

HUMBOLDT COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

LONG RANGE PLAN

April 1, 2012 – June 30, 2015



MISSION

To enhance and improve the sustainability of natural resources in an economically viable manner through outreach, education and by assisting the community, private and public land managers and land users.

ORGANIZATION

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.

HCRCD is governed by a seven-member volunteer Board of Directors appointed by the County Board of Supervisors. Directors are landowners, or their agents, who understand local resource conservation issues and who volunteer 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.

PURPOSE

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.

VISION

The HCRCD will be economically viable, serving as a trusted partner for the community; successful at assisting with funding, education, implementation and maintenance of resource based projects.

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.

PRIORITIES

Landowners in the Eel River Valley surrounding the town of Ferndale originally formed the HCRCD to focus on addressing the hydrologic dysfunction of the Salt River Watershed and the resulting resource concerns that impact its residents and producers. Restoring the Salt River watershed has remained one HCRCD 's top priorities and the HCRCD is currently leading a 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 basin of the Lower Eel River Watershed.

The Board and Staff recognize that the magnitude of this effort will continue to make it a primary focus of the District. However; the HCRCD also works to stay informed of resource conservation needs and trends in Humboldt County, and works to establish new programs and implement new projects to meet those needs. This Long Range Plan serves as the joint understanding between the Board and Staff on priorities outside of the Salt River Restoration Project to ensure a broad, county-wide focus for District activities.

Protect agricultural lands to ensure sustainability and profitability

Strategies and Tasks:

1. Provide education to producers on available technical and cost share assistance programs
2. Support partners involved in economic sustainability education
3. Continue collaboration with Department of Fish and Game for grazing on wildlife areas
 - a. Grazing committee to review and revise grazing form – April 2012
4. Participate in relevant watershed-wide planning activities

Measurement of Success:

- Number of workshops held and projects implemented
- Increase in use of wildlife areas by Aleutian Geese and grazing fee revenues
- Measure total acres and AUM improvements

Protect and enhance diversity of wildlife habitat

Strategies and Tasks:

1. Use land management practices to protect and enhance a variety of particular habitat types
 - a. Continue utilizing and assessing grazing to help with short grass habitat.
 - b. Seek funding through the Wildlife Conservation Board to implement burning and thinning projects in oak woodland habitats
 - c. Continue addressing erosion and drainage issues to improve fish passage and habitat

Measurement of Success:

- Measure and monitor changes to extent of habitat types

- Measuring wildlife populations

Improve quality of surface and groundwater

Strategies and Tasks:

1. Partner with watershed groups and agencies for water quality and roads workshops
2. Identify and pursue watershed wide road improvement grants
3. Identify road projects and obtain permits on behalf of landowners
 - a. Investigate as fee for service
 - b. Submit applications to Humboldt County Headwaters Fund
4. Continue ongoing effort to develop nutrient management plans
5. Take the lead in TMDL implementation development

Measurement of Success:

- Number of workshops held
- Volume of sediment saved from erosion
- Funding Secured to assist landowners with permitting on roads work

Support education regarding air quality in agricultural operations

Strategies and Tasks:

1. Educate Staff and Board
 - a. Staff to conduct research and update board quarterly or with significant change
 - b. Invite speaker (AQD, NRCS) on air quality issues to District meeting
2. Educate Community
 - a. Provide links on website for air quality issues
 - b. Partner with organizations and agencies to provide an air quality workshop
 - c. Incorporate air quality discussion into other programs/projects/workshops

Ensure sufficient funding to achieve HCRCD Priorities

Strategies and Tasks:

1. Include funding for grant writing in every grant proposal
2. Identify partners to help write grants
3. Determine level of staff benefits and costs to include in grant applications – Dec 2012
4. Poll other RCD's on fee for service and fundraising options (i.e. Land Management, Conservation Easements, Grant Writing, Oak Woodlands Funding)

Measurement of Success:

- Operational reserve is increased and improved
- Benefits are offered to staff