



SISKIYOU RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2020 – 2024 LONG RANGE PLAN

Prepared for:
the Board of Directors

By:
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SISKIYOU RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Siskiyou Resource Conservation District is to recognize, identify, and meet conservation and restoration needs through voluntary landowner/manager and resource-user participation by providing technical, financial, and educational leadership within the boundaries of the District.

VISION STATEMENT

The vision of the Siskiyou Resource Conservation District is to meet the natural resource conservation and restoration needs of the District by providing a means for the development of projects from the design phase, project implementation, and as needed the assessment of projects and programs.

INTRODUCTION

This five-year plan will be the guiding document to determine the priorities for the Siskiyou Resource Conservation District (RCD) in carrying out its mission statement from 2020 through 2024. The document sets forth the goals related to each priority and lists actions that support those goals. Activities that demonstrate measureable progress on an annual timeframe will be identified in the associated Annual Plan of Operations. The 2020-2024 Long-Range Plan may be revised at any time to ensure that District priorities are aligned with the needs of the evolving community and environment. In order to effectively carry out the mission statement, the District recognizes the following realities:

The Siskiyou RCD must be acknowledged within the community as a leader in navigating natural resource issues. This can be demonstrated by working cooperatively with stakeholders, implementing creditable projects, building on experiences and maintaining public relations.

The Siskiyou RCD realizes that establishing and maintaining cooperative partnerships with local non-governmental organizations increases the capacity, effectiveness and diversity of solutions to natural resource issues.

The Siskiyou RCD understands the importance of establishing and maintaining working relationships with local, State, and Federal government representatives without compromising the property rights of individuals.

The Siskiyou RCD must acquire funding through various sources and retain professional staff to perform the actions outlined in the 2020-2024 Long-Range Plan.

The Siskiyou RCD must sustain voluntary support and participation from stakeholders.

Through the 2020-2024 Long-Range Plan the Siskiyou RCD lays the groundwork to assist stakeholders in conserving, improving, and sustaining the natural resources, environment and economic viability of the District.

HISTORY

The idea of forming local conservation districts was founded in the early 1930's when dust storms and floods swept the nation and aroused public concern around soil erosion. Congress passed Public Law 46 in 1935 declaring conscious land use and soil conservation a national policy, after which the federal government initiated associated technical and financial assistance programs. What was needed, however, was informed cooperation and participation of local citizens. In 1937 President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote to the governors of all states recommending legislation allowing landowners to form conservation districts.

Today, more than 3,000 conservation districts exist throughout the United States, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. In California, Soil Conservation Districts began forming across the state in the 1940s. Many have been consolidated over time so that of the hundreds of Districts that once existed in California, 103 now remain. Under California Public Resources Code, Soil Conservation Districts were originally empowered to manage soil and water resources for conservation, but these powers were expanded in the early 1970s to include "related resources," including fish and wildlife habitat. This expansion of powers was reflected in the name change from "Soil" Conservation Districts to "Resource" Conservation Districts in 1971.

The Siskiyou Resource (Soil) Conservation District has been in operation continuously since a referendum and election was held May 17, 1949 approving the creation of this non-taxing special district within Siskiyou County. The District is managed by a Board of Directors consisting of five non-paid volunteers appointed by the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors for 3-year terms allowing for renewals. Board Members must be active registered voters in Siskiyou County and reside within the District boundaries.

AUTHORITY

The Siskiyou Resource Conservation District was established and organized in accordance with Division 9 of the Public Resources Code of the State of California. Under Division 9, the

District is empowered to research, develop and implement actions to address the conservation and management of natural resources including soil, water, and other related assets such as habitat. The RCD can cooperate directly with the United States, the State of California, counties, cities, public districts, corporations, associations, non-governmental organizations and individuals to consistently carry out work within District boundaries. The protection and management of natural and working lands has been determined to be in the general public interest and therefore, the use of public funds for these actions on privately or publicly owned land constitutes expenditure for the general public benefit. Publicly funded work by the District involves a contractual agreement between one or more government agencies and the District. It is the policy of the District to obtain complete landowner consent before proceeding with any project on private or public land.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

The District consists of 1,176,160 acres of privately (294,160 acres) and publicly (882,000 acres) owned lands in the Scott River watershed, Salmon River watershed, and portions of the Klamath River (Appendix A: District Map). This includes the Klamath National Forest in the western and northern areas of the District and portions of the Shasta National Forest in the southern end of the District. Small portions of Native American lands lie within District boundaries. The towns of Fort Jones, Greenview, Etna, and Callahan are excluded.

PRIORITY GEOGRAPHIC AREAS

Under this Plan the Siskiyou RCD designates the Scott River watershed as the priority geographic area for staff development of projects. The Siskiyou RCD recognizes that portions of District that lie within the Salmon River watershed are primarily served by the Salmon River Restoration Council and portions of the District that include the Klamath River are primarily served by the Mid-Klamath Watershed Council. The Siskiyou RCD values the role that these cooperators play within those areas and offers support to their community-based efforts.

MAJOR LAND USES & PRODUCTS, ECONOMIC SETTING

The Scott River watershed has a mountainous perimeter that is void of virtually all development, which sets it apart from the rest of Siskiyou County. The primary land management activities of the U.S Forest Service through upland National Forests and Wilderness Areas are associated with wildlife and recreation but also include fire suppression and managed grazing where applicable. Land use through the mid-elevation regions of the watershed is predominantly commercial timber harvest with some rangeland areas. The valley floor is relatively flat and supports agriculture including livestock pasture as well as the production of hay and grain. Most development is located within and around cities and communities; however, demographics are changing with the steady reduction of the timber industry over the past few decades. These changes have been manifested in the development of residential and small land ownerships through the wooded foothills of the valley.

DISTRICT PRIORITIES, GOALS AND ACTIONS

Meeting the natural resource-related needs of the community and environment is accomplished through individual projects or as components of a larger program or combination of programs. For the purpose of this Plan, the Siskiyou RCD has organized priorities into five categories: Natural Resource Priorities, Community Priorities, Partnership Priorities, Educational Priorities and Management Priorities. Within each category are the various priorities (not in order of importance), the specific goal for that priority and actions (listed numerically for ease of reference but not in order of importance) to make progress towards the identified goal.

NATURAL RESOURCE PRIORITIES

A. Water Supply

Goal – Maximize the conservation and efficient use of water.

1. Continue to develop a better understanding of watershed hydrological balances to inform management actions
2. Work with water users to properly quantify water use and improve the infrastructure and management of irrigation systems
3. Promote the utilization of NRCS financial and technical assistance for implementing on-farm efficiencies
4. Continue the implementation of alternative stockwater systems where applicable
5. Develop opportunities to enhance instream flows for aquatic species at priority locations while preserving other beneficial uses
6. Support the refinement and utilization of the Scott Basin Groundwater Model
7. Work with the community to explore water storage opportunities

B. Water Quality

Goal – Improve water quality conditions where necessary to preserve beneficial uses

1. Continue monitoring water quality parameters to ensure local knowledge of existing conditions.
2. Work with landowners to identify and remove or reduce sources of water quality impairments
3. Protect and improve the condition of riparian zones through exclusion fencing and re-vegetation as well as other indirect methods

C. Land

Goal – Reduce soil loss and erosion to protect land use and water quality

1. Promote best management practices to reduce erosion and maintain soil productivity in both agricultural and forested settings
2. Work with landowners to protect and improve the stability of riparian zones and agricultural ground through construction of instream structures to enhance the integrity of stream banks
3. Encourage proper rangeland and grazing management
4. Work with landowners to identify and correct existing drainage and erosion problems associated with roads, prioritizing those sites which have the greatest potential to impact stream systems
5. Assist landowners in managing and eliminating noxious / invasive weeds

D. Fisheries

Goal – Improve conditions for fish within the watershed, especially special status species

1. Continue monitoring anadromous fish populations through surveys and studies of various life stages
2. Install fish screens at remaining diversions where applicable and support existing infrastructure through assistance with maintenance and repair
3. Evaluate fish passage structures/barriers and implement solutions to restore habitat accessibility
4. Update stream habitat inventory to identify reach level trends (improving, degrading, stable...)
5. Enhance instream habitat in priority areas within the watershed through the implementation of wood and other natural features
6. Continue to identify, protect and expand areas of thermal refugia
7. Facilitate land management actions that reduce pressure to limiting life stages of coho salmon

E. Geomorphology and Channel Condition

Goal – Improve understanding of the river system function and processes

1. Evaluate geomorphology of the Scott River and tributaries
2. Update topographic surveys of selected sites to identify reach level trends
3. Evaluate locations where stream channel can connect to floodplain without negatively impacting existing land uses and work to implement feasible projects
4. Assess and implement riparian revegetation projects where it will favorably impact channel conditions

F. Wildlife

Goal – Preserve diversity and improve habitat conditions for wildlife of the area

1. Support the Scott River Watershed Council in expanding the Wildlife Section of the Strategic Action Plan to provide guidance to the District in improving habitat conditions for special status species
2. Continue developing wetland protection and enhancement projects
3. Continue developing riparian protection and enhancement projects
4. Consider participating in studies to monitor wild game populations in the watershed and work with local professionals to develop habitat restoration projects

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

G. Community Participation

Goal – Promote community-wide interest and participation in resource conservation

1. Continue to develop public relations
2. Facilitate stakeholder involvement in the identification and solving of natural resource issues
3. Facilitate communication between landowners with similar resource concerns
4. Address landowner requests for technical and financial assistance to the best of the District's ability

H. Economic Viability

Goal – Conduct District operations in a manner that protects economic viability

1. Promote and assist in the development of value added agricultural products
2. Secure funding for natural resource activities contribute to the economic stability of the community

PARTNERSHIP PRIORITIES

I. Planning and Coordination

Goal – Maintain a productive relationship with partners to collaboratively plan and coordinate conservation activities within the District

1. Improve communication and coordination of activities with other organizations operating in the watershed though a process outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding
2. Work cooperatively with the Scott River Water Trust, a 501(c)3 organization, to improve stream flow for salmon and steelhead at critical periods of their life cycles in the Scott River stream system while economically protecting local agricultural operations.
3. Work cooperatively with the Scott River Watershed Council, a 501(c)3 organization, to assess watershed conditions, prioritize and develop conservation projects under the guidance of the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) and use effectiveness monitoring to make adaptive management revisions to the SAP.
4. Work cooperatively with the Salmon River Restoration Council, a 501(c)3 organization, serving the restoration needs of the Salmon River region of the District.
5. Work cooperatively with the Mid-Klamath Watershed Council, a 501(c)3 organization, serving the restoration needs of the Klamath River region of the District.
6. Cooperate and collaborate with the NRCS Yreka Field Office in the facilitation of a Local Working Group to discuss resource priorities as well as the definition and distribution of technical and financial assistance programs within Western Siskiyou County
7. Coordinate, inform and work with Siskiyou County Government

EDUCATIONAL PRIORITIES

J. Public Awareness & Education

Goal – Inform and educate stakeholders on watershed resource issues.

1. Sponsor, host or participate in public workshops, community forums and outreach events.
2. Co-sponsor informative workshops and seminars with the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the University of California, and others to strengthen the economic viability of the agricultural community base.
3. Enhance local school programs by providing staff guest speakers, coordinating field trips and distributing educational materials.
4. Expand availability of watershed-related resources

MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

K. Administration

Goal – Maintain a streamlined system for managing District operations

1. Continue to develop, negotiate, execute, and administer contracts and agreements to carry out the objectives of this Plan.
2. Continue current accounting system, and continue to make improvements for efficiency and accuracy.
3. Continue to apply for funding from traditional sources, and seek out and develop new sources of funding for projects and programs that support this Plan.
4. Maintain physical document files as well as electronic files of all aspects of project development from proposal stage to contract development, budgets, invoices, reports, permits, photos, maps, and correspondence.

L. Project Management & Implementation

Goal – Execute commitments in a professional and consistent manner according to established timelines and budgets

1. Maintain staffing, hire additional employees, and acquire subcontractors as necessary to fully execute all project tasks and deliverables prescribed in funding agreements.
2. Conduct monthly management meetings to monitor progress, develop and modify timelines, coordinate work schedules, and conduct on-site inspections.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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