



Humboldt County Resource Conservation District

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Humboldt County Resource Conservation District Agricultural Enhancement Program

Planning Technical Assistance Application

Contents

Introduction	2
Application & Selection Process.....	3
Priorities.....	4
Eligibility Requirements.....	4
Schedule	5
Scoring/Selection Criteria.....	6
Application	7

Introduction

The Humboldt County Resource Conservation District (HCRCDD) is inviting agricultural land managers who are interested in conservation, soil health, and carbon sequestration to apply to receive technical assistance with on-farm planning. Developed plans can be used to seek funding for implementation of recommended practices. We anticipate selecting 10 - 16 land managers to receive plans over the next two years. This application packet serves as a guidance document that establishes the process, procedures, and general requirements to apply for and receive technical assistance.

HCRCDD has received funding through the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to develop a variety of farm planning documents.

Disclaimer: Because this project is publicly funded, the final plans may be submitted to the grant funders as deliverables for the grant. Documents developed as part of the project may be subject to the California Public Records Act (PRA).

HCRCDD is offering technical assistance to develop the following types of plans:

Carbon Farm Plan

A whole-farm conservation plan that, when implemented, will enhance soil health, increase carbon sequestration, increase productivity, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These plans serve as guidance documents for land managers, outlining a suite of conservation practices that address on-farm resource concerns and greenhouse gas reductions. Plans are designed to help land managers meet their natural resource management goals while supporting productive lands, thriving streams, and on-farm wildlife habitat. This plan is for land managers who want to factor carbon sequestration and climate resilience into their operational decisions.

Soil Health Management Plans

A plan focused on improving on-farm soil conditions. Soil health management plans identify soil resource concerns related to the physical, biological, and chemical properties of the soil, and recommend practices to address them. This plan is for land managers who want to address soil organic matter depletion, aggregate instability, compaction, or lack of biological diversity within their soils.

Soil Health Management System Designs

A plan that provides site-specific recommendations for implementation of the practices suggested in a Soil Health Management Plan. This plan identifies all necessary

specifications, standards, and requirements for land managers to move forward with implementation of soil conservation practices.

Carbon Sequestration and Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Assessments

Establishes a baseline of GHG emissions and sinks, expressed in common units of metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) and estimates the potential effect of a conservation plan with the preferred mitigation and sequestration alternatives using COMET-Farm, a whole farm and ranch carbon and greenhouse gas accounting system. This plan is for land managers whose operational goals are to be carbon neutral or negative, and who have extensive record keeping history.

HCRCDC will work with selected land managers to determine which plans best address their goals and current resource concerns.

Application & Selection Process

HCRCDC has developed an application to provide a fair and equitable process to select land managers who will receive assistance for plan development. HCRCDC will be accepting applications on a rolling basis and will conduct quarterly reviews and selection of applications. Candidates not selected during the current review round will be rolled into future application rounds. The selection process will consist of two phases:

Phase 1 consists of a review and ranking of responses to the completed application by a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) consisting of HCRCDC staff and outside partners.

Phase 2 consists of the TAC conducting interviews with the applicants who qualify after Phase 1. Once interviews are completed, the TAC will finalize the scoring and ranking, and select applicants who will receive assistance for plan development.

HCRCDC anticipates selecting at least two to three land managers to receive planning assistance per quarter, subject to change. HCRCDC is committed to supporting landowners and land managers who have demonstrated a land stewardship ethic. The selection of your application is a commitment by HCRCDC to create a plan that identifies conservation, soil health and climate adaptive practices on your farm.

Landowners or land managers who receive assistance are expected to implement the practices in their plans as funding opportunities become available. HCRCDC is committed to supporting the implementation of planned practices as funding allows.

HCRCDC reserves the right to revise this application for future selection rounds to best meet the goals of grant funding and the needs of land managers.

Priorities

Equity in Conservation:

HCRCDC recognizes the importance of providing resources and assistance to underserved communities. We are striving to expand access to funding and technical assistance to historically underserved and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. Land managers who do not self-identify as part of a priority population are still eligible to receive assistance.

Priority populations include:

- Small farms (25 acres or less)
- Historically underserved groups as defined by NRCS (<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/underserved-farmers-ranchers>)
 - Socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers (African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders)
 - Beginning farmers and ranchers (farming/ranching for less than 10 years)
 - Veterans
 - Limited resource individuals (total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of your county's median household income <https://lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov>)
- Individuals who have not previously received technical or financial assistance from NRCS or CDFA.

Diverse Land Use

HCRCDC hopes to assist land managers from a variety of production systems and anticipates selecting the top-ranking applicants from dairy, range, row crop or other systems. Applicants will be ranked against other land managers of the same production system.

Project Potential

The plans will recommend beneficial conservation practices that can be implemented on your farm/ranch. The goals of these plans include improving soil health, sequestering carbon, and improving wildlife and pollinator habitat. Because of this, we are prioritizing applicants who have the intention to seek funding for their practices, and whose practices will have an environmental benefit. Land managers who will share their experience with others in the community, through farm tours, peer to peer meetings, or workshops, or other means, will be prioritized.

Eligibility Requirements

Eligible Land Uses: any working lands, including but not limited to annual and perennial row crops, dairies, ranches, orchards, and vineyards. There is no minimum acre requirement. However, the plan types offered are not suitable for forest systems where silviculture is the primary production type.

Eligible Applicants must:

1. Own the property or lease the property and demonstrate land control.
2. Be willing to participate as an engaged partner in the development of a plan. The farmer and other landowners/lessees must actively engage with HCRCD in the planning process and agree to the following:
 - Participate in the application process.
 - Understand that a commitment for participation could take approximately 40 hours of your time for plan development.
 - Participate in 1-3 site visits with your plan developers and provide relevant information.
 - Participate in 2-3 planning meetings, and possibly host other farmers and/or funders to view your farm.
 - Review and comment on your plan.
3. Be willing to implement, maintain and monitor conservation and carbon sequestration practices identified in the developed plan on your lands. If funded by public funds, you should expect to monitor and maintain the integrity of any implemented practices for up to 10 years.
4. If practices are implemented, allow HCRCD to monitor the practices, including sharing soil sample results with partners for research and case studies.
5. Be willing to enter into a Cooperative Agreement with HCRCD to commit to the above items.

Schedule

Date	Description
August 1- September 30, 2023	First application period
October 1- December 31, 2023	Second application period
January 1- March 31, 2024	Third application period
April 1 – June 30, 2024	Fourth application period
July 1- September 30, 2024	Fifth application period
October 1- December 31, 2024	Sixth application period
January 1- March 31, 2025	Seventh application period

Schedule subject to change. Additional application rounds may be released, pending grant funding.

Scoring/Selection Criteria

Criteria	Points
Social Equity	60
Beginning farmer and rancher (farming/ranching for less than 10 years)	10
Military Veteran	10
Limited resource individuals, household income less than \$29,502	10
Small farms/ranches (10 points for <10 acres, 5 points for <25 acres)	10
Land manager is new to technical assistance programs	10
Socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher	10
Project Potential	100
Willingness to implement practices identified in the plan if funding can be secured and maintain practices for up to 10 years.	20
Carbon sequestration/emissions, climate resilience or GHG reduction influence management decisions	20
The land is contiguous with existing/potential high-quality habitat or wildlife corridors	10
The land manager is interested in adding one or more of the following practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hedgerows • Riparian exclusion fencing • Tree plantings • Wetland enhancement 	15
The land manager is willing to allow us to share soil sample data with partners	5
The land manager is willing to allow us to share their plan with partners	10
The farm/ranch has a community benefit or potential to influence other land managers. The land manager is willing to host tours, workshops, peer to peer meetings, or show their implemented practices to other land managers.	20

Application

Applicant

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone #: _____ Email: _____

FARM/RANCH INFORMATION

Farm/Ranch Name: _____

Farm/Ranch Address: _____

Do you own, lease, or rent the property? _____

If you are not the landowner, can you demonstrate land control and lease agreement? Y/N Is there an existing easement on any part of the farm? Y/N

Animals/Crop (type & #):

Legal Property Owner Name and Address

Assessor Parcel(s) #

Farm background:

1. Describe your ranch/dairy or farm operations, (examples may include: Year-round or rotational grazing, cow-calf, fall calving, organic operations, feed production, laying hens, seasonal grazing of dairy replacement heifers, row crops, orchards, etc.).

2. Describe or list your long-range plans for your farm, including any plans to increase agricultural productivity and or diversification (examples may include direct marketing, leases, dairying, beef, food, or fiber production etc.). Do you intend to add or increase acreage for farming (livestock, poultry production, row crops, orchards or vineyards, row crops, etc.)? Also, briefly describe any succession plans for the farm/ranch, if applicable.

3. Why are you interested in receiving a plan? Please explain. For example, climate change mitigation, drought resilience, wildlife habitat, soil health etc. If your interest is wildlife enhancement, please give an overview of the type of conservation practices that you would like to develop or implement (*including wildlife habitat enhancement, creek restoration, riparian/wetland habitat enhancement, native vegetation planting, etc.*)

Please make sure your response also addresses the following questions:

- Is your current management working for you?
- What types of changes would you like to make?
- Why do you want to make changes?
- What are your motivations for seeking a plan?
- What do you want the HCRCD to see on your ranch and help with?

Add any additional information you believe would be helpful to HCRCD in the selection of your Farm or Ranch for plan development.

4. **YES / NO** Do you have detailed farm history (irrigation schedule, crop rotation, tillage system, harvest dates, cover crop types, grazing rotations, etc.)?

If so, for how many years?

5. Have you worked with any of the following groups (circle):

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Humboldt County Resource Conservation District

North Coast Growers Association

University of California Cooperative Extension

If yes, in what capacity? Please explain and describe any other relevant groups you have worked with (nonprofits, trade associations, etc.).

Scored Questions

6. Do you meet the criteria for any of the following categories? Mark all that apply; categories defined by USDA, for more information, please see <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/underserved-farmers-ranchers>

- Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher
- Beginning Farmer or Rancher
- Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher
- Veteran Farmer or Rancher

7. How large is your farm/ranch?

8. **YES / NO** Are you willing to implement practices identified in the plan if funding can be secured and maintain practices for up to 10 years?

9. **YES / NO** Does carbon sequestration or emission, climate resilience or GHG reduction factor into your management decisions?

10. **YES / NO** Is the land contiguous with existing/potential high-quality habitat or wildlife corridors?

11. Are you interested in implementing any of the following practices?

- Hedgerows
- Riparian exclusion fencing
- Tree plantings
- Wetland enhancement

12. **YES / NO** Are you willing to allow us to share soil sample data with partners?

13. **YES / NO** Would you share the information in your plan with other land managers?

14. **YES / NO** Post implementation, are you willing to be a demonstration site, host tours, workshops, peer to peer meetings, or show your implemented practices with other land managers?

15. **YES / NO** The planning process is always evolving, and collaboration is an important factor in keeping planners educated in the best way to provide technical assistance. Can we share your plan with other planners so that we can all learn and continue to refine the process?

How was your experience completing this application? If you have suggestions on how to improve the application experience, please let us know: