

Colusa County
Resource Conservation
District



2008-2013
Long Range Plan

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Adopted June 4, 2008

*Colusa County Resource Conservation District
Long Range Plan
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PURPOSE OF THE LONG RANGE PLAN

The purpose of the Colusa County Resource Conservation District's (CCRCD) Long Range Plan is to provide a foundation whereby resource concerns within Colusa County may be identified, studied, and addressed. The Long Range Plan will be reviewed annually and remain effective for a period of 5 years.

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE CCRCD:

The mission of the CCRCD is to assist local landowners to protect, conserve, and restore natural resources through information, education, and access to technical assistance programs. In doing so the CCRCD will always take measures to protect the individual landowner's rights and fully support "from the ground up" conservation planning that promotes local, social, and economic sustainability through wise land use.

HISTORY

Soil Conservation Districts, now known as Resource Conservation Districts, were formed in the 1930's after the unparalleled ecological disaster known as the Dust Bowl. At the present time almost every county in the United States has a resource conservation district.

Originally Colusa County had two Districts, voluntarily organized by landowners, under the provisions of Division 9 of the Public Resource Code of the State of California. The Stonyford Resource Conservation District (Western portion of Colusa County) was formed in 1956 and the Colusa County Resource Conservation District (Eastern Colusa County) was organized in 1959. In 1996 the two separate districts merged to better serve the needs of Colusa County in its entirety. This united district became known as the "Colusa County Resource Conservation District."

DIRECTORS

The CCRCD's governing body is comprised of a seven member volunteer Board of Directors. The CCRCD's Directors represent the many different land uses within Colusa County and lend their expertise in these areas. Directors must own or manage land within the District and be a registered voter in the State of California. Each director is elected to a four-year term through the county general election process or appointed by the Colusa County Board of Supervisors. The CCRCD holds monthly meetings that are governed under the rules of the Brown Act.

STAFF

The CCRCD Board of Directors has the authority to employ staff to carry out the day-to-day operations of the District, plan and implement conservation projects, and provide conservation educational outreach. CCRCD Staff could include a District Manager, project managers, and project technicians as the workload demands.

PARTNERSHIPS

The CCRCD provides for the delivery of "locally led conservation" to the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) at the Colusa Field Office. Together this partnership continually monitors and inventories priority resource concerns within Colusa County and directs Farm Bill programs to best address the needs of the local landowners. The CCRCD also works with many other Federal, State, County, and private agencies and organizations whose concerns include resource management.

SUPPORT

The CCRCD's highest level of support comes from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The NRCS provides the District with office space, utilities, use of office equipment, office supplies, internet access, and the part-time use of a vehicle. The NRCS also assists the CCRCD by providing technical expertise for the District's projects. The CCRCD receives financial support for projects, staff, and administrative overhead through the award of local, state, federal, and private foundation grants funding. When necessary, the CCRCD may also seek financial assistance from the Colusa County General Fund to cover basic operating expenses. Revenue is also generated through equipment rental fees received from the CCRCD's no-till drill and two rice rollers, as well as interest earned on the CCRCD's funds held by the Colusa County Treasurer. The CCRCD receives financial accounting support from the County of Colusa.

Land Use & Planning

The CCRCD recognizes the increasing pressures of residential development and the potential loss of agricultural, ranch, oak woodland, and open space lands. The CCRCD believes the best way to address this issue is to: (1) continue educating land managers and decision makers on natural resource issues of the county and (2) assist local stakeholders with managing natural resources in a profitable and sustainable manner. To accomplish this, the CCRCD will engage in the following activities:

- Provide input on the creation, development, and implementation of legislation that could impact natural resources
- Provide input on local planning and zoning ordinances that may influence natural resources of the county
- Facilitate the creation of conservation easements on agricultural lands by connecting interested landowners with land trusts and/or easement programs
- Host educational events on agricultural land protection, conservation, easements and managing productive working lands
- Gain recognition as the "go-to" organization for technical assistance with natural resources management
- Maintain communications with the Colusa County Board of Supervisors and the Colusa County Planning Commission by making comments on applications for projects that have the potential to negatively impact natural resources

Watershed Management & Health

CCRCD recognizes several trends impacting the county's resources. These include but are not limited to; increased regulation and need to protect water quality, loss or segmentation of riparian and wildlife habitat, increased residential housing and recreational or small scale agriculture, decreased awareness of natural resource issues among citizens, transitions from rangeland to irrigated cropland, and difficulty in managing forest and upland resources. Considering these trends and CCRCD's commitment to assisting local landowners in maintaining and improving watershed health, the District will seek funding and foster partnerships to develop community based watershed management plans and to address the following resource areas:

Water Quality and Quantity

The CCRCDD anticipates that water quality and quantity will remain a priority resource concern well into the timeframe of this Long Range Plan. The CCRCDD will engage in the following activities to address this vital natural resource:

- Provide technical support and educational outreach to promote practices that limit sediment, nutrient, and pesticide discharges
- Support programs that decrease or remove illegal waste dumped in waterways and eradicate and manage invasive species
- Seek grant funding to assist landowners implement conservation practices that address water quality issues
- Promote irrigation practices that reduce irrigation runoff and increase water use efficiency
- Promote conservation practices that address water use efficiency in urban areas
- Survey riparian habitat and plan restoration needs with interested landowners
- Work with all agencies of authority to reduce and control flooding
- Integrate the Colusa County Groundwater Management Plan
- Strengthen partnerships with local irrigation districts, reclamation districts, and other stakeholders in addressing water quality and conservation to insure a reliable supply for all beneficial purposes

Oak Woodland Conservation/Upland Watershed Management

The CCRCDD puts a high value on the upper watersheds within our county and will work on private and public lands to conserve, protect, improve, and manage natural resources through the following activities:

- Promote sound grazing practices
- Support and promote measures to reduce fuel loading in our forestlands
- Support the eradication and management of invasive species
- Promote the utilization of native species
- Provide educational outreach on the value of Oak Woodlands
- Continue to support and assist the Upper Little Stony Inholder's Alliance (ULSIA) with resource issues
- Support the development of off-stream watering systems for livestock and wildlife
- Develop a program to address the un-natural state of our forestlands

Soil Quality & Erosion

The very existence of Resource Conservation Districts evolved from soil erosion issues dating back to the 1930's. The CCRCDD is very committed to protecting this non-renewable resource by:

- Working with partners and landowners to assess and improve soil quality and stability through practices such as conservation tillage, cover crops, buffer strips, stream bank protection measures, utilization of native vegetation, and any new and innovative means.

Air Quality

Air quality is an increasingly serious resource concern in the north state. CCRCDD is committed to refining district activities relevant to air quality as regulations continue to impact the Sacramento Valley. In order to promote and support activities that reduce air pollution, CCRCDD will engage in the following activities:

- Foster improved air quality by recognizing and supporting sources of renewable energy
- Host seminars or workshops on topics relevant to air quality
- Promote and explore alternative uses for agricultural by-products such as; rice straw, orchard Clippings, and forest slash
- Assist landowners address new regulations as needed

Locally Led Conservation

The health of our natural resources begins with the ability of private land owners and managers to apply conservation practices on their land. The CCRCD prides itself on delivering “from the ground up” conservation planning and practices that are driven by local concerns. The CCRCD will continue to assist local landowners manage and protect their lands by:

- Developing collaborative projects with local landowners and stakeholder groups
- Providing administrative and technical assistance to existing and new stakeholder groups
- Seeking funding for projects and studies of interest to stakeholders
- Utilizing local stakeholder input for the development of management plans for Colusa County Watersheds
- Providing technical support and seeking grant funding to assist landowners implement conservation practices
- Assisting landowners with conservation applications and permits
- Representing the local landowner’s conservation priorities to government agencies and assisting in the development of Farm Bill programs that address local needs
- Providing an avenue for the public to make suggestions and provide input on their resource concerns

Conservation Education

The CCRCD is very committed to providing natural resource education throughout the county and feels it is one of the most important services the CCRCD has to offer. The CCRCD will participate in existing programs and develop new outreach avenues as they see fit to increase the community awareness and knowledge of the value of our resources. The CCRCD will:

- Provide natural resources education for youth and adults
- Make presentations to groups when appropriate such as; local government, agricultural organizations, community meetings, schools, and annual functions
- Link the agricultural community with the urban community to provide education on agricultural issues
- Provide new landowners with packets of watershed educational materials

Administration and Operations

In order to effectively serve the community, CCRCD will use responsible business practices. To accomplish this CCRCD will...

Budget

- Prepare an annual budget
- Utilize proper accounting procedures for RCDs
- Seek non-restrictive revenue to support the District
- Review monthly fiscal reports prepared by the District Manager
- Conduct annual financial audits preformed by an independent CPA
- Consider how grant funding may impact the District’s budget:
 - Provide for staff retention
 - Adequate money to accomplish the project’s tasks and goals
 - Sufficient overhead to cover in-direct expenses associated with said project
 - Sufficient planning for retention fees if applicable

Administration

- Annually complete items as scheduled in the District's Administrative Policy including:
 - Election of Officers
 - Development of Annual Work Plan
 - Preparation of District Annual Report
- Review District policies as needed
- Provide ongoing training to District directors in ethics, boardsmanship, Brown Act, and Division 9
- Provide ongoing training to staff in administrative procedures

Capacity Building & Outreach

The CCRCD's sustainability depends on building and maintaining strong partnerships with local landowners and stakeholder groups and building recognition as the "go to" organization for local natural resources. The CCRCD's capacity to deliver services is dependent on the engagement of knowledgeable individuals, keeping abreast of current natural resource concerns and trends, promoting the District's role in the community, and securing adequate financial resources to ensure their existence in the future.

The District will:

- Solicit a commitment from community members to actively serve as directors and associate directors of the CCRCD
- Define and promote the CCRCD's role in the integrated regional watershed management approach
- Conduct an ongoing public relations program that keeps the community abreast of the CCRCD's activities
 - Submitting newspaper articles for publication about the CCRCD and its activities
 - Presenting the District display board at community events
 - Giving presentations about District activities to community groups and schools
 - Inviting local media and officials to RCD events
- Support local, state, and national associations of Resource Conservation Districts by:
 - Encouraging Directors and staff to attend association meetings and annual conferences
 - Providing dues, fees, or conference registration, as the budget allows
 - Submitting resolutions to associations as needed to address CCRCD concerns
- Communicate with and lobby: local, state, and federal legislators concerning resource matters of concern to the District by
 - Participating in the California Association of Resource Conservation District's annual Day in the Capitol when feasible
- Continue to lobby for staffing and increased support for RCDs
- Provide ongoing training to staff and directors on issues relevant to local natural resources

**The CCRCD acknowledges and appreciated the use of the
Tehama County Resource Conservation District's 2008-2013 Long Range Plan
as a guild in the development of the CCRCD's 2008-2013 Long Range Plan**