

Proposal: Expanding the Napa RCD Tool Library to Increase Conservation Outcomes



Prepared for: Napa County Wildlife Conservation Commission

Submitted by: Napa County Resource Conservation District



Description of Organization

1. Type of Organization: Napa County Resource Conservation District (Napa RCD) is a local non-regulatory, not-for-profit special district.
2. Purpose: Napa RCD's mission is to empower Napa County's communities to voluntarily conserve, protect, and restore natural resources in a landscape that supports agriculture, urban areas, and wild lands. We provide education, technical assistance with planning and project implementation, cost-share programs, and monitoring services to support a future of abundant water and wildlife, fire-resilient forests, and thriving communities.
3. Tax Exemption Status: Exempt
4. Date Formed: 1945
5. Membership: Napa RCD is governed by 7 Directors serving 4-year terms. The District's Directors are appointed by the Napa County Board of Supervisors in lieu of an election. State law and District policy governs our Board of Directors.
6. Board of Directors: Bruce Barge, Paul Asmuth, Allison Day, Gretchen Stranzl McCann, Jennifer Putnam, Jim Lincoln, and Karen Turjanis.

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Needs Assessment / Problem Statement

1. Problem Statement:

As one of the key players in Napa County's conservation network, Napa RCD coordinates volunteer conservation activities that, in the past year alone, engaged 770 participants contributing 3,535 hours of service. These efforts have advanced county and municipal conservation priorities by addressing ecological challenges through trash cleanups, invasive species removal, and oak woodland habitat restoration.

Napa RCD's volunteer program has been active for over 10 years and aims to build a culture of conservation for community members in Napa County. Through service, education, and meaningful connections with the land, we work with our community to foster a shared responsibility for the health of our streams, forests, ag lands, urban landscapes, and wild spaces for generations to come. We don't do this alone and in fact cannot do this alone; we work extensively with partners to accomplish shared

conservation goals. We partner with municipalities, county staff, nonprofit organizations, our local school districts, and regional partners through grants and contracts that further shared goals that protect and restore Napa County's land, water, soil, and wildlife.

Over the past ten years, we have installed over 6,000 acorn plantings and over 300 trees and other native plants at sites throughout the county, removed over 276,700 lbs. of waste from Napa County's streets, creeks, and waterways, and removed invasive species from over 6 acres of park land. The majority of this work has happened on public lands owned by the City of Napa, City of American Canyon, City of St Helena, County of Napa, and the Napa County Parks & Open Space District. This means that our community members not only make a difference on their day of service, but that they can go back to those public spaces and see the results of their service days weeks, months, and even years afterward.

As Napa RCD's volunteer program has grown to encompass a wider variety of conservation activities, our tool library has been left behind. On planting days with up to 60 volunteers, we have just 12 round-head shovels and 20 hoes to go around. At weed-pulling events with a similar turnout, there is just one weed wrench being passed around Westwood Hills Park. We can usually borrow extra shovels from partner organizations, but across the entire county we collectively have only 5 weed wrenches. And if two events happen on the same day, there simply aren't enough tools to go around.

The result is that volunteers spend more time waiting than working and coordinating staff burn hours on logistics instead of restoration. And projects that should move forward stall. Without a right-sized tool library, the program's growth- and the conservation work it enables countywide- is hitting a roadblock it shouldn't have to face.

One of Napa RCD's longest running volunteer activities- oak planting and maintenance- has been active since 2014. This is a well-loved community effort happening at locations throughout the county but focused on Alston Park in the City of Napa and St Helena Community Forest in St Helena. Families and community groups return year after year, often checking to see if the tree they planted the previous fall has survived the summer. During events, 50–70 participants work together

each year to plant or maintain native oaks, but the limited supply of shovels, scissors, hog rings, hoes, and other equipment means that work is frequently interrupted while tools are passed between groups. These delays reduce the amount of restoration that can be accomplished during each event and when volunteers are standing around waiting for something to do, they leave feeling less useful and less accomplished.

Similar constraints affect other conservation programs. During Napa RCD's Earth Day Napa Community Cleanup and the countywide Coastal Cleanup Day, we distribute buckets, reusable gloves, and trash grabbers across multiple sites, but we lack enough materials to fully equip the 150–500 participants who come ready to clean up. At invasive plant removal events, a few weed wrenches must be passed across large work areas, cutting into productive removal time and reducing the acreage we can treat.

Agencies and organizations in Napa County share tools when possible, to enable conservation work across different land types. Napa RCD currently shares weed wrenches with the County Ag Commissioner and the Land Trust of Napa County, McLeods with Napa Open Space, shovels with City of Napa Parks and Recreation, and all of the above with the American Canyon Community & Parks Foundation. The existing pool of shared tools simply cannot keep pace with the number of active conservation projects underway.

The requested funding would directly address the gap between our current tool library and the tools required to carry out conservation work safely and successfully. The growing demand for tools reflects a welcome reality: more people are volunteering for natural resource conservation projects across Napa County. To keep that momentum moving forward, we need to be sure the work isn't limited by something so simple (but expensive) as equipment shortages.

The funding requested for tools and supplies would enable Napa RCD and our partnering agencies and organizations to expand on-the-ground conservation outcomes, increase the acreage and effectiveness of restoration work, increase volunteer satisfaction, and further Napa RCD's mission to protect and preserve Napa County's land, water, soil, and wildlife.

2. Objectives and Amount Requested

Objectives:

- Reduce delays and downtime caused by equipment bottlenecks during large-scale conservation events such as Coastal Cleanup Day, Community Oak Planting Day, MLK Day of Service, and Earth Day Napa by about 20%, allowing more restoration and cleanup work to be completed per event.
- Expand the shared equipment pool available to natural resource agencies and organizations across Napa County, increasing total countywide capacity for on-the-ground conservation work.

Amount Requested: \$10,061.51

3. Anticipated Results & Timeline

- Inventory Phase (Sept-Oct)
 - Inventory existing tools and identify needs for conservation work planned in the next 1-3 years.
 - Survey staff and volunteer coordinators to confirm highest-need purchases.
- Purchase Phase (Oct-Nov)
 - Order, receive, and label all new tools and supplies.
 - Set up tool inventory, maintenance schedule, and loan process.
- Implementation & Evaluation Phase (Nov-June)
 - Tools used across active restoration sites: invasive removal, native planting, trash removal, etc.
 - Report on number of volunteer workdays, acres treated, and number of partner requests fulfilled.

4. Description of Methods

Napa RCD staff will conduct an informal staff and partner survey to learn about upcoming conservation projects to expect in the next 1-3 years. Once we have a handle on what projects are coming up, and what tools will be required to complete those projects, we can then confirm that what we currently anticipate our tool needs

to be matches up with projected restoration work not just for Napa RCD, but for our partners as well.

Once we have a solid list of needs, we can then move on and purchase the tools required to successfully complete the expected conservation projects planned over the next year. We anticipate needing to buy many tools and supplies in bulk, which will reduce the cost of most of the items we expect to need. We will prioritize the purchase of tools identified by program and volunteer leads as in the highest demand.

Napa RCD's Senior Volunteer Project Manager will put together a centralized tool inventory, maintenance schedule, and loan process to be sure that the tools are not just taken care of, but also available to our partners in conservation throughout the county. If necessary, a plan will be made to replace tools and supplies that need to be replaced on a regular basis.

Tools will be used throughout the county at different project sites, and sharing will be coordinated so that the tools will be used to their fullest extent. Napa RCD tracks how many volunteers we work with each year, how many acres of invasive plants are treated, the amount of trash removed, and plants planted and maintained. Once we have a year of data and tracking, we can evaluate how our tool library is serving our county and decide if we need to purchase a few more tools for different conservation projects.

5. Statement of Benefit

This proposal directly supports the Napa County Wildlife Conservation Commission's goals by expanding volunteer capacity for on-the-ground watershed stewardship across Napa County. Based on prior experience, in 2026-2027, we estimate that volunteers will use the acquired tools to achieve the following watershed benefits over the grant period:

- 7 acres of invasive weeds removed
- 100 native plants put in the ground
- 150 native trees and shrubs maintained
- 3,000 lbs of waste removed from streets, creeks, and the Napa River

The specific piece of §13103 of the CA Fish and Game Code that this proposal supports include:

(e) Improvement of fish and wildlife habitat, including, but not limited to, construction of fish screens, weirs, and ladders; drainage or other watershed improvements; gravel and rock removal or placement; construction of irrigation and water distribution systems; earthwork and grading; fencing; planting trees and other vegetation management; and removal of barriers to the migration of fish and wildlife.

6. Determination of Success

Napa RCD staff and volunteers engage in restoration projects throughout the year, often with the support of volunteers. Napa RCD will track how many volunteers we work with, how many acres of invasive plants are treated, the amount of trash removed, the number of plants planted and maintained, and the number of shared-agency checkouts over one year. Measurable outcomes could include:

- High volunteer satisfaction and sense of purpose
- A 20% reduction in equipment-caused downtime at large-scale events, as determined by informal surveys of volunteers and volunteer coordinators.
- Expansion of the shared tool library to support at least two partner agency tool requests per year.

Attachments

1. Expenditure detail

Expense	Description	Number	Item Cost	Total Cost
Supplies	Weed Wrench- Medium	3	\$239.00	\$717.00
	Weed Wrench- Large	2	\$284.00	\$568.00
	Loppers	10	\$40.02	\$400.20
	Leather Gloves	48	\$6.00	\$288.00
	Adult Garden Gloves	144	\$1.93	\$277.92
	Kid Garden Gloves	50	\$2.50	\$125.00
	Muck Boots	15	\$35.95	\$539.25
	14-Gauge Round-Point Shovel	40	\$55.99	\$2,239.60
	Council Tool McLeod	6	\$111.25	\$667.50
	AMS Montana Sharpshooter	4	\$305.98	\$1,223.92
	Wire Cutters	4	\$22.00	\$88.00
	Heavy Duty Scissors	10	\$21.97	\$219.70
	Hog Ring Pliers	8	\$13.79	\$110.32
	Buckets	50	\$7.89	\$394.50
	Trash Grabbers	60	\$36.71	\$2,202.60
Total Amount Requested				\$10,061.51

2. List of other funding sources

Funding Source	Amount
United States Forest Service Urban & Community Forestry Grant (includes funds to be used for plants, tools, & plant protection, all combined)	\$112,000
CA Dept of Food & Agriculture Weed Management Area Grant Program	\$200
Total Matching Funds	\$112,200

3. Completion/progress report of projects completed over past 5 years with the use of Fish & Game Fine Monies.

(2025) Green Futures- Equitable Engagement of High School Students in Wildlife Habitat Stewardship and Conservation Careers

Summary

- 122 students from 8 high school classes participated in Napa RCD's Green Futures environmental education program. RCD staff implemented 8 classroom sessions and 4 field trips to Skyline Wilderness Park in Napa. Green Futures increased time spent learning outdoors in nature by 4.5 hours per student. Students planted, monitored, and maintained 85 native oak trees across a 3-acre area.

Stewardship

- Three acres of native oak habitat within Skyline Wilderness Park (Napa, CA) were cared for by students.
- Students installed 17 new native oak tree plantings creating new wildlife habitat, canopy, and carbon sequestering biomass.
- Students provided critical monitoring and maintenance of 68 young trees, supporting their survival and establishment.
- 90% of students reported participating in at least one direct stewardship action.

Nature Affinity & Interaction

- Increased time learning outdoors by 4.5 hours per student.
- Students ranked field trip experiences as "Very Positive" (4.6 out of 5.0)
- 70% of students voluntarily shared and described positive reflections about their experience.

Conservation Career Exploration

Napa RCD staff recruited, trained, and integrated 9 unique conservation career partners as professional mentors including:

- ACCPF: Joy Hilton (Education Director) and Tammy Saunders (Naturalist)
- LTNC: Clarisa Rosas (Assistant Stewardship Coordinator), Joseph Clark (Stewardship Program Assistant), Whitney Wyche (Stewardship Program Assistant)

- Napa RCD: Francisco Larios (Project Assistant), Eric McKee (Project Manager)
- NRCS: Frank Bradley (Biologist) and Erika Valek (Soil Conservationist)

Through direct observation as well as follow-up surveys, students demonstrated development of practical conservation career skills throughout their experience. The most reported skills reported by students were environmental data collection (90%), tree care (80%), using a GPS (75%), and plant and animal identification (70%).

- 85% of students reported interacting with at least one professional mentor during their field trip.
- 35% of students expressed curiosity about environmental internships, careers, or a willingness to try conservation work.
- 14 students were uncertain whether environmental careers were right for them, highlighting the importance of continued exposure, mentorship, and career pathway programming for youth who have historically had limited access to environmental professions.

The results of program evaluation data demonstrated that when students are provided meaningful opportunities to care for the environment, learn outdoors, and connect with relevant conservation professionals, they develop the skills, confidence, and sense of belonging needed to become future stewards of Napa County's wildlife and habitats.

Napa RCD thanks the Napa County Wildlife Conservation Commission for making these experiences possible. Green Futures would not be possible without the support and assistance from: ACCPF, LTNC, NRCS, Skyline Wilderness Park, and VOHS.

Additional funding for the Green Futures program is provided by: County of Napa PBES, County of Napa Health & Human Services, Innovative Health Solutions, Lewis Cellars Community Grants, North Bay Watershed Association, Steve Rasmussen & Felicia Woytak and individual donations.

(2024) Engaging schools and community members in western monarch conservation

- 13 1st-2nd grade classes totaling 297 students participated.

- 4 1st grade classes received a 1-hr class visit that included a hands-on life cycle modelling activity, along with a presentation, educational videos, and student discussion.
- 9 2nd grade classes received a 1-hr class visit that included a 20–30-minute outdoor monarch migration activity, presentation, videos, and student discussion.
- 6 teachers participated in the program for the first time. 3 of these teachers additionally participated in the Western Monarch Teacher Workshop.
- Napa RCD staff worked with NVUSD and McPherson Magnet Elementary School staff to plan a school garden. Initial meetings were held to scope garden locations and project goals and objectives. Our planning process includes writing a Pollinator Habitat Plan used for our private landowner pollinator habitat restoration projects. These plans consist of a project description, site prep instructions, maintenance plan, documentation of herbicides used on site, plant list, and plant layout. RCD staff met with NVUSD staff to review a draft plan and discuss logistics of implementing a school garden. At this moment, RCD staff has completed the plan, plant list, and plant layout. We are waiting on NVUSD to sign the plan, allowing us to move forward with school staff to purchase plants, complete site prep and plan a volunteer planting day. Our goal is to implement the garden in Fall 2025. This project has allowed Napa RCD staff to build a relationship with NVUSD maintenance and lead district garden staff that will support future projects between the school district and Napa RCD.
- Distributed 8 sets of the monarch migration activity to participating 2nd grade teachers including bilingual Spanish/English materials.

(2023) Engaging schools in western monarch conservation through Kids for Monarchs

- 10 groups consisting of 223 1st – 5th grade students participated in Kids for Monarchs
 - 7 groups received a single educational experience that consisted of a class visit; class visits included a presentation, student discussion, and indoor and outdoor pollinator and monarch activities.
 - 2 groups received 2 separate educational experiences each, including class visits and outdoor learning time.
 - 1 group received 4 separate educational experiences, each of which included outdoor pollinator and garden activities in their school garden.

Napa RCD also helped this group plant 18 milkweed plants and other native plants in a monarch waystation. The group was an afterschool garden program called Dirt Girls that met every Tuesday from April 30 – June 4 at the Napa Valley Language Academy school garden. Dirt Girls is a program hosted by The School Garden Doctor, a key collaborator in the Kids for Monarch program.

- 3 teachers participated in the program for the first time. 1 is interested in working with Napa RCD to install a native plant garden on their school campus.
- Napa RCD collaborated with School Garden Doctor to install a monarch waystation at Napa Valley Language Academy, including 18 milkweeds and various other pollinator plants.

(2022) Creating and Enhancing Western Monarch Habitat in Napa County

- 16 Pollinator Habitat Plans were created and will be fully implemented by Fall 2023 with help from other Napa RCD grants. Once implemented, the number of new acres planted to native plants will be about 35 acres.
- 2.5 acres of high-quality monarch and pollinator habitat were created.
- RCD hosted the fall 2022 Xerces Habitat Kit Program plant distribution event.
- RCD taught a one-day class on native plants and pollinators at Napa Valley College and helped students install a Xerces Habitat Kit.
- Coordinated and led Napa County Monarch Working Group which consists of 50 members from 23 organizations. The Working Group partnered closely with Land Trust, Xerces, Western Monarch Society, and US Fish and Wildlife Service on a project to collect and propagate early season milkweed seeds that is not readily available at nurseries.
- Partnered with Western Monarch Society to obtain 1,018 native milkweed plants that were installed at 16 project sites resulting in 0.2 acres of new monarch breeding habitat.

(2021) Creating and Enhancing Western Monarch Habitat in Napa County

- 17 habitat planting plans were created and implemented
- 2.5 acres of high-quality breeding and migratory habitat were created.
- RCD hosted 2 community planting events with high school students
- RCD worked closely with the Xerces Society and Napa Farmers to implement their Xerces Habitat Kit projects and provide technical and logistical assistance.
- Hosted Monarch Working Group meetings and 1 presentation for the community on Best Management Practices for vineyards adjacent to habitat plantings.