

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EPA Honors the Gold Ridge RCD for Environmental Excellence

Occidental, CA - The Occidental-based Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (RCD) today announced that the RCD has received an Environmental Excellence Award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for their leadership role in innovative, collaborative conservation efforts that produce measurable results in lowering non-point source pollution in creeks and streams in western Sonoma County.

EPA's Environmental Awards program recognizes the strong commitment of the RCD in their efforts to demonstrate that a voluntary, incentive-based approach to agricultural management can successfully protect and enhance soil and water resources, while preserving the economic viability of a diverse agricultural community in the Estero Americano and Salmon Creek Watersheds.

"It is a great pleasure and honor that we can recognize the innovative and important environmental work achieved by this year's impressive group of organizations and individuals, and the example they set for all of us to follow," said Laura Yoshii, the U.S. EPA's acting administrator for the Pacific Southwest region. "This year's winners and nominees have made superb efforts to protect and preserve our air, water and land, and increased awareness of the environmental challenges we all face."

The Gold Ridge RCD is one of 40 organizations in the EPA's Pacific Southwest Region from over 300 nominations received this year from businesses, government agencies, , Native American tribes, media groups, environmental organizations and community activist groups.

"We're very proud of this award and very grateful to the landowners, our partners and volunteers who have made it possible," said Gold Ridge RCD Executive Director Lisa Hulette. "Good news has been in short supply this year, and this achievement helps keep the staff and landowners optimistic that the work we do is being noticed at the national level. In my opinion, our accomplishments are due in large measure to the RCD's focus on the economic viability of the agricultural landowners while at the same time working at the grass-roots level to nurture and conserve natural resources and improve our environment."

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There are 102 Resource Conservation Districts in California. RCDs provide free assistance and educational opportunities to agricultural producers, land users, educators, and anyone with land-based resource conservation needs, on a strictly voluntary basis. Conservation projects may include education, soil erosion control, water quality enhancement, range management, vineyard development, woodland, forestry and wildlife management, and watershed and stream enhancement.

Gold Ridge RCD was established in 1941, the seventh RCD in the state. The district -- bordered by Marin County to the south, the Russian River to the north, the Pacific coastline to the west, and the Laguna de Santa Rosa to the east -- covers 134,000 acres and includes eight watersheds. The diverse resources of the region include rangeland, woodland, wildlife habitat, vineyards, dairies, orchards, cropland, streams, coastal areas, as well as rural and urban areas.

The Gold Ridge RCD is overseen by a supportive and active Board of Directors which includes Don Petersen (President) dairy operator in the Laguna de Santa Rosa Watershed; Martin Albini, sheep and cattle rancher in Bodega, whose family roots in go back to the late 1800s; vineyard owner Joe Dutton of Graton; Barry Fisher, a former principal in the Sebastopol Union School District; and Ann Cassidy, a member of the Salmon Creek Watershed Council and long-time Bodega resident.

For more information about the Gold Ridge RCD, visit: <http://www.goldridgercd.org>.

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