

# **Placer County Resource Conservation District**

## **2004 Strategic /Long Range Plan**

### **2004-2009**

The purpose of the Placer County Resource Conservation District's (PCRCD) Strategic Plan is to identify long-range opportunities and needs for the conservation and development of natural resources within the district. It serves as a practical guide for the planning and accomplishment of work by the RCD, its cooperators, and associated agencies. The Plan sets forth the RCD's short and long-range objectives in logical priority and sequence. The plan identifies the vision of the District's role in the community and the natural resource goals or objectives of the District.

PCRCD's Board of Directors addressed two key questions: "Where are we now?" and "Where do we want to be?" In the process of answering the first question, we looked at our strengths, weaknesses, environmental opportunities and threats. To answer the second question, much thought was given to the desired future of the District. The RCD Directors and our key conservation partner, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) discussed which resource areas should be the District's focus for the next 3 to 5 years and which activities should be implemented. A "vision" was then developed for the PCRCD, as was a list of natural resource priorities.

### **Placer County RCD's History**

The history of conservation districts in the U.S. is closely allied with the creation of the Soil Conservation Service (now called the Natural Resources Conservation Service) a federal agency within the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture.

By the 1930's years of prime agricultural land mismanagement had resulted in the erosion problem known as the "Dust Bowl". This disaster led to the formal creation of the Soil Conservation Service by Congress in 1935. The primary purpose of the SCS was to help farmers and ranchers manage their land to minimize soil erosion and maximize soil productivity. In order to deliver these services locally SCS conceived the idea of Conservation Districts. These districts, governed by locally elected boards, serve to develop and carry out local resource conservation programs with technical help from the Soil Conservation Service. A "Standard Act" was proposed with outlines for the formation of Districts within their own states. California adopted a modified version of the "Standard Act" in 1938.

The Placer County RCD was organized in 1946 and, after the election of a five-member board, went into operation in 1948. Originally it was known as the Placer County Soil Conservation District and encompassed 201,000 acres of Placer County's richest farm and ranch land.

### **Enabling Legislation**

California legislation authorizes its RCDs to implement a resource conservation program. The purposes of this program, as mandated by Division 9, are: 1) to help the state secure adoption of conservation practices "to save the basic resources, soil, water, and air of the state from unreasonable and economically preventable waste and destruction." Such application includes,

but is not limited to, "farm, range, open space, urban development, wildlife, recreation, watershed, water quality and woodland." and 2) to help landowners, groups, and various levels of government control water runoff, prevent soil erosion, and stabilize soil on open land, agricultural, urban and recreational development, wildlife areas and watersheds. In addition, RCDs help people protect water quality, reclaim water, develop storage facilities, and distribution systems for water, and treat each acre of land according to its need.

### **Governing Authority**

This District is an independent, self governing body, (not a branch of any county, state, or federal agency) dedicated to serving both public and private interests as they occur.

Currently the District is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors, determined in a district election or appointed by the Placer County Board of Supervisors. Each of the Directors serves a four-year term, without monetary compensation.

### **Financial Resources**

The RCD receives funds from four basic sources: 1) A portion of County property tax assessments. This is the base level of funding for the District 2) Contracts with local units of government. Currently the District contracts with Placer County, the Cities of Auburn, Roseville, and Lincoln, to provide technical assistance, as requested, as it pertains to resource conservation, management, and planning 3) a rental arrangement between a private business operator and the District. This source of funding can cease whenever the County takes over the management of the County owned property 4) Grants from government agencies, non-profit entities, and private business/corporations.

## **NRCS/RCD Relationship**

RCDs in California have ever-widening responsibilities for conservation and development of the state's soil, water, and related resources. In carrying out these responsibilities, RCDs seek and receive assistance and cooperation from many agencies, organizations, and groups. However, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the principal source of assistance to RCDs. The primary function of the NRCS in this context is to give technical assistance, through RCDs, to individuals, groups, and community leaders who make decisions about conservation, development, and use of natural resources. The NRCS also provides office space, some equipment use, and vehicle use to the RCD. Jointly, RCD and NRCS annually review the memorandum of understanding, the supplemental memo of understanding, and other agreements between the RCD, the NRCS, and/or USDA.

## **Geography of Placer County**

### Physical Boundaries

Placer County comprises approximately 969,600 acres or about 115 square miles. Placer County is bordered on the north by Nevada County, on the North West by Yuba County, on the west by Sutter County, on the east by the State of Nevada, and on the south by El Dorado County. The County extends from the Sacramento Valley floor at its southern and southwestern boundaries east across the crest of the Sierra Nevada Mountains to Donner Lake and Lake Tahoe to the State line of Nevada. This distance from west to east is approximately 100 miles. The average width from north to south is 15 to 20 miles. Auburn is the county seat located at the hub of Interstate 80 and State Highway 49. Auburn is approximately 25 miles north east of the City of Sacramento.

### Physiographic Divisions

Four physiographic divisions are represented in Placer County, these include the following:

- 1) Valley plains of the Sacramento Valley. This area is generally considered major land resource area 17 under USDA Soil Conservation Service description of land resource areas.
- 2) The lower foothill region generally between the valley floor and elevation 1300 feet is classed as major land resource area 18.
- 3) The upper foothill and low mountain region east of Auburn.
- 4) The high mountains of the Sierra Nevada Range are described as major land resource area 22 or the Sierra Nevada Resource area.

### Drainage Areas

The County has 10 principal drainage areas as follows:

Drainage Area Approximate area in sq. miles Truckee River 243.9 Yuba River 20.2 Bear River 55.3 North Fork American River 294.2 Middle Fork American River 321.4 Rubicon River 183.5 Yankee Slough 28.7 Auburn Ravine - Coon Creek 220.2 Pleasant Grove Creek 66.4 Dry Creek ~ 1515 sq. miles

\* Note: For more *Detailed* information on Soils, county Drainage systems, Climatic Data, Population, Water Delivery Systems, and the various types of Land Use, contact the PCRCD office at 530-885-3046, ext. #6.

**Mission:** The Placer County Resource Conservation District is dedicated to identifying natural resource management and conservation issues, providing education and technical assistance or direction to private landowners/operators and local entities. Independently and in collaboration with other local, state and federal agencies and organizations, the RCD will implement programs and plans to conserve and enhance the natural resources of the District while inspiring and mobilizing public conservation awareness and involvement.

**Vision:** Our long-range goals are to develop and implement conservation assistance programs in the areas of watershed planning, water conservation, reduction of topsoil erosion, wildlife habitat improvement/enhancement/preservation, political communication and public education. Our 2004-2009 five year plan will be accomplished by providing services to private landowners, government agencies and other community groups.

PCRCD support for all Watershed activities will follow the following model:

- A. Ongoing involvement in Watershed Group (CRMP) meetings, including (as needed):
  - development of agendas, taking minutes, and regular attendance.
  - technical assistance (as requested)
  - grant administration (as requested)
  - assisting with specific tasks within grant funded projects.
  - encouraging local landowner/operator involvement.
- B. Determine available funding that can be used to implement on-the-ground practices, such as fuel load reduction activities, wildlife enhancement, erosion issues, water quality activities, training, educational workshops, etc.

**Guiding Principles:**

*We share a commitment to:*

- *Promoting the voluntary approach to resource management*
- *Advocating total resource management*
- *Building new alliances to expand our partnership*
- *Facilitating locally led decision-making*
- *Educating and informing the public about conservation*
- *Enhancing our grassroots delivery system*
- *Anticipating, identifying and addressing issues and goals*
- *Listening, anticipating and responding to our customers needs*
- *Fostering economically viable environmental policies*

*We will improve our efficiency and effectiveness by:*

- *Advocating, promoting, and practicing teamwork*
- *Breaking down interagency barriers*
- *Communicating, coordinating, and cooperating*

- *Eliminating duplication of efforts*
- *Offering opportunities for mutual training*
- *Empowering people to make decisions*
- *Emphasizing cooperation*
- *Putting quality first*
- *Striving for continuous improvement*

**Goal 1: Provide on-the-ground technical assistance and support on-the-ground projects with urban and rural landowners, managers and users.**

**Objective 1a: General technical assistance** (*implementation by RCD Directors, RCD staff and NRCS staff*)

- Action 1a.1: Continue to provide general technical assistance as specified in the District's agreement with Placer County  
*Time frame:* ongoing, with annual agreement
- Action 1a.2: Continue to provide general technical assistance and erosion control training as specified in the District's agreement with municipalities  
*Time frame:* ongoing, with annual agreement
- Action 1a.3: Use existing and create new networks for public input into issue identification  
*Time frame:* ongoing
- Action 1a.4: Develop a partnership with the Nevada Irrigation District and the Placer County Water Agency to provide the following:
- Water conservation assistance to water users. Assist in the implementation of water conservation measures with at least 10 agricultural water users  
*Time frame:* ongoing
  - Water efficiency goals (planning and consultation)  
*Time frame:* as needed
  - Vegetation management goals (aquatic weed control, fuel load reduction, invasive species control etc.)  
*Time frame:* as needed
  - FERC re-licensing process  
*Time frame:* as needed
- Action 1a.5: Develop and maintain a list of companies (including typical fees) that provide on-the-ground treatment (e.g., mastication, chipping, livestock browsing, etc.)  
*Time frame:* ongoing (updated at least annually)
- Action 1a.6: Develop workshops on key resource management topics  
*Time frame:* annually

**Objective 1b: Specific assistance** (*implementation by RCD Directors, RCD staff and NRCS staff*)

- Action 1b.1: Continue to support agriculture in Placer County:
- Develop local cost share program (e.g. a miniature Environmental Quality Incentives Program) by creating a financial reserve  
*Time frame:* to be determined
  - Assist grape growers in increasing acreage planted to grapes  
*Time frame:* as needed
  - Provide a small spray rig to Placer County landowners to assist in noxious and invasive weed control  
*Time frame:* to be determined

- Action 1b.2: Continue to support Fire Safe activities within Placer County and adjoining watersheds:
- Support the Placer County Chipper Program (through collaboration with Placer County and CDF)  
*Time frame:* ongoing
  - Support Watershed Groups in hazardous fuels reduction, public information, Fire Wise Communities programs, and demonstration projects  
*Time frame:* as needed
  - Continue to conduct 4291 inspections each year in both urban and rural communities. Obtain grant funding from the Bureau of Land Management and the California Department of Forestry. Encourage fire districts to enlarge the program in Local Responsibility Areas (LRAs)  
*Time frame:* ongoing
  - Support completion and/or maintenance of demonstration projects (including shaded fuel breaks, fire safe landscaping, etc.) serving “communities-at-risk” in Placer County  
*Time frame:* as needed
- Action 1b.3: Continue to support landowner/operator-based watershed management activities that address forest and rangeland health, water quality and wildfire prevention. Watersheds include American River, Bear River, Auburn Ravine/Coon Creek, Truckee River, Dry Creek, Pleasant Grove Curry Creek and the Sacramento River Watersheds.

**Goal 2:** Provide public education regarding resource use and conservation. (*implementation by RCD Directors, RCD staff and NRCS staff*)

**Objective 2a:** Develop, identify and support resource education programs for residents, college students, and students in grades K-12

- Action 2a.1: Continue to provide resource media and relevant publications:
- Continue to update and publish revisions to existing publications such as the stream care guide, healthy forest practices, etc. Prepare new handouts as necessary  
*Time frame:* ongoing
  - Sponsor subscription to the *American Farmland Trust* magazine for local libraries and high schools.  
*Time frame:* upon Board approval
  - Develop a scholarship fund  
*Time frame:* upon Board approval
- Action 2a.2: Communicate conservation goals and activities to the public
- Provide assistance to school groups and classes for field trips to visit farms, ranches, and other agricultural operations to observe and learn about agriculture in Placer County.  
This assistance would consist of providing funds for transportation (via buses or other means) for a program to be administered by Placer County Office of Education (or Auburn Education Foundation) to distribute to groups or classes in need of transportation funding assistance.

PCRCD could provide a small amount of “seed money” to establish the program, and could pursue grants from foundations (such as the Auburn United Indian Community /Thunder Valley Foundation, Auburn Community Foundation, etc.) to fund a larger scale program.

*Time frame:* to be determined

- Establish a program with Seniors First or other organizations serving senior citizens to provide transportation for seniors to Farmers Markets in Placer County. The goals of this program would be (1) to provide assistance to seniors through access to healthy, seasonal produce and a more nutritious diet; (2) to furnish an opportunity for seniors to “get out” by participating in a wholesome, vibrant experience; and (3) to support the direct marketing efforts of local producers.

*Time frame:* to be determined

- Upgrade fair display

*Time frame:* to be determined

- Develop a traveling display regarding agriculture for local libraries

*Time frame:* to be determined

- Develop Backyard Conservation workshops

*Time frame:* to be determined

- Support safety training for agricultural and forestry workers

*Time frame:* to be determined

- Conduct a workshop on California Farmlink and other farmland conservation options

*Time frame:* to be determined

**Objective 2b: Develop, identify and support community resource education programs through partnerships with Placer Nature Center, Urban Forestry Group, American River Watershed Institute, Placer Adult School, 49er ROP, Placer County Transportation Agency, Placer County Office of Education, Seniors First/Senior Link, etc.**

Action 2b.1: Continue to support activities of partner organizations:

- Provide technical assistance and financial support for programs and publications of these organizations

*Time frame:* ongoing

- Support collaboration of resource management agencies and local citizens groups

*Time frame:* ongoing

Action 2b.2: Assist partners in grant funding and management:

- Identify sources of public and private grants

*Time frame:* ongoing

- Assist in proposals, budgeting and grant management

*Time frame:* as needed

**Goal 3: Address urban and rural forestland issues through technical assistance and education.**  
(implementation by RCD Directors, RCD staff and NRCS staff)

**Objective 3a:      Develop and improve greater community awareness of forest management, urban forestry and fire safe practices.**

- Action 3a.1: Continue to support activities of partner organizations:
- Continue District partnership with CDF in its inspection and education program  
*Time frame:*      ongoing
  - Assist in support of the Placer County Fire Safe Alliance and local Fire Safe Councils  
*Time frame:*      ongoing
  - Maintain proposed project list for Fire Safe projects  
*Time frame:*      ongoing
  - Expand the Urban Forestry program to Granite Bay, Colfax, and Foresthill with demonstration sites  
*Time frame:*      to be determined
  - Create awareness of forestland issues through neighborhood “coffee klatches” and workshops  
*Time frame:*      ongoing
  - Work with local high schools to involve seniors in forestry-related projects  
*Time frame:*      ongoing
- Action 3a.2: Provide technical assistance to landowners and managers of forestlands:
- Develop a series of articles or possibly a newspaper insert on forest management issues  
*Time frame:*      to be determined
  - Provide erosion control assistance to forest landowners  
*Time frame:*      ongoing

**Objective 3b:      Pursue research and development of technology alternatives, such as Biomass Utilization, for utilization of forest products.**

- Action 3b.1: Assist in the development of a biomass facility in Foresthill:
- Support interested local organizations, public agencies and private industry in determining feasibility of facility  
*Time frame:*      as needed
  - Provide technical assistance and advocacy as requested  
*Time frame:*      to be determined
- Action 3b.2: Collaborate with research institutions and private industry in emerging technologies
- Monitor progress in “Thermal Depolymerization” and other innovative concepts for utilizing forest products (and other sources of organic material, including agricultural waste and the urban waste stream)  
*Time frame:*      to be determined
  - Provide technical assistance and advocacy as requested  
*Time frame:*      as needed

**Goal 4:      Provide for the long-term organizational effectiveness of the District. (implementation by RCD Directors and staff)**

**Objective 4a: Restructure District organization.**

- Action 4a.1: Complete personnel and financial management guidelines  
*Time frame:* upon Board approval
- Action 4a.2: Restructure staff positions
- Establish and implement RCD Manager as staff position  
*Time frame:* upon Board approval
  - Maintain opportunities for contracting with consultants for the implementation of specific projects as appropriate  
*Time frame:* ongoing
- Action 4a.3: Administer personnel policies, contracts and subcontracts as approved by RCD Board  
*Time frame:* ongoing

**Objective 4b: Improve District committee effectiveness.**

- Action 4b.1: Energize committees and subcommittees (and consider restructuring)  
*Time frame:* as soon as possible
- Action 4b.2: Establish 5 year objectives and 1 year action items for each committee
- Establish and implement RCD Manager as staff position  
*Time frame:* as soon as possible
  - Establish staffing subcommittee to carry out Board actions  
*Time frame:* upon Board approval

**Objective 4c: Improve District internal communications.**

- Action 4c.1: Foster better communication between Directors  
*Time frame:* ongoing
- Action 4c.2: Facilitate the use of email for district communications  
*Time frame:* ongoing

**Objective 4d: Review and codify District policies and partnerships**

- Action 4d.1: Develop policies regarding contracting and other issues  
*Time frame:* as soon as possible
- Action 4d.2: Identify the District's role with respect to watersheds  
*Time frame:* as needed
- Action 4d.3: Coordinate the management functions of local watershed groups  
*Time frame:* as needed

**Objective 4e: Improve District financial resources**

- Action 4e.1: Maintain tax-base funding

*Time frame:* ongoing

Action 4e.2: Continue contracts with Placer County and municipalities

*Time frame:* ongoing, annually

Action 4e.3: Continue collecting fees for grant management and administrative services

*Time frame:* ongoing

Action 4e.4: Establish a capital fund and implement facilities improvements

*Time frame:* as available

**Goal 5: Address critical public policy issues with a particular emphasis on agricultural and resource management issues. (implementation by RCD Directors and staff)**

**Objective 5a: Continue District support for NRCS activities.**

Action 5a.1: Continue to partner with NRCS to implement the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Community Technical Assistance, and Farm Bill programs

*Time frame:* ongoing

Action 5a.2: Lead the local working group for NRCS

*Time frame:* ongoing

**Objective 5b: Improve resource management goals and conservation activities through informing public policy.**

Action 5b.1: Maintain a presence at state and federal levels and on a watershed scale regarding public policies and implementation strategies (e.g., water quality monitoring, forest management, etc.)

*Time frame:* ongoing

Action 5b.2: Continue to coordinate and/or participate in field trips on timber, agricultural and fire related issues for legislators and staff

*Time frame:* ongoing

Action 5b.3: Consider creating District subcommittees to provide sound, accurate information regarding key policy issues

*Time frame:* as needed

**Objective 5c: Continue efforts within Placer County to manage resources, preserve agriculture, restore and maintain health habitats and water quality through informed land use policy.**

Action 5c.1: Improve understanding of Placer County General Plan, Municipal Plans of cities, and Community Plans

- Provide a copy of the Placer County General Plan to RCD Directors

*Time frame:* as soon as possible

- Conduct a workshop on the Placer County General Plan

*Time frame:* ongoing

Action 5c.2: Assist policy makers and staff of appropriate county departments and public agencies in their understanding of resource management and conservation issues

- Participate in policy development in the areas of land use, general plan, water quality and water quantity

*Time frame:* ongoing

- Develop presentations on resource issues for high level policymakers

*Time frame:* ongoing

Action 5c.3: Continue to improve stakeholder involvement in policy issues

- Continue partnership with agricultural organizations on policy review and formulation

*Time frame:* ongoing

- Develop resource-related forums to facilitate communication between all stakeholders

*Time frame:* as needed