fire threats in California. RCDs work to educate homeowners about defensible space, get communities involved through fire safe councils, prevent the spread of tree killing noxious pests, develop chipping programs, and organize volunteers for reforestation efforts. There is no doubt RCDs are a critical component of the fuels management efforts in California.

## Strategic Planning at the CARCD Conference

Is your RCD's Long Range or Strategic Plan in need of an update? Are there new employees or directors at your district? Are you in need of a Strategic Planning refresher course? If you answered yes to any of the above questions, we will be holding a strategic planning workshop at the CARCD conference on Thursday 11-18 starting at 3:30pm. We would love to see you there! Contact Jenny at [jdistefa@conservation.ca.gov](mailto:jdistefa@conservation.ca.gov) or 916-804-2345 with any questions.

## Mobile Irrigation Labs Continued from page 6

land managers with in the district since 1987 and has conducted over 800 evaluations. The evaluation involves the RCD sending out an auditor to analyze the irrigation system effectiveness and look for problems such as uneven water distribution. The auditor evaluates system output, plant water requirements, irrigation timing, and weather data.

The onsite evaluation determines soil conditions and cultural practices that affect irrigation. The auditor then develops a report for the landowner based on field test data, soils, and weather data. This report indicates potential water savings, deep percolation losses, and maintenance needs.

Evaluations have been conducted for many high profile urban locations such as the Santa Anita Race Track, the Los Angeles Coliseum, Hollywood Park, the City of Irvine, Southern California Edison, and several water districts and municipalities

The CA Department of Water Resources has stated that education is the key to management of water resources and Mobile Labs can help in that education. (DWR website) RCDs statewide are helping to meet state goals for water conservation through providing valuable Mobile Irrigation Lab services. The stories above are only a few of the many RCDs helping landowners conserve water.

### Special Thanks:

Thank you to Marty Levitt (RCD of Greater San Diego), Cheryl Lartigau (RCD of Greater San Diego), Cheryl Nagy (Mojave Desert RCD), Brian Hockett (Northwest Kern RCD), Kevin Greer (Tehama RCD), and Paul Robins (RCD of Monterey County) for their help in preparing this newsletter!

### In the Next Issue:

- RCD Permit Coordination Programs
- RCD Easement Programs
- RCDs and *Arundo donax*
- And More.....

## Brown Act: Reporting After a Closed Session

The Brown Act allows local government boards to go into closed sessions for a few specific reasons detailed in the Government Code. The Act requires boards to specify the reasons for the closed session on the agenda, announce what will be discussed in the closed session prior to entering closed session (note the announcement can just refer to the agenda), and after the closed session the board must reconvene in an open session. Generally, if any final actions were taken in the closed session the board is required to report on those actions. The report can either be oral or in writing. In the case of a contract or settlement of a lawsuit, copies of the document also must be disclosed as soon as possible. (§ 54957.1(b)) Note: there are specific requirements for closed sessions related to pending or potential litigation. § 54956.9(b)(3)

There are some exceptions for the reporting after the closed session requirement:

1. If the final action requires action from another party, the board does not have to release a report on the closed session but must report once the other party has acted.
2. If the board is dismissing or refusing to renew an employment contract, the board should wait to issue a report until the first public meeting after the appeals process period has ended.

More information about the reporting after a closed session requirement is available in the Act itself and at the Attorney General's website at [http://caag.state.ca.us/publications/2003\\_Main\\_BrownAct.pdf](http://caag.state.ca.us/publications/2003_Main_BrownAct.pdf)

## Congratulations Tehama County RCD!

Congratulations are in order! Tehama County RCD was one of the organizational recipients of the Cal Fire Director's Award. The Director's Annual Awards recognize the exceptional and outstanding individuals and team accomplishments that are relative to the goals and objectives of the Department. (CALFIRE) The RCD was recognized for their fuels management and fire planning efforts in the Tehama-Glenn Unit.

Tom Mc Cubbins, RCD Watershed Coordinator, was instrumental in forming the Tehama County Fire Safe Council and has served as the council's chair since its formation. Through partnerships with Cal Fire, USFS, NRCS, USFWS, The Nature Conservancy, Dept. of Fish and Game, BLM, Quincy Library group, and other stakeholders the Fire Safe Council and the RCD developed the Tehama East Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) and the Tehama West CWPP.

The RCD was also recognized for its development of fuel breaks and . The RCD was a key liaison between landowners and Cal Fire in the development of the fuel breaks. Cal Fire recognized the RCD for its 10 years of contributions to Cal Fire and the community in the Tehama– Glenn Fire Unit. Keep up the great work!



**Has Your RCD Received an Award?**  
**We want to know! Please let us know when you have been recognized for your hard work. Send us an email with the details at [rcd@conservation.ca.gov](mailto:rcd@conservation.ca.gov)**

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The RCD Outlook newsletter is intended to provide RCDs with helpful tips and updates on RCD work statewide. If you would like to be added to the mailing list or have an article to contribute please feel free to call the Jenny at 916-324-0774 or send an email to: [jdistefa@conservation.ca.gov](mailto:jdistefa@conservation.ca.gov).

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