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El Dorado County Resource Conservation District  
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*El Dorado County Resource Conservation District*

*FY 2006/ 2010 Strategic Plan*

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**Mission Statement**

*“To promote the responsible stewardship of our natural resources through education, planning, and project assistance”*

***Introduction***

The El Dorado County Resource Conservation District was organized to address resource management problems and promote sound management of natural resources in El Dorado County. It works with landowners on a voluntary basis to promote good stewardship. This Strategic Plan defines the objectives we hope to accomplish in the next 5 years.

We are currently in a time of significant change. In the course of developing this plan, the District identified the following changes occurring now and to 2005: more money becoming available from state and federal agencies, more needs on the ground, a growing focus on solving resource problems in a non-regulatory environment, changes in the patterns of rural land use and ownership, changes in environmental laws, an emphasis on coordinated watershed planning, and emerging technologies. The District Board of Directors considered these changes, the District’s mission and its goals, and developed this Strategic Plan.

This Plan's objectives are in four areas of strategic focus: Organization, Fire, Watersheds, and Education. For each strategic area, the District has developed an overall goal:

1. **Organization:** Develop the District’s capacity to plan and deliver conservation programs.
2. **Fire:** Significantly reduce the risk to life, property, and watershed health from wildfire through support of fuel management projects and public information programs.
3. **Watershed:** Coordinate and facilitate the development of a watershed scale resource management and restoration program for the South Fork of the American River, and for the Cosumnes River. Work with all interested stakeholders and agencies to address watershed scale problems and opportunities.
4. **Education:** Help to fill the training and resource management information needs of homeowners, landowners, and resource users.

Each year the District will consider this Plan and the objectives and develop an Annual Plan that lays out the steps that should be accomplished in the coming year.

## ***History***

The District was originally formed as the Central El Dorado Soil Conservation District on July 30, 1940, by election of the landowners pursuant to the provisions of the California Public Resources Code. It was the second RCD in California. The board of directors elected at the time of formation included the following: Roy M. Marks, L. W. Veerkamp, Leo N. Ench, Steven A. Bivans, and W. J. Clark.

Prior to the district organization the area was an Erosion Control Demonstration Area administered by the Soil Erosion Service. The problem of serious erosion in hillside orchards was the principal reason for district organization. In an early action by the original board of directors, they declared that the purpose of the district is "to conserve, improve and properly use all the soil, water, wildlife, plant, and related resources for the benefit of all the people."

In subsequent years others who served on the board were the following: Roy M. Marks, L. W. Veerkamp, Leo N. Ench, Steven A. Bivans, and W. J. Clark, R. C. Wallace, John D'Agostini, Douglas Stodick, Dave Barnett, Paul Dickey, Dr. Walter Krell, William Klare, Robert Mills, George Volz, Robert D'Agostini, John Forni, Harold Veerkamp, Bert Marchini, F. Gregory Boeger, Albert Harris, Lloyd Walker, Randy Hansen, Kenneth Johnson, and Vern Gerwer.

The current directors are: Robert Beegle, Ron Huston, John James, Carlan Meyer, and Dale Pierce. The current associate directors are: Peter Melnicoe.

## ***Geography***

The original district contained 28,684 acres with the boundaries coinciding with the El Dorado Irrigation District. Over the years transfers of land and additions to the district resulted in the current total of 617,241 acres. This area covers all of the land south of the South Fork of the American River within El Dorado County excluding the Tahoe basin.

The elevations of the district range from about 300 feet in the Latrobe area on the southwest to 9,963 feet at Pyramid Peak in the Sierra Nevada range. There is no great expanse of flat land in the district. The slopes vary from gently rolling foothills and divide to steep canyon sides and rugged, rocky mountain summits. The principal watershed drainages are the South Fork of the American River and the South, Middle, and North Forks of the Cosumnes River.

*(Insert Map)*

## ***Mission Statement***

*"To promote the responsible stewardship of our natural resources through education, planning, and project assistance"*

## ***Our Vision***

El Dorado County Resource Conservation District:

1. Is an effective provider for on-the-ground conservation projects
2. Creates long-term relationships with conservation partners and the public

3. Communicates with landowners about their natural resource concerns including watershed improvement, fuels and vegetation management, and erosion control

## ***Strategic Area - Organization***

### **Develop the District's capacity to plan and deliver conservation programs.**

Discussion: The District is in a period of growth. In the last several years it has taken on new resource and watershed management roles in the County. It has been the facilitator and coordinator in the preparation of grant applications which involve multiple agencies, including the County Department of Transportation, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, and the U. S. Forest Service. When a Proposition 204 grant and the CALFED South Fork American River Stewardship Strategy were funded, the RCD became lead contractor and subcontracted with these other agencies to perform their tasks.

As the county's population increases, so will the demands on the District. In particular the District will probably play an increasing role in cooperative watershed planning and management, and in the preparation and administration of grants for watershed projects. These roles will place increasing demands and responsibilities on the District Directors and staff. Because of these circumstances, the District should examine and improve its organizational capacity.

#### Objectives:

##### Board of Directors:

1. Actively involve the Board of Directors in RCD business.
2. Recruit Associate Directors who have skills in areas needed by the District.
3. Organize subcommittees to increase the efficiency and decision-making ability of the Board.

##### Relationships with Partners:

1. Further develop relations with agency and conservation partners.
2. Maintain "on time, within budget" performance on grants and projects.

##### Personnel:

1. Increase the RCD's ability to select, develop, and retain talented permanent employees.
2. Promote the RCD as a good place for resource professionals to work within the community.
3. Develop and implement sound comprehensive personnel policies.

##### Finances:

1. Maintain a reserve account sufficient to cover contingencies.
2. Prepare a written overhead rate policy.
3. Assure the RCD's financial integrity by having regular financial audits.
4. Improve the RCD's financial reports to give the best information possible to manage the organization.
5. Secure a continuous project funding source for the RCD.

##### Contracts and Contract Law:

1. Improve the District's abilities to prepare and understand legal contracts and bidding procedures.

##### Planning:

1. Prepare an annual work plan and manage the RCD accordingly, making changes as needed.

## ***Strategic Area - Fire***

### **Significantly reduce the risk to life, property, and watershed health from wildfire through support of fuel management projects and public information programs.**

Discussion: One of the most significant resource issues in the District is the threat of wildfire, and the attendant risk to life, property and watershed health. Increasing residential development in the County means the urban/wildland interface is growing. In addition, fire suppression over the last 50 to 100 years has led to significant fuel loads. As a consequence, residential fire safety is an increasingly important issue. The District and other agencies will need to make significant efforts to reduce fuel loads, establish community defense zones, and mobilize homeowners and landowners to make their properties firesafe.

#### Objectives:

1. Work with CDF, Eldorado NF, local volunteer fire departments, UC Extension, and the County to implement a coordinated plan for fuel reduction for the District.
2. Deliver information to private landowners on fire safety for private residences and lots. Work with subdivision homeowners' groups on their fire safety programs.
3. Work with homeowners' groups, fire agencies, and contractors to develop new mechanisms for cooperative fuel management work: e.g. mutual benefit fuel management districts, cost-share programs, and group contracting.
4. Work with CDF to develop and fund a community "chipper day" program.
5. Support development of private businesses, which provide fuel reduction and management services. Develop a list of contractors for public distribution.
6. Encourage and/or organize volunteer service programs that do fire safety work.

## ***Watershed***

### **Coordinate and facilitate the development of watershed scale resource management and restoration programs for the South Fork of the American River and the Cosumnes River. Work with all interested stakeholders and agencies to address watershed scale problems and opportunities.**

Discussion: The District is in a unique position to coordinate and facilitate watershed planning and restoration efforts in our watersheds. Unlike most state and federal agencies, the District is not the manager of specific lands nor is it narrowly focused on a specific resource or mission. In addition, the District enjoys the trust and support of private landowners because of the voluntary nature of our programs.

The District should facilitate and coordinate the formation of watershed groups that include public agencies, private landowners and land managers, and all other stakeholders. The Districts can use currently available funding to begin the development of a Coordinated Resource Management Plan for the Middle and South Forks of the American River. Short-term priorities should be to identify restoration work which can begin as soon as funding is available, and to create a long-range plan to guide future work.

In addition the District should remain involved in the El Dorado County Noxious Weed Management Group, and should provide technical support to the county.

Objectives:

1. Facilitate the formation of watershed groups. These groups should be independent entities, but the Districts may provide coordination and administrative support.
2. Develop with the watershed groups a list of priority projects. Prepare grant proposals, work plans, and funding for priority projects.
3. Work with watershed groups on the development of watershed management plans that identify long term goals, objectives, and project areas.
4. Work with the El Dorado County Noxious Weed Management Group on noxious weed management in the District.
5. Work with the NRCS to provide review of projects under the County Department of Transportation grading ordinance.
6. Encourage landowner participation in state and federal cost-share programs.
7. Develop a network of experts in watershed restoration and improvement, and identify and develop areas of expertise within the Districts and staff.

### ***Education***

**Help to fill the training and resource management information needs of homeowners, landowners, and resource users.**

Discussion: The District has a significant role to play in filling the resource management information and education needs of landowners and homeowners in the County, along with other agencies including the University Extension, CDF, the County, and water purveyors. The RCD should identify instances where it has capabilities or interests and should coordinate efforts with the other agencies.

The District's educational strengths include: greater flexibility in staffing than other government agencies, the ability to obtain grants targeted to RCD's, skills in administering grants, and a broad countywide focus.

Our success in education will depend in part on our visibility and public outreach.

Objectives:

1. Develop an outreach and education program to guide the District's activities.
2. Keep County Supervisors informed of the District's programs and the importance of the County's support.
3. Develop a database of resource management information to meet the District's needs.
4. Build a website to provide an instant source of resource management information.
5. Make fire safety a concern of every resident potentially threatened by wildfire. Work in cooperation with CDF and ENF.
6. Make noxious weeds an issue of concern to affected land managers in the District, and make weed management information readily accessible to them in cooperation with the El Dorado County Noxious Weed Management Group and the University Extension.
7. Support natural resources education and curriculum in public schools, including the Watershed Education Summit (WES), Project WET, and a stream monitoring program.
8. Inform and educate the public on coordinated watershed management planning efforts and opportunities for involvement.
9. Prepare periodic white papers on resource issues of concern in the District.