

Welcome to the Watershed Program Annual Report July 2021 – June 2022

Introduction

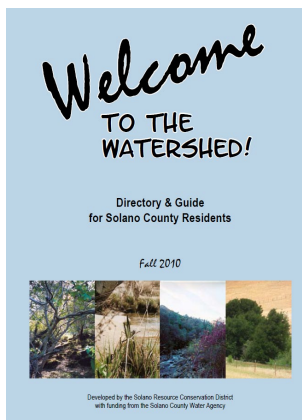
Solano RCD's Welcome to the Watershed program focuses on outreach to landowners in Solano County about relevant conservation issues. Through the program, Solano RCD staff demonstrates and distributes information on best management practices for water and soil conservation, native wildlife habitat, urban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

Program Overview

The Welcome to the Watershed program has four major components:

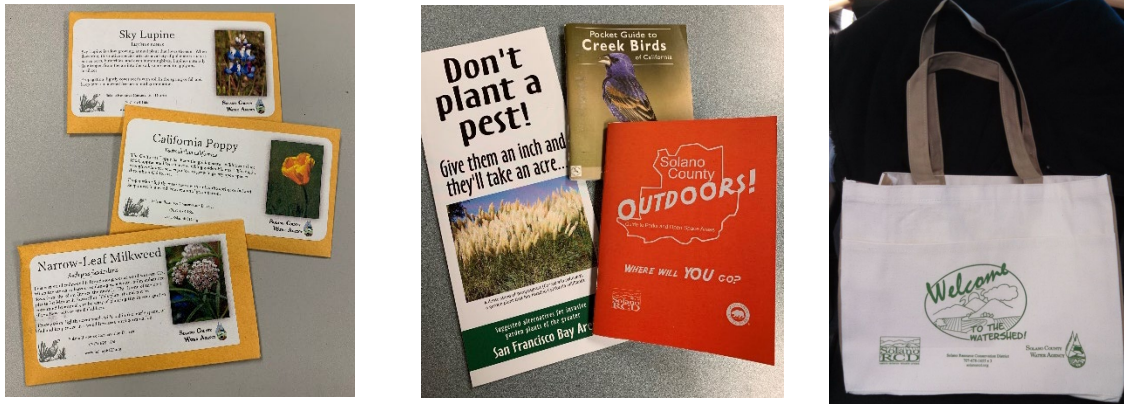
1. Welcome to the Watershed supply kits: Available to all interested Solano County residents are these popular packages of local conservation information. Contents of the kits are purchased with funds from SCWA, SID, NRCS and other partners, indicated in parentheses below. Recipients are able to select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

- Native Wildflower Seed packets – Solano RCD 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. (SCWA)
- Solano County Outdoors Guide to Parks and Open Space Areas – maps and highlights of all parks in the County. (SCWA, Solano RCD)
- Information on recycling used oil. (Solano RCD)
- 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.

Additionally, this year we designed an Outdoor Guide magnet that will be included in each kit next fiscal year. The magnet will direct people to the Solano RCD Outdoor Guide Website which will include an interactive map and all of the same information currently included in the physical guide and will include information on our local water resources. This should be a useful tool to help gain county residents' interest to learn more.

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. We also post upcoming events on the Solano RCD social media pages – Instagram and Facebook.

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.



Firescaping workshop at the Spring Plant Sale in Winters, March 2022

3. Tabling and Outreach: 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; and a variety of handouts and pamphlets.



STEAM Discovery Festival in Benicia, May 2022

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, we only hosted 3 volunteer planting events this year, well below our normal number of volunteer days.



Volunteers at Glen Cove in Vallejo, February 2022

Conservation workshop attendance and kit distribution during reporting period:

Workshop title	Date	Material Covered	# attendees/ # Kits
Solano Water Institute	Aug 4-6, 2021	Teacher Training focused on Solano County water resources and open spaces	27 Attendees/ 27 Kits
Silveyville Christmas Tree Association	Aug 21, 2021	Water conservation in Christmas Tree Farming	43 Attendees/ Kits not distributed
Pollinator Gardens Workshop at Fall Plant Sale	Nov 6, 2021	How to incorporate pollinator friendly plants into your gardens	11 Attendees/ Kits not distributed
Continuing Education for Pesticide	Dec 16, 2021	Pesticide disposal in relation to ag water with local landowners	65 Attendees/ Kits not distributed
Project WET	Feb 16, 2022	How to incorporate water conservation and watershed stewardship into K-12 curriculum (VIRTUAL)	5 Attendees/ 5 Kits
Perennial Covercrops and Vineyards	March 24, 2022	Benefits of covercrops on ag water in a vineyard setting (VIRTUAL)	8 Attendees / Kits not distributed
Firescaping Workshop at Spring Plant Sale	March 26, 2022	Strategies on incorporating firescaping on your property	30 Attendees / Kits not distributed

Citizen Science Assoc. conference	May 25, 2022	Presented on importance of biomonitoring in youth education to foster citizen science	13 Attendees / Kits not distributed
		Total # attendees	202
		Total # kits distributed	32

Tabling and Outreach

Event	Date	# Visitors/ # Kits distributed
Suisun Climate and Environment Fair	Oct 9, 2021	Approx. 35 visitors / 5 kits
Bass Festival	Oct 9, 2021	Approx. 35 visitors / 0 kits
Fall 2021 Plant Sale	Nov 6, 2021	Approx. 70 visitors / 12 kits
Spring 2022 Plant Sale	March 26, 2022	Approx. 60 visitors / 7 kits
Earth Day Cleanup	April 16, 2022	Approx. 145 volunteers / 0 kits
STEAM Festival in Benicia	April 16, 2022	Approx. 50 visitors/ 0 kit
World Environment Day	June 4, 2022	Approx. 82 volunteers / 0 kits
	Total Visitors	477
	Total Kits	24

Volunteer events

Event	Date	# Attendees/ # Kits distributed
Putah Creek Volunteer Day Lake Solano	July 13, 2021	10 volunteers / 0 kits
Volunteer Planting Day at Lake Solano	Dec 11, 2021	15 volunteers / 5 kits
Volunteer Day at Glen Cove	Feb 24, 2022	18 volunteers / 0 kits
	Total Attendees	43
	Total Kits	5

Flood Awareness program site visits

Fiscal Year	# kits distributed
21-22	6

Total kits distributed July 2021 – June 2022 = approximately 67.

Kit distribution this year was low. This was in part due to the cancellation of some in-person events this year because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some 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. Additionally, while we participated several partner agency workshops, Solano RCD held less

workshops than normal, also contributing to the low kit distribution this year. We plan to host more workshops in the coming year and have already tabled at the Vacaville Farmer's Market this summer. In preparation for more in-person events slated for FY22-23, much of our funding this year went to the new promotional magnets and the Outdoor Guide. We anticipate these resources will bring more attention to and conservation of our drinking water resources.

Future activities

Conservation workshops will continue to be a focus in the future. In addition to continued interest in topics like lawn replacement amid drought, there is community interest in workshops on pollinators, fire-prevention and groundwater. All are potential workshop topics in the coming year.

Additionally, we are excited to incorporate the new magnet as a tool in our Welcome to the Watershed kit. We would also like to begin something similar for the watershed directory. Our current idea is a scaled down brochure that directs interested community members to a watershed directory website with expanded information about our local watersheds.