



Humboldt County Resource Conservation District

5630 South Broadway Eureka, CA 95503

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Local Working Group Meeting

Small Market Agriculture

DATE: March 21st, 2024

TIME: 9:30am-12:00pm

LOCATION: Humboldt Agriculture Center, 5630 South Broadway, Eureka CA

Meeting Purpose: This collaborative meeting aims to identify and prioritize local environmental resource concerns with the overall goal of providing locally led conservation recommendations that will contribute to community vitality.

Meeting Agenda

Welcome and Introductions (15 mins)

- HCRC/ NRCS introductions
- Round robin Introductions of participants
- Purpose and Goals

Brief history of Local Work Groups (10 minutes)

- The role and importance of Local Working Groups

RCD presentation (10 Minutes)

- Introduction to relevant programs and funding sources
- Current focused resource concerns/areas

Large group discussion (20 minutes)

- Facilitator assists the group in narrowing down the shared vision of resiliency

Breakout Sessions (30 Minutes)

- Break into groups
- Small groups discussion on resource concerns and sustainability

Large group discussion (60 minutes)

- Group discussion about resource concerns, technical assistance and funding needs/opportunities

Meeting wrap-up (5 minutes)

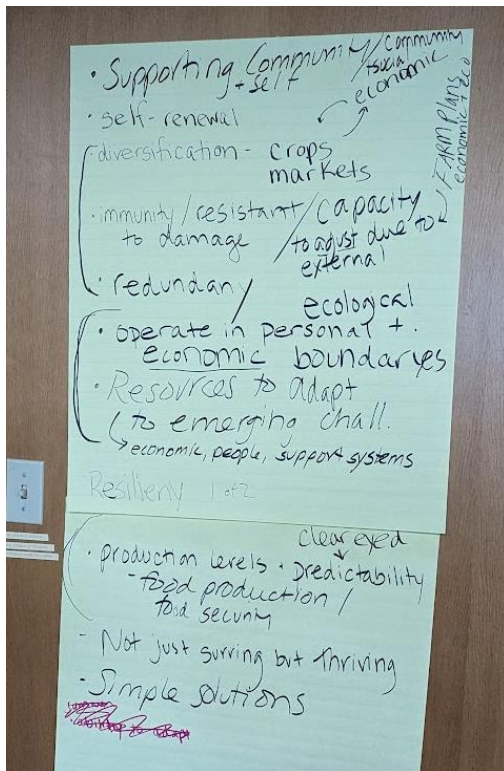
- How the HCRC/ NRCS will use this information.
- Meeting notes will be shared with attendees who RSVP'd via email
- Next meeting: June – Forestry

Meeting Notes

Large Group Discussion

Vision of Resiliency

- Operate within one's ecological, personal, economic, and community boundaries.
- Proactive response to challenges we know are coming; be honest, intentional, and clear-eyed about coming challenges to environmental predictability.
- Redundancy and diversification; having a good operation plan is critical.



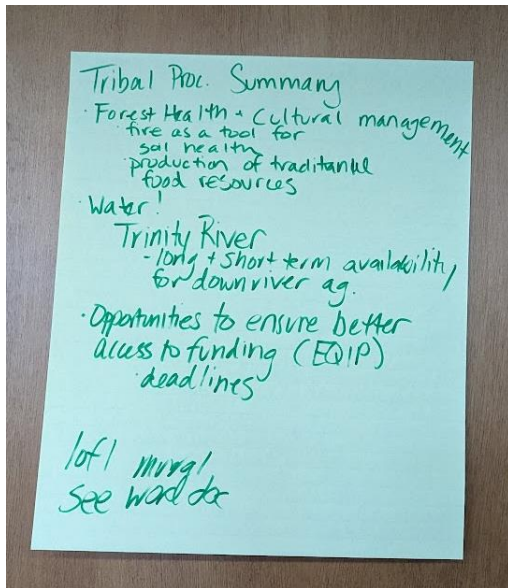
In the initial discussion of our vision of resiliency, the group discussed common aspects of resilient production systems. These included: capacity for self-renewal, diversification of production in terms of crops and market channels, redundancy of operations, and the ability to withstand unpredictable systems and changes. Community and social resources were emphasized as a key component of resiliency, along with access to technical expertise. At the same time, simple solutions are usually more economically and personally viable than over-engineered solutions. Food security, independence, and sovereignty were also highlighted as goals of small agriculture resilience.

Breakout Session Summaries

Group 1 – Tribal Representatives

Resource Concerns

- Soil health
- Forest health
- Water availability
- Access to funding resources

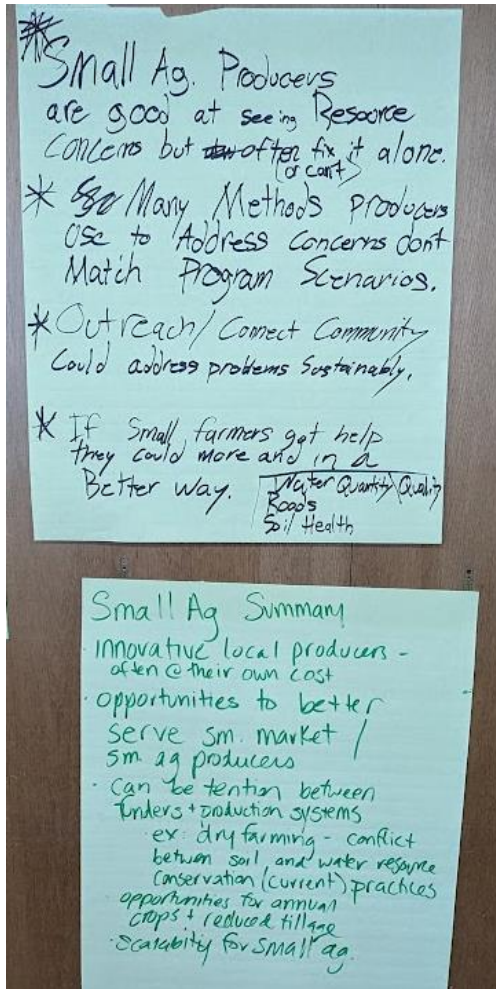


During the breakout discussion, the group focused on the impact of soil and forest health on traditional food supplies and medicinal resources in Tribal lands. They emphasized the importance of incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to effectively use fire as a tool for enhancing soil health and supporting traditional food production. Additionally, the group explored the potential of utilizing the Trinity River for agriculture but highlighted the necessity of ensuring adequate water resources downstream. Furthermore, they identified the need for improved access and streamlined processes for securing funding resources through NRCS's EQIP program.

Group 2 – Small Ag Producers

Resource Concerns

- Erosion
- Access to funding resources
- Irrigation system inefficiencies
- Water Quality



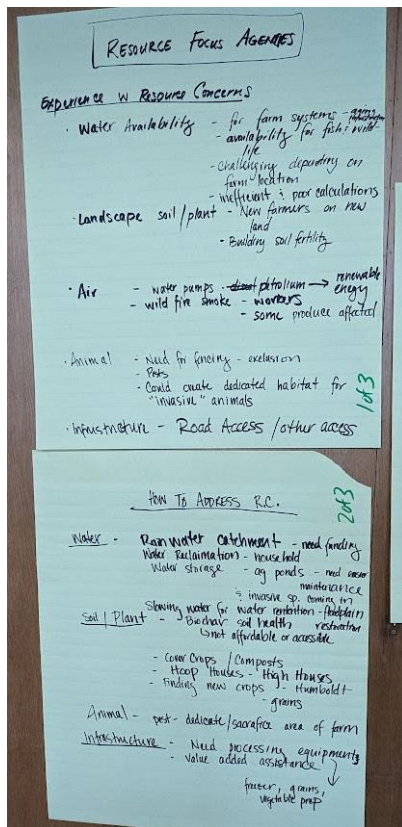
During the discussion on resource concerns, the group highlighted the impact of topsoil erosion and erosion from roads on water quality. They also noted the diversity of values among landowners and producers, noting how this variation can hinder producers striving to adopt sustainable practices. Producers often find themselves addressing resource challenges creatively and at personal expense due to the disconnect between available financial support and the practical needs of farmers. This underscores the mismatch between some NRCS practices and farmers' requirements, and emphasizes the need for scalable resources tailored to small-scale agriculture. A major example was dry farming, and how this practice, as well as low-irrigation models, do not fit well with NRCS funding opportunities. Small agricultural producers address their resource concerns in various ways, including plant diversification through test plots and trials such as no-till farming, dry farming, and interplanting to prevent bare soil and reduce tillage. To improve productivity sustainably, small farmers can benefit from a tool-sharing hub that provides increased

accessibility to unique and expensive tools. Additionally, there is a need for additional staff and assistance to support small farmers effectively.

Group 3 – Resource Focused Agencies

Resource Concerns

- Infrastructure
- Soil fertility
- Air quality
- Water availability/quality

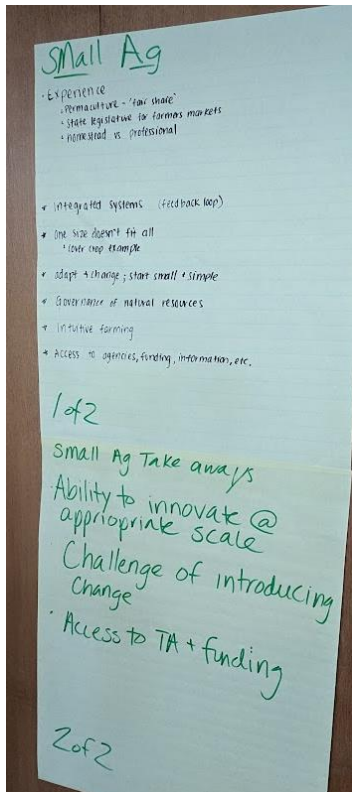


This group discussed their experiences with resource concerns including challenges such as lower water availability for aquatic species in the Lower Eel, outdated infrastructure affecting water access and efficiency, and the need for knowledge and resources to prepare land for production. Addressing these concerns sustainably involves solutions like gutter water capture from greenhouses, clean accessible household water, and ag ponds with better maintenance systems. Efforts also include enhancing water retention through various methods like biochar, organic waste utilization, and infrastructure improvements like high houses and hoop houses. Additionally, there's a focus on local sourcing, processing facilities, and managing "pest" animals to reduce waste and improve sustainability.

Group 4 – Small Ag Assistance Agencies

Resource Concerns

- Adaptability
- Governance of Natural Resources
- Access to funding resources
- Challenges of introducing change

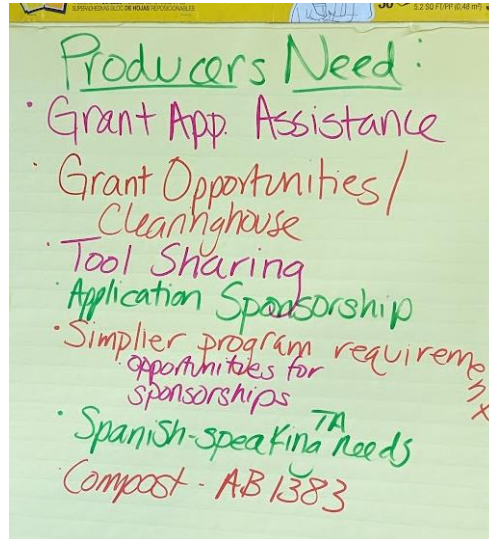


This group discussed their experience in fair share permaculture, state legislation for farmers' markets, and the difference between homestead and professional production farming. They emphasize the importance of integrated systems with feedback loops and recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach, such as with cover crops, may not be suitable for all situations. They felt that starting small and making changes gradually, supported by the governance of natural resources and access to agency funding information would best support the needs of small farmers. They found value in intuitive farming and the ability to innovate at an appropriate scale, despite the challenges of introducing change.

Final Discussion

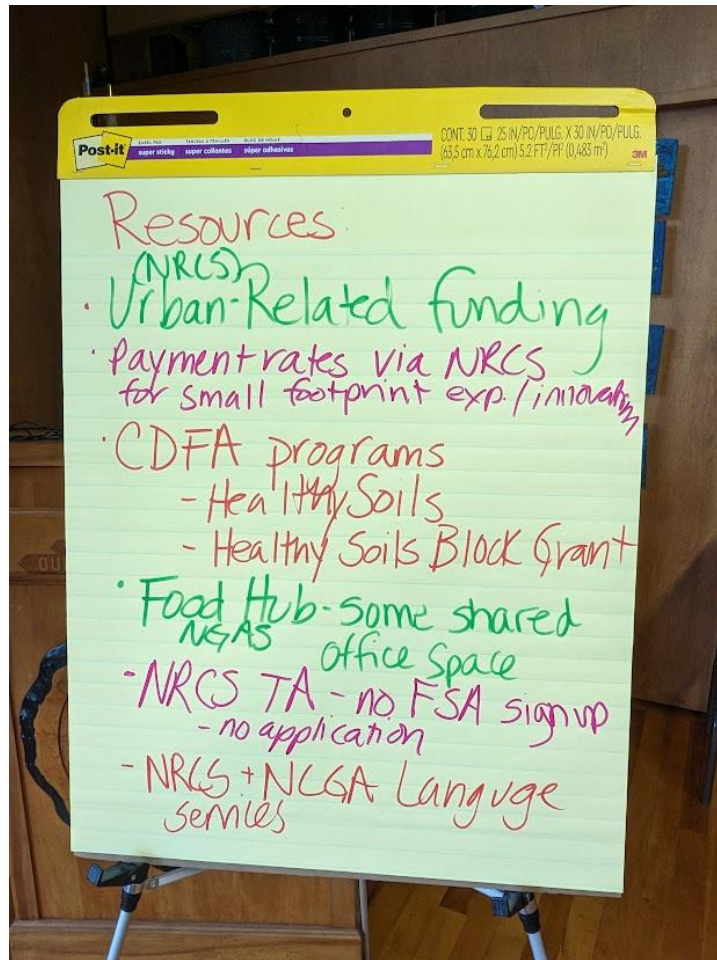
To wrap up the meeting, a summary of needed and available resources was discussed.

Resources Needed:

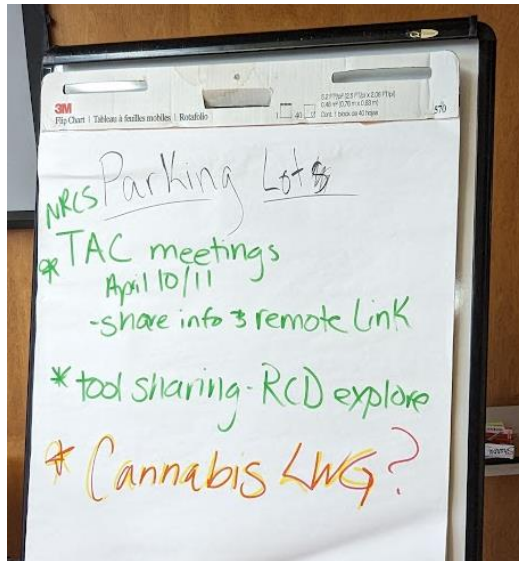


- More grant application assistance, access to funding, and awareness of available funding.
- Some funding is not available to individual producers, so sponsors are needed.
- Diversified farms don't fit well into FSA programs.
- Grants can be too detailed and require tracking beyond what producers have capacity to deal with; simpler program requirements are better, or using block grant models.
- Opportunities for tool sharing; RCDs in other regions provide this.
- Spanish language assistance; some translated resources exist, but fluent staff would be ideal.
- Compost for farms. Humboldt County has not rolled out legally required compost availability.

Resources available:



- [NRCS](#) has new practices for urban agriculture, may work better for small producers who didn't fit well into [EQIP](#) model in the past.
- [CDFA](#) recently released simpler grant applications, including [Healthy Soils](#) and Resilient Food Systems grant.
- [Food Hub](#) is working on providing a shared workspace with computers available.
- NRCS provides free Technical Assistance to all producers, including those not involved in any of their programs.



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