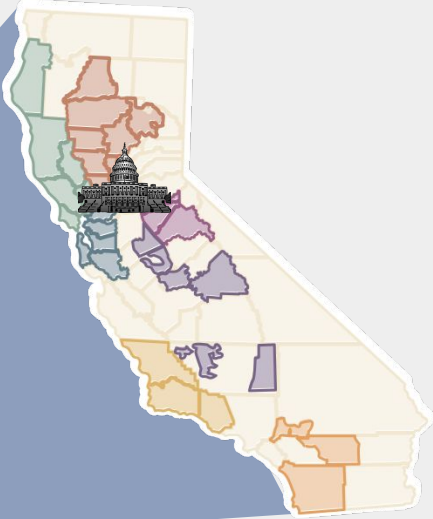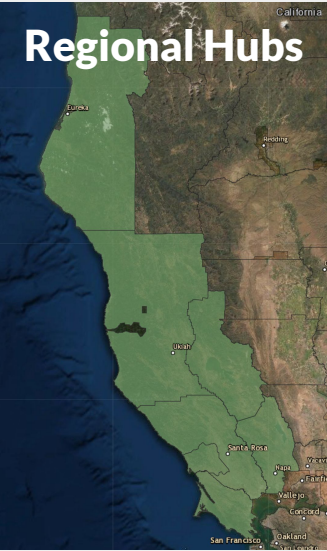# Scaling Resilient and Climate-Beneficial Agriculture through Local and Regional Partnerships

September 28, 2023

Jonathan Wachter, PhD

Carbon Cycle Institute

Facilitating scaled action and partnerships at local and regional scales

Regional Hubs

Informing policy, programs, strategies & targets at the State scale
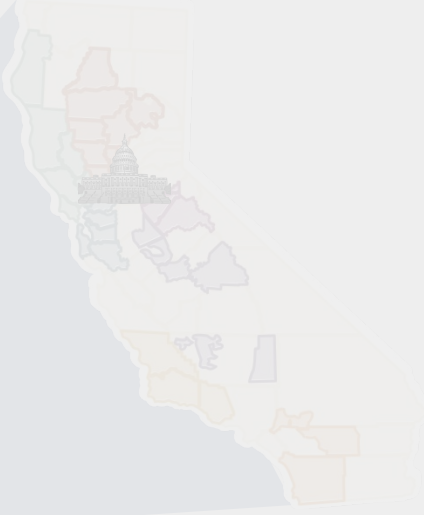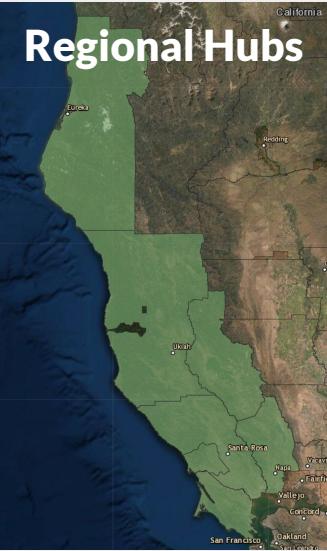
Facilitating scaled action and partnerships at local and regional scales

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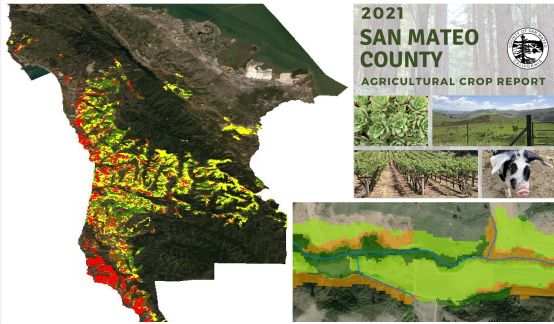Informing policy, programs, strategies & targets at the State scale

- Knowledge & resource sharing: equipment, staff, developing programs, building infrastructure

- Peer to peer learning and problem solving between farmers and agricultural support organizations

- Collaborative grant proposals

- Regional assessments and planning: carbon sequestration potential, adaptation planning, needs assessments, ag community engagement

Participatory scenario and strategy development at the local scale

Led by local agricultural conservation organizations
- Facilitating agricultural community voice and participation
- Enabling partnerships with County Staff, Ag Commissioner, Farm Bureau, etc.
- Building capacity of local ag organizations for increased technical assistance, project management, and program development

Place-based and community-driven process
- Estimate biophysical potential
  - field-based planning data
  - geospatial data
  - implementation data
- Engage producers throughout the process
  - Hold workshops, focus groups, interviews
  - Build awareness & agency among ag community
  - Understand needs and barriers, inform measures, ag goals and implementation targets
- Develop measures, implementation targets and countywide ag goals

Example: San Mateo County Climate Action Plan

Ag sector emissions ~7,000 MT CO_2e yr^{-1} or ~1.5% of total County emissions

Implementation Targets

2030 Moderate Adoption Goal:
  7,900 MT CO_2e yr^{-1} sequestration

2045 Moderate Adoption Goal:
  13,577 MT CO_2e yr^{-1} sequestration

Supporting Measures

ACTIONS		DESCRIPTION
L-1.1	Carbon farming investments	Implement a County funding program, such as Santa Clara County's Agricultural Resilience Incentive, for farmers and ranchers to implement and maintain climate beneficial practices.
L-1.2	External funding programs for carbon farming	• Support the San Mateo Resource Conservation District (SMRCD) and other land partners to leverage private, regional, state, and federal funding for producers' implementation of climate beneficial agricultural practices. • Develop a program or mechanism for San Mateo County businesses, philanthropic institutions, and supportive community members to support local carbon farming projects.
L-1.3	Compost procurement	Where feasible, County-procured compost through SB 1383 compliance should be made available to producers at a reduced cost or for free.
L-1.4	Cost saving methods	Explore opportunities for establishing a bulk purchasing program for cost savings, such as for cover crop seed.
L-1.5	Climate-beneficial communications	Assess potential of a communication or labeling program to raise awareness of climate beneficial agricultural practices of San Mateo County producers, potentially as part of *As Fresh As It Gets*.[12] Assess potential of such program to increase revenue for producers.
L-1.6	Public benefit communications	Assess and report the estimated public benefits and cost savings provided by climate beneficial agricultural practices to the agricultural and larger San Mateo County communities.
L-2.1	Technical assistance provider support	Support the SMRCD and other land partners in providing technical assistance to agricultural producers to scale carbon farming and GHG reducing practices. Support adequate staffing for technical assistance providers to undertake outreach, planning, implementation, monitoring, and maintenance.
L-2.2	On-farm research and demonstration	Support trials, research, and monitoring by the SMRCD and other land partners to refine local data on carbon sequestration and GHG reduction occurring from existing and new climate beneficial practices.
L-2.3	Educational opportunities for land managers	Support the SMRCD and other land partners in providing educational opportunities to assist producers in evaluating and adopting climate beneficial agricultural practices.

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Regional agricultural planning efforts are expanding

RCDs working directly with their counties on Ag Climate Action & Resiliency Planning

Alameda RCD

Cachuma RCD

Coastal San Luis Obispo RCD

Gold Ridge RCD

Napa RCD

RCD of Greater San Diego

Sonoma RCD

Yolo RCD

DOC SALC funded Ag Chapter Development through RCDs
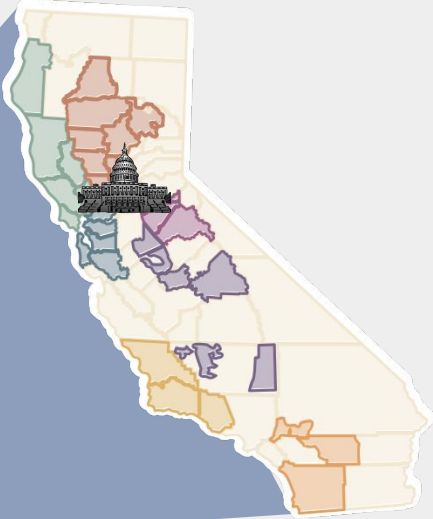
Contra Costa County

Marin County

Mendocino County

San Mateo County

Santa Clara County

but limited by funding, local capacity and understanding of intersections between agriculture & climate change

Facilitating scaled action and partnerships at local and regional scales
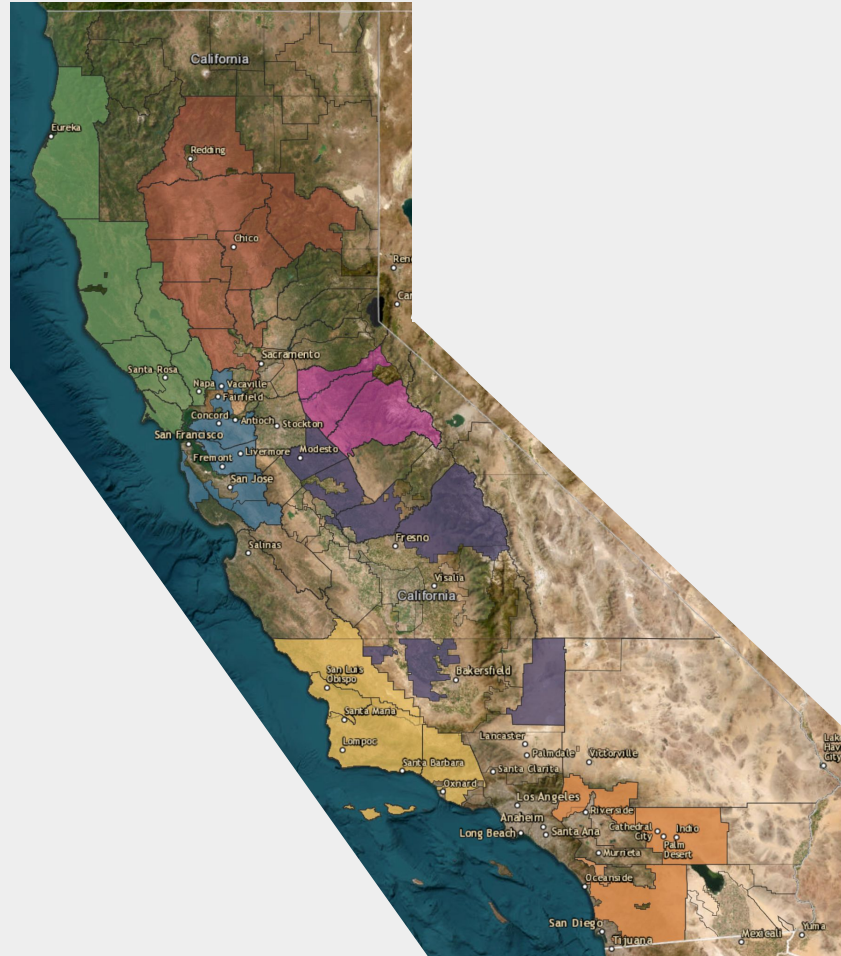
Regional Hubs

Informing policy, programs, strategies & targets at the State scale

Policy Support Priorities

1. State funding to create a pipeline of trained and experienced conservation planners

2. Baseline staffing and program support for our local, public sector natural resource conservation organizations (RCDs and UC Cooperative Extension)

3. Dedicated funding for local and regional agricultural climate action and resiliency planning

4. Implementation dollars tied to local and regional implementation plans and targets

5. Ambitious climate goals for the NWL sector

Establishing RCD Regional Carbon Farming/Soil Hubs

2019 — 7 Regions Develop Proposals

2020 — Hub Funding Strategy

2021 — Hub Funder Outreach

2022 — Hub Funding Awards

2023 — Hub Establishment

Currently:
- Hired 5 regional coordinators
- Hired 1 statewide coordinator at CARCD
- Funding for RCD participation in their hubs
- Onboarding & training cohort process
- Initiating regional assessments

Different climate impacts are felt at different scales, but it starts at the local level. Our greatest barrier is the lack of investment in local and regional conservation partnerships as a core strategy in creating healthy, climate-resilient farming systems.

Building economic resilience and agroecological adaptation

through

Recarbonization and reducing GHG emissions

contributing to

Global climate change mitigation

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Thank You

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