

# *Humboldt County Resource Conservation District*



January 2009

Prepared by:



**HUMBOLDT**  
*Local Agency Formation Commission*

For Updating the Sphere of Influence Report

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This Municipal Service Review (MSR) was prepared as part of a mandated review of the spheres of influence (SOI) of all government entities in the County by the Humboldt Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo). This report focuses on the Humboldt County Resource Conservation District (HCRCd). The purpose of this study is to examine and evaluate local governmental services in order to improve overall understanding of local service conditions and to enhance these conditions through comprehensive review and analysis.

This MSR presents for the Commission’s consideration a discussion, analysis, and recommendations regarding services provided by the HCRCd. The current SOI for the HCRCd was updated in 1993; this MSR serves to update the relevant data on services provided within the district’s SOI. At this time, the SOI will not be amended.

### Review Methods

This MSR was prepared by LAFCo staff in the first quarter of 2009. The HCRCd completed an agency profile questionnaire, which provided LAFCo with the current status of district operations. The Infrastructure and Services Report that was compiled as part of the Humboldt County General Plan was also referenced for regional population and housing projections, as well as detailed descriptions of existing infrastructure. The draft report was sent to the district staff for review and clarification. All information gathered for this report is filed by Humboldt LAFCo for future reference.

# **LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION AUTHORITY**

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## **Latent Powers, Enabling Legislation and Empowered Services**

The fundamental role of the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) is to implement the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act (The Act) consistent with local conditions and circumstances. The Act guides LAFCo's decisions. The major goals of LAFCo as established by The Act are to:

- Encourage orderly growth and development;
- Promote orderly development;
- Discourage urban sprawl;
- Preserve open-space and prime agricultural lands by guiding minimizing resource loss;
- Exercise its authority to ensure that affected populations receive efficient services;
- Promote logical formation and boundary modifications that direct the burdens and benefits of additional growth to those local agencies that are best suited to provide services;
- Make studies and obtain and furnish information which will contribute to the logical and reasonable development of local agencies to provide for present and future needs;
- Establish priorities by assessing and balancing community service needs with financial resources available to secure and provide community services and to encourage government structures that reflect local circumstances, conditions and financial resources;
- Determine whether new or existing agencies can feasibly provide needed services in a more efficient or accountable manner and, where deemed necessary,

As set fourth in § 56425 (g) of The Act, on or before January 1, 2008, and every five years thereafter, Humboldt LAFCo shall review and update each Sphere of Influence (SOI).

Additionally, an MSR shall be conducted with, or in conjunction with the action to establish or to update a SOI pursuant to The Act. Together, the SOI and MSR documents analyze the District's ability to serve existing and future residents.

In order to prepare and to update Spheres of Influence in accordance with § 56425, Humboldt LAFCo shall conduct a service review of the municipal services provided in the McKinleyville Community Services District (CSD). The commission shall include in the designated for service review area any other geographic area as is appropriate for an analysis of the services to be reviewed, and shall prepare a written statement of determinations with respect to the following:

- (1) Growth and population projections for the affected area;
- (2) Present and planned capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services, including infrastructure needs or deficiencies;
- (3) Financial ability of agencies to provide services;
- (4) Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities;
- (5) Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies; and
- (6) Any other matter related to effective or efficient service delivery, as required by commission policy.

## AGENCY PROFILE

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The Humboldt County Resource Conservation District (HCRCD) has jurisdiction over the entire County of Humboldt, exclusive of the seven incorporated cities. The district encompasses approximately 2.2 million acres. The district is located along the north coast of California beginning approximately 200 miles north of San Francisco and extending north just past the town of Orick. The district extends approximately 30 miles inland.

The primary purpose of the HCRCD is to work cooperatively and voluntarily 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. The HCRCD has a strong history and reputation as a leader in promoting locally led voluntary conservation and has been very successful in working with private landowners to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, and improve fisheries habitat.

**Table 1: Agency Profile**

Agency Name	Date of Formation	Enabling Legislation
Humboldt County Resource Conservation District	1987 original formation for service area of 118,000 acres Eel River Basin  1993 expanded to county-wide 2.2 million acres, exclusive of the 7 incorporated cities	Federal Standard State Conservation District Law of 1937 and Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code
Contact Person	Contact Title	Email/Website
Donna Chambers	Executive Director	Email: <a href="mailto:donna-hcrccd@yahoo.com">donna-hcrccd@yahoo.com</a> Website: <a href="http://www.humboldtrcd.org">www.humboldtrcd.org</a>
Mailing Address	Physical Address	Phone/Fax
HCRCD 5630 South Broadway, Eureka, CA 95503	HCRCD 5630 South Broadway, Eureka, CA 95503	Phone: (707) 444-9708 ext 117 Fax: (707) 442-7514

### Formation

The HCRCD was originally formed by popular vote, in March of 1987, as the Eel River Resource Conservation District (RCD). At that time, the District encompassed 118,000 acres and had signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). In June of 1993, the District was expanded to cover the entire county of Humboldt and re-named the HCRCD. The HCRCD continues its operational MOUs with the USDA and the SCS; which was later re-named Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

RCDs have their origins in the Federal “Standard State Conservation District Law”; commonly known as the “Standard Act” of 1937 and a modified version adopted by the State of California in 1938. RCD are legal, non-regulatory, political subdivisions of state government. Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code authorizes the formation of RCDs, 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.

RCDs across the nation focus attention on local land, water and related resource issues, then work to develop programs to address those issues. RCDs enlist and coordinate help from all public and private sources that can contribute to accomplishing the District’s goals. RCDs also work to further conservation education in the local community.

**Governance Structure and Administration**

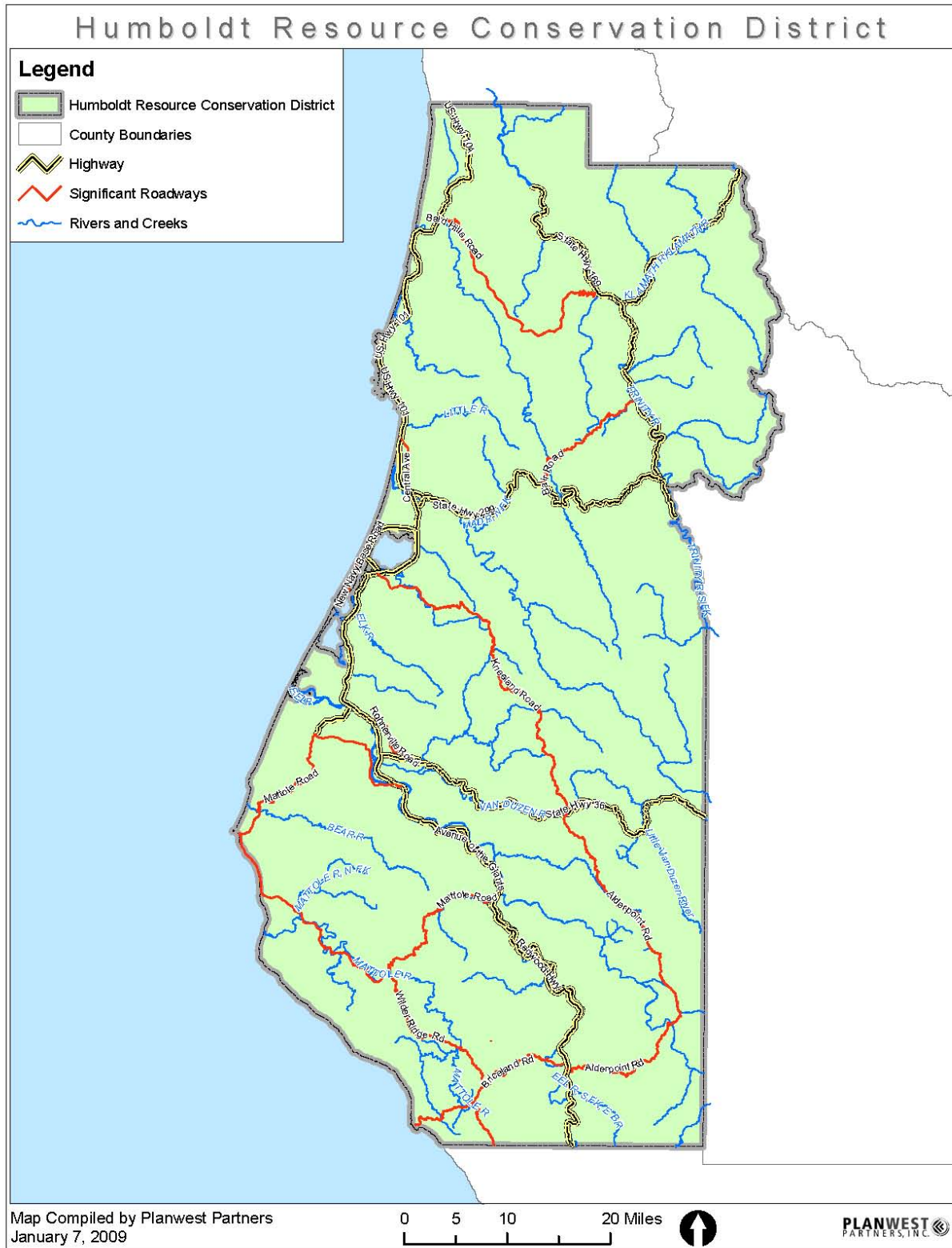
HCRCDC is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors charged with managing and conducting the business and affairs of the District. Directors are landowners, or their agents, who understand local resource conservation issues and who volunteer their time without compensation. Members of the Board of the HCRCDC are appointed by the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors to serve a four year term and may request to be re-appointed to serve additional terms, if desired.

Board meetings are held the second Thursday of each month and are open to the public. Meeting notices and agendas are posted in accordance with the Brown Act. The Board of Directors establishes a 3-4 year operational strategic plan to guide Board and staff decisions. An Annual Work Plan establishes programs and services for the year and provides direction to staff for budget and infrastructure decisions. The decisions and actions of the Board of Directors are guided by input from landowners, the community, and a number of technical advisory committees. Table 2, below, shows the current Board composition.

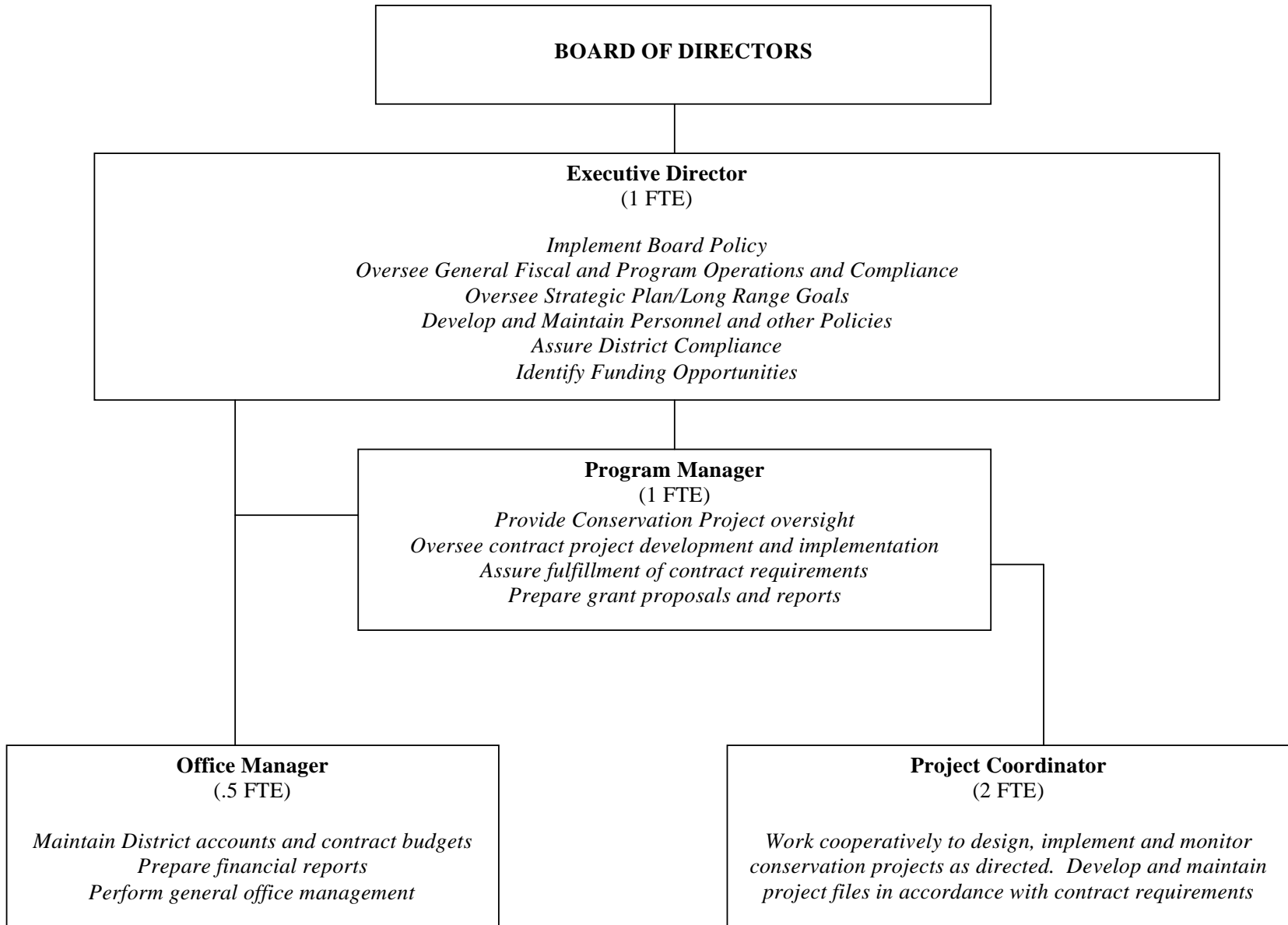
**Table 2: HCRCDC Board of Directors.**

<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Title</b>
Mark Moore	Chairman of the Board
Dan Cohoon	Vice Chairman of the Board
Otis Skaggs	Secretary/Treasurer
Gary Belli	Director
James Renner	Director
Peter Bussman	Director
Gary Markegard	Director

**Figure 1. Boundary and Sphere of Influence**







## POPULATION AND LAND USE

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According to the most recent census and expected growth rates, the total population in Humboldt County is 132,821<sup>1</sup>. Based on a Department of Finance (DOF) estimated annual population growth rate of 0.06% (607 persons per year), DOF projects that the County's population will reach 145,858 by 2025. The Building Communities Report for the Humboldt County General Plan Update includes a complete discussion of County Population Trends.

## SERVICES PROVIDED

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The HCRCO provides the following services to Humboldt County working in cooperation with private landowners and landowner groups:

- agricultural support,
- habitat restoration,
- water quality improvement,
- erosion prevention,
- community education, and
- technical assistance for landowners.

The district employs four full-time and one part-time staff. The main office of the Humboldt County RCD is at the County Agricultural Center and a satellite office is located in Ferndale. HCRCO owns no equipment, vehicles or buildings at this point.

### Agricultural Support

- **Humboldt Agriculture Management and Enhancement Program:** implements current technology in dairy waste management in the Humboldt Bay area and receives advice and guidance from the Dairy Technical Team, comprised of agency partners, and from the Dairy Advisory Group, comprised of local dairy operators.
- **Nutrient Management Planning and Technical Assistance Program:** provides technical assistance and scientific testing leading to the development of individualized nutrient management plans and baseline data for north coast pasture-based dairies.
- **Salt River Ecosystem Restoration Project:** HCRCO 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.

### Habitat Restoration

- **Wildlife Area Agricultural Program:** The district is working with the Department of Fish and Game on this project, which aims to protect wildlife habitat, enhance Aleutian Goose habitat, and protect native species.
- **Lower Eel River Watershed Restoration Project:** this project works to improve fish habitat, stabilize eroding stream banks, and restrict livestock access to the creeks.
- **Salt River Ecosystem Restoration Project:** includes a large-scale tidal wetland restoration component that will create a succession of biologically rich and diverse tidal wetland habitats.



## **Water Quality Improvement and Erosion Prevention**

- **Salt River Ecosystem Restoration Project:** HCRCD will conduct a general 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.
- **Mid Van Duzen River Ranch Road Sediment Reduction:** HCRCD 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.
- **Freshwater Creek Road Decommissioning Project:** HCRCD is working in cooperation with Pacific Watershed Associates (PWA) to accomplish road decommissioning projects on private lands in the Freshwater Creek Watershed.
- **Elk River Road Decommissioning Project:** HCRCD is working in cooperation with Pacific Watershed Associates (PWA) to accomplish road decommissioning projects on private lands in the Elk River Watershed.
- **Iaqua Ranch Roads Sediment Reduction Project:** This project will accomplish treatment on 6.8 miles of ranch roads to decrease sediment in the North Fork Yager Creek Watershed on private land that is placed under a perpetual conservation easement.
- **Salt River Ecosystem Restoration Project:** This project; a multi-year, multi-agency, landowner-driver endeavor, takes a holistic, watershed-wide approach to improve water quality in the Salt River Watershed of Ferndale.
- **Humboldt Agriculture Management & Enhancement Program– Phase IV:** Through a grant from the State Water Resources Control Board, (SWRCB) HCRCD is continuing to work with local dairy producers to address waste storage, waste handling, and waste distribution systems that protect water quality.

## **Community Education**

- **Lower Eel Basin Watershed Organizational Support Project:** With the cooperation and support of the California Department of Fish and Game, (CDF&G) this program provides baseline organizational support to the District to continue its work with local landowners, watershed groups, and natural resource entities, such as the Eel River Watershed Improvement Group (ERWIG). This program provides leadership and coordination of conservation efforts in the critical tributaries of the Eel River, focuses on outreach and education with private landowners in the Salt River tributaries and assists with restoration projects within the Wildcat Mountains and along Barber Creek.

## **Technical Assistance**

HCRCD is available to provide technical assistance and planning services to private landowners with soil and water conservation issues. The delivery of services is open to nearly all individuals and encompasses most soil and water conservation issues. Assistance to landowners is provided within the constraints of staffing availability and funding.

## **Other Service Providers**

The HCRCDD works in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The district also works with various government agencies and environmental groups including the Department of Fish and Game, State Water Resources Control Board, the Yager/Van Duzen Environmental Stewards (Y.E.S), Pacific Watershed Associates (PWA), and the Eel River Watershed Improvement Group (ERWIG).

## **BUDGET**

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Although it is a Special District, HCRCDD assesses no taxes, fines or levies. Although HCRCDD has, over its history, provided tremendous economic and resource conservation benefits to the State and County, it receives no regularly budgeted funds from county or state sources. The District has been very successful at securing grants and contracts that have supported its continued operations for the past 20 years and has demonstrated its capacity to be good stewards of public dollars. A complete summary of current and pending contracts is attached.

In addition to its other grants and contracts, HCRCDD is currently lead agency for the Salt River Ecosystem Restoration Project. This project is a component of the North Coast Integrated Regional Water Management Plan, a plan that was ranked #1 in the State of California. Two contracts with the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) for this project reflect a combined total of slightly over \$6 million.

Grants through the State Water Resources Control Board operate on a reimbursement basis and employ a 10% withhold until the project is completed. Turnaround time between invoicing and payment can be as long as 3-4 months. Because the HCRCDD is working with many private landowners who can ill-afford to be out-of-pocket for that long, the Board has successfully utilized a \$100,000 line of credit that is secured by its grants and contracts to bridge this gap and to cover other operating expenses as needed.

## **MSR DETERMINATIONS**

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### **Growth and population projections for the affected area**

The HCRCD serves the entire County of Humboldt with an estimated 2008 population of 132,821. The County's estimated 2025 population is 145,858. County growth will likely increase demands for resource conservation and management services.

### **Present and planned capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services, including infrastructure needs or deficiencies**

The HCRCD currently provides valuable resource conservation services to the County and landowners and collaborates with several other agencies. The HCRCD currently has no infrastructure needs or deficiencies.

### **Financing ability of agencies to provide services**

The HCRCD has a strong history attaining funding for their programs through grants and contracts. The district currently does not assess any taxes, fines, or levies, but this would be an option if necessary.

### **Status of and, opportunities for, shared facilities**

The HCRCD shares an office in Eureka with the United States Department of Agriculture Service Center. This is provided at no cost to the HCRCD through a License Agreement with the County of Humboldt. Through an Operational Agreement between HCRCD and NRCS the HCRCD has the use of phones, photocopier, fax, technical assistance for computers, and vehicles at no cost. Operational expenses for the Ferndale office and staff are covered through contracts and grants.

### **Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies**

The HCRCD is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors elected by residents. The district holds public meetings in accordance with the Brown Act. District staff can be reached by phone, email, or at the district office during normal business hours. The HCRCD has a tiered organizational structure that allows the district to efficiently serve the County's resource conservation needs.

### **Any other matter related to effective or efficient service delivery, as required by commission policy**

There are no further matters to report pertaining to the HCRCD's services.

## **SOI STATUS**

It is concluded that the current HCRCD SOI is sufficient. Based on the results of this MSR, no amendments to the SOI are necessary at this time. It is not possible under current conditions and regulations, for the HCRCD to extend beyond Humboldt County boundaries.

## REFERENCES

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<sup>i</sup> State of California, Department of Finance, E-1 Population Estimates for Cities, Counties and the State with Annual Percent Change — January 1, 2007 and 2008. Sacramento, California, May 2008.