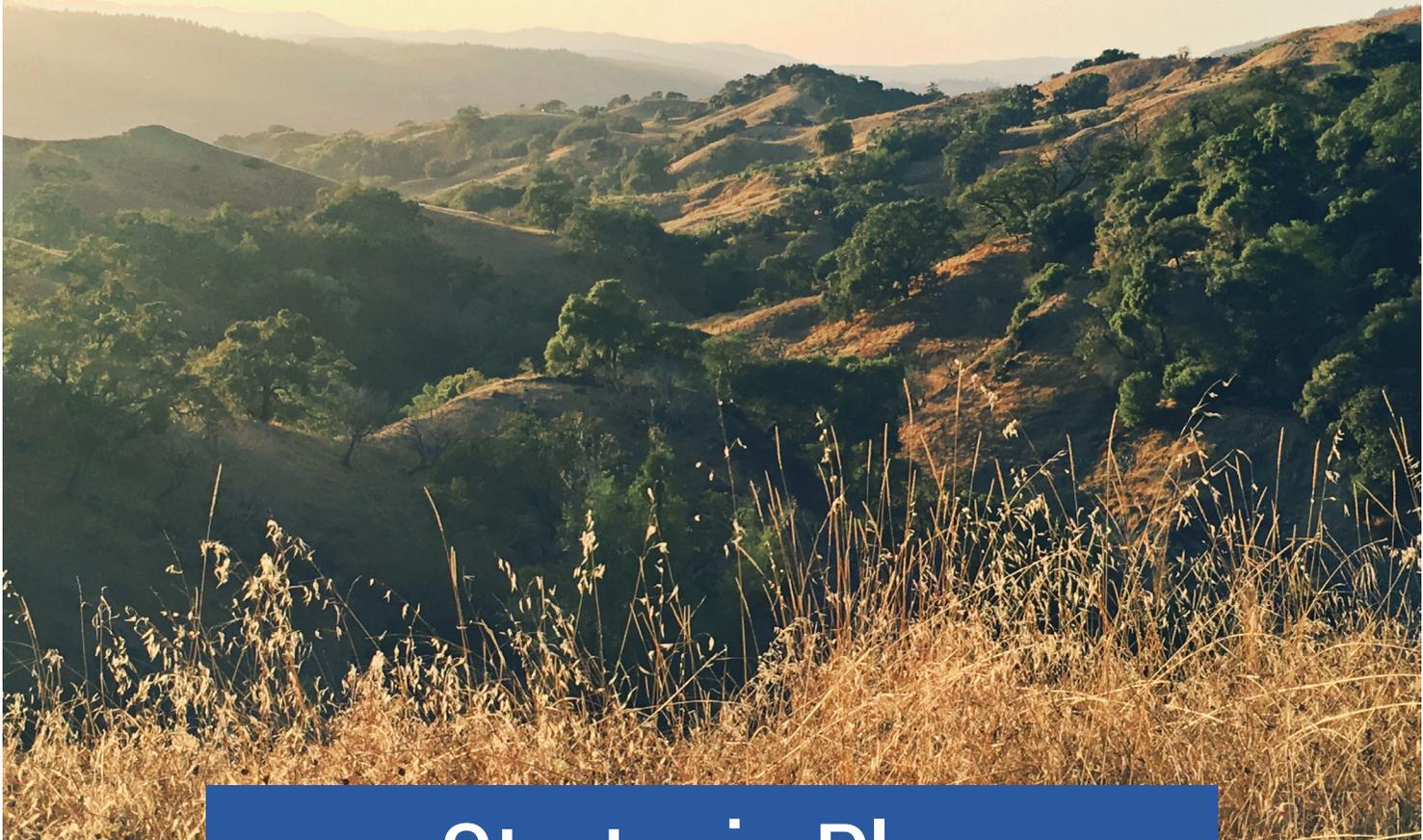




Resource Conservation District
Mendocino County



Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024

Approved by the Board of Directors on 17 November 2020

MCRCD conserves, protects, and restores
wild and working landscapes to enhance
the health of the water, soil, and forests
of Mendocino County

Mendocino County Resource Conservation District (MCRCD)

(in order of length of service, with current position, and year joined)

Board of Directors

Craig Blencowe, Director, 1991

Peter Braudrick, Director, 2003

Cathy Monroe, Director, 2016

Lisa Bauer, Director, 2016

Vacant, Director

Associate Directors

Geri Hulse-Stephens, Associate Director, 2003

Jennifer Riddell, Associate Director, 2019

Tony Orth, Associate Director, 2020

John Hansen, Associate Director, 2020

District Staff

Patty Madigan, Senior Conservation Programs Manager, 2001

Linda MacElwee, Watershed Coordinator, Strategic Planner, 2005

Ursula Butler, Business Manager, 2008

Joe Scriven, Assistant Executive Dir, Fisheries Biologist, 2011

Deborah Stanger Edelman, Water Program Manager, 2013

Chris Bartow, Land Stewardship Program Manager, 2014

Mary Mayeda, Forest Program Manager, 2016

Jacob Stubberfield, Field Operations, 2016

Marisela de Santa Anna, Project Interpreter, 2017

Megan McCluer, Executive Director, 2018

Katy Brantley, Soils Program Manager, 2019

Robert Kunicki, Assistant Land Manager, 2019

Bryce Hutchins, GrizzlyCorp Fellow, 2020

Cover photo: Linda MacElwee

Letter from the Chair of the Board and the Executive Director

Climate change has brought vast changes in our natural environment, and in just the last five years, floods, drought, and repeated catastrophic wildfires have overwhelmed Mendocino County. The Mendocino County Resource Conservation District (MCRCD) has been able to pivot quickly to help address near-term issues while continuing our work on long-term landscape-level needs. Our flexibility is one of our greatest strengths. The versatility of our staff and their varied expertise have allowed us, through thick and thin, to continue to deliver on our mission to conserve, protect, and restore the natural resources of Mendocino County. This 5-year Strategic Plan was written with a broad perspective: to remain loyal to our mission for the long-term sustainability of our environment, to deal with the impacts of climate change, to maintain flexibility to address the near-term needs of our community that vary year to year, and to recognize that our mission is embedded in a parallel goal for environmental equity and inclusivity.

The MCRCD receives about 1% of our budget as an annual allocation from the county, with most funding coming from competitive state and federal grants. Over the years, our outstanding staff, who are accomplished scientists, authors, and project managers, have secured numerous conservation and restoration project awards from a variety of sources. These funds have enabled us to sustain our work in natural resource stewardship to enhance the health of the water, soil, and forests of Mendocino County. The years ahead are likely to be very challenging. The long-term economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the now-annual catastrophic fires is unknown at the time of this writing. Creating a roadmap to maintain our focus on the primary mission and overall program objectives will be critical as we plan for the next five years.

The MCRCD values the environment of our unique county, but also our diverse community of residents. We are non-regulatory and non-political and therefore can represent a neutral point of view for discussions relating to the natural environment. We acknowledge that Mendocino County was originally the lands of over ten Native American tribes and that Native peoples continue to live and steward the land here. Black, Indigenous, and people of color have been, and continue to be, systematically oppressed in this county, as elsewhere. The MCRCD has made a commitment to educate ourselves to these social issues, to always consider diversity and equity in our policies and actions, and to embrace leadership in environmental justice. This Strategic Plan will help guide the Board and Staff to make informed decisions, aligned with our guiding principles, and ensure wild and working landscapes, and the people who depend on them, will thrive long into the future.



*Peter Braudrick
Chair of the Board*

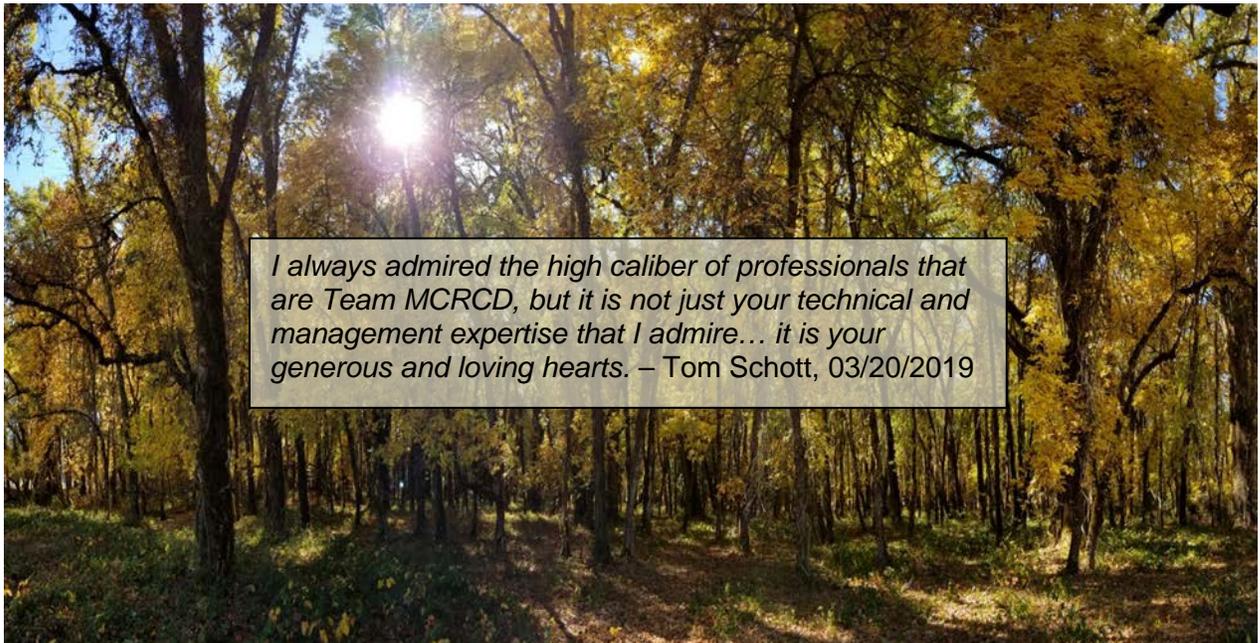


*Megan McCluer
Executive Director*

Thank you to the Strategic Planning Team: Thank you to the Board of Directors, Associate Directors, District Staff, and the many partners of the Mendocino County Resource Conservation District in the development of this five-year **Strategic Plan 2020 - 2024**.



MCRCD - Strategic Planning Retreat at the Grace Hudson Museum, February 6th, 2020
Left to Right, Back row: Robert Kunicki, Craig Blencowe, Megan McCluer, Jacob Stubberfield, Ursula Butler, Marisela de Santa Anna, Mary Mayeda, Geri Hulse-Stephens, Chris Bartow, Katy Brantley, Joe Scriven, and Tony Orth. Front Row: Linda MacElwee, Patty Madigan, Deborah Stanger-Edelman, Lisa Bauer, Jennifer Riddell, and Cathy Monroe. Not shown: Tom Schott, Peter Braudrick, John Hansen



I always admired the high caliber of professionals that are Team MCRCD, but it is not just your technical and management expertise that I admire... it is your generous and loving hearts. – Tom Schott, 03/20/2019

Oregon Ash Forest in Willits, CA

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Introduction to the Strategic Plan

The mission of the Mendocino County Resource Conservation District (MCRCD or “District”) is to conserve, protect, and restore wild and working landscapes to enhance the health of the water, soil, and forests in Mendocino County. The MCRCD is a non-regulatory, public agency providing conservation leadership through technical, financial, and educational support for voluntary stewardship of natural resources on public and private lands in our community.

This Strategic Plan is a top-level planning document for MCRCD to set clear direction over all aspects of its operation and services, and it provides a framework for decision making over the next five years.

This planning process began with a survey of the District’s directors, staff, partners, and customers. The District’s mission, guiding principles, and natural resource priorities were developed by the Board and staff and reviewed in a workshop setting. Then, within the framework of that structure and the business environment, strategies and goals were developed to sustain and improve the District over the next five years. This Strategic Plan seeks to strengthen and build upon core values and capabilities, address opportunities for improvement, leverage strengths in areas identified for growth or continuation, and provide a mechanism for periodic reviews and updates to the MCRCD’s strategy.

Overarching drivers for the whole organization are mitigating for the adverse effects of [Climate Change](#) and championing [Environmental Equity](#). These ever-present concerns influence every aspect of our work in natural resource conservation.

The District is organized into five core program areas:

1. **Water Resources** – addressing water quality and water quantity for the environment and human supply
2. **Soil Health and Agriculture** – encouraging innovative practices for improved soil conditions and climate resilient agricultural systems
3. **Forest Health and Resiliency** – promoting active management using best practices for healthy and resilient forests on both public and private lands
4. **Land Stewardship** – caring for lands that the District is responsible for, including native wildlife, flora, and fauna
5. **Operations** – ensuring effective and efficient District organization and driving diversity, equity, and inclusion in all we do.

These categories provide an organizational structure and clarity for describing our scope and mission. However, all District activities are deeply intertwined, and every project overlaps several categories, especially in the environmental benefits they help accomplish.

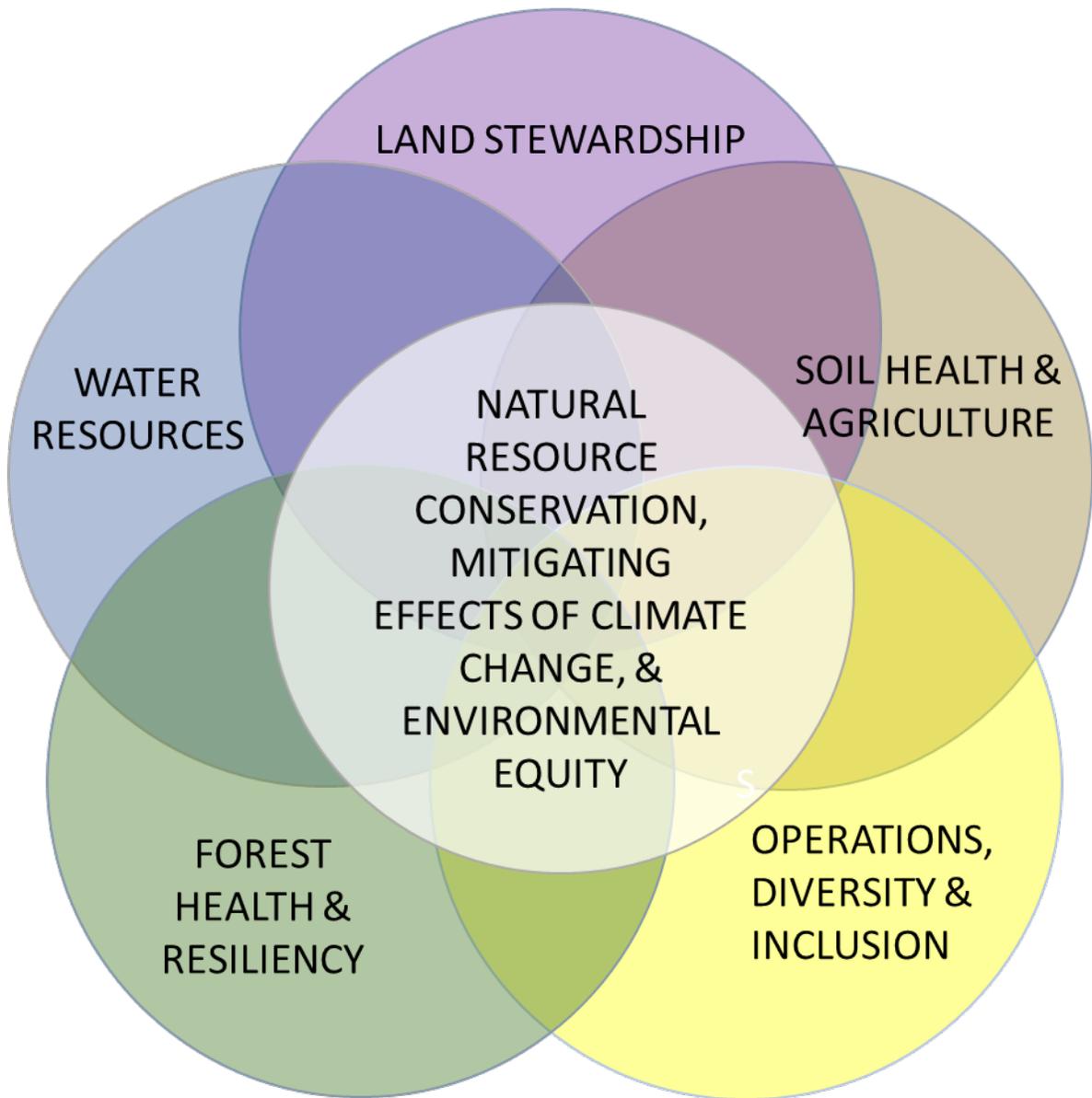


Figure 1. All areas of natural resource conservation overlap one another, and climate change and environmental equity are ever-present concerns that influence all our work.

Background

Resource Conservation Districts are one of California's earliest grassroots conservation organizations – identifying conservation needs and supporting local land managers in implementing solutions on a voluntary basis. The catastrophic soil losses of the Dust Bowl Era sparked national and state recognition that soil erosion was the greatest challenge to the country's ability to feed its people and be a leader in agricultural production. Non-regulatory Conservation Districts were conceived by the federal government and were later sanctioned by the State of California in 1938 to assist local land managers in addressing a variety of soil, water, and forest conservation challenges.

The Mendocino County Resource Conservation District (MCRCD) is a "Special District," a legal subdivision of the state, organized under Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code. MCRCD was formed as an independent special district under the provisions of the California Soil Conservation District Act and was established by election on May 14, 1945. At that time, it was named the Willits Soil Conservation District and was comprised of 146,000 acres in and around the Little Lake Valley. In 1956, the District became essentially county-wide apart from the incorporated areas of the county. Today, the District's Sphere of Influence includes all 2.2 million acres of forest, rangeland, production agriculture, and cities and towns in Mendocino County.

MCRCD works with communities to voluntarily conserve, protect, and restore natural resources in a landscape that supports agriculture, timberland, wild lands, and urban areas. We provide technical assistance, educational programs, and monitoring and assessment services to landowners and residents, and we secure millions of dollars in grant funding to help meet local and regional conservation goals. The District serves as a clearinghouse of information on natural resources conservation, technical guidance, permitting, and financial assistance programs for landowners and managers interested in implementing conservation practices or habitat enhancement. MCRCD uses a watershed approach in addressing natural resource issues, collaborating closely with federal, state, county, and other local resource agencies and organizations. The District also works closely with industry associations, community groups, businesses, schools, and the general public.

Leadership and governance of MCRCD is provided by a five-member volunteer Board of Directors, which consists of local residents with diverse backgrounds and interests. The roles of the Directors are to establish priorities, set policies and guidelines, advocate, secure funding, and oversee general operations. Day-to-day management of the MCRCD is conducted by an Executive Director and the work of the MCRCD is performed by a staff of natural resource and administrative professionals.

WHO WE ARE

The Mendocino County Resource Conservation District (MCRCD) is a non-regulatory, local agency supporting voluntary stewardship of natural resources on wild and working landscapes. Serving Mendocino County since 1945, MCRCD collaborates with private organizations, public agencies, family farms and individuals to conserve, protect and restore natural resources and meet conservation and regulatory objectives. We provide technical assistance, educational programs, monitoring, assessment services, and grant funding to help land managers meet their conservation goals.



SOIL PROGRAM

MCRCD partners with landowners on environmentally beneficial soil conservation practices and provides technical assistance to improve soil health and reduce erosion. Landowners can improve water retention, sequester carbon, increase production, improve pasture quality, and minimize erosion on working landscapes. MCRCD is a cofounder of the North Coast Soil Health Hub (soilhub.org).

OUR EXPERTISE

Our team of professional staff offer expertise in fisheries, water conservation, botany, forest management, and soil health. We assist with biological surveys, rural road inventory and upgrades, land management plans, carbon farming, stormwater pollution prevention, and native plant restoration.

OPERATIONS

MCRCD will provide effective, timely, and professional management of funds, facilities, and staffing for efficient operations of the organization and completion of the mission: *to conserve, protect and restore wild and working landscapes to enhance the health of water, soil, and forests of Mendocino County.*



WATER PROGRAM

Clean water and healthy streams are critically important to both human communities and aquatic ecosystems. Working with our conservation partners and willing landowners, water resources are stewarded through the promotion of water conservation best management practices, salmon stream habitat restoration, road-related erosion control and implementing flow enhancement strategies.

LAND STEWARDSHIP

LITTLE LAKE VALLEY RESTORATION

The Willits Bypass Mitigation Lands occupy approximately 2,085 acres located in the Little Lake Valley near the City of Willits. These public lands have been acquired for wetland mitigation associated with the construction of the Highway 101 Willits Bypass.

MCRCD has assumed the role of long-term managers of these lands and is responsible for all aspects of habitat and infrastructure maintenance, reporting and agency coordination, administration of agricultural programs and community outreach and education.



FOREST PROGRAM

MCRCD works to improve forest and oak woodland health through the promotion of resilient management and conservation practices. MCRCD helps landowners understand the ecology of their forestland and how to actively manage for multiple benefits, including fuel reduction, habitat enhancement, and watershed function.

Figure 2. Excerpts from the MCRCD Organizational Brochure, July 2019

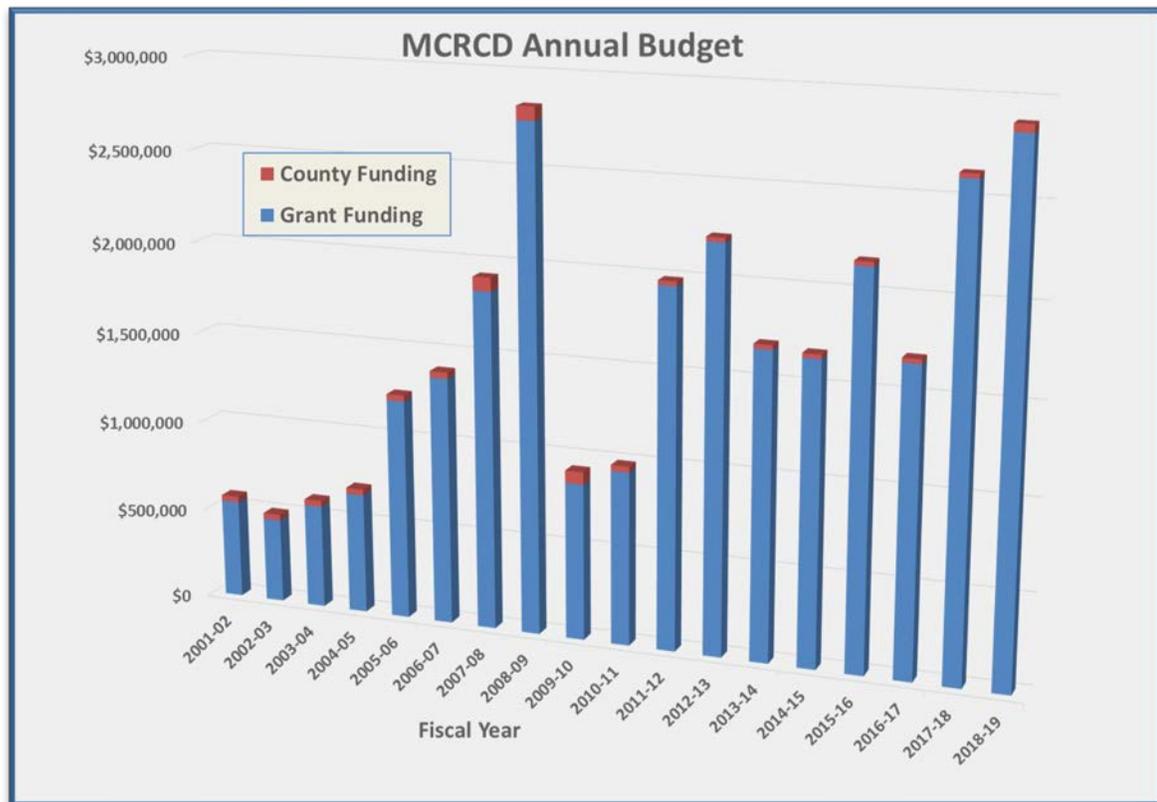


Figure 3. The Mendocino County Resource Conservation District annual budget as provided by the County of Mendocino (County Funding) and funds secured from competitive grants (Grant Funding).

Key publications that the MCRCD has developed over the years remain relevant and valuable resources and are available for download at : <https://mcrcd.org/resources/publications>.

- *Watershed Best Management Practices for Cannabis Growers and Other Rural Gardeners (in English & Spanish) 2018*
- *Handbook for Forest, Ranch and Rural Roads. A Guide for Planning, Designing, Constructing, Reconstructing, Upgrading, Maintaining and Closing Wildland Roads (in English & Spanish) 2015*
- *Rare and Endangered Plant Field Guide for Timber Harvest Plans in Coastal Mendocino County 2017*
- *Mendocino County Sustainable Agricultural Lands Strategy 2017*
- *Russian River Integrated Coastal Watershed Management Plan, 2012*

Guiding Principles

The MCRCD Board of Directors and staff reflected on our historical presence and began formulating a new approach to guiding the MCRCD into the future. The MCRCD is a “core-values-driven” organization where we have defined what matters to us most and incorporate that into everything we do. We consider the environmental, economic, and social short and long-term consequences of our decisions and management. We believe that if we do not address the social and economic needs, along with the environmental considerations in the process, we will struggle with sustaining any progress we have made in Mendocino County and as an organization. Our five main guiding principles are commitment to the mission, connection to the land and life in Mendocino County, quality of life for the people in the organization, commitment to social justice, and honoring Indigenous Peoples of Mendocino County.

Commitment to the Mission

- MCRCD’s mission is to conserve, protect, and restore wild and working landscapes to enhance the health of water, soil, and forests in Mendocino County.

Connection to the Land, People, and Wildlife in Mendocino County

- Honoring Indigenous Peoples’ connection to the land
- Mitigating the impacts of climate change
- Healthy, climate resilient soils, forests, grasslands, and water resources
- Rich in plant and animal biodiversity and climate resilient and regenerative landscapes
- Commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion of all peoples in all we do.

Quality of Life for the People at MCRCD

- Healthy life/work balance
- Meaningful, relevant, and joyful work
- Being part of a team, working together, celebrating diversity
- Manageable stress loads related to work

- Supportive and reciprocal relationships with partners and community
- Collaborative, cooperative, and supportive work environment
- Opportunities to learn, gain competencies, and increase skills
- Enjoy our work and celebrate our successes
- An actively engaged Board of Directors
- Clear, concise, compassionate, and respectful communication
- Rich, meaningful relationships
- Strong and diverse partnerships
- High staff retention
- Practice confidentiality and discretion, where applicable.

Commitment to Social Justice

- MCRCD opposes systemic racism and injustice. Racism and inequality are deeply antithetical to our core mission of assisting all people in Mendocino County in caring for natural resources. Fulfilling that mission involves eliminating barriers to participation, expanding the relevance of our program content to address environmental fairness and justice, and building community partnerships.
- MCRCD stands in solidarity with the Black community, Indigenous Peoples, and other People of Color (BIPOC).
- As an institution, we recognize that environmental stewardship and anti-racism must go hand in hand if we are to have a sustainable future. Thriving landscapes and strong economies require the full participation of all members of our society.
- MCRCD commits as an organization to looking inward to address ways we can better serve our community and fulfill our mission, which involves listening to the needs, knowledge, and ideas of BIPOC communities.

Respect and Honor Indigenous Peoples of Mendocino County

- MCRCD recognizes Indigenous Peoples as original stewards of this land and appreciates their close cultural ties to the natural environment.
- MCRCD will strive to ensure our policies, projects, and behaviors honor their Traditional Ecological Knowledge and care of the land.

- We honor and respect the tribes that lived and continue to live in Mendocino County:

Cahto Tribe of the Laytonville Rancheria
Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians
Guidiville Band of Pomo Indians
Hopland Band of Pomo Indians
Manchester Band of Pomo Indians of the Manchester – Point Arena Rancheria
Pinoleville Pomo Nation
Potter Valley Tribe
Redwood Valley Little River Band of Pomo Indians
Round Valley Indian Tribes (Concow, Nomlaki, Pit River, Pomo, Wailaki, Yuki)
Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians
Yokayo Tribe of Indians

Honoring Indigenous Peoples and their lands is a small gesture that becomes more meaningful when aligned with specific actions. The MCRCD has listed in this strategic plan:

- Collaborate with the Tribes to develop a land acknowledgement statement that could be spoken prior to workshops and field activities to recognize territorial lands and native peoples, past and present, in Mendocino County.
- The Water Resource Program is striving to develop a tribally-led stream and salmonid monitoring program, and working with Tribes to address water security issues.
- The Soil Health and Agriculture Program aspires to learn and incorporate Tribal Ecological Knowledge and practices in soil health projects around the County.
- The Forest Health program has committed to developing lasting partnerships with the Tribes to identify projects of value and benefit to the Tribes.
- The Land Stewardship program has committed to have regular and frequent participation of tribal members on the Willits mitigation lands and include their input on how the land is managed.

These guiding principles, along with our overarching focus on climate change and environmental equity, affect our entire organization and influence how we implement MCRCD's programs.

Climate Change

Climate change is the global phenomenon of climate transformation characterized by the changes in the usual climate of the planet (regarding temperature, precipitation, and wind) that are especially caused by human activities. As a result of unbalancing the weather of Earth, the sustainability of the planet's ecosystems is under threat, as well as the future of humankind and the stability of the global economy. Climate change, environmental hazards, and pollution affect all, but they often impact communities of color the hardest, and these communities often have the fewest resources to cope with the effects. MCRCD is committed to working to mitigate against the adverse effects of climate change and to ensure all residents of Mendocino County can benefit from the environmental projects we champion.

Environmental Equity

Environmental equity means protection from environmental hazards as well as access to environmental benefits, regardless of income, race, and other characteristics. Environmental equity describes a region in which no single group or community faces disadvantages in dealing with environmental hazards, disasters, or pollution. No one should need extreme wealth or political connections to protect the well-being of his or her family and community. Everyone deserves a clean and healthy environment. All communities must have clean air and water, and one's life expectancy should never be determined by zip code, race, or income. Building a clean environment can open a vast array of new economic opportunities, bringing good paying jobs and investment to communities of color that are disproportionately impacted by pollution and climate change. For this to happen, equity must be at the core of efforts to fight climate change, poverty, and pollution.

The five guiding principles, (commitment to the mission, connection to the land and life in Mendocino County, quality of life for the people, commitment to social justice, and honoring Indigenous Peoples), in addition to climate change and environmental equity, serve as the primary underlying drivers for all activity in the organization.

As mentioned previously, MCRCD is organized into five Program Areas: 1. Water Resources, 2. Soil Health and Agriculture, 3. Forest Health and Resiliency, 4. Land Stewardship, and 5. Operations. Each of these programs in turn have developed technical focus areas, with tasks, goals, desired results, approaches, and metrics for sustaining alignment with the strategic goals of the organization. These program areas and strategies are described in the following chapters.

MCRCD PROGRAM AREAS

1. Water Resources Program



MCRCD Water Resources Program has a mission to promote and protect clean water and healthy streams, which are critically important to aquatic ecosystems and human communities.

We work in partnership with landowners, property managers, schools, road associations, Tribes, government agencies, and the public to enhance, protect, and restore water resources in Mendocino County.

Together, we engage in outreach, education, technical assistance, promotion of cost-share and grant opportunities to:

- Demonstrate water conservation best management practices,
- Promote and implement water quality improvement projects,
- Support stormwater pollution prevention strategies,
- Restore fisheries habitat and riparian connectivity on a landscape level, and
- Enhance stream flows and engage in climate beneficial practices throughout Mendocino County.

Water quality, water quantity and aquatic habitat are core elements of MCRCD's work. Mendocino County has abundant water resources. Those resources, however, are not distributed evenly throughout the year and are not available when the people, farms and fish all need the water the most. This seasonal variation impacts agriculture, urban and rural development, commercial enterprises, instream habitat and aquatic species. In addition, water is not available equally to all; Tribes and people of color in Mendocino County are disproportionately impacted by drought and water shortages and are frequently the first to feel the effects. Virtually all MCRCD projects aim to protect and/or enhance the following: Water Quality, Water Quantity, Fisheries, Aquatic Species Habitat, and Regional Water Planning.

Water Resources – Example Projects

Drought Response Outreach Program for Schools (DROPS). This program was funded by the State Water Resources Control Board to create stormwater pollution prevention projects at schools in California. Between 2016 and 2019, MCRCD developed over 23,000 square feet of rain gardens, filtration strips and bioretention basins at three Mendocino County schools. Anderson Valley Unified School District (AVUSD) and Ukiah Unified School District (UUSD) were two of only 25 school districts statewide to receive and complete this grant. These low impact development (LID) projects help protect water quality in Con Creek, Robinson Creek, Orrs Creek, and the Navarro and Russian Rivers. Collectively, the projects capture and clean up to 6.2 million gallons of stormwater per year, benefit pollinators, help recharge groundwater, and prevent flooding. The projects included curricular tie-ins and educational opportunities, water quality data collection, peer-to-peer education and 15 permanent interpretive signs. These projects were recognized in a statewide study of the DROPS grant program completed by the University of Southern California as “clear outliers with substantially greater benefit returns than other projects with similar funding,” and the two projects in Anderson Valley were rated among the top four projects statewide.

Navarro River Flow Enhancement Program. The goal of this Water Conservation Board (WCB) funded program was to promote and demonstrate streamflow enhancement strategies in priority sub-watersheds of the Navarro River basin. Strategies included storage and forbearance, community water management, groundwater infiltration, large wood augmentation and monitoring. This multi-phase project was conducted in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, Shippensburg University, and local landowners. These demonstration projects promote and implement water quality improvement in priority sub-basins and inform streamflow improvement best management practices throughout northern California. This work was presented at the annual Salmonid Restoration Federation (SRF) and California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) conferences in 2019. The Community Water Management in California’s Rural Watersheds: A Guide To Enhancing Streamflow And Water Supply Reliability was produced by The Nature Conservancy and SRF and can be found at: <http://mcrcd.org/publications>

Our strategic planning process in February 2020 resulted in the following goals, results, approaches, and metrics for the next five years (Table 1). The table below describes ways in which MCRCD is targeting future work in Mendocino County to enhance water supply/quantity and quality to benefit both human and natural communities.

Table 1. Water Resources Program Strategic Implementation Plan

Task No.	Task Name	Goal	Results	Approach	Metrics
1	Water Resources Program	To promote and protect clean water and healthy streams	To improve and maintain aquatic ecosystems and human communities		
1.1	Water Quality: TMDLs, Stormwater, Roads	Excellent water quality, minimal surface pollution, abundant native aquatic species populations and wildlife	TMDL targets for water quality aggressively addressed; Low stream temperatures; Healthy fish populations and riparian corridors; No trash in creeks; Broad implementation of stormwater LID	Science-based projects-infiltration, road upgrades, easy and inexpensive LID, riparian connectivity, fisheries habitat restoration and monitoring, creek cleanups	Native fish population increase; Increase in LID retrofits; Funded water quality monitoring, number of road miles treated; reduced sediment delivery to streams; lower stream temperatures; more shade, wider riparian buffers
1.2	Water Quantity: Conservation, Storage, Groundwater, Resilience	Plentiful water for human, wildlife, and plant needs; Ample streamflows to support healthy anadromous and resident fish populations	Water security for all rural residents; Increased water storage; Sufficient flows for salmonids; Reduction in water use across all sectors; Stable groundwater levels	Demonstrate water conservation BMPs, drought contingency planning, increased winter storage and summer forbearance, upgraded water fixtures (home and irrigation)	Increased streamflow; reduction in water use across all sectors, increase in number of storage projects; Salmonid monitoring program with Tribes; water security for Tribes; Greywater reuse commonplace, higher water tables, decrease in algal blooms and NPK, no communities running out of water
1.3	Fisheries, Aquatic Species and Habitat	Upward trends of populations of listed species; Healthy, resilient, biodiverse, regenerative riparian ecosystems that provide good habitat for fish and other aquatic species	Recovery of listed species; Riparian areas throughout the County are healthy and climate resilient	Through promoting BMPs and working with landowners on riparian restoration and habitat enhancing projects	Upward trend of population numbers in listed species; At least five (5) riparian projects implemented in next 5 years
1.4	Regional Planning, Outreach and Education	Navigable rivers, knowledgeable public regarding watershed health practices, all school districts embrace conservation and LID on campuses	No steel "jacks" in Russian River; Increased connectivity to flood plains; Educated public on watershed protection, pollution prevention, water conservation, water education; with resources readily available	Participate in regional and public outreach events, tabling, workshops, presentations	Effective regional planning, increased attendance at workshops and presentations; Increase outreach efforts to BIPOC communities and developing multi-lingual outreach and informational materials regarding water resources.

2. Soil Health and Agriculture Program



MCRCD Soil Health and Agriculture Program's mission is to promote active management for both climate resiliency and agricultural productivity through healthy soils and land management.

Through a combination of technical assistance, outreach, education, regional partnerships, and county leadership, we act as a catalyst to:

- Empower land stewards to manage for the future by improving ecosystem functions and healthy soils
- Mobilize community planning and implementation efforts related to sustainable land practices
- Connect land managers with the scientific community and research
- Acquire grant funds and link land managers to outside funding for planning and implementation of climate beneficial practices in the North Coast Region
- Engage and support agricultural producers, including farmers, ranchers, vineyard and cannabis cultivators regarding land and water stewardship resources and best management practices (BMPs).

Agriculture is a major part of Mendocino County's economy and culture, touching a wide variety of residents, land areas, and natural resources. Along with the agricultural diversity comes a spectrum of land management decisions, which impact soils' productivity and overall resilience to the impacts of climate change. Various management practices can improve soil health, sequester carbon, reduce erosion, increase water holding capacity, grow healthy and abundant crops, and support a diversity of life. The MCRCD Soil Health and Agriculture Program aims to promote these practices and support the conservation of our agricultural lands and natural resources, serving our community through: Carbon Farm Planning and Implementation, Promotion of Climate Beneficial Practices, Soil Health Technical Assistance, and Regional Planning, Education, and Outreach.

Soil Health and Agriculture Program – Example Projects

Carbon Farm Planning. MCRCD is collaborating with various organizations and land managers throughout Mendocino County to create Carbon Farm Plans. These plans help land managers identify existing and potential conservation practices that can be implemented to sequester carbon, reduce erosion, increase water holding capacity, grow healthy and abundant crops, increase native species, and support a diversity of life. MCRCD started writing Carbon Farm Plans in 2016 and now has six completed plans. A current three-year project is part of a partnership with California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) through a Water Conservation Board (WCB) grant, valued at over \$65,000. This grant will help produce four additional plans in Mendocino County. This work aligns with MCRCD's mission because it will help restore riparian corridors, increase biodiversity, improve wildlife habitat, sequester carbon, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in working landscapes.

Best Management Practices for Cannabis. Cannabis has been grown in Mendocino County for decades, although it has only been legal and permitted for sale and distribution since 2016. As the backbone of a significant part of the rural economy, cannabis growing exerts considerable influence on land and water use. The cannabis program is still in its early stages, and MCRCD is part of a leadership team developing statewide RCD programming. MCRCD engages and educates cannabis cultivators about land and water stewardship resources and BMPs through the Growing Responsible and Socially Sustainable Cannabis (GRASS-C) BMPs Verification Program. In 2016, MCRCD was the first natural resource agency in California (possibly the United States) to produce a peer-reviewed guide for watershed best management practices developed primarily for cannabis cultivators. The *Watershed Best Management Practices for Cannabis Growers and Other Rural Gardeners* is available in English and Spanish at <https://mcrcd.org/resources/publications>.

MCRCD's strategic planning process in February 2020 resulted in the following goals, results, approaches, and metrics for the next five years, as shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Soil Health and Agriculture Program Strategic Implementation Plan

Task No.	Task Name	Goal	Results	Approach	Metrics
2	Soil Health and Agriculture	Promote healthy soils and land stewardship through active management	Climate resiliency and agricultural productivity		
2.1	Carbon Farm Planning and Implementation	Healthy and climate resilient agriculture and rangeland systems are valued and conserved	A strong land stewardship ethic exists with land managers in the county; a diversity of farmers and ranchers throughout the County have plans and are implementing them	Conservation carbon farm planning and implementation; personalized, individual assistance, including site visits and various communication methods; assist land stewards/managers with funding projects	Track: number of plans, conservation practices and acres designed and implemented; number and diversity of individuals, farm types, locations served
2.2	Promotion of Climate Beneficial Practices, BMPs	Land managers, county leaders, and residents in Mendocino County understand what healthy and climate resilient agricultural and rangeland systems look like and the need to conserve them	Residents throughout Mendocino County understand, implement, and educate others about the importance of land and water stewardship, BMPs, and utilizing a variety of agricultural practices to mitigate for and adapt to climate change	Promote climate beneficial practices and outreach about native plantings, habitat creation/restoration, pollinator habitat, invasive species removal, restoration projects, and cannabis BMPs through in person and virtual methods	Track: native/pollinator plantings, invasive removal, restoration acres, and number of individuals reached
2.3	Soil Health Technical Assistance	Healthy and climate resilient agricultural and rangeland systems that are valued and conserved	Soils sequester carbon, reduce erosion, increase water holding capacity, grow healthy and abundant crops/native species, and support a diversity of life	Promote scientific, relevant approaches, technologies, and protocols, soil health assessments (SHAs), and trials; incorporate indigenous knowledge and practices	Track: number of trials and SHAs; Number and diversity of individuals, farm types, locations served
2.4	Information Hub	County residents, managers, and landowners are empowered with knowledge and resources to create positive changes on their wild and working landscapes; MCRCD is a reliable resource and valued team member on local, county, and regional levels	Successful rangeland recovery from fires; agricultural land conservation without development pressures; land managers and residents understand importance of soil health and ecosystem functions; MCRCD is a leader supporting the county's climate action endeavors	Coordinate workshops, create and share resources with land managers, county leaders, and residents; participate in regional and public events; develop and strengthen diverse partnerships to implement projects, including with underrepresented and tribal members; participate in local, county, regional collaborations	Key role in at least five regional and five local and county partnerships that represent and support the community, including underrepresented and tribal members; info hubs with partners are in major regions of County/ North Coast/Northern CA

3. Forest Health and Resiliency Program



MCRCRD Forest Health and Resiliency Program's mission is to promote sustainable forestry and land stewardship through active management for both climate change and fire resiliency on public and private land.

Through a combination of technical assistance, outreach, education, and regional partnerships, we:

- Educate and engage the public on issues regarding fire and fuels, insects and disease, habitat diversity, and the importance of active and informed management.
- Help residents, landowners, and land managers understand the ecology of their forestland and how to best manage to achieve their goals and objectives.
- Act as a catalyst in mobilizing community planning and implementation efforts for cross-boundary, landscape level treatments.
- Link landowners and managers to outside financial assistance opportunities to support thoughtful implementation projects to promote forest health, reduce hazardous fuel loading, enhance wildlife habitat, and improve overall forest stand resiliency.
- Acquire grant funds to enhance planning capacity and implement vegetation management activities that contribute to the health and resilience of forests within Mendocino County and throughout the North Coast.

Forest ecosystems provide multiple benefits, including fresh air, clean water, wildlife habitat, and both economic and cultural products. Forests play an integral role sustaining healthy and resilient communities in the face of climate change and the suite of challenges it poses. Approximately half of Mendocino County is considered forestland, ranging from conifer to oak woodlands. Unlike other forest dominated counties in California, Mendocino County is 90% privately owned, with only 10% of forestland held by public agencies. With such a high component of privately held forest

tracts comes a wide diversity of land management goals and objectives. MCRCD's Forest Health and Resiliency Program aims to assist these landowners and residents in how to sustainably manage their properties while looking at landscape-level forest health, watershed function, wildfire resilience, and a variety of ecosystem services.

Forest Health and Resiliency – Example Projects

Forestry Technical Assistance. MCRCD provides Forestry Technical Assistance to the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Ukiah Field Office. The goal of the Forestry Technical Assistance Program is to help non-industrial private landowners make good decisions about how to care for their forested land. MCRCD's Registered Professional Forester (RPF) and contractual RPFs are available to provide free site visits to residents and landowners throughout Mendocino County who have questions regarding the management of their forestland. MCRCD's foresters provides insight and guidance on how to best achieve their goals and assist in providing the necessary information to shepherd landowners through NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Through EQIP, MCRCD and NRCS provide non-industrial forestland owners and managers with financial resources and one-on-one help to plan and implement conservation practices, including fuel reduction, wildlife enhancement, and other forest improvement treatments.

Applied Innovative Forest Health Strategies on Post-Fire Landscapes. The October 2017 Redwood Complex Fire burned more than 36,000 acres in Mendocino County. MCRCD is working with landowners whose forest experienced high severity wildfire effects to replant native conifers in appropriate sites. This project will help accelerate the re-establishment of a conifer forest and help prevent stand type conversion to brush or hardwood stands. In addition, MCRCD has partnered with a private company to build and deploy eight (8) 25 kWh (each) biomass gasifiers to utilize sub-merchantable dead woody material. The goal of the gasifiers is to provide the community with a solution to actively utilize standing dead trees that plague their properties. Creating energy and [biochar](#) from the dead and dying trees demonstrates a new technology that Mendocino County residents and resource managers have been wanting to see for a long time. Residents are interested in using this technology and this project could be the catalyst to launch a biomass energy production program within Mendocino County, supporting both forest health and economic development goals. The project serves as a valuable demonstration of the benefits, feasibility, and challenges of biomass utilization technology. With our partners, MCRCD will deliver the lessons learned through workshops, newsletter articles, and other means.

Table 3. Forest Health and Resiliency Program Strategic Implementation Plan

Task No.	Task Name	Goal	Results	Approach	Metrics
3	Forest Health and Resiliency Program	Promote sustainable land practices for the health of the County's diverse forests	Landowners and residents engage in active management for climate and fire resiliency		
3.1	Forest Health	Resilient forest stands throughout the County able to recover from disturbances such as fire, drought, insects & disease	Landowners & residents understand forest stand competition, insects, disease & species composition; Landowners invest in forest health management	Education and outreach through workshops & media platforms. Continue strong relationship with NRCS to provide TA and support implementation projects through incentive programs	Secure interagency agreement with State Parks for landscape level planning; Renew service agreement with CARCD/NRCS
3.2	Fuels Reduction	Resilient, fire adapted forests throughout the County with strategic areas for firefighters to limit the extent of catastrophic fires	Network of strategically placed shaded fuelbreaks on a landscape level; Successful working groups between multiple stakeholders	Work closely with Agencies & Tribes to plan high priority projects; Work directly with land managers to support projects through incentive programs & grants	Secure interagency agreement with CAL FIRE for landscape level planning; Implement at least one landscape level project
3.3	Habitat Enhancement	Maintain and enhance diverse wildlife habitats across landscapes (i.e., stand types, age classes, species diversity)	Landowners & residents understand diversity of habitat types within the County, cultural significance, & how to maintain & promote values	Continue strong relationship with NRCS to provide TA; Develop relationships with contractors to promote habitat enhancement treatments w/ their clients.	Renew service agreement with CARCD/NRCS; Write FMP for landowners with unique habitats; Assist in oak woodland and coastal habitat workshops
3.4	Biomass Utilization	MCRCD as a leader in new technologies and opportunities for utilizing excess biomass	Up to 8 sites throughout County hosting biomass systems demonstrating gasification and other co-benefits	Continue managing innovative grants to demonstrate biomass utilization; Meet w/ State Legislators & power companies	Have two sites up and running by 2023; Host biomass workshop; Interconnect with PG&E by 2022
3.5	Regional Partnerships, Education and Outreach	Increase RCD capacity and influence throughout the region; Develop lasting partnerships with Tribes	Standardized messaging throughout the region; Regional forestry programs and forest health/fuel reduction networks	Participate in regional and public outreach events - tabling, workshops, presentations, regular mtgs with other RCD forestry staff; Integrate TEK into projects	Effective regional planning with Agencies, Tribes, & timber companies; Standardized info used by all RCD forestry programs

4. Land Stewardship Program



The MCRCD Land Stewardship Program mission is to provide professional, progressive, and sustainable long-term land management that is resilient to climate change and supports native ecosystems and the local community. MCRCD manages endowment-funded public lands and incorporates best environmental practices.

MCRCD's Land Stewardship Program's objectives are to provide for the following:

- Maintain, preserve, enhance, and create native habitats capable of buffering against climate change
- Utilize working landscapes and support local agriculture in a way that reflects the program's mission statement
- Manage endowment funding and project spending to provide for the security and operation of projects in perpetuity
- Provide outreach and education to local communities and beyond about the importance of land stewardship and sustainable agriculture on working landscapes
- To collaborate with local indigenous tribes and to acknowledge their critical importance in achieving a holistic approach to land management
- Network and share information with the greater resource conservation community
- Support wildlife and biodiversity and continually find ways to enhance connectivity on landscapes
- Invasive species management through planning, maintenance, and monitoring.

The Land Stewardship Program currently is centered on the Willits Bypass Mitigation Lands, although expanding into other projects outside of Willits is anticipated in the future. Table 4 represents an outline of the present and future goals of the land stewardship program. The following examples highlight some of the current programs being implemented as part of the Willits project.

Land Stewardship – Example Projects

Willits Bypass Mitigation Lands: In partnership with Caltrans, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and other state and federal regulatory agencies, MCRCD has been the primary land manager of the Willits Bypass Mitigation Lands since 2015. Comprised of 2,085 acres of wet meadows, wetlands, uplands, riparian corridors, stream channels, and oak and Oregon ash woodlands, the Mitigation Project will be held and managed by MCRCD in perpetuity. MCRCD is responsible for administering grazing leases on a working landscape, conducting habitat and infrastructure maintenance, and ongoing biological monitoring. The Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (MMP) defines long-term objectives on the project. Components of the MMP implemented by MCRCD include protecting several listed plant species, managing for invasive species, encouraging the recruitment of all native species, enhancing wildlife habitat, providing outreach and education to the local community, and overseeing monitoring. These project objectives support and are in congruence with MCRCD's mission. Funded by a non-wasting endowment, MCRCD's project staff work from an on-site office and are dedicated to the improvement and protection of these lands. See also <https://mcrccd.org/project/willits-bypass-mitigation>

Invasive Species Management Plan: As part of the Willits Bypass Mitigation Lands, an Invasive Species Management Plan (ISMP) was created to provide a way to systematically manage invasive species by MCRCD staff. The plan addresses both plants and wildlife on the project. The ISMP acts as a living document that identifies the invasive species currently present on mitigation lands, mapping of known locations, and a calendar describing phenology as well as highlighting ideal times of year for treatment. In addition, the plan describes current treatments being implemented for management and discusses other possible alternatives.

Table 4. Land Stewardship Program Strategic Implementation Plan

Task No.	Task Name	Goal	Results	Approach	Metrics
4	Land Stewardship	To provide professional, progressive, and sustainable long-term land management.	resilient to climate change and supports native ecosystems and the local community		
4.1	Wildlife Habitats	The maintenance, enhancement, and creation of native habitats and connectivity capable of buffering against climate change.	Secure and sustainable native ecosystems on the Willits project.	Thru monitoring, identify what land management techniques provide positive change.	Monitoring will show strong native habitats and the reduction or stabilization of non-native species
4.2	Working Landscapes	Utilize working landscapes and support local agriculture	Source livestock from local producers. A thriving local economy and a working landscape that benefits community health.	Coordination with lessees, oversight with decision making driven by monitoring	A grazing program that demonstrates positive effects on native habitats in monitoring.
4.3	Fiscal Security for Long-Term Land Management	Preserve endowment funding to provide for the project in perpetuity.	A sustainable program where spending does not outpace endowment growth.	Thorough annual budgeting and efficient and effective project management.	Annual growth in endowment base funding.
4.4	Outreach and Education On Environmental Stewardship and Collaboration with local indigenous tribes	Open an outreach and education center at the Coleman house. To have regular and frequent participation of tribal members on mitigation lands	Offer ongoing educational opportunities to the community A more holistic and complete approach to land management.	Creation of standardized curriculum and a replicable educational tour schedule, and a tribal liaison position	Number of annual visitors. Tribal members are engaged stakeholders
4.5	Information Sharing on Land Management	Share information with the greater resource conservation community.	Adaptive management based on our own institutional knowledge and information learned from others.	Present at conferences, workshops and reporting that can be shared.	Attend and present at least one event annually.
4.6	Future Opportunities for additional land stewardship and/or acquisition	Create a clear list of criteria that future projects can be vetted against.	only entertain additional land management opportunities that have a strong chance for success.	Checklist of min requirements to vet potential projects.	Saved copy of a checklist on the server.

5. Operations Program



The mission of MCRCD's Operations Program is to provide effective, timely, and professional management of funds, facilities, and staffing for efficient and seamless operations of the organization. The Operations Program provides the roots of the organization that enables MCRCD's resource programs to succeed and grow.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI): Similar to the Guiding Principles described earlier, the MCRCD's overarching holistic goals shall be embraced and facilitated by the Operations Program to ensure these core values are adopted and manifest throughout every project. Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is a term used to describe programs and policies that encourage representation and participation of diverse groups of people, including people

of different genders, races and ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, religions, cultures, ages, and sexual orientations and people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and skills and expertise. Research has found that having diverse viewpoints at all levels of an organization improves financial results, organizational and team performance, innovation, and other areas of the business.

Additional key priorities of the Operations Program include Quality of Products, Quantity of Products, Fiscal Stability, and Continual Improvement of Processes.

Quality of Production

- The highest standard and quality of work based on the latest science
- Consistent quality of all work products among staff based on shared skills and knowledge of the requirements and expectations of the client/funder

Quantity of Production

- Efficient and effective production
- Sustainable, high integrity, high quality
- The right tools and systems at hand in high level working order
- Ability to know when to refer clients/projects to others, or to say "no" where applicable

Financial Stability

- Consistent, and diverse income, sustaining into the future
- Managed and thoughtful growth
- Empowered staff that understand their role in the financial health of the organization
- Transparency

Continuous Improvement to Planning/Processes/Systems

- Commitment to regular and on-going planning and self-assessment
- Thorough, complete, concise, intelligent documentation
- Inclusive, transparent processes, resilient and adaptive systems
- Safe environment to share thoughts or opposing/alternative ideas
- Utilize management tools such as Highly Effective Teams (HET) and Holistic Management



Operations Example Projects

Embracing New Technology Tools. Information technology tools are changing constantly, and it takes a commitment to continuous learning to stay current with computer applications necessary to function in the fast-moving environment. MCRCD's use of shared calendars, shared drives, video conferencing, automated project management, and structured forms has helped us keep up to date and support efficient operations. One recent example is the use of the Smartsheets® forms, "Action Item Tracker," where an action item and associated data is entered into a web-based system and tracked as it progresses to completion, keeping the requestor and the responsible party organized and informed, in addition to having a historical record, independent of any email. This kind of in-house custom tool development use has helped MCRCD stay streamlined to smoothly handle the large workload and maintain an organized information database.

Financial Stability – Financial stability is when an organization's financial system can dissipate financial imbalances that arise as a result of significant adverse and unforeseeable events. MCRCD has successfully operated since 1945, but not without acute attention to fiscal status and fast adaptive management to an ever-changing economic environment. For the MCRCD to

fulfill its mission and stay true to its core values, the Operations Program must nurture a stable, long-term financial foundation. Renewed and continual attention to monthly and annual financial reports such as Balance Sheets, Profit and Loss, Accounts Payable and Receivable, and Aging Reports help maintain a clear picture on the fiscal health of the organization and its ability to continue to be resilient into an unpredictable future.

Topics not discussed in this Strategic Plan are the additional administrative tasks required for the operation of a Special District in the State of California. For example, requirements include compliance with the Brown Act, IRS filing, and a multitude of California laws associated with Special Districts. These additional responsibilities within the Operations Program are addressed only in the context that the Operations team must have a strategy, and the capability to address these mandatory requirements.

MCRCD's Operations Program is committed to providing effective, timely, and professional management of funds, facilities, and staffing for efficient and seamless operations of the organization. These focus areas have been broken down into six main categories listed below and described in the following table.

- 5.1 Project Management
- 5.2 Financial Management
- 5.3 Human Resources
- 5.4 Board Engagement
- 5.5 Facilities
- 5.6 Partnerships/Outreach

Table 5. Operations Program Strategic Implementation Plan

Task No.	Task Name	Goal	Results	Approach	Metrics
5	Operations	Operations Program will provide effective, timely, and professional management of funds, facilities, and staffing	Efficient and seamless operations of the organization		
5.1	Project Management	Effective management of deliverables, budget, schedule, and team	Project Managers able to produce projects on time and on budget; Celebrations of success	Build and use tools for prediction, execution, tracking, and reporting. Always work in teams	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, Smartsheets, Excel spreadsheets used and analyzed
5.2	Financial Management	Accurate and timely, multiple Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), Healthy status and reserve funds	More resources for fiscal activities. Business Manager freed to do deeper analyses	Training and closer PM attention to project budgets w/ regular ED mtgs	Multiple financial resources, training, and reviews. Reserve account established
5.3	Human Resources	Life/work balance, clarity of role, job satisfaction, independent HR representative	Independent HR representative responsive to staff needs, and increased morale	Regular check-ins, real-time adjustments, growth and training opportunities	External HR resources, regular HR focused meetings and ED support
5.4	Board Engagement	Board involved with Technical teams and subcommittees	Participation, input helps staff, policies/processes up to date	Each Board member assigned to a team and engaged with staff	Board and staff engagement and satisfaction survey
5.5	Facilities	Meeting project, equipment, and human resource facility needs	Needs of today and tomorrow met in a frugal but satisfactory way	Attention to project and work environment and infrastructure	Regular check in and evaluation on needs assessment
5.6	Partnerships/Outreach	External Partners, Communication and Outreach is clear and positive	Strong partners, clear supporting roles, joint programs including BIPOC communities	ED engaging w/ EDs of partnering organizations, participating on State level conversations	New collaborations, more comms/insight of partner activities

Continuous Improvement and Sustainability

The MCRCD has earned an excellent reputation over our 75-year history and has experienced incremental, sustained growth over the past two decades. As an organization, MCRCD is an innovator in developing and adopting best management practices to improve both internal organizational systems and for meeting the natural resource needs of Mendocino County. In recent history, dramatic events have shaped the trajectory of the organization, including historic drought conditions between 2011 and 2020, catastrophic wildfires of 2017 and 2018, and the challenges of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. These regional and global crises have underscored the relevance of the organization and our critical role in addressing both local and global climate-related challenges impacting our natural resources and human communities.

MCRCD's demonstrated strengths are adaptability and resilience - whether responding to support our communities in the midst and aftermath of environmental disasters, the challenges of State budget emergencies, or the current COVID-19 pandemic. Supported by leadership of the Executive Director and Board of Directors, MCRCD staff are responsive to new urgencies and can quickly adjust to a change in priorities for meeting new organizational and/or fiscal landscapes.

This Strategic Plan recognizes that our staff are our strength. Sustaining well-being of individuals, as well as teams, by providing meaningful work in a supportive atmosphere is crucial for the organization to thrive. Ensuring commitment to MCRCD's mission and strategic planning goals requires continuous review and updating of our operations, objectives, and strategies.

To meet current and future organizational and natural resources challenges, MCRCD supports staff training, information sharing platforms, partnership development, off-site work options, and participation in regional and state conferences. Together these resource sharing and work strategies increase MCRCD's organizational capacity and exposure to emerging technologies and opportunities to expand and sustain services.

Implementing and Tracking the Strategic Plan

An interactive project management tracking spreadsheet is in place to track Strategic Planning elements (identified in the Program Tables in this document). This allows the Strategic Plan to be easily accessible for adding additional levels of detail, to be augmented with ongoing decisions and deviations, as needed, and to be reviewed no less than annually.

Annual reviews allow for regular maintenance of the Strategic Plan so that it reflects the actual progress and dynamic needs of MCRCD. The reviews will be documented and tracked with a Plan supplement or update each year. A five-year planning horizon will be maintained with each review requiring development of an added fifth year of target actions, projects, and initiatives.

“Smart Tools” for Tracking Strategic Planning Progress

With the onboarding of new leadership and staff with expertise in multiple organizational tracking tools and systems, MCRCD has engaged our internal operations and program teams in the following new tools and strategies:

- The Strategic Plan metric tracking tool on Smartsheets “platform” is an internal method for Program Areas to document and track progress through reliable, relevant metrics
- Inclusion of Board member participation on MCRCD program teams, allowing the Board to stay active in project development and provide a critical feedback loop to staff and MCRCD’s leadership
- A cascading Annual Planning Process which originates from, and is grounded in, the Strategic Plan. This provides a “True North” guidance for what MCRCD will be doing as we move forward, in alignment with the five-year Strategic Plan
- Continuous development of, and tracking for, “lessons learned” for guiding future strategic planning through a shared folder as a repository for capturing important elements to support continuous improvement of the organization.

The Strategic Plan is not designed as a living document, rather it serves as a critical tool for organizational excellence and a touchstone to be referenced often.

APPENDICIES

Appendix A. Helpful Acronyms for Navigating the RCD World

AC	Advisory Committee
ACOE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
ACP	Agricultural Conservation Program
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
BLM	United States Bureau of Land Management
BMPs	Best Management Practices or Beneficial Management Practices
CALEPA	California Environmental Protection Agency
CALFIRE	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CALFlora	California plants for conservation, research, and education
CalIPC	California Invasive Plant Council
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CALTrout	California Trout, Inc.
CalSIP	California Land Science Information Project
CalWEED	California Noxious Weed Control Projects Inventory
CARCD	California Association of Resource Conservation Districts
CASGEM	California Sustainable Groundwater Elevation Monitoring
CCC	California Conservation Corps
CDEC	California Data Exchange Center -California Department of Water Resources
CDF	California Department of Forestry
CDFA	California Department of Food and Agriculture
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act 63
CERPI	California Ecological Restoration Projects
CIWMB	California Integrated Waste Management Board
CNRA	California Natural Resources Agency
COGS	Councils of Government
COMTF	California Oak Mortality Task Force
COVID -19	Corona Virus, 2019 – 2020 RIP
CRMP	Coordinated Resource Management Plans

CSDA	California Special Districts Association
CWPI	California Watershed Project Inventory
DFG	California Department of Fish and Game—formally California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
DOC	California Department of Conservation
DLRP	DOC Division of Land Resource Protection
DWR	Department of Water Resources
DWR	Division of Water Rights, State Water Resources Control Board
ED	Executive Director
EIR	Environmental Impact Report (CEQA)
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement (NEPA)
EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
EPA-WATERS	Environmental Protection Agency's Watershed Assessment, Tracking and Environmental Results
EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (NRCS)
F&G –WHDA	U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife -Wildlife and Habitat Data Analysis Branch
FFA	Future Farmers of America
FMP	Forest Management Plan
FRAP	Fire and Resource Assessment Program
FSA	Farm Services Agency (USDA)
FWS	Fish and Wildlife Service -United States Department of the Interior
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
ICE	Information Center for the Environment
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
IRWM	Integrated Regional Water Management
IRWMP	Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
JPA	Joint Powers Authority
LAFCO	Local Agency Formation Commission
LAO	Legislative Analyst's Office
LID	Low Impact Development
LUPIN	California Land Use Planning Information Network
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NACD	National Association of Conservation Districts
NASDA	National Association of State Departments of Agriculture

NASS	National Agricultural Statistics Service for U.S. Agriculture Statistical Info and Graphics
NCRP	North Coast Resource Partnership
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration
NPS	Non-point Source Pollution
NPS	National Park Service
NRCS	National Resources Conservation Service
NRPI	Natural Resource Project Inventory
OPR	Office of Planning and Research (California State Clearinghouse)
PM	Project Manager
RCD	Resource Conservation District
RC&DC	Resource Conservation and Development Council
RCPP	Resource Conservation Partnership Program
RDM	Residual Dry Matter, expressed in pounds per acre, left in a field after being grazed.
RWQCB	Regional Water Quality Control Board
SCC	California State Coastal Conservancy
SCD	Soil Conservation District (renamed to RCDs in the 1970s)
SCS	USDA -Soil Conservation Service (renamed to NRCS)- 65
SFSCC	State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee (California Forest Stewardship Program)
SMRC	Storm water Manager's Resource Center, Center for Watershed Protection, Inc.
SME	Subject Matter Experts
SNC	Sierra Nevada Conservancy
SOD	Sudden Oak Death -Monitoring in California
SOI	Sphere of Influence
SWRCB	State Water Resources Control Board
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
TEK	Traditional Ecological Knowledge
TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Load
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
TU	Trout Unlimited

UFEI	Urban Forest Ecosystems Institute: www.ufe.calpoly.edu
UC	University of California
UCCE	University of California Cooperative Extension
UGB	Urban Growth Boundary
USBR	United States Bureau of Reclamation USDA: United States Department of Agriculture
USFS	United States Forest Service
USGS	United States Geological Survey
USLE	Universal Soil Loss Equation
VOCs	Volatile Organic Compounds
WCB	Wildlife Conservation Board
WHDAB	Wildlife and Habitat Data Analysis Branch
WITS	Watershed Information Technical System-California Resources Agency
WMA	Weed Management Area
WPI	Watershed Projects Inventory

Appendix B. Glossary

Biochar – Biochar is charcoal that is produced by pyrolysis of biomass and is used as a soil amendment for both carbon sequestration and soil health benefits. Biochar is a stable solid that is rich in carbon and can endure in soil for thousands of years. Biochar is being investigated as a means of carbon sequestration, and it may be a means to mitigate global warming and climate change. Source: Wikipedia, see also <https://www.rffi.org/biochar/>

Climate Change – Climate change is a change in global or regional climate patterns attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by the use of fossil fuels. The effects are apparent throughout the world, including higher temperatures, more extreme weather events, wildfires, and rising sea levels.



Climate Change. Source 1: NOAA Climate.org

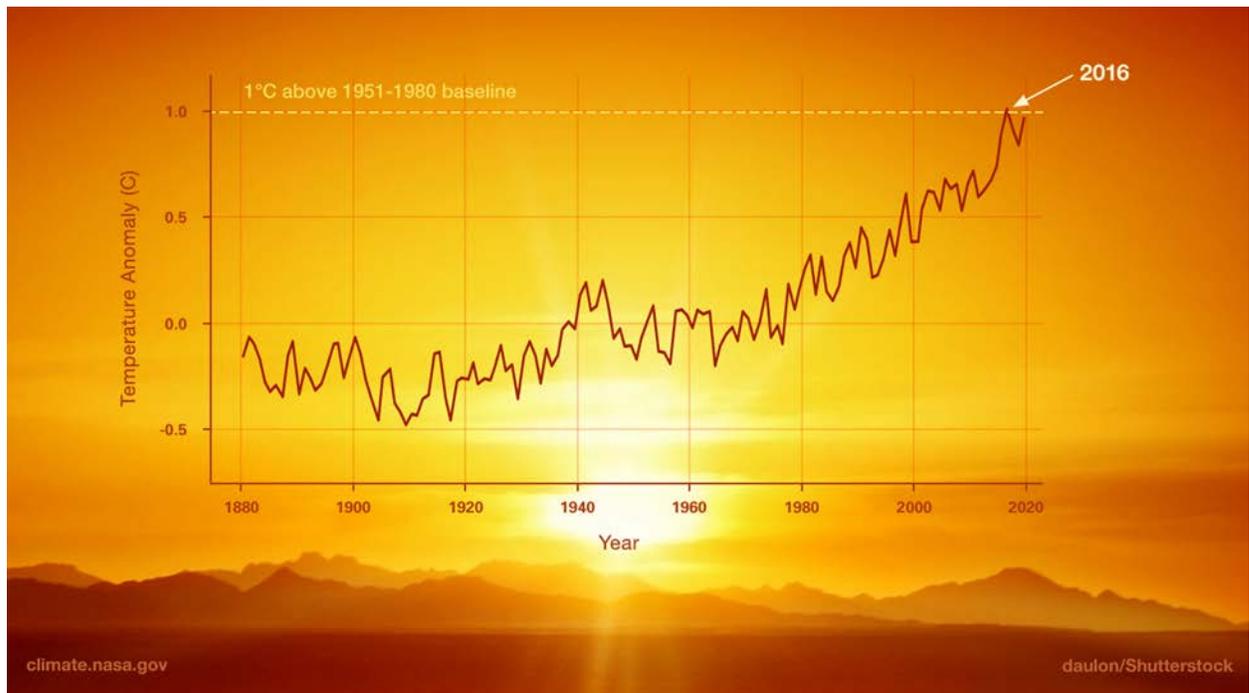
Climate Resilience – Climate resilience focuses on how communities prepare for and adapt to the effects of climate change, like drought, sea level rise, extreme heat, and wildfire.

Conservation and Open Space Easement: A voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and land trust or government agency that protects the conservation values of a piece of land by permanently limiting its present and future uses. This flexible tool allows a landowner to retain ownership and use of his/her property. An easement can be established to protect all or part of a property that has significant agricultural, historic, scenic, or wildlife habitat resources.

Environmental Equity- Environmental equity refers to the appropriate proportional distribution of

pollution and environmental benefits across communities so that no one group bears a larger impact of environmental hazards.

Global Warming – Global warming is the long-term heating of Earth’s climate system observed since the pre-industrial period (between 1850 and 1900) due to human activities, primarily fossil fuel burning, which increases heat-trapping greenhouse gas levels in Earth’s atmosphere. The term is frequently used interchangeably with the term climate change, though the latter refers to both human- and naturally produced warming and the effects it has on our planet. It is most commonly measured as the average increase in Earth’s global surface temperature. <https://climate.nasa.gov/>



Global Warming. Source 2: climate.nasa.gov

Land Acknowledgement: A Land Acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as original stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional lands. Land acknowledgement is a way that people insert an awareness of Indigenous presence and land rights in everyday life. This is often done at the beginning of ceremonies, lectures, or any public event. It can be a way to recognize the history of colonialism and a need for change in settler colonial societies. Reference: <https://native-land.ca/territory-acknowledgement/>

Mission Statement: A declaration of MCRCD’s purpose, which succinctly describes why MCRCD exists. All MCRCD activities should be in support of the Mission Statement. The Mission Statement is adopted by the Board of Directors. The mission of MCRCD is to conserve, protect, and restore wild

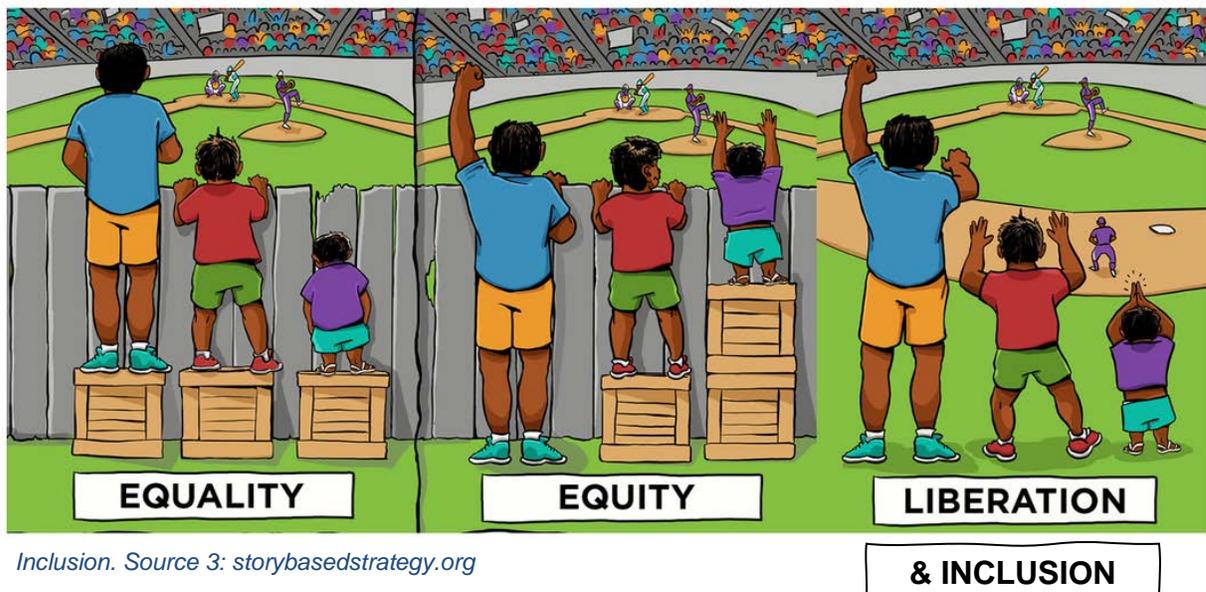
and working landscapes to enhance the health of the water, soil, and forests in Mendocino County.

Objective: A concise statement associated with each Strategic Resource Priority that describes the objective of that Priority. It explains why addressing that Priority is important to the District's overall strategy.

Strategic Goals: A short statement of desired success. The goal statement is supported by a narrative that more fully explains the nature of the goal and the issues that the goal intends to address. The Strategic Goals are prepared by management and accepted by the Board. The Strategic Goals will change from year-to-year when the annual assessment is made of the progress on each Strategic Element. The Strategic Goals straddle the line between policy (Board responsibility) and implementation (management responsibility) and as such are a collaborative effort of both the Board and management.

Strategic Resource Priorities: These focal areas of MCRCD business and opportunity represent what should or must be addressed over the planning period. Strategic Resource Priorities are derived from the foundational Mission and Board Vision statements of MCRCD. They are linked to action and results through the Strategic Goals written for each Strategic Resource Priority of the Strategic Work Plan. Within the five-year period covered by this Strategic Plan, addressing these Priorities assures that critical aspects of operations are well supported and are moving forward in a way that reflects Board priorities.

Inclusion: Systems that remove barriers to including all people and liberate them from societal barriers. See sketch illustrating the difference between equality, equity, and liberation & inclusion.



Inclusion. Source 3: storybasedstrategy.org

Appendix C. Resources

California Association of Resource Conservation Districts Joint Forestry Committee:

<https://carcd.org/our-work/committees/forestry-committee/>

California Environmental Quality Act & CEQA Guidelines. American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC). 2020. Published by ACEC California, Sacramento. www.acec-ca.org

California Forest Stewardship Program Forestland Steward Newsletters:

<https://ucanr.edu/sites/forestry/Publications/?newsList=3333>

California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual, 4th Edition, Flossi, G., Downie, D., Hopelain, J., Bird, M., Coey, R., and Collins, B., 2010

Eel River Recovery Project <https://www.eelriverrecovery.org/>

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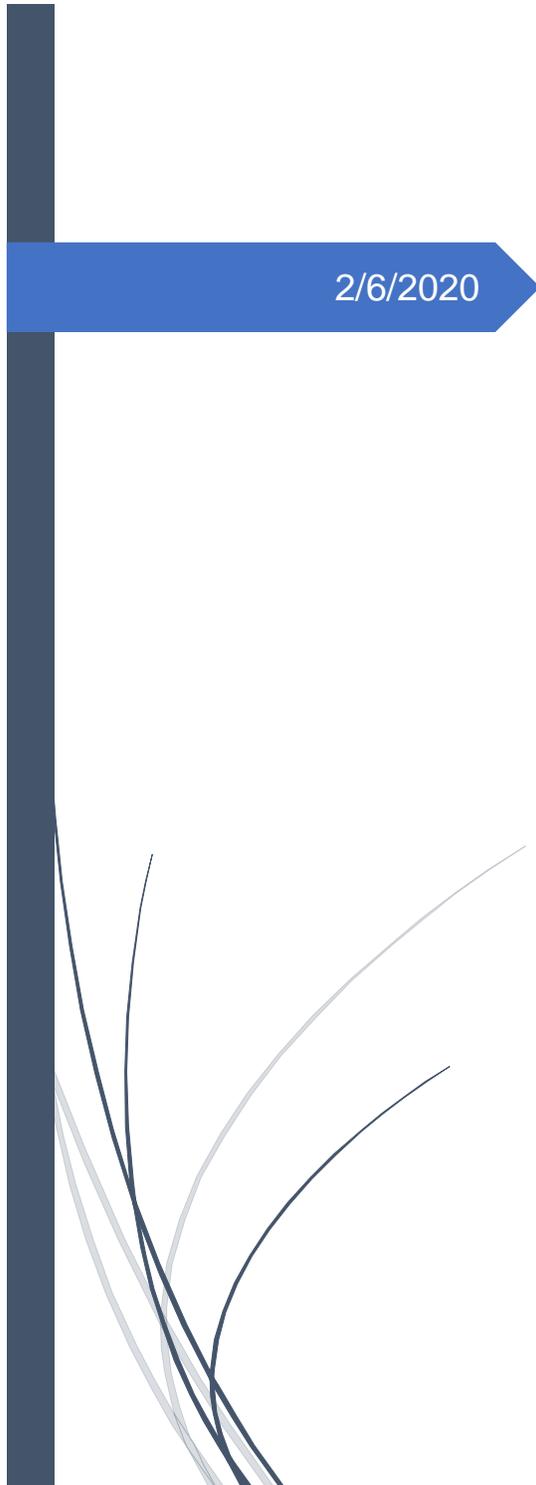
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Appendix D. Survey and Results



2/6/2020

Mendocino County
Resource
Conservation
District

Survey 2020

Getting input on MCRCD's
Priorities and Approach
and the needs of
Mendocino County.

Executive Summary of MCRCD Priorities Survey

The MCRCD conducted an online anonymous survey, between 11/2019 to 1/1/2020, regarding conservation priorities in the County. The survey was sent to over 150 people including staff, board, partners, volunteers, and members of the public. Fifty-seven (57) responses were received, and the unedited data is provided here. Questions 1 and 2 were multiple choice with an opportunity to comment, and questions 3 and 4 were open ended, with no limit of text.

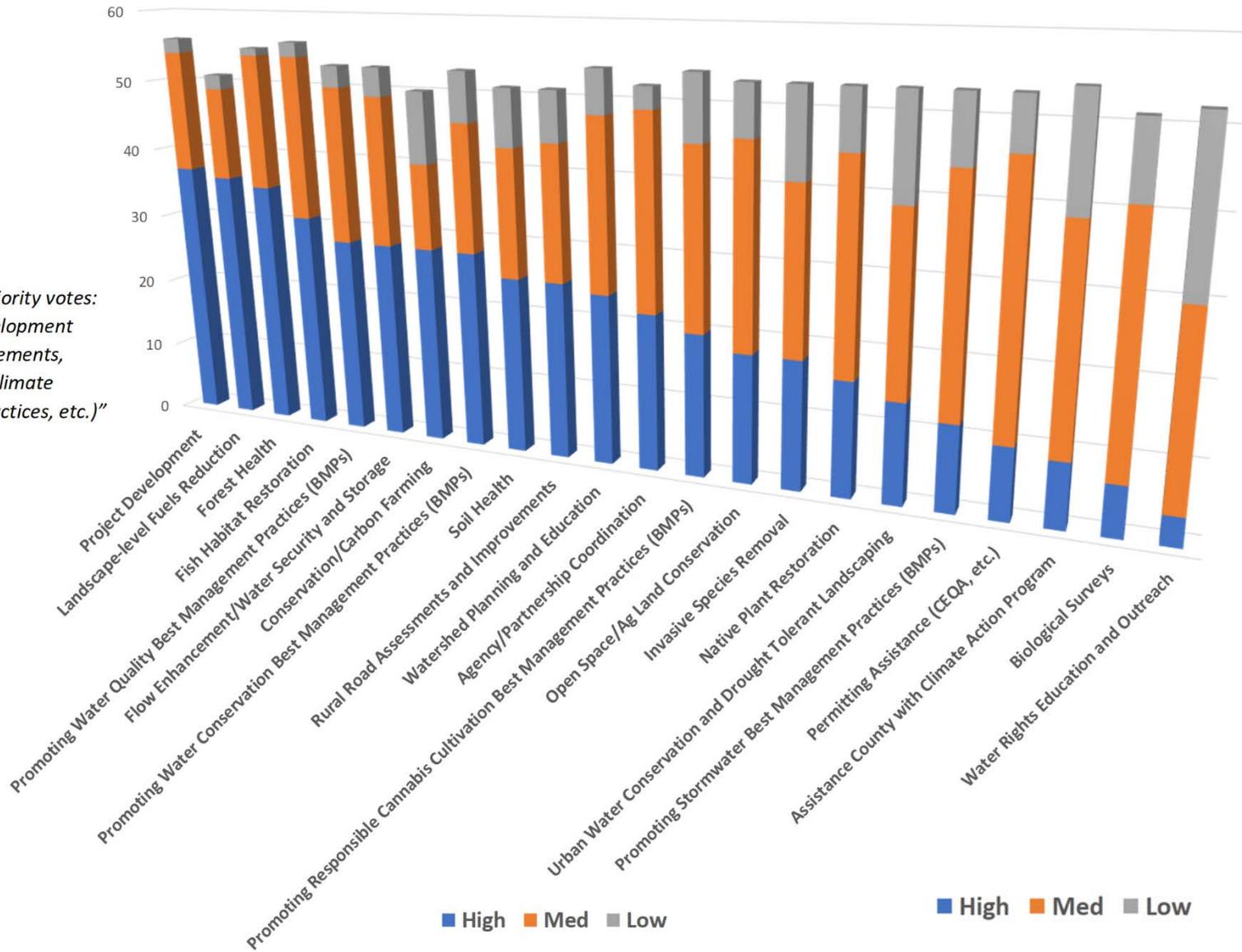
1. What are your top conservation and restoration priorities?
2. How do you see MCRCD helping to achieve those priorities?
3. Is there an unmet natural resource need in Mendocino County that you would like to see the MCRCD help fill?
4. Please give us other comments, suggestions, recommendations, or ideas.

In summary, the findings reinforced MCRCD's essential role as a water, soil, and forest conservation advocate and trusted partner. The data revealed that all our programming is considered important to our partners and no project area was identified as extraneous. In particular, the results revealed the MCRCD's central role in creating and developing needed projects, technical assistance, and grant writing for forest health and fuels reduction, fish habitat restoration, promoting water quality best management practices (BMPs), flow enhancement, water security and storage.

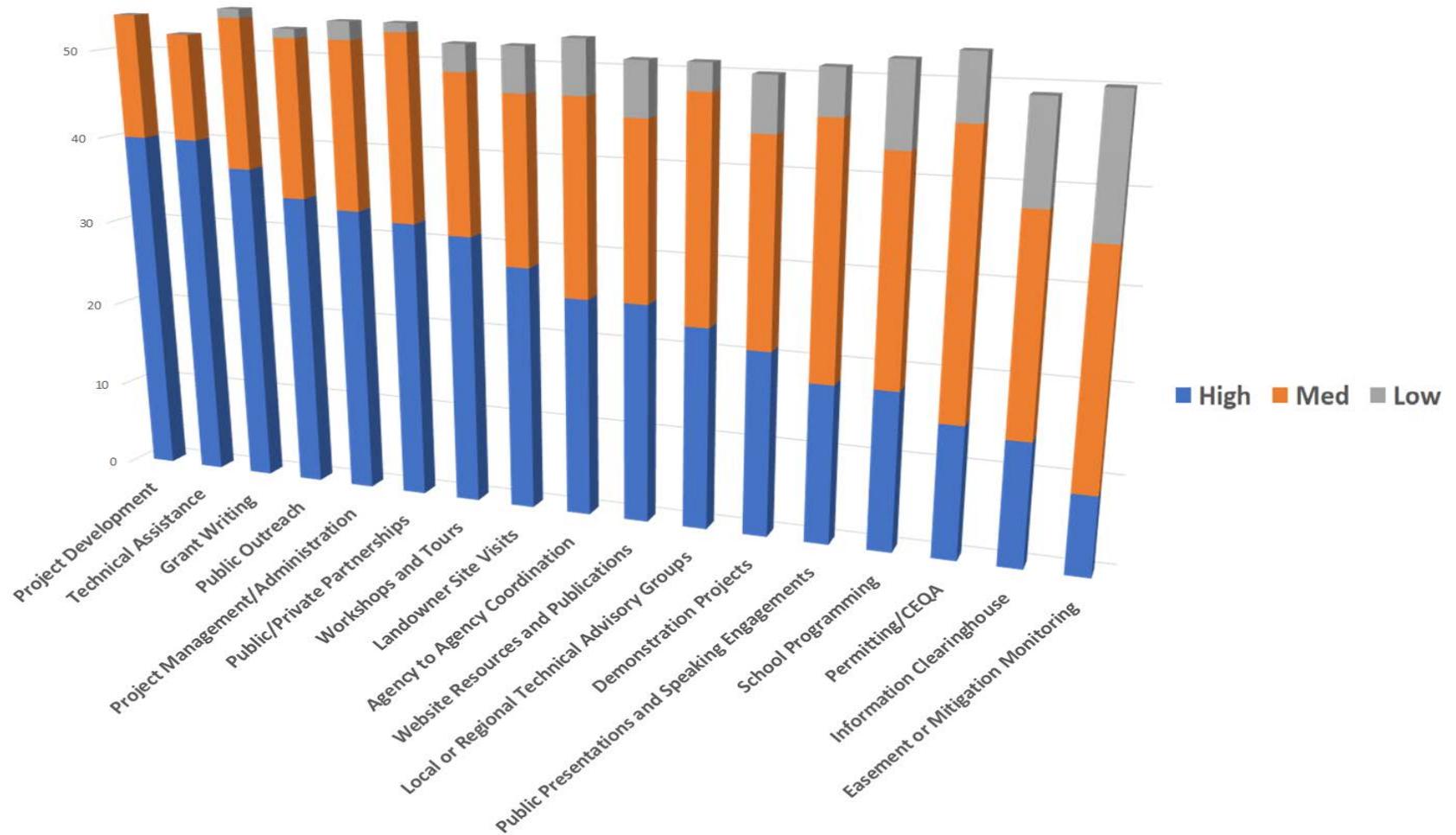
Some insightful feedback encouraged MCRCD to focus on areas that are not currently served by other agencies, to grow existing areas of engagement rather than adding new areas, to continue outreach in schools and participation in regional planning efforts, and to assist Tribes with vital watershed restoration efforts.

Question 1. What are your top conservation and restoration priorities?

Most High priority votes:
 "Project Development
 (road improvements,
 restoration, climate
 beneficial practices, etc.)"



Question 2. How do you see the MCRCD helping to achieve those priorities?



Survey Comments

Question 1. What are your top conservation and restoration priorities?

- *These all seem like high priorities, so hard to call one more important than others.*
- *Fire prevention and hazardous fuels reduction.*
- *Not sure about Asst Co w/Climate Action. Only if it is truly wanted and they are actually going to do something meaningful that fits the overall RCD mission and approach too. Otherwise- no.*
- *There are several water choices here, but only a few forest and soil topics. Suggest having equal emphasis on all three topics of your mission statement above. We have a lot of forests.*
- *Fire Fuels reduction should be delegated to Fire Safe Councils*
- *My lowest picks seem to me that other agency responsibilities as lead agencies. My top picks help respond to climate impacts which overreach all categories or due too additional expansive industrial uses of lands for hemp farming that need addressing.*
- *I'd say habitat restoration projects and more than just open/ag conservation, but projects that have acquisition/CEs/conservation and restoration components (or that can be phased as such) with as many multi-benefits to species while also providing human benefit. Mendocino county is data poor; we need more information (LiDAR on the inland), VegCAMP funding for vegetation classification and mapping, and in general, a better understanding where species are and their abundance in Mendocino County. Those marked medium or low priority were categorized as such because seemed too broad and unfocused or would occur after planning and program development is complete and its implementation can focus efforts on well-defined targets.*

Question 2. How do you see the MCRCD helping to achieve those priorities?

- *Re: Demonstration Projects--emphasis on All-Power Biomass Demo*
- *Regular educational webinars would be good.*
- *Reporting out to the public more on accomplishments.*
- *Lowest ranking where land trusts available for private property or donated lands monitoring. RCD work on State lands such as the Willits By-pass project is my overall highest rated program that brings together all of the above into co-joined potential. Some low rated categories duplicated within top rated choices*
- *The RCD is a wonderful resource to inform the public and private landowners and could be the best entity to lead regional, landscape level planning in Mendocino county that pulls in diverse stakeholders to achieve both better understanding of our resources, increase conservation/open space, and improve implementation (BMPs and monitoring).*
- *I think all these areas are where MCRCD can play an important role in all of the above. That is why a financially healthy RCD is so important.*

Q3. Is there an unmet natural resource need in Mendocino County that you would like to see the MCRCD help fill? If yes, please specify.

- *The MCRCD might have to start assessing what holes could be filled as most of the UCCE advisers retire in the region in the next year or two.*
- *Coordination with Mendocino National Forest for fuels reduction and small diameter timber harvest and utilization. Lack of funds once provided by timber harvest revenue limits MNF in its ability to manage resources for sustainable forests, watershed health and fire protection.*
- *More agricultural technical assistance, especially since UCCE will have less staff capacity in the area with upcoming retirements.*
- *I would suggest focusing on beefing up existing programs, rather than stretching too thin in too many directions. I would like to see an assessment of where staff think the MCRCD is strongest, and where they think they need support in order to be effective.*
- *Owl boxes*
- *Mitigation banking*
- *Improve the capacity of the MCRCD - FSC to spend and track grant funds and matching contributions.*
- *Not sure if this fits here, but articulating/demonstrating the productive ecological role that prescribed fire can play in the management of our natural resources.*
- *helping illegal cannabis become legal*
- *I like your mission statement. I suggest sticking to that and not inadvertently letting your scope of work get too broad.*
- *Oak regeneration as part of forest/ rangeland health*
- *Development of restoration crews, Youth development in natural resources, Tribal knowledge transfer for resource mgmt.*
- *New science on fire effect/climate change and the need for adapted/restoration of Mendocino lands. Temp variation, robust dry/wet cycles, were do we need to go?*
- *Gibson Creek: landowner assistance with erosion control*
- *Yes. Need regional planning. I wonder if RCD could be lead on the development of a Regional Conservation Investment Strategy that covers Mendocino, Humboldt, and Lake or Sonoma, or Del Norte counties. Grants are available through Wildlife Conservation Board to develop RCISs. We are in dire need of regional planning to focus landscape-level planning and mitigation efforts that go beyond piecemeal mitigation. RCD may be well-suited to taking lead on such. Second, more resource data (including species and vegetation classification) is needed to inform development and conservation.*
- *Landscape level project planning in coordination with agencies.*

- *Improving insect habitat. Increasing public education about the ecological dangers of pesticide use.*
- *yes, I believe that there are a wide variety of unmet natural resource needs in the county, roads that need grading work to many rural homes, proper water storage, cannabis cultivation BMPs, ect. things that tend to occur in our county maybe more than others.*
- *The link between rural water supply security and restoration of summer base flows to benefit listed salmon and steelhead is a critical issues to the health and well being of Mendocino County. No other group is capable or well positioned like the MCRCD to serve as a catalyst for local projects, leveraging the support of other groups and available bond funds. The impacts of climate change are increasing and Mendocino County can adapt but needs the leadership of the MCRCD to guide the way.*

Q4. Please give us other comments, suggestions, recommendations, or ideas:

- *Most Native American Tribes in Mendocino County have insufficient funding, organizational support, or training to complete monitoring efforts for salmonids and other aquatic species. MCRCD could work more closely with the tribes to address this topic.*
- *Eco-tours via school programming, regional outfitters, etc. as an avenue to build appreciation and stewardship for natural resources.*
- *We are on a critical cusp for change for conservation. All natural resources are important. When can we depend on the public and private sectors to carry the ball and and when do they need outreach, education and coordination from MCRCD to realize responsible management and restoration of resources? Tough questions*
- *continue to balance RCDs work with natural resources and working landscapes.*
- *Work with partners to present a coordinated team approach to the community at large.*
- *I am not as informed about what the funding opportunities are currently which is always a major consideration. I like the broad based programs offered by the RCD even though I am biased toward the more rural landscapes*
- *Who do you work for? Who is your customer? Is it the county government or residents of the county? Your work focus could be different depending on who you are serving.*
- *Maintain emphasis on technical quality of your work. Keep your workload manageable or else your quality will be compromised.*
- *One large problem I do not see how to include is Garbage impact on Riparian areas, how do we reduce this and educate about this?*
- *Many of these categories are interconnected and difficult to rate separately.*
- *more input from ag community coastal outreach and partnerships*
- *Assist landowners with conservation and erosion control within the Ukiah City limits*

- *Thank you for all your hard work over the years. The county's natural resources are our most valuable assets and their protection and enhancement is crucial for our future.*
- *Need for management or coordination of cross-agency project data (type and spatial information) to better coordinate/prioritize projects and fill gaps or focus on "greatest good" areas (i.e., keep investing in and expanding in certain areas vs doing a little in a lot of places)*
- *The MRCRD has been an incredible place to work, and seeing all of what gets done with our small staff is impressive to say the least. I think that the thing I run into most often is that people don't even know what an RCD is. I think that brainstorming ways to reach out to the public, just to inform them about the RCD and its purpose, might cause more people to reach out to us for possible future work. I know this is done currently but maybe a radio ad that plays through the year or something with more regularity. I think that the RCD is an untapped resource for a lot of people and continuing to find ways to inform the public about the RCDs overall mission will benefit both the MRCRD and the County itself.*
- *The MRCRD is a recognized leader and increasingly state and federal agencies recognize the key role regional groups play to accomplishing conservation goals. The MRCRD has the potential to grow into a much larger role and leverage its reputation, capacity and partnerships to secure state and federal funds and meet the water needs for people, rivers, fish and wildlife.*

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Mendocino County Resource Conservation District



All areas of natural resource conservation overlap one another, and climate change and environmental equity are ever-present concerns that influence all our work.