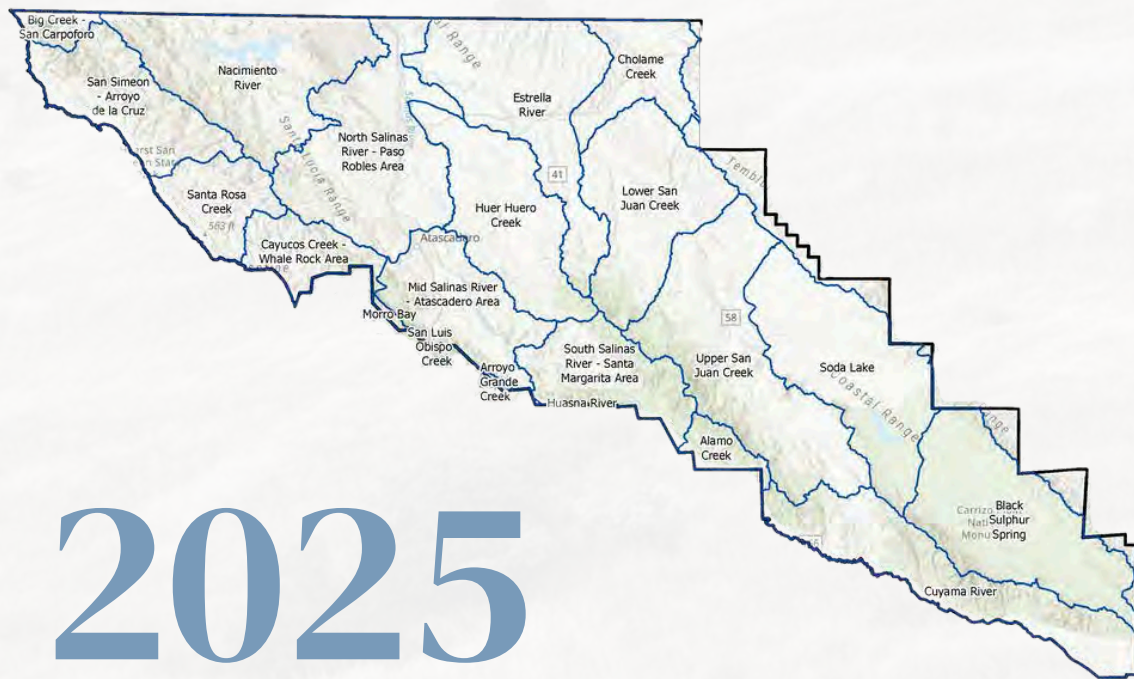


UPPER SALINAS LAS TABLAS RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

*Your partners in local,
productive, and sustainable
land management since 1951*



UPPER SALINAS-LAS TABLAS
RESOURCE
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Executive Director



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Eric Michielsens, Director

A letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends, Partners, and Community Members,

I am thrilled to be appointed as the new Executive Director of the Upper Salinas–Las Tablas Resource Conservation District, and it is an honor to share my first annual report with you. Stepping into this role in early October has given me a deep appreciation for the exceptional work already underway across our district and the strong community of partners who make that work possible. Joining the RCD after 15 years with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has been a wonderful transition, and I am excited to lead this talented team to implement conservation programs in our community. Being a Cal Poly graduate with a Bachelor's and Master's in Forestry, I never imagined I would end up back in San Luis Obispo County to do meaningful conservation work. I am humbled by the trust placed in me and inspired by the dedication I have witnessed in every corner of our District.

One of the highlights of our work has been the ongoing restoration at [Willow Creek Conservancy](#). Thanks to targeted habitat restoration, invasive species management, and native vegetation planting, Willow Creek is recovering its natural resilience. We are already seeing positive ecological responses from improved stream function to increased wildlife activity, and we look forward to building on this momentum in the coming year.

Throughout the district, our team has continued to advance a diverse range of conservation initiatives that reflect our mission to *provide services and education to landowners supporting their management and stewardship of soil, water, and natural resources*. This includes:

- Expanded soil health and regenerative ag programs with the help of the [Central Coast Soil Hub](#) to support land managers in adopting practices that build resilience from the ground up.
- Fuel reduction and wildfire resilience projects that protect both ecological and community values in a time of increasing wildfire risk.
- Investment in watershed monitoring and restoration planning to ensure that our decisions remain rooted in sound science and long-term resource stewardship.
- Continued pollinator and native habitat enhancement efforts, improving biodiversity, and creating vital ecological corridors across the district.

What I have learned most during these first few months is that conservation is driven not just by technical expertise, but by relationships — relationships with landowners, with partner organizations, with volunteers, and with the broader community that cares deeply about our region. I am grateful to each of you for welcoming me into this role and for your unwavering commitment to our shared mission.

As we look ahead, the Upper Salinas–Las Tablas RCD remains committed to expanding our impact, strengthening partnerships, and continuing to support land stewardship across our district. Thank you for your trust, your collaboration, and your continued investment in the health of our landscapes.

With appreciation,



Drew Loganbill

Executive Director

Upper Salinas–Las Tablas Resource Conservation District

Willow Creek Conservancy Updates



Willow Creek Conservancy became part of the USLTRCD's care through a generous land donation, marking the beginning of an ongoing effort to restore the land, support wildlife, and create a place where conservation and community meet. Since receiving the property, RCD staff, partners, and volunteers have been working steadily to transform the site into a living example of ecological restoration, sustainable land management, and community connection.

The journey began with a large-scale debris and trash removal effort to clear accumulated waste and give the land a fresh start. Over the past two years, Bunchgrass Grazing worked to manage invasive weeds and reduce fire fuel loads, helping bring balance back to the grassland ecosystem while supporting local grazing operations.

Improved access roads now make it easier for visitors and equipment to move throughout the property, laying the groundwork for ongoing restoration and public use.

Along the southern boundary, the team installed a native hedgerow designed to support pollinators and provide a natural corridor for wildlife. The hedgerow features a diverse mix of species that bloom throughout the year, offering nectar and shelter for bees, butterflies, and birds. These living corridors also connect with surrounding wildlands, strengthening habitat continuity across the broader Willow Creek landscape.

Restoration efforts have expanded across the property using a deep mulching technique; a method that improves soil health, retains moisture, and drastically reduces the need for irrigation.



Willow Creek Conservancy Updates Continued

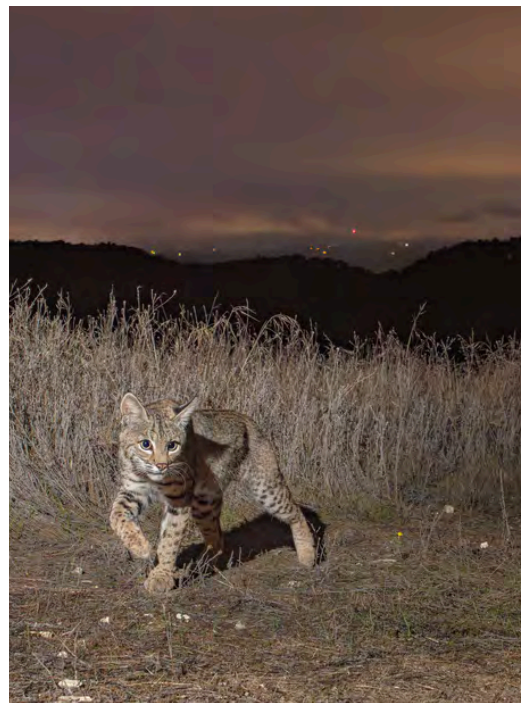
Hundreds of young oak trees and native oak woodland species have been planted throughout the property, helping to reestablish a resilient woodland ecosystem that will provide habitat and shade for generations to come.

To better understand how wildlife is using the landscape, a network of wildlife cameras has been installed as part of a volunteer-led effort spearheaded by Roy Dunn. These cameras have captured incredible glimpses of the property's wildlife, including bear, mountain lion, bobcat, fox, and coyote, as well as countless deer, often with fawns in tow. These sightings serve as a powerful reminder that restoration efforts are already making a difference, creating space for wildlife to return and thrive.

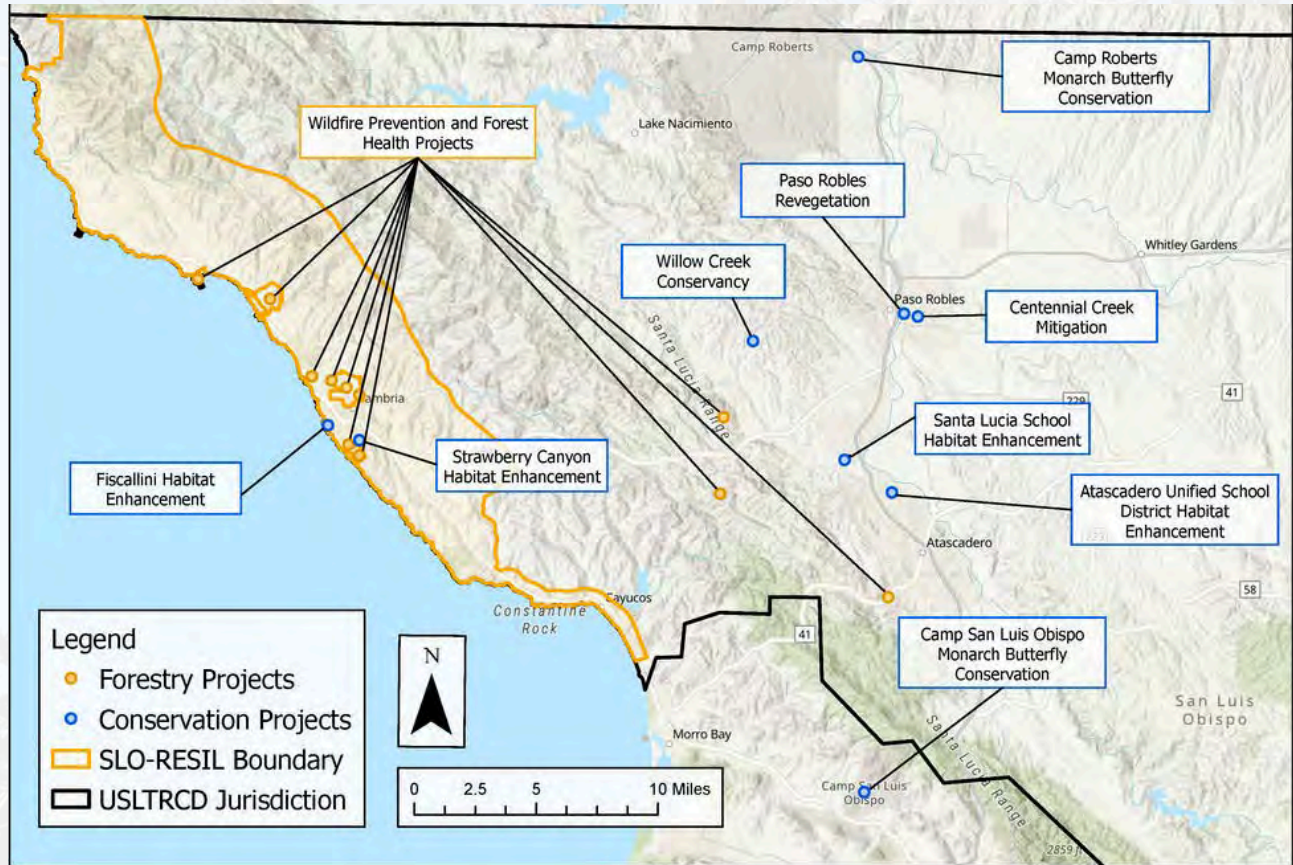
As public access grows, a new parking area now welcomes visitors to the site, making it easier for community members to explore, learn, and connect with the land. On the operations side, the RCD has begun developing an equipment library at Willow Creek, featuring tools like a compost spreader and keyline plow that will soon be available to support other landowners and conservation partners in implementing regenerative practices on their own properties.

Adding to its role as a restoration hub, Willow Creek Conservancy is now home to a shade house and greenhouse, built to support the RCD's expanding native plant nursery. The nursery currently grows more than 50 native species for use in restoration projects throughout the region ensuring a local supply of high-quality native plants for habitat projects.

Together, these efforts are transforming Willow Creek Conservancy into a model landscape that demonstrates how ecological restoration, working lands management, and community engagement can come together in one place. It's a living, growing example of what's possible when people invest in the health of their land and a cornerstone for the RCD's mission to support stewardship and resilience across San Luis Obispo County.



Stewardship Across the Region



Highlights From the Year

- 650 oak trees planted at Willow Creek Conservancy
- 10 Carbon Farm Plans written for landowners
- 230 forest health acres treated
- 200 volunteer hours logged at Willow Creek Conservancy
- 11 habitat enhancement installations
- 8 no-cost irrigation evaluations performed for local vineyards
- 2,245 pounds of native seed provided to private landowners
- 3 Forest Management Plans developed

2024-2025 Funding Sources

Revenue for July 2024 - June 2025 was just over \$4.6 million

9.2% Federal Funds	9.7% Private Funds
78.5% State Funds	< 1% Fee-for-Service
2.5% Local Funds	< 1% Donations

Expenses from July 2024 - June 2025 were just over were \$3.6 million

Centennial Creek Mitigation Project



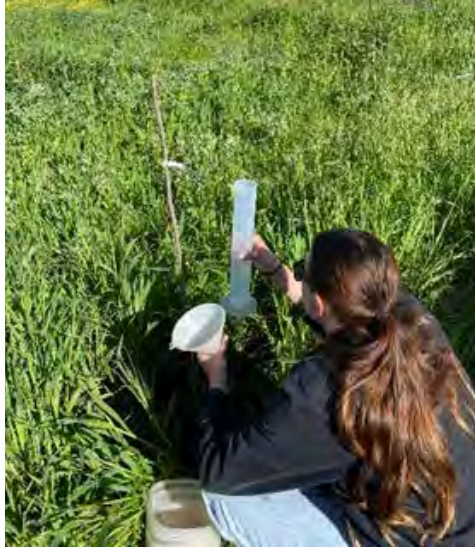
Along the Centennial Creek walkway in Paso Robles, a one-mile stretch of the creek has been brought back to life through a mitigation restoration partnership with Caltrans. Over the past three years, crews have reshaped the channel to encourage the return of wetland ecosystems, creating a more natural and resilient waterway. Rock structures placed throughout the creek help slow and spread water, reducing erosion and preventing sediment from traveling downstream to the Salinas River.



More than 1,000 native plants, including trees, shrubs, and understory species, now line the banks, providing shade, stabilizing soil, and creating habitat for birds, insects, and other wildlife. Over the next ten years, USLTRCD staff will continue monitoring and maintenance efforts in partnership with Caltrans to support plant health, limit erosion, and track the ongoing success of the restoration. In time, this growing native plant community will help build a more resilient creek system capable of adapting to future droughts and storm events.



Mobile Irrigation Lab



With support from the County of San Luis Obispo, USLTRCD offers no-cost irrigation evaluations to vineyards throughout the district to help land managers make the most of every drop of water. After each evaluation, growers receive a detailed report analyzing water pressure and flow, including a distribution uniformity (DU) score that shows how evenly water is being applied across their fields.



Using these results, RCD staff provide practical, site-specific recommendations to improve irrigation efficiency, reduce waste, and promote long-term water conservation. Many local winegrowers also rely on these evaluations to meet sustainability standards such as SIP (Sustainability in Practice) Certification, demonstrating the shared commitment of the agricultural community to responsible resource management.



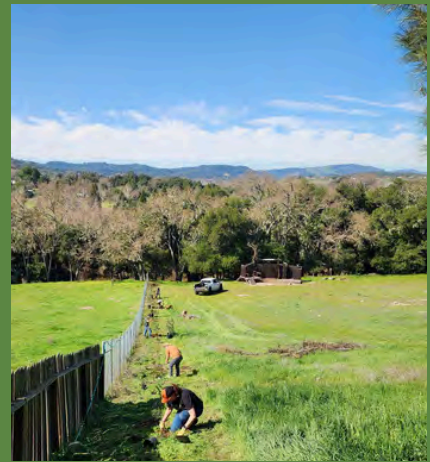
Habitat Enhancement on Working and Public Lands

Since 2023, funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board has helped bring new life to landscapes across our district, supporting habitat enhancement and restoration at eleven sites on both private working lands and public spaces.

At Santa Lucia School in Templeton, parents and volunteers came together to plant a living privacy hedgerow along the schoolyard, creating both a sense of enclosure for students and resources for birds and pollinators. In Atascadero, students at the Atascadero Unified School District Learning Farm now walk along a native plant entry path designed to spark curiosity and provide hands-on opportunities to learn about local ecosystems. Two hedgerows were also installed at this farm site to increase pollinator activity within the crop system.

On nearby ranches and vineyards, growers received native cover crop seed and materials to install hedgerows and habitat islands meant to weave wildlife habitat back into the fabric of working lands. These projects show how conservation can thrive alongside agriculture, supporting both healthy soils and thriving ecosystems.

Later this winter, two more public land plantings are planned at Fiscalini Ranch Preserve and Strawberry Canyon in Cambria, where native plants will help restore habitat and connect people to the natural beauty of the Central Coast.



Conservation Planning and Implementation

Funded by the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Carbon Farm Planning helps landowners adopt sustainable, climate-smart practices that benefit both their operations and the environment. Through this program, USLTRCD staff have developed twenty Carbon Farm Plans, customized conservation plans that focus on capturing carbon in the landscape through practices such as compost application, tree planting, and improved soil management.

Each plan begins with a site visit, where RCD staff meet with landowners to understand their goals, challenges, and vision for the land. From there, the team recommends practical, climate-smart strategies that align with NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) to improve soil health, enhance productivity, and increase resilience to drought and changing conditions. These plans are designed as living documents that evolve alongside the property, growing with the land and its stewards over time.



Beyond planning, USLTRCD provided nearly \$30,000 in materials to support on-the-ground implementation of these practices, including compost, cover crop seed, and biochar, thanks to funding from the UC Office of Research and Innovation.



Forest Health and Wildfire Resiliency Program

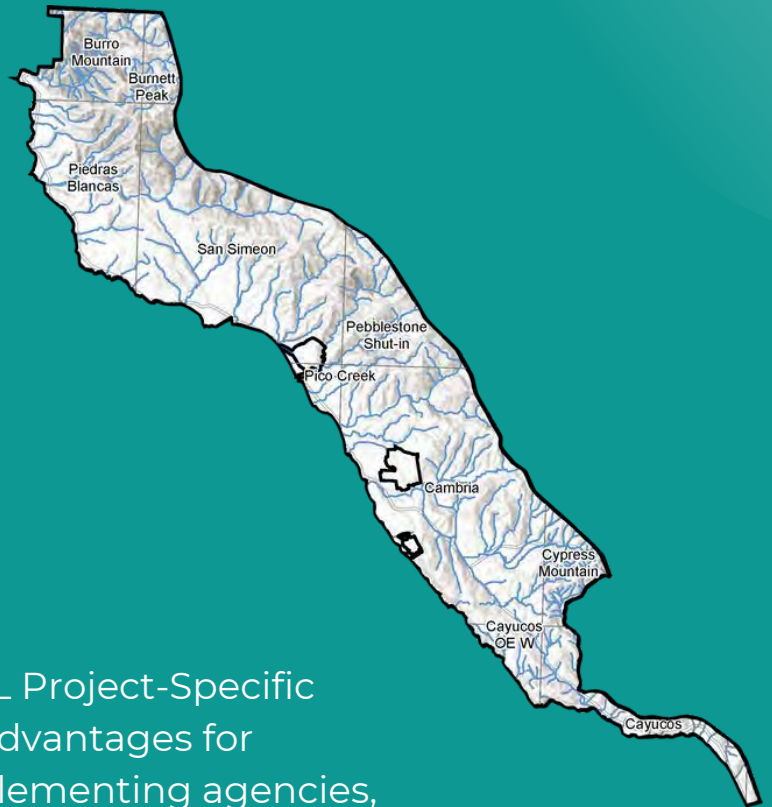


2025 has been a productive year for the USLTRCD Forest Health and Wildfire Resiliency Program. Planning and implementation efforts have been successfully supported through the California Climate Investments (CCI) Cap-and-Trade Program, which provides funding to CAL FIRE and the Board of Forestry.



The RCD has received funding through a combination of direct grants, subawards from block grants, and Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) with the Fire Safe Council—an organization also funded by CAL FIRE, the Board of Forestry, and ultimately the CCI Cap-and-Trade Program. Through strong partnerships and collaboration, the RCD successfully implemented vegetation treatments across approximately 230 acres and secured permitting for an additional 88,000 acres.

Planning and Permitting; San Luis Obispo Regional Ecological Strategy for Improving Landscapes (SLO-RESIL)

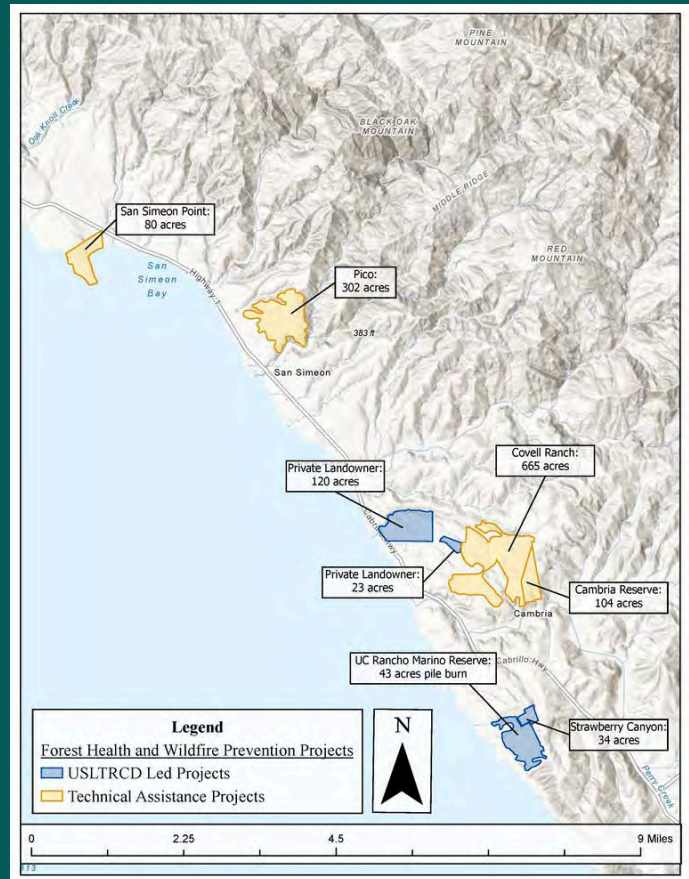


The recently approved SLO-RESIL Project-Specific Analysis (PSA) offers significant advantages for landowners, land managers, implementing agencies, local organizations and the USLTRCD's Forest Health and Fire Resiliency Program. SLO-RESIL functions as a pre-approved CEQA and Coastal Act compliance mechanism for vegetation treatment activities across up to 88,151 acres within the USLTRCD's jurisdiction in the California Coastal Zone. Key benefits include substantial cost savings, streamlined permitting processes, the ability to develop shovel-ready projects with a higher likelihood of securing grant funding, and strengthened collaboration among project partners and landowners along the northern San Luis Obispo County coast.

Northern SLO Coast Monterey Pine Conservation

Over the past year, USLTRCD successfully managed four Forest Health and Wildfire Resiliency projects within the rare Monterey pine forests surrounding the communities of Cambria and San Simeon. In total, 177 acres were treated across four distinct treatment units and participating properties. Treatments were conducted by manual hand crews equipped with chainsaws and tracked chippers, following detailed specifications designed to achieve multiple goals: reducing wildfire risk, promoting ecological restoration, and protecting sensitive species—all in a coordinated and balanced approach.

In addition, USLTRCD staff have provided ongoing support for daily project oversight and compliance to ensure adherence to regulatory standards, assist with field layout, and participate in weekly coordination meetings for various projects under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the San Luis Obispo County Fire Safe Council. This MOU serves as a framework for partner collaboration, supporting the implementation of approximately 640 acres of treatment within the rare Monterey pine habitat by July 2030.



Oak Woodland Forest Health



In 2025, USLTRCD staff developed three California Cooperative Forest Management Plans, enabling participating landowners and managers to qualify for cost-share funding programs. In addition, RCD staff managed three separate implementation projects encompassing a total of 50 acres of fuels reduction. These treatments were strategically located along ridgetops adjacent to neighborhoods, improving emergency vehicle access routes and creating opportunities to identify and strengthen potential holding lines for future prescribed fire projects. In total, USLTRCD provided technical assistance and or treatment to over 1,300 acres within the region on both private and public lands with the help of partners across state agencies, non-profits, and private organizations.





UPPER SALINAS-LAS TABLAS
RESOURCE
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USLTRCD provides services and education to stakeholders supporting their management and stewardship of soils, water, and natural resources.

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