

Long-Term (Strategic) Outreach Strategy Moves Conservation Planning Forward in Stanislaus County ***Matching Your Outreach Plan to SUCCESS!***

Long-range planning is great, and long-range *strategic* planning is even better. Apply that approach to outreach and you get more clients assisted and a greater technical capacity and conservation commitment within the farming community. All that benefit *without* a big strain on your overall workload commitments.

That's been the Modesto Field Office's experience with building partnerships with the Hispanic farming community. Starting small but thinking long-term, the Modesto NRCS staff, led by District Conservationist Diana Waller and in partnership with the East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District, have been reaping successes using a strategic approach that includes setting goals, learning about and responding accordingly to farmers' needs, concerns and interests, working in collaboration with others, and delivering quality services. Small components that add up *BIG*.

As it turns out, Modesto's efforts to enhance service delivery to the Hispanic farming community have followed along the lines of California NRCS's recommended process for a successful outreach strategy (See next page and *Outreach Tip*). The most recent component of Modesto's outreach strategy took shape recently as



Farmers check out a demonstration of new equipment and network among one another and with technical experts - a great technique to support adoption of conservation practices.

more than 40 Spanish-speaking farmers from Stanislaus and Merced Counties attended a recent technical conference that was offered in Spanish. Technical topics included integrated pest management (IPM) techniques, soil health concepts, and information about NRCS programs that can support their adoption of conservation practices. Value was added to the conference by providing a series of learning sessions for farmers who needed to meet the education requirements of their pesticide handlers licenses. Presentations were supplemented with Spanish-language hand-out materials which included a variety of custom products from NRCS and its partners.

→ → On the next page are brief examples of how the Modesto F.O. and its partners implemented each of eight recommended steps of Outreach Planning as part of their efforts to enhance conservation support to Hispanic farmers.

...Outreach Tip to Put in Your Back Pocket...

Learn more about the strategies outlined in this issue. Check out the California NRCS custom poster, ***Outreach Strategies for Field Offices*** and PowerPoint presentation, ***Working with a New Client Group*** on the California Outreach SharePoint: <https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/west/ca/outreach>

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Outreach Strategic Planning - An Example from the Modesto F.O.

Strategy #1 Establish goals. Local goals include expanding awareness among the Hispanic community about NRCS services and programs, and increasing the number of farmers who request conservation planning services.

Strategy #2 Understand the clients' (resource) needs. Farmers have issues relating to water use and groundwater contamination. Many farms have high water tables due to proximity to local creeks, drainageways, and the San Joaquin River. They have weed and other pest management problems and are concerned about pesticide-related health impacts and costs. Farmers need (and want) to comply with agriculture water runoff regulations to avoid fines. Many farmers use pesticides and need to learn about safe handling and use precautions to earn education credits to maintain their handler's licenses.

Strategy #3 Know who your (targeted) clients are. Many farmers operate irrigated orchards. Many are bi-lingual, but they most effectively learn about complex technical and program information in their native Spanish language. They are concerned about operation costs and are more likely to try new ideas or approaches when demonstrated by a trusted colleague. Word-of-mouth networking works effectively. Farmers have been starting to set up equipment-sharing partnerships.



Strategy #4 Find, acquire and format appropriate information. The Modesto F.O. utilizes a variety of information products including Spanish-language products, when available. Products from other sources are frequently used.

Strategy #5 Build your talented service delivery and support team. Although the Modesto F.O. staff includes several technical disciplines and fluent Spanish-speakers, they've expanded their team to include experts from the East Stanislaus RCD, other agencies and organizations, and fellow NRCSers.

Strategy #6 Build Trust: Include clients in program or service development. Building trust is key to the adoption of new ideas and technologies related to conservation. This year's IPM conference reflected direct feedback from last year's conference's evaluation forms. Future plans include expanding Hispanic farmer participation in Local Work Group activities.



This year's agriculture conference had a talented multi-partner team. (L to R): Martin Guenera of the City of Davis, NRCSers Arturo Carvajal, Wendy Roth and Graciela Gomez, NCAT's Marisa Alcorta, Richard Hoenish of UC Davis, and Jose Lule of NRCS.



Graciela Gomez of the Modesto F.O.

Strategy #7 Deliver the service. Because the conference was well-planned and reflected farmers needs, it turned out a success! Modesto F.O. conservation technician Graciela Gomez facilitated the conference activities and served as emcee. Because she is a fluent Spanish speaker and passionate about assisting NRCS customers, participants felt welcomed and ready to learn. Lunch and snacks were hosted by conference sponsors.

Strategy #8 Provide follow-up. The Modesto F.O. staff asked each participant to complete an evaluation sheet to provide important feedback about the learning content, format, etc. Additional follow-up contacts will provide direct feedback, strengthening the partnership even further.