

## Welcome to the Watershed Program Annual Report July 2020 – June 2021

### Introduction

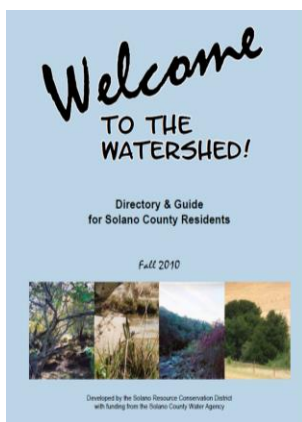
Solano RCD's Welcome to the Watershed program focuses on outreach to landowners in Solano County about relevant conservation issues. Through the program, Solano RCD staff demonstrates and distributes information on best management practices for water and soil conservation, native wildlife habitat, urban gardens and agricultural and rangeland management.

### Program Overview

The Welcome to the Watershed program has four major components:

**1. Welcome to the Watershed supply kits:** Available to all interested Solano County residents are these popular packages of local conservation information. Contents of the kits are purchased with funds from SCWA, SID, NRCS and other partners, indicated in parentheses below. Recipients are able to select whichever of the conservation items are useful for them. The kits can include:

- Native Wildflower Seed packets – SRCD staff assembled packets of native lupine, California poppy, Yarrow, and narrow leaf milkweed seed using locally sourced native flower seed that is adapted to Solano County climate and conditions. Solano county residents can plant these native, attractive and low-water use seeds in their home gardens to benefit wildlife and pollinators and also reduce their irrigation water needs (SCWA).
- Welcome to the Watershed Directory – this full-color booklet (left) was written by Solano RCD staff and is updated and printed as needed. It is a useful reference for a variety of conservation practices, county, state and federal resources that can help landowners to implement those practices, and maps of the County from a watershed basin perspective. (SCWA)
- Flood Awareness – Ready for the Flood Manuals, if applicable to the resident's property. (SCWA)
- "Don't Plant a Pest" brochures – from the California Invasive Plant Council. Excellent reference to avoid invasive species at horticultural nurseries, and other plants to use in their place. (SCWA)
- Low-flow shower heads, hose nozzles, in-line hose timers, sink aerators, etc. to conserve water. (SID, SCWA)
- "California Water Facts" publication. (SID)
- "Creek Birds" pocket identification guide – distributed to landowners that border a creek. (NRCS)
- Pens, rulers, sponges and other small items – all refer to [www.solanosaveswater.org](http://www.solanosaveswater.org). (SCWA)



- Solano County Outdoors Guide to Parks and Open Space Areas – maps and highlights of all parks in the County. (SCWA, SRCD)
- Information on recycling used oil. (SRCD)
- Native plants – when seasonally appropriate, small native and drought-tolerant plants or seed packets are given away with the kits. (SCWA)

Typically, these items are distributed to landowners in a re-usable canvas shopping bag (below).



***Examples of some items found in a Welcome to the Watershed kit, including native seed packets and literature.***

**2. Workshops:** Educational workshops are held each year, covering such topics as drip irrigation, backyard composting, lawn replacement options, attracting pollinators and more. Residents are contacted via press releases in local newspapers, emails to those residents who have requested to receive them, and in Solano RCD’s newsletter, which is mailed to more than 1,800 households yearly. Additionally, Solano RCD sends quarterly news blasts via email called “The Conservation Quarterly” to use as an outreach tool and promote upcoming events like workshops and volunteer days. There are over 400 email recipients of these updates.

Welcome to the Watershed workshops are hands-on demonstrations of conservation practices combined with opportunities for participants to do some of the work themselves. They are held at Solano RCD’s Conservation Education Center (CEC), at a local restoration site or private property, or a partner facility. This year most of the workshops facilitated by Solano RCD were held virtually due to safety concerns surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to any workshop-specific handouts and materials, workshop participants are offered Welcome to the Watershed kits.



**Slides from a Healthy Soils workshop facilitated by Solano RCD virtually, January 2021**

**3. Tabling at eco-events:** Solano RCD staff participate in local environmental events and agricultural festivals several times per year to promote the Welcome to the Watershed program and distribute the kits. Our staff educate visitors about water conservation and water quality protection. We tailor the displays to the audience. Displays include brochures about native plants; displays of pollinator insects; a hands-on display that highlights the problems seabirds and other animals face when feeding in waters degraded by plastic pollution; and a 3-D watershed model that demonstrates how run off moves from uplands to waterways.

This year most tabling activities were suspended due to Covid-19. Most of the events Solano RCD tables at were cancelled. Fortunately, the Vacaville Farmers Market began again this spring and Solano RCD was able to table the entire months of May and June to offer information on Welcome to the Watershed and the current efforts underway in the Solano Subbasin regarding SGMA and groundwater.



**Vacaville Farmers Market, May 2021**





***Vacaville Farmers Market, May 2021***

**4. Volunteer events:** Solano RCD manages several large restoration programs throughout the County, and often solicits volunteers from the community to assist with propagation, planting, irrigation, weeding, etc. at restoration sites and the Conservation Education Center. Volunteers often receive Welcome to the Watershed kits in addition to learning about native plantings and practices.

Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, Solano RCD suspended all volunteer events for Fiscal Year 2020/2021.

**Conservation workshop attendance and kit distribution during reporting period:**

<b>Workshop title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Material Covered</b>	<b># attendees/ # Kits</b>
Post-Fire webinar	Sept 1, 2020	Post-fire best practices facilitated by NRCS (VIRTUAL)	400 Attendees/ Kits not distributed
Native Plants presentation to Fairfield Garden Club	Oct 1, 2020	Presentation to Fairfield Garden Club on native plants of Solano County (VIRTUAL)	8 Attendees/ Kits not distributed
Post-fire Seeding and Mulching	Oct 31, 2020	Best practices for post-fire seeding and mulching with Clays Bees	7 Attendees/ Kits not distributed
Project WET	Nov 4, 2020	How to incorporate water conservation and watershed stewardship into K-12 curriculum (VIRTUAL)	9 Attendees/ 9 Kits

Building Healthy Soils and Creating Wildlife Habitat on Your Farm	Jan 26, 2021	Healthy soils and cover crop 101 and how healthy soils can promote pollinator habitat	75 Attendees/ Kits not distributed
Project WET	Feb 8, 2021	How to incorporate water conservation and watershed stewardship into K-12 curriculum (VIRTUAL)	11 Attendees/ 11 Kits
Mulch and Monarchs: A Hands-on Workshop at Wild Oaks Vineyard	May 20, 2021	Benefits of mulch for healthy soils and the role of farms in butterfly conservation	7 Attendees/ 7 kits
		<b>Total # attendees</b>	<b>517</b>
		<b>Total # kits distributed</b>	<b>27</b>

### Outreach Tables at Eco-events

Event	Date	# Visitors/ # Kits distributed
Vacaville Farmers Market	Every Saturday in May and June 2021	Approx. 300 visitors/ 35 kits
Ashes to Springtime	May 22, 2021	Approx. 50 visitors/ 1 kit
Earth Day Virtual Event – tips and info available on website for the week of Earth Day	Apr 19-24, 2021	N/A
	<b>Total Visitors</b>	<b>350</b>
	<b>Total Kits</b>	<b>35</b>

### Volunteer events

Event	Date	# Attendees/ # Kits distributed
No events this year due to Covid-19		
	<b>Total Attendees</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>Total Kits</b>	<b>0</b>

### Flood Awareness program site visits

Fiscal Year	# kits distributed
20-21	1

**Total kits distributed July 2020 – June 2021 = approximately 63.**

Kit distribution this year was very low. This was due to the cancellation of most in-person events this year because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Most of the festivals and community events we attend and table at were cancelled or converted to virtual events. These cancellations greatly affected our outreach efforts and reduced the number of events we held and attended, as well as the amount of kits we

distributed. Solano RCD also implemented a policy restricting volunteer events and in-person workshops, also impacting the amount events held and kits distributed.

### **Budget**

The current contract for Welcome to the Watershed is \$60,000 total through June 30, 2022.

Total expenditures for the 2020 – 2021 FY were \$8,344.87. This was below the contract goal of \$20,000 a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Many of the workshops and volunteer events planned for the year were cancelled due to public health concerns.

### **Future activities**

The budget surplus going into the final year of the this contract cycle will be put to good use by holding several more conservation workshops than planned in the coming year. Conservation workshops will be a priority effort for the program, as we implement two large restoration projects with demonstration sites designed to hold workshops and volunteer events. We also plan to hold more workshops and tabling events concentrating on pollinator conservation. We are currently focusing on digital outreach efforts including online resources for pollinators on the Solano RCD website. Additionally, we will be working on updating our Welcome to the Watershed directory and creating an online version easily accessible to the community through our website.