

Fire Response and Future Planning: an RCD and NGO Perspective

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Roadmap

- What went well: themes & examples
- Factors for success
- Lessons learned
- Opportunities for the future
- Resource needs

What went well: community action

- Watershed Revival Partnership: mobilized over 300 volunteers - from Stanford Students to Jackson Family Wines employees – to lay over 35 miles of wattle
- Sonoma Ecology Center: landowner access and volunteer cooperation to contain 82% of burned structures within 100' of Sonoma Creek
- Engineers Without Borders: first ever Community Engineering Corps Project
- Sonoma RCD: unprecedented landowner technical assistance; worked Conservation Corps to rapidly implement projects



What went well: sharing stories

- Sonoma RCD and partners: neighborhood walks and workshops, each one with a wait list
- Sonoma Ecology Center: Fire Recovery Walk Series getting hundreds on the land to learn about wildland recovery
- Daily Acts: pivoted annual fundraising breakfast to make space for fire forums
- Sonoma Land Trust: beautiful, hopeful imagery of protected lands recovering

Nature Endures



Photo credit Sonoma Land Trust

What went well: collaboration

- Sonoma & Napa RCDs' close partnership w/ the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Sonoma Ecology Center: shared GIS data with agencies to expedite and track site containment
- Watershed Collaborative: over 160 individuals and 60 organizations



LIVING IN A FIRE-ADAPTED LANDSCAPE:

PRIORITIES FOR RESILIENCY

SONOMA COUNTY NATURAL & WORKING LANDS

Factors for success

- We are local
- We recruit passionate people
- We are humans
- We are both experienced and flexible

Factors for success

“Nonprofits after the fires had to take on new responsibilities and new roles. In ordinary times, our post-fire directions would have been so far outside our normal lane that it would be called mission creep, but in times like this, it’s called leadership.”

- Caitlin Cornwall, Sonoma Ecology Center

Lessons learned

- Plan ahead for disaster scenarios, anticipate what role(s) the organization should play, have communication infrastructure in place
- Spend more time on the ground right away
- What we now know about emergency response/recovery processes will help us in the future
- It takes every person a different amount of time to be ready

Opportunities: education

About:

- Wildfire and other natural disasters
- General watershed concepts
- Forest and wildland management
- Rebuilding fire-ready, water-wise
- Resources available to landowners

Opportunities: education

Through:

- Advertising
- Repetition
- Settings that help put people at ease
- Connecting to what people care about
- Educating both decision-makers and the public
- Disclosures at key points: permits, point-of-sale



Opportunities: land management

- Sustainable/green rebuilding
- Native, drought-tolerant, fire-resistant landscaping
- Defensible space
- Structure hardening
- Forest & wildland management – so many benefits!

Resource needs

- Funding
- Maps/data on watershed risks/impacts
- Ongoing maintenance/replacement of BMPs installed by volunteer groups
- Continued and enhanced collaboration among conservation agencies and organizations







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*And our heartfelt gratitude to the many agencies, nonprofits, and individual citizens who have given it their all to help Sonoma County's communities and landscapes recover. **We are in this together.***