



Vanessa McCracken

# 2023 Annual Report



**Longmont and  
Boulder Valley**  
Conservation Districts

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## OUR MISSION

To provide conservation education and resources to local land managers by collaborating with stakeholders for the sustainability and betterment of our growing community.

# WHAT WE DO

The Boulder Valley and Longmont Conservation Districts (BVLCD) provide conservation technical and financial assistance to private landowners and land managers. We partner with the USDA-NRCS and many other state, regional, county, and local partners.

In response to the changing climate, catastrophic wildfires, and a growing population, our programs and services continue to evolve and expand. Historically, our services focused on agricultural producers on the plains. While we continue to serve the agricultural sector, we have also added a robust forestry program in recent years. These programs, combined with agriculture and conservation education, noxious weed management, and the STAR (Savings Tomorrow's Agricultural Resources) Program, enable BVLCD to serve a diversity of customers.

If you have concerns about the natural resources on your property, give us a call. We are here to serve our community.



**Longmont and  
Boulder Valley**  
Conservation Districts





## A NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

As I reflect on my first four years at BVLCD, I can't help but look back, way back, with profound gratitude. Local conservation-minded agriculturalists founded the Boulder Valley Conservation District in 1945, 78 years ago. A year later, in 1946, Longmont followed suit. For nearly three quarters of a century, the districts have steadfastly served the conservation community. There are over 50 former board supervisors who volunteered to keep the districts intact – adapting, adjusting, and moving forward. Mr. Jack Wheeler served on the Boulder Valley board for forty-four years! The incredible commitment, sacrifice, and spirit of service shown by these individuals is second to none. I am deeply grateful for the wisdom, guidance, and adaptability of the former and current supervisors.

I am honored to count myself as part of a highly talented, high-achieving team of conservation professionals. The staff, the heartbeat of BVLCD, bring their talents, humility, and solutions to the table, day after day. I am blessed to be a part of this team.

I look forward to our continued landowner partnerships, both in the forest and on the plains, surrounded by and intertwined with a vibrant, active, supportive, and collaborative conservation community.

*Vanessa McClacken*

**VANESSA MCCrackEN**

*District Manager*

# PARTNERS

## ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITIES WE PARTNERED WITH IN 2023

A1 Organics  
Acres USA  
Alliance Irrigation  
Auciello Applicators  
Bird Conservancy of the Rockies  
Boulder County Farmers Markets  
Boulder Mushroom  
Boulder Watershed Collective  
Buffalo Brand Seed  
Sipe Farms  
Citizen Science Soil Health Project  
City of Boulder  
City of Longmont  
Colin Williams  
Colorado Ag Water Alliance  
Colorado Association of Conservation Districts  
Colorado Department of Agriculture  
Colorado Department of Natural Resources  
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment  
Colorado State Forest Service  
Colorado Timber Industry  
Colorado Water Conservation Board  
Cool Boulder  
Cory Bateman  
CSU Extension – Boulder County  
CSU Veterinary School  
Cure Soil  
Farm Service Agency  
Green Latinos  
Growing Gardens  
Jefferson Conservation District  
Larimer Conservation District  
Leggett Ditch Company  
Mad Agriculture  
Mountain West Pest  
National Forest Foundation  
Northern Colorado Fireshed Collaborative  
Northern Water

Pawnee Buttes Seed  
Quality Well and Pump  
Rocky Mountain Farmers Union  
Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources  
Schlagel Farms  
Spirit of the Sun  
St. Vrain FFA  
Turner Realty  
United States Forest Service  
Valley Irrigation of Greeley  
Watershed Center  
Wildland Restoration Volunteers

## KEY FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTORS



National Association of  
Conservation Districts





# BY THE NUMBERS

## 2023 HIGHLIGHTS



**Longmont and  
Boulder Valley**  
Conservation Districts

2023

BVLCD ANNUAL REPORT

**6,828**

ACRES IMPACTED

**162**

LANDOWNERS  
ASSISTED

**385**

EVENT PARTICIPANTS

**50**

COLLABORATIVE  
PARTNERS

**1,213**

STUDENTS ENGAGED

**1,000+**

HOURS DONATED  
BY VOLUNTEERS

## FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

**\$757,861**

FUNDING SECURED  
FOR LANDOWNERS

**\$33,621**

VALUE OF  
VOLUNTEER HOURS

**\$7,820**

SCHOLARSHIPS AND  
DONATIONS

**\$455,583**

GRANTS AND PARTNERSHIP  
AGREEMENTS

# AGRICULTURE AND SOIL HEALTH



Bethany Hawoll

## STAR+ PROGRAM

After rolling out the STAR+ pilot program in 2021, BVLCD was selected to expand the STAR Plus Program to more local producers. BVLCD enrolled 12 producers in Round 1 and added an additional 7 producers in Round 2.

These trailblazing producers are implementing various soil health practices including cover crops, applying compost, returning annual cropland to perennial systems, rotational grazing, interseeding, reducing tillage, and planting trees and shrubs.

Longmont Conservation District was called on to host the Rocky Mountain Soil Health Round Table field day on September 20 at two local farms. The Round Table brought together soil health professionals from six western states to work towards a shared vision to guide soil health initiatives across the arid West.



## STAR+ PROGRAM BY THE NUMBERS

**4**  
FIELD TOURS

**18**  
PRODUCERS

**864**  
ACRES

**\$24,523**  
TOTAL PRODUCER  
INCENTIVE PAYMENTS



# FOREST PROGRAM



Rob Walker

## FOREST RESTORATION AND WILDFIRE MITIGATION

BVLCD's Forestry Program has had a successful year restoring over 320 forested acres to their healthy and resilient ecological conditions. Projects ranged from working with individual small acreage landowners, to working with a group of multiple landowners and local collaborative partners. Over \$733,000 in funding was secured from federal and state sources including NRCS EQIP and CSFS' Forest Restoration & Wildfire Risk Mitigation grant. Our efforts aided in building resilient communities, reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires, increasing forest health, improving wildlife habitat, and protecting our watersheds. We are ambitiously planning over 330 treatment acres in 2024, and look forward to more restored forests to come.

### FORESTRY BY THE NUMBERS

**5** FOREST MANAGEMENT  
PLANS COMPLETED

**\$733K** SECURED FOR PROJECT  
IMPLEMENTATION

**39** LANDOWNERS ASSISTED

**335** ACRES PLANNED FOR  
TREATMENT IN 2024

**322** ACRES TREATED IN 2023

**329** PROPERTY  
ACRES PLANNED



# FOREST PROGRAM

## EAGLE RIDGE FOREST RESTORATION PROJECT

After more than two years, the Eagle Ridge forest restoration project is nearly complete. The project sits north of Lyons and just south of the Larimer County line. The project encompasses 130 acres of four contiguous landowners.

The ponderosa dominant forest was densely stocked, with interlocking canopies of small, competition-suppressed, pole-sized trees surrounding large mature ponderosas. The forest now exhibits open meadows and groups and clumps of trees, with enhanced wildlife habitat. Fire behavior is now projected to be a low severity ground fire, making it easier and safer for wildland firefighters to manage. All of the slash was removed off site.

This project was possible thanks to four terrific landowners and close collaboration with Boulder County Parks & Open Space.



BEFORE TREATMENT



AFTER TREATMENT





# FOREST PROGRAM

## CAMP ST. MALO FOREST RESTORATION PROJECT



Vanessa McCracken

In 2019, Camp St. Malo reached out to BVLCD to assist with the management of their forests. Over the course of the next four years, our foresters worked with Camp St. Malo staff to design forest restoration treatments, apply for funding through NRCS's EQIP Program, and manage loggers in order to establish a more diverse and resilient forest ecosystem.

The Camp St. Malo property consists of 160 acres of incredibly diverse forest types, from riparian subalpine forest and aspen and willow groves along the creeks, to old-growth ponderosa savanna, to dense lodgepole stands. The diversity of this property is prime for the educational programs offered by the Camp; however, overcrowding and structural homogeneity was stifling biodiversity.

The treatments implemented were designed to establish a more heterogeneous mosaic of forest types and densities. Openings in the canopy will allow more grasses and wildflowers to flourish in the understory, while reserves of lodgepole and subalpine forest were left to provide cover and nesting areas for woodland critters.



Rob Walker

BEFORE TREATMENT



Rob Walker

AFTER TREATMENT



# CONSERVATION SERVICES

Hania Oleszak



## MED SAGE BY THE NUMBERS

**146**  
VOLUNTEER HOURS

**38**  
DAYS IN THE FIELD

**11,057**  
WEEDS REMOVED

**1,142**  
ACRES IMPROVED

**75**  
LANDOWNERS ASSISTED

## DISTRICT CONSERVATION TECHNICIAN PROGRAM

The District Conservation Technician (DCT) position supports the USDA-NRCS in the planning and execution of Farm Bill programs, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). The DCT works with local agricultural producers and ranchers to implement various conservation strategies, including irrigation efficiency improvements, building soil health, increasing plant productivity, and reducing erosion.

## MEDITERRANEAN SAGE

For over 25 years, BVLCD has been working toward the eradication of Mediterranean sage, a List A noxious weed in Colorado. Our seasonal crew scouted 75 privately-owned properties and removed over 11,000 plants. The crew also provided educational materials and personalized property reports with maps for each property treated.



# CONSERVATION EDUCATION

## EDUCATION BY THE NUMBERS

2 EVENTS HOSTED

48 CLASSROOMS  
PARTICIPATED

2 SCHOLARSHIPS  
AWARDED

1,478 EVENT ATTENDEES

## FROM OUR LANDS TO YOUR HANDS

From Our Lands to Your Hands 2023 occurred on two days in February at the Exhibit Building at the Boulder County Fairgrounds. After a three-year hiatus, BVLCD was excited to bring this educational program back. The goal of the event was to educate youth of Boulder and Weld Counties about agriculture, natural resources, and conservation. Over 1,200 4th and 5th graders, from 17 different schools in the St. Vrain Valley School District, along with their teachers and chaperones, attended the free event.



Peyton Ward



Rich Koopmann



Peyton Ward



Peyton Ward

# CONSERVATION EDUCATION



## SOIL REVOLUTION CONFERENCE

Two hundred thirty-three people attended the conference held on December 13 at the Boulder JCC. Keynote speaker, Dr. Fred Provenza, discussed highlights from a lifetime of research in the innate wisdom of grazing animals, stressing the importance of plant health and diversity for both livestock and human health.

Patrick O'Neill, siblings Dr. Erin and Drew Gaugler, three local presenters Nick DiDomenico, Eric Fairlee and Vanessa McCracken, Dr. Dannele Peck, and Dr. Brent Young all contributed presentations regarding soil health, climate, risk management, and establishing good financial habits. The day ended with a moderated roundtable featuring all of the speakers.

## COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP AWARD WINNERS



Alexander Deputat  
Colorado State University



Katja O'Malley  
Colorado State University





# 2023 CONSERVATION PARTNER OF THE YEAR

## BOULDER COUNTY

Boulder County is a long-time and committed supporter of BVLCD.

Boulder County has supported the District Manager position for many decades. Thanks to this support, the Districts have provided a local voice to national conservation efforts, as well as local conservation projects and programs.

In 1980, the Longmont Soil Conservation District built our current office, The Natural Resources Building, on the Boulder County Fairgrounds. For the past 43 years, the Longmont Conservation District and Boulder County have worked under a condominium agreement to share the space. The exceptional Fairgrounds, Facilities, and CSU Extension staff continually partner with the Districts to keep the Natural Resources Building a welcoming, one-stop shop for local land managers.

Boulder County has been a strong supporter of the Districts' educational programs, including the From Our Lands to Your Hands Youth Event and the Soil Revolution Conference. For nearly 20 years, Boulder County has assisted BVLCD in the battle against Mediterranean sage.

Boulder County also stepped up in a big way in 2023 to support our forestry program, funding conservation forester positions to work toward wildfire resilience on private lands. The Boulder County Commissioners take time each year to meet with the Board Supervisors to hear conservation and program updates, as well as attend farm and forestry tours.





# 2023 CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR – AGRICULTURE

## LOUKONEN FAMILY

Kenny. John. Kathy. Dean. Cindy. Mike. Farmers. Ranchers. Business Owners. Siblings. Dedicated Conservationists.

The six Loukonen siblings hail from a long and proud line of Finnish ancestors. They are the fourth generation of Loukonens to call the foothills and valleys south of Lyons their home. All six of the Loukonen siblings give credit to their parents, Leonard and Dorothy, for their conservation values, work ethic, and love of the land.

Leonard's great-grandparents, John and Susanna Loukonen, emigrated to Lyons from Finland in 1890. In 1892, they purchased a stone quarry. John and Susanna's son, John, and his wife, Katri, ran the business and then their sons, Leonard and Reino, took over. Leonard and Reino joined forces and ran not only the stone quarry business but also an extended agricultural operation in and around Lyons, Rabbit Mountain, Hygiene, Niwot, and Longmont. At the height of the operation, they managed over 3,000 acres of owned and leased properties, ran 200 head of beef cattle, and operated a 100-head dairy herd.

The family has seen it all in their 133 years in Boulder County – floods, droughts, fires, two pandemics – and they are still here instilling the Loukonen family values in the 5th and 6th generations.

Photos provided by Loukonen Family.





# 2023 CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR – FORESTRY

## JACK DEBELL



In June 2021, a landowner named Jack DeBell reached out to BVLCD with concern for wildfire, and for the lack of opportunity in his neighborhood to evacuate or for firefighters to assist should a fire occur.

From the very beginning, Jack has been a champion for the scale of restoration needed in his local forest. While the project started with his 14 acres, he quickly rallied his three neighbors to grow the project to a total of 130 acres. Because of Jack, the project grew from his small defensible space to a landscape scale endeavor.

Jack's ingenuity, connections, and amicable nature didn't stop with growing the project in size. One of the most difficult aspects of a forestry project is finding an outlet for the woody biomass. Jack established a good working relationship with a nearby quarry who was similarly interested in quarry reclamation and river restoration. By utilizing cooperative power, Jack not only found an end-product for the woody biomass from his own project, but at the same time found source material for nearby ecosystem restoration projects.

Moreover, Jack has had no reservations to roll up his sleeves and contribute directly to the project. He helped remove extensive lengths of barbed wire on his neighbor's land to help facilitate the project. Jack is a familiar face at the local community meetings, where he advocates for ecological stewardship. Jack DeBell has been a force of nature in seeing the project through at all stages. Jack also received the CACD state award for outstanding forestry landowner.



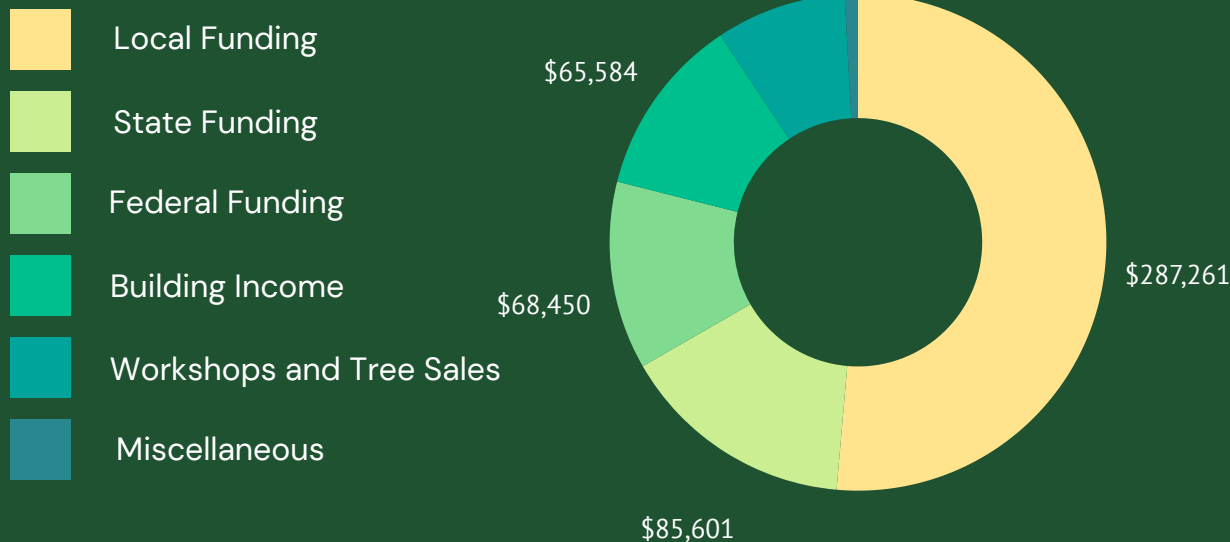
# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

## LONGMONT CONSERVATION DISTRICT



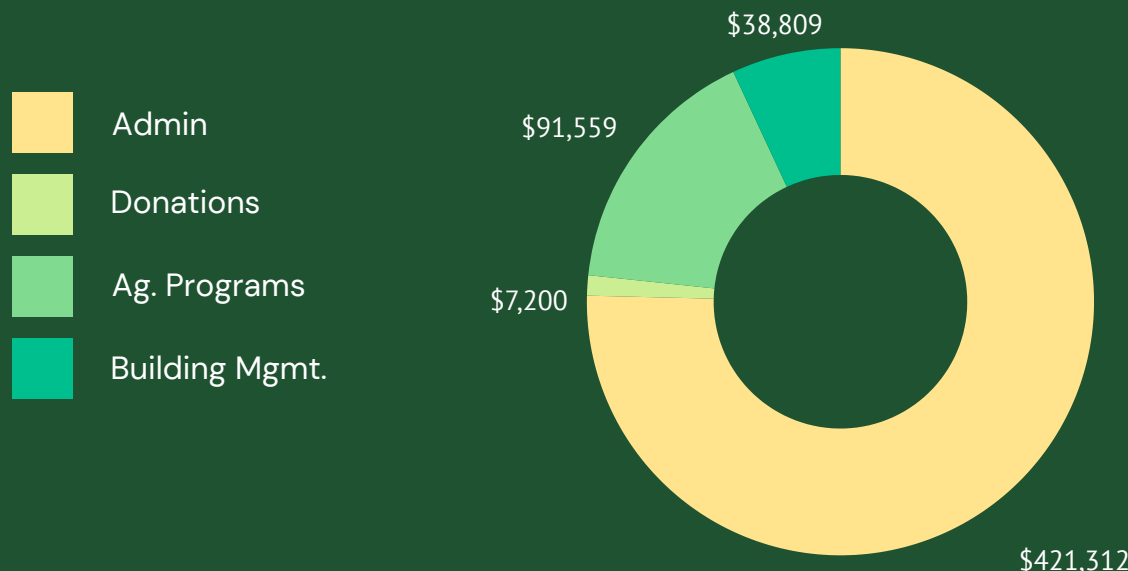
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Conservation Districts

### REVENUE



**2023 REVENUE \$559,125**

### EXPENSES



**2023 EXPENSES \$558,881**



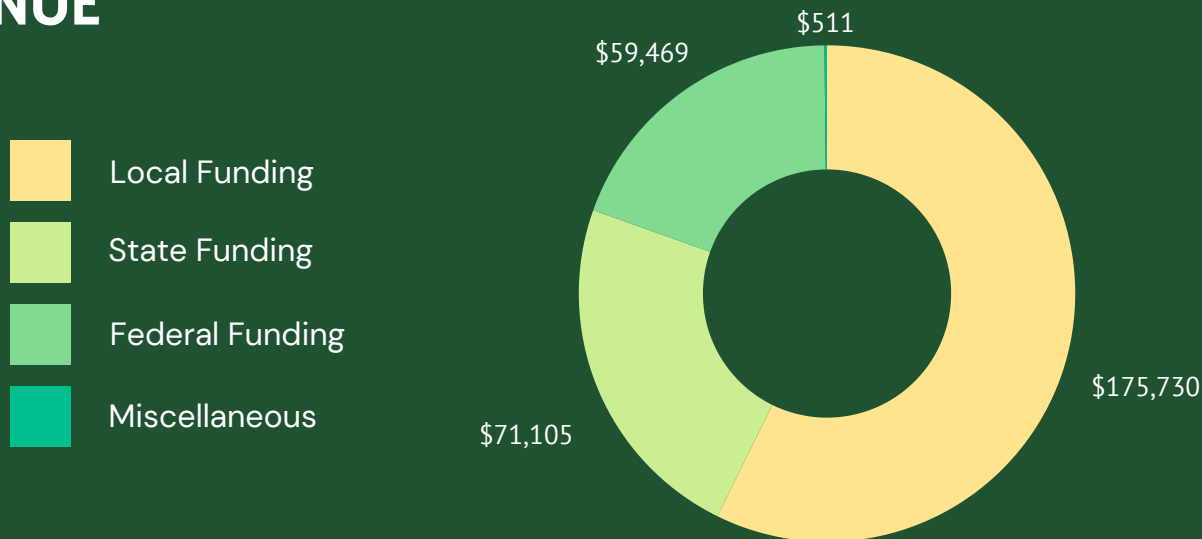
# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

## BOULDER VALLEY CONSERVATION DISTRICT



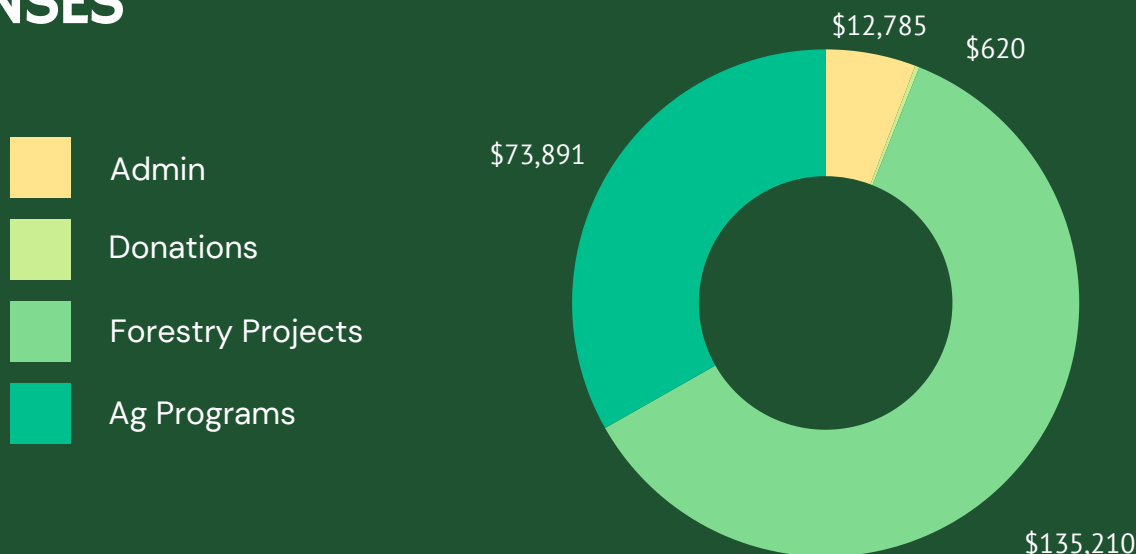
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Boulder Valley  
Conservation Districts

### REVENUE



**2023 REVENUE \$306,815**

### EXPENSES



**2023 EXPENSES \$222,505**



# SUPERVISORS AND STAFF



Amanda Interpreter

## CONTACT US

### LOCATION



Boulder County  
Fairgrounds  
Natural Resources Building  
9595 Nelson Road  
Suite D  
Longmont, CO 80501

### CONNECT WITH US



720-378-5521



bouldervalley-  
longmontcd.org



Boulder Valley and  
Longmont Conservation  
Districts



bvlconservation

## LONGMONT CONSERVATION DISTRICT

John Sekich, President  
Rich Koopmann, Vice President  
Mike Rademacher, Secretary/Treasurer  
Wyatt Barnes, Supervisor  
Jules Van Thuyne, Supervisor  
Dean Loukonen, Associate Supervisor  
JD Burch, Associate Supervisor  
Rob Alexander, Associate Supervisor

## BOULDER VALLEY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Dan Lisco, President  
Keith Bateman, Vice President  
Scott Miller, Secretary/Treasurer  
Chris Reichard, Supervisor  
Cindy Domenico, Supervisor

## BVLCD STAFF

Vanessa McCracken, District Manager  
Hania Oleszak, Agricultural Resource Specialist  
Rob Walker, Conservation Forester  
Ben Markle, Conservation Forester  
Jessica Jackman, Conservation Forester  
Alaine Quinn, Mediterranean Sage Field Coordinator  
Kelsea Kennedy, Mediterranean Sage Field Technician  
Tamara Combs, Forestry Intern  
Alex Hill, Administrative Specialist