
HUMBOLDT COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

LONG RANGE WORK PLAN

July 2009 – June 30, 2012



The mission of the Humboldt County Resource Conservation District is to enhance and improve the sustainability of natural resources by educating, training and assisting private and public landowners and land users.

ORGANIZATION AND PURPOSE

Humboldt County Resource Conservation District (HCRCD) was originally formed by popular vote in March of 1987 as the Eel River Resource Conservation District. In June of 1993 the District was expanded to be a county-wide Special District. Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) are legal subdivisions of state government. Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code authorizes the formation of Resource Conservation Districts, defines the State of California's framework for conducting the business of resource conservation within the State, and details the general powers and operations of RCDs.

The primary purpose of the HCRCD is to work in voluntary cooperation with private landowners and groups of landowners to reduce soil erosion, conserve water, and improve water quality so as to maintain, protect, and assure the productivity of the natural resources of Humboldt County. HCRCD has a strong reputation as a leader in promoting locally led, voluntary conservation and has a history of success in working with private landowners to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, and improve fisheries habitat.

HCRCD is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Directors are landowners, or their agents, who understand local resource conservation issues and who volunteer without compensation for their time. The Board of Directors establishes priorities and sets policy for the District; guided by input from landowners, Technical Advisory Committees, and community stakeholders.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PARTNERSHIPS

Over the years HCRCD has worked to develop strong cooperative partnerships with local entities to provide technical and professional assistance to landowners and watershed groups in assessing, planning, and partnering to secure grant funding to develop and implement a range of restoration and enhancement projects. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) University of California Cooperative Education (UCCE) and the County of Humboldt are all strong partners that assist HCRCD accomplish watershed management activities throughout Humboldt County.

SALT RIVER ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROJECT PARTNERSHIPS

HCRCDC is the lead agency for this highly collaborative watershed based, ecosystem scale restoration project. Funding and technical project partners include: the Salt River Watershed Council and private landowners throughout the watershed area, the County of Humboldt, the City of Ferndale, California State Water Resources Control Board, State Coastal Conservancy, California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ducks Unlimited, Wildlife Conservation Board and Western Rivers Conservancy. The project is intended to restore natural hydrologic and ecological processes in a watershed that has lost hydrologic function due to natural and anthropogenic causes.

HCRCDC RESOURCE CONSERVATION PRIORITIES 2009-2012

1. AGRICULTURE

- Promote resource conservation activities and best management practices that help sustain the working landscapes of the Dairy and Agricultural industries in Humboldt County.
- Promote resource conservation activities that prevent the degradation and loss of agricultural land in the Eel River Watershed.

2. HABITAT RESTORATION

- Support and promote projects in watershed areas throughout the County to protect, restore, and enhance in-stream fisheries and riparian wildlife habitat.
- Work in cooperation with the Department of Fish and Game to protect and enhance diverse wildlife habitat through managed agricultural activities and wildlife areas.

3. WATER QUALITY

- Protect water quality by implementing projects that address treatable sediment sources in the upper watersheds of the County.
- Promote resource conservation activities and identify cost-share funding to help landowners meet regulatory requirements.
- Protect water quality by providing technical and professional assistance and education to dairy producers to improve and support effective nutrient management planning and practices.
- Protect water quality by identifying cost-share funding to pay for infrastructure improvements on dairies to protect clean water from contamination and for equipment that helps the producer manage animal waste effectively.

4. SOILS

- Work in cooperation with USDA NRCS to support the completion of the soils survey for Humboldt and Del Norte Counties.
- Work in cooperation with landowners, NRCS, and others to support and promote projects to identify, prioritize, and treat areas of upslope and streambank erosion.

Current Projects 2009 – 2012

AGRICULTURE



1. Humboldt Agriculture Management & Enhancement Program

Through a grant from the State Water Resources Control Board, (SWRCB) that is funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, HCRCD is continuing its work with producers to manage animal waste and reduce nutrient-related pollution in the Eel and Mad River and Redwood Creek watersheds. This program provides information and technical assistance to local dairy producers about current technology and practices for dairy waste management and works to improve nutrient management practices around the Humboldt Bay area. The RCD receives advice and guidance from the Dairy Technical Team, comprised of agency partners, and from the Dairy Advisory Group, comprised of local Dairy Producers.

2. End Results: Nutrient Management Planning and Technical Assistance

Through a grant from the Humboldt County Headwaters Fund this project expands the work of the RCD to develop Nutrient Management Plans in cooperation with local dairy producers. HCRCD will be working one-on-one with up to four dairy producers to provide technical assistance and scientific testing leading to the development of individualized nutrient management plans and baseline data for North Coast pasture-based dairies. These funds will also be used to enhance the capacity of the HCRCD to get the training and gain the expertise needed to contract with NRCS and receive payment for developing and assisting local dairy operators to implement Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans in the future.

3. Salt River Ecosystem Restoration Project

Two grants from the State Water Resources Control Board fund the implementation of the Salt River Ecosystem Restoration Project; one under the Integrated Regional Water Management Program (IRWMP), and one under the Consolidated Grants process. HCRCD is lead agency on this multi-year, multi-agency, landowner-driven endeavor that takes a holistic, watershed-wide approach to address sediment, fish passage, flooding, and drainage issues in the Salt River Watershed of Ferndale. Increasingly frequent flooding, reduced drainage capacity, and sediment deposition has negatively impacted the ability of local landowners to effectively utilize their lands for agricultural purposes.

HABITAT RESTORATION



1. Wildlife Area Agricultural Management Program

HCRCD and the Department of Fish and Game have entered into a cooperative agreement to operate agricultural leases and conduct agricultural management activities on North Coast Wildlife Area lands to protect wildlife habitat, enhance Aleutian Goose habitat, and protect native species.

2. Salt River Ecosystem Restoration Project

This ecosystem-scale project includes a large tidal wetland restoration component that will create a succession of biologically rich and diverse tidal wetland habitats, including transitional wetlands and adjacent uplands as part of a sustainable estuary system.

WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT and EROSION PREVENTION



1. Salt River Ecosystem Restoration Project

This many faceted project is a multi-year, multi-agency, landowner-driver endeavor. It takes a holistic, watershed-wide approach to improve water quality, enhance habitat and fish passage, and improve drainage and reduce flooding in the Salt River Watershed. The project includes upslope erosion prevention treatments, channel realignment and excavation, riparian planting, livestock control measures, and tidal wetland restoration.

Within this Project HCRCDC will conduct an assessment and prioritization of treatable sediment sources in the Francis, Reas and Williams Creek watersheds and enter into cost-share agreements with local landowners to treat sediment sources to reduce sediment delivery from the upper watersheds.

2. Mid Van Duzen River Ranch Road Sediment Reduction

HCRCDC has entered into a cooperative working agreement with a local watershed group – the Yager/Van Duzen Environmental Stewards (Y.E.S.) to complete on-the-ground treatments on ranch roads to reduce sediment delivery to watercourses. This project is funded under a contract through the Integrated Regional Water Management Program (IRWMP), which is managed by the County of Humboldt.

3. Freshwater Creek and Cloney Gulch Road Decommissioning Projects

Under grants from the Department of Fish and Game HCRCDC is working in cooperation with Pacific Watershed Associates (PWA) to accomplish road decommissioning projects on private lands in the Freshwater Creek Watershed.

4. Elk River and South Fork Elk River Road Decommissioning Projects

Under grants from the Department of Fish and Game HCRCDC is working in cooperation with Pacific Watershed Associates (PWA) to accomplish road decommissioning projects on private lands in the Elk River Watershed.

5. Iaqua Ranch Roads Sediment Reduction Project

This project will accomplish treatments on 6.8 miles of ranch roads on private land that is placed under a perpetual conservation easement. The goal of the project is to decrease sediment in the North Fork Yager Creek Watershed. This project is funded under a grant from the Department of Fish and Game

6. Humboldt Agriculture Management & Enhancement Program

Through a grant from the State Water Resources Control Board, (SWRCB) HCRCDC is continuing to work with local dairy producers to address waste storage, waste handling, and waste distribution systems that protect water quality.

ADDITIONAL PROJECT GOALS FOR 2009-2012

1. Work in cooperation with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) and other partners to provide information to the public about resource conservation issues, activities, and available resources.
2. Work in cooperation with NRCS to provide technical assistance and planning services to private landowners to help meet their conservation objectives.