



RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT TITLE: Measure A and Voter Choice: Rethinking Parks and Agriculture Funding in Marin

REPORT DATE: June 30, 2026

RESPONSE BY: Marin Resource Conservation District

GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Recommendation numbered **R1** will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable.

Date: 8/27/2026

Signed:

DocuSigned by:

Terry Sawyer

261874C46DB447A

President, Marin Resource Conservation District

RESPONSE TO MARIN COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Marin Resource Conservation District (Marin RCD) Board of Directors does not approve of Recommendation 1 which states, "Prior to placing a Measure A renewal proposal before voters, expected to occur before the current measure expires in 2031, the Marin County Board of Supervisors should consider developing separate ballot measures for (a) parks and open space funding and (b) sustainable agriculture funding, to allow voters to separately evaluate each measure."

Marin RCD's legislative mandate to enhance resources for the public good on both natural and working lands, our ability to leverage outside agency funding, and momentum in responding to increased interest from agricultural producers, lead us to recommending a unified measure in reaching the ultimate goal of completing comprehensive watershed-wide ecological improvements.

See below for more details about our position.

Background

- The importance of locally governed Conservation Districts was made clear in the 1930s during the Dust Bowl, when drought and poor farming practices contributed to poor air and water quality and precipitated a federal public health crisis.
- Consistent with this history, the State of California — per Division 9 of the California Public Resource Code, Section 9001(1) — declared that *“resource conservation, enhancement, restoration, adaptation, and resilience are of fundamental importance to the prosperity and welfare of the people of this state.”*
- In 1959, Marin County voters established the Marin RCD. The statute, as amended (Section 9001(3,4)), directs districts to *“facilitate coordinated resource management efforts for watershed restoration and enhancement and to develop and implement projects and programs for the conservation, enhancement, restoration, adaptation, and resilience of soil, water, and biodiversity and related natural resource conservation.”*
- Conservation Districts are authorized to conduct this work on both public and private lands.
- Despite opposition to the sustainable agricultural section of Measure A, it passed by over 70% in both the 2012 and 2022 ballot years.
- In 2020, Governor Newsom signed Executive Order N-82-20, directing the CA Department of Food and Agriculture, the CA Environmental Protection Agency, and other state agencies to protect and restore the state's biodiversity, climate, food security, and natural resources across a broad range of landscapes — including natural areas and working lands — and to partner with agricultural stakeholders to identify farmer- and rancher-led solutions.
- Measure A supports this Executive Order by providing matching grants to the Marin RCD to implement carbon farm plans and similar projects on working agricultural lands, supporting and enhancing water quality, soil health, biodiversity, wildlife corridors, riparian zones, erosion control, and climate resiliency, while safeguarding wildlife habitat and pollinators.

2022 Funding and Results to Date

- Since 2022, Marin RCD has received \$1.8M in sales tax revenue of which \$1.6M has been spent on implementation programs.
- \$1.8M in matching funds have been leveraged from the CA State Coastal Conservancy, the CA Wildlife Conservation Board, the CA Department of Food and Agriculture, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and private landowners — all directed toward protecting natural resources on agricultural land.
- Marin RCD has completed the following projects with Measure A dollars, among other accomplishments:
 - 8 stream restoration projects, more than 10,000 native trees planted, and habitat improvements throughout the Tomales Bay watershed, in partnership with Point Blue Conservation Science Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed (STRAW) Program along with plant establishment and monitoring of these projects to support long term success and data collection

- 5 hedgerow planting projects, establishing over 5,000 native and pollinator plant species, in partnership with STRAW
- 1 silvopasture project containing 16 native trees, providing shade for livestock, habitat for native species, and increased water holding capacity for soils
- 1 dairy road improvement project to reduce erosion risks, improve adjacent creek water quality, and enhance soil health in surrounding pastures
- The momentum created with Measure A funding has resulted in a reliable and consistent conservation funding stream for watershed enhancement on private lands in Marin County. In our most recent funding round, over 30 conservation practices were proposed by agricultural producers which indicates a high level of interest and investment by the agricultural community.

Marin RCD's Position

The Marin RCD does not support separating the ballot measure into distinct measures for sustainable agriculture and parks. Separating the measures would incorrectly imply that voters would realize different gains from protecting natural resources on private versus public lands — this is not the case.

- Both the federal and state governments recognize the importance of natural resource protection at a watershed-wide scale, and both provide matching grant funds that support natural and working lands alike.
- Marin County is leading by example in recognizing the connectedness of natural and working lands at the local level. Following passage of Measure A, Santa Cruz County passed a similar ordinance, and Sonoma County will soon consider a comparable measure on this year's ballot.
- Marin RCD's core mission is to conserve and enhance Marin's natural resources through community-based conservation and restoration, where nature and people thrive together: where clean water flows, healthy soils grow, and abundant wildlife flourishes through collaboration. With over 2,000 miles of stream located on agriculturally zoned parcels in our district, what happens upstream ultimately affects the quality of cities, parks, beaches, bays, fisheries, and recreation areas downstream. Whether the public is enjoying salmon, oysters, a visit to Tomales Bay, or time spent on public lands, everyone shares in the benefits of a healthy watershed.

Conclusion

For these reasons, the Marin RCD urges that the ballot measure remain unified. A combined measure reflects the interconnected reality of natural and working lands, ensures continued eligibility for critical state and federal matching funds, supports agriculture's invested interest in watershed health and preserves the community-wide benefits — clean water, healthy soils, and thriving wildlife — that depend on watershed-scale investment rather than a division between public and private land categories.