

Placer County Resource Conservation District

Strategic Direction

The Need

The communities and natural resources of Placer County face many changes and challenges. Large scale drought and other changes to the climate are making weather more unpredictable, impacting the livelihoods and lifestyles of many throughout the County. Wildfire danger looms large as we pre-empt and prepare for the kinds of major catastrophic fires that have touched some of our communities and have deeply affected many of our neighboring counties. Meanwhile, the primary land use, culture, and activities on the land are changing. This land and landscape, once wholly stewarded by native peoples (and whom still do to varying degrees), was taken by European colonizers applied farming, ranching, and industrial land uses that we see today. More recently there is a rapid increase in land use toward housing for a growing population of both urban/suburban residents and rural smaller landowners.

Our Vision

The Board of Directors and staff of the Placer Resource Conservation District (Placer RCD) envision and strive towards a future where we skillfully address these changing needs, so that abundant natural resources can continue to enrich and support the land, communities, and ecosystems of Placer County.

Our vision for the future of Placer County includes:

- Forests that have been restored to a fire-adapted state, allowing communities, wildlife, and natural resources to co-exist with fire.
- Vibrant and sustainable agricultural enterprises, where farmers and ranchers use conservation practices that create long-term health for the land and soils, helping our communities adapt to changes in climate and other conditions.
- Clean and abundant water for drinking, irrigation, and sustenance of the natural environment.
- Healthy habitat and functioning watersheds that support abundant plants, animals, and other species.

To make this vision possible, we must also envision a future where the stewardship actions of our entire community are enlisted to support the natural resources we cherish and rely on.

We are working towards a future where everyone in Placer County is inspired, invited, and motivated to work together as partners in stewardship. In this ideal future, everyone will be able to participate in stewardship through the practices and decisions that happen on farms, ranches, and rural properties; in urban and suburban neighborhoods; in business and in government. Access to information, tools, and resources can make these conservation practices widespread and help more people relate to our environment in healthy, mutually beneficial ways.

Realizing this vision is bigger than any one agency—it will take many people and organizations working together and within their own organizations. Members of the board and staff of the Placer RCD are proud to play our role in working towards this future.

Our Mission and Role

The mission of the Placer RCD is to advance the sustainable management of natural resources in Placer County among private landowners, local organizations, and public agencies through action, education, and outreach.

We fulfill our mission by offering expertise that is grounded in a deep history of integrity, science, connection, and relationship. We specialize in coordinating efforts, meeting emergent needs, and serving as trustworthy advisors to help people bring stewardship practices to their land and communities.

As a special district guided by the State of California’s Natural Resource Code, Placer RCD is led by an appointed board of directors who represent our communities. Placer RCD can:

- Provide technical assistance, funding, and other resources directly to private landowners to help them implement stewardship practices on their properties, in a confidential, non-regulatory context.
- Partner with other public agencies to implement on-the-ground conservation.
- Respond to the emerging needs of our communities and our natural resources as conditions change around us.
- Participate in coordinating government, private, and nonprofit entities from the local, state, regional, and federal levels to support all partners to achieve more together.

Our values

Several principles guide our work and help us make decisions and relate well to one another:

- **Collaboration:** In our programs, we partner with a broad base of organizations and people throughout the community, joining our resources and expertise to reach shared goals. Within our organization, we work as a team, leverage each other’s strengths, and support each other in big and small ways.
- **Creativity.** We are a flexible, responsive, innovative agency driven by community needs. We are always seeking to improve our programs and to incorporate new resources and approaches. We are committed to learning and growth as an organization and as individuals.
- **Inclusion.** We provide support and resources to people throughout Placer County, from the forests to the valley. We work to make our programs accessible and inclusive to people from all backgrounds and interests.
- **Integrity and transparency:** The Board of Directors and staff share information openly, live up to our commitments, and bring excellence to our individual roles for the benefit of the whole.

About this document

The RCD’s 2022-2027 Strategic Direction describes our goals and strategies for moving towards this vision over the next several years. In addition to deepening and expanding our core stewardship programs, we will make new investments in education and community awareness—and we will continue to strengthen our organization so that we can achieve more together.

Creation of the Strategic Direction

This strategic direction document was created by the Board of Directors and staff of the Placer RCD in the Fall and Winter of 2021-2022. Our process included:

- The following stakeholders shared their perspectives via interviews, focus groups, and surveys:
 - ◆ *RCD Directors*: Claudia Smith, Chair; Christine Johnson, Vice Chair; Kristin Lantz, Secretary/Treasurer; Patti Beard, Cathy Johnson, Steve Jones, Tom Wehri
 - ◆ *RCD Staff*: Cordi Craig, Robert Delgado, Allison Erny, Kate Espinola, Andrew Justus Fritz, Jason Graydon, Ismael Jamarillo, Sarah Jones, Brian Pimentel, Tony Quatela, Jerry Reioux (Raichel Vierra, George Alves, and Mark White were not able to participate.)
 - ◆ *Representatives from partner organizations including*: Auburn City Council; Auburn City Fire Department (multiple individuals); CAL FIRE (multiple individuals), California Association of Resource Conservation Districts; Greater Auburn Fire Safe Council; Nevada County RCD; Health Education Council; Placer County (Executive Office, Parks Division, Ag Commissioner, Stormwater); Placer County Water Agency (multiple individuals); Placer Sierra Fire Safe Council; RCD contractors and former directors; U.C. Cooperative Extension Placer County
- The RCD Directors and staff gathered on November 30, 2021, for a facilitated strategic planning retreat.
- The RCD’s strategic planning committee (Directors *Claudia Smith and Cathy Johnson*, staff members *Sarah Jones, Allison Erny, and Kate Espinola*) worked with the consultant to review strategic direction drafts and seek comment from all directors and staff members.
- The Board of Directors approved the strategic direction on February 22, 2022.

Updates to the Strategic Direction

Acknowledging that our operating environment and organization are changing rapidly, we plan to check back regularly on this Strategic Direction document. We will incorporate the goals, strategies, and measurable objectives into annual workplans, staff reports, and annual reports. The Board of Directors will consider revisions to this Strategic Direction document at approximately halfway through the planned timeframe. We will also update the measurable objectives outlined here each year as part of the annual workplan process.

Notes to the Board (not for publication):

- *In some cases, specific measurable objectives will be added by staff after the strategic direction document is approved; some can be drawn from grants and contracts, others will result from more specific plans such as chipper program business plan, etc.*
- *The sub-bullets (3.1 etc) will not appear in the public-facing strategic direction document, but will show up in the three-year implementation plan*

Goals and Strategies

<p>Goal #1: The forests and communities of Placer County are resilient to wildfire and other threats to forest health.</p>	
Strategies for 2022-2025	Measurable Objectives
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Play a leadership role in coordinating fire preparedness efforts with agencies and organizations throughout Placer County. 2. Lead the development and implementation of a Prescribed Burn Association in Placer County and provide prescribed burn and forest health education. 3. Improve and expand assistance to residents to reduce fuel loads through education, technical assistance, and direct services. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1. Continue to provide technical assistance 3.2. Develop a business/operations plan for the Chipper Program and implement process improvements and success metrics 3.3. Develop a business/operations plan and launch a defensible space assistance program focused on low-income, elderly, and other vulnerable residents 3.4. Improve and expand outreach and education to help residents and land managers reduce fuel loads. 4. Implement large-scale and regional projects to reduce fuel loads and create community protection in forested lands. 5. Develop an adaptive approach for supporting long-term maintenance of fuels reduction projects, for example through additional treatments and technical assistance. 6. Examine the feasibility of new forest health programs including reforestation programs, addressing forest pest issues, and options for forest products generated by fuel reduction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Collaborative plans developed ■ Prescribed Burn Association established ■ Number of acres treated with fuels reduction strategies ■ Number of acres treated with prescribed burn ■ Number of vulnerable residents served by fuels reduction programs

<p>Goal #2: Farmers, ranchers, and other rural landowners have the information and resources they need to sustainably manage their land, including larger and smaller operations.</p>	
Strategies for 2022-2025	Measurable Objectives
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish an ongoing Healthy Soils program to provide technical assistance and funding support to help landowners implement soil and water conservation practices. 2. Work with related entities including NRCS, U.C. Cooperative Extension, Placer County Ag Commissioner, etc. to develop shared strategies for agricultural conservation. 3. Develop educational materials, technical assistance resources, and outreach strategies to reach smaller landowners and those newer to land management in Placer County. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1. Expand our focus on underserved farmers/ranchers including through multi-lingual outreach and education materials. 3.2. Further develop a conservation planning approach that helps rural landowners look at multiple resource issues and approaches on their lands. 4. Research the feasibility of a conservation learning hub or establishing best practices demonstration sites in Placer County. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of landowners assisted ■ Conservation plans developed ■ Number of landowner applications funded ■ Shared outreach plan developed with other entities ■ Number of educational offerings

<p>Goal #3: Residents and land managers throughout Placer County have the knowledge, skills, resources, and confidence they need to steward our natural resources.</p>	
<p>Strategies for 2022-2025</p>	<p>Measurable Objectives</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop an education, outreach, and communications plan to engage people from the full diversity of communities in Placer County, working in close partnership with other public and private organizations. 2. Continue PRCD’s Urban Agriculture program, reaching urban and backyard gardeners and smaller rural producers. 3. Develop a pilot program to engage community volunteers in PRCD programs. 4. Research the feasibility of establishing a youth education program such as SLEWS (Student and Landowner Education and Watershed Stewardship) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff hired and plan developed ■ <i>(Plan objectives met)</i> ■ Pilot community volunteer program completed and evaluated ■ Youth education program approach developed if appropriate

<p>Goal #4: Strong and effective partnerships, funding and visibility ensure the RCD's programs are sustainable and effective.</p>	
<p>Strategies</p>	<p>Measurable Objectives</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include in the education, outreach, and communications plan strategies to increase the visibility of PRCD with key audiences. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Increase PRCD’s presence at key meetings with community leaders at the local, state, and federal levels. 1.2. Train staff and board to engage as ambassadors for PRCD. 1.3. Include strategies and tactics for using available media (print, digital, social, etc.) and developing new (branded clothing, etc.) communications resources 2. Develop a long-range funding plan that includes an opportunity filter that will help staff and board evaluate new funding, program, and project opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Plans developed ■ Evaluation process used to qualify and disqualify opportunities

Goal #5: The Placer County Resource Conservation's people, systems, and organizational culture support excellence in serving its mission.	
Strategies	Measurable Objectives
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase finance and management capacity in the RCD staff. 2. Create a dedicated outreach, education, and communications staff position to promote all PRCD programs. 3. Support organizational growth with revised staff management structures, role clarification, onboarding practices, and annual workplans. 4. Create a board recruitment and development plan that includes succession of officers and longtime directors, recruitment of new associate directors representing the diversity of communities within Placer County, and support for directors. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 Update director and officer position descriptions to clarify roles and responsibilities 4.2 Develop a recruitment and outreach strategy for associate directors 4.3 Clarify approach to training and orientation of new directors 4.4 Integrate strategic meeting agendas. 5. Establish opportunities to build community, celebrate, and learn within and between the board and staff teams <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1. Adopt regular practices for evaluation / reflection on programs and projects 5.2. Clarify professional development policies and opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ New positions hired ■ New structures and roles established ■ Board recruitment and development plan created ■ Team celebration / connection schedule established