



PLACER RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

FY24-25 Annual Work Plan

*Objectives will be completed by June 30, 2025 unless otherwise noted

*Budget totals indicate anticipated expenditure for FY24-25

*Partner category indicates funder and collaborating entities

District Staff

Executive Director, Sarah Jones

Administration & Finance Director, Donna Thomassen

Administration & Finance Manager, Kate Espinola

Community & Conservation Director, Andrew Justus Fritz

Agriculture Program Manager, Brian Pimentel

Outreach & Education Coordinator, Liana Vitousek

Conservation Planner, Mark White

Chipper Program Crew Supervisor, Jason Graydon

Senior Chipper Program Crew Lead, Chad Chaney

Chipper Program Crew Lead, Lilita Santellano

Chipper Program Crew Lead, Brandi Calderon

Forestry Director, Scott Stephenson

Forestry Project Manager, Lewis Campbell

Forestry Project Coordinator, Ellen Murphy

Prescribed Fire Program Manager, Cordi Craig

Forestry Technical Advisor, Chris Paulus

Forestry Conservation Planner, Jerry Reioux

NATURAL RESOURCES/WATERSHED/HABITAT

Dry Creek Watershed Red Sesbania Removal Project

Staff: Andrew Justus Fritz, Liana Vitousek

Partner: Sacramento Area Flood Control District (SAFCA)

Budget: \$50,000

Strategic Plan Goal: 3

Objectives: Remove Red Sesbania along approximately 31 riparian miles on Dry Creek, Secret Ravine, Antelope Creek, and Miner’s Ravine and submit an Annual Report

Red sesbania (*Sesbania punicea*) is a highly invasive deciduous shrub that is rapidly spreading throughout the Central Valley and Sierra Foothills. According to the California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC), red sesbania has earned a “high” overall invasive score, which translates to severe negative impacts on native plant communities and abiotic ecosystem processes. The plant grows in dense clusters and impedes water access for humans and wildlife. Since 2007, Placer RCD has collaborated with SAFCA to manually remove Red Sesbania from creeks and streams in the Dry Creek watershed to mitigate streambank erosion and flooding risk for downstream communities.

Climate Resilience Through Habitat on California Lands (WCB Pollinator Habitat)

Staff: Andrew Justus Fritz, Brian Pimentel, Liana Vitousek

Partners: Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), California Association of Conservation Districts (CARCD)

Budget: \$52,857

Strategic Plan Goal: 3

Objectives: 1-3 pollinator habitat installation projects

In 2023, the Wildlife Conservation Board awarded \$19.4 million to Placer RCD and 39 other Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) in California. This funding will be used by the RCDs to carry out projects aimed at creating new habitats and sequestering carbon, which will provide substantial benefits to both working and public lands. Placer RCD received \$450,000 from this grant, which will pay, at a minimum, the cost of plants and materials. The grant comes at a critical time when California’s pollinators and wildlife are facing significant threats due to habitat loss and climate change. With this funding, a large-scale effort will be initiated, resulting in long-term advantages for California’s land, climate, and its people.

Atwood Conservation Easement Monitoring and Reporting

Staff: Andrew Justus Fritz, Mark White, Cordi Craig

Partner: Auburn Recreation District (ARD)

Budget: \$5,000

Strategic Plan Goal: 3

Objectives: Provide technical assistance upon request, 2 general inspections, 2 biological surveys, submit Annual Report by February 28, 2025

The Placer RCD provides technical assistance and compliance inspections for ARD at the Atwood Nature Preserve in Auburn, CA. The Preserve is under a U.S. Army Corp of Engineers permit as mitigation for the surrounding development. Placer RCD's role is to ensure that the agreements of the permit are upheld by ARD.

Placer Riparian Restoration Project

Staff: Andrew Justus Fritz, Brian Pimentel, Liana Vitousek

Partner: US Fish and Wildlife Service

Budget: \$13,253

Strategic Plan Goal: 3

Objectives: Install 2,000 feet of fencing at Lincoln High School and treat approximately 1 acre of red sesbania in Granite Bay along Miner's Ravine

Healthy riparian areas, like those found alongside streams or rivers, play a vital role in providing a wide array of benefits and ecosystem services, including water filtration, wildlife habitat, erosion prevention, and flood risk reduction. However, some riparian areas in Placer County are challenged due to invasive species and habitat degradation. By addressing these challenges to riparian ecosystems and more, the removal of invasive species like red sesbania (*Sesbania punicea*) will enhance and protect riparian areas through fencing, planting, or other restoration activities.

FOREST HEALTH AND WILDFIRE RESILIENCE

Placer County Chipper Program

Staff: Jason Graydon, Chad Chaney, Brandi Calderon, Liliana Santellano, Donna Thomassen, Kate Espinola, Sarah Jones, Andrew Justus-Fritz, Liana Vitousek

Partners: Placer County, CAL FIRE

Budget: \$679,612

Strategic Plan Goal: 1.3

Objectives: 1000 chipper services

The Placer County Chipper Program is a cost-share program funded by Placer County and CAL FIRE that provides low-cost residential chipper service for Placer County residents, promotes defensible space, and incentivizes fuels reduction fire prevention activities. This program is implemented with support of the Placer County Probation Department's Alternative Sentencing Program.

Prescribed Burning on Private Lands Program (PBPL)

Staff: Cordi Craig, Chris Paulus

Partners: CAL FIRE, University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE), Placer County Air Pollution Control District, Todd's Valley Miwok Maidu Cultural Foundation, Colfax-Todd's Valley Consolidated Tribe, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Budget: \$161,530

Strategic Plan Goal: 1.2, 1.3, 1.5

Objectives: 40 acres treated, 10 educational events, 5 demonstration burns, 1 high complexity prescribed burn, 1 Rx fire implementation survey

The Prescribed Burning on Private Lands (PBPL) Program provides a mechanism to support landowners in reducing fuel loads on private property with prescribed burning, including broadcast and pile burning. Prescribed burning is one of the essential tools used to manage wildfire risks today. As catastrophic wildfires continue to be a growing concern in California, the use of prescribed burning to reduce hazardous fuels is projected to increase. The primary goal of the PBPL Program is to assist landowners in using prescribed fire to manage vegetation on their properties through workshops, technical assistance, and education.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

Staff: Jerry Reioux, Ellen Murphy, Lewis Campbell

Partners: CARCD, NRCS, UCCE

Objectives: 10 site visits, 5 contracts managed

Budget: \$14,770

Strategic Plan Goal: 1.3, 1.5

In response to large-scale tree mortality, Placer RCD partnered with the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) and secured funding from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) for removing dead and dying conifers on private non-industrial forestland. The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) was developed to address the effects of prolonged drought and bark beetle infestation on forests throughout the Sierra Nevada.

North Fork American River Shaded Fuel Break (Phase 1B and Phase 2)

Staff: Scott Stephenson, Lewis Campbell, Chris Paulus, Cordi Craig

Partners: CAL FIRE, U.S Bureau of Land Management (BLM), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), Placer Land Trust

Budget: Phase 1B- \$138,049 Phase 2- \$ 2,198,835

Strategic Plan Goal: 1.3, 1.4, 1.5

Objectives: Phase 1B – 50 acres of pile burning. Phase 2- 244 acres of herbicide spray, 61 acres of cutting and chipping, 87 acres of mastication, and 30 acres of pile burning

The North Fork American River Shaded Fuel Break (NFARSFB) is a landscape-scale fuels reduction project in the wildland-urban interface between the densely vegetated North Fork American River canyon and adjacent communities of Placer County. In Phase 2 the project area includes 865 acres of private and federal lands located east of Weimar and continues north along the canyon rim to connect with Phase I of the NFARSFB, which was implemented in 2019/20. Phase 1B expands on project treatments completed in Phase 1. Treatments include mastication, handwork, and herbicide. Phase 1B funding will also be used to fund botanical and wetland surveys and reports for a Caltrans fuel reduction project along Interstate-80.

Placer County Coordinated Shaded Fuel Break

Staff: Lewis Campbell

Partners: CAL FIRE

Objectives: 70 acres of herbicide spray

Budget: \$33,154

Strategic Plan Goal: 1.3, 1.4, 1.5

In 2022, Placer RCD completed more than 300 acres of fuels treatment in Applegate with funding from CAL FIRE's California Climate Investments Program. The fuel break will improve ingress and egress routes, protect important historical and cultural resources, and modify fire behavior to improve ground and aerial suppression efforts in the event of a wildfire. Mastication, handwork, grazing, and herbicide were used to modify fuels. In 2022, the RCD received a block grant from CAL FIRE's Wildfire Resilience Program to widen the fuel break and use herbicide, grazing, and prescribed fire to further reduce fuels and maintain fuel break efficacy.

Mosquito Fire Restoration

Staff: Ellen Murphy, Scott Stephenson, Lewis Campbell, Cordi Craig

Partners: US Forest Service (USFS), CAL FIRE, Georgetown Divide Resource Conservation District (RCD)

Budget: \$1,255,958

Strategic Plan Goals: 1.4, 1.6

Objectives: Archeological surveys on 59 acres, 200 acres non-commercial site prep, salvage 150 acres, 150 acres completed by SPI

Placer RCD was funded \$11,980,000 to provide technical assistance and treatments for forest recovery and reforestation for areas impacted by the Mosquito Fire. Placer RCD is collaborating with partner agencies including the Georgetown Divide RCD, CAL FIRE, US Forest Service, and NRCS to maximize the benefits of multiple post-fire recovery options on private land. Through this effort approximately 2000 acres of private land in the Mosquito Fire burn scar will be treated over the next 5-7 years with approximately 200,000 seedlings planted.

Placer County Wildfire Prevention Support

Staff: Lewis Campbell, Scott Stephenson, Chris Paulus

Partners: CAL FIRE

Budget: \$549,626

Strategic Plan Goal: 1.4, 1.5, 3

Objectives: 100 acres herbicide spray, 10 acres handwork

This project will provide support services as requested by CAL FIRE including, but not limited to, development of CEQA compliance documents for fuels reduction and fire prevention projects, professional forestry, technical forestry, biological surveys and protection, air quality permitting and monitoring, fuels reduction/fire prevention implementation and maintenance including prescribed fire use, project coordination and oversight, and any logistical support needs for implementation as directed. Currently this grant supports planning for the Kearsage Mill shaded fuel break and a forest health project within the Emigrant Gap State Demonstration Forest.

Placer Sierra Fuels Reduction

Staff: Lewis Campbell

Partners: CAL FIRE

Budget: \$65,763

Strategic Plan Goal: 1.4, 1.5, 3

Objectives: 10 acres treated

This project will provide support services as requested by CAL FIRE including, but not limited to, development of CEQA compliance documents for fuels reduction and fire prevention projects, professional forestry, technical forestry, biological surveys and protection, air quality permitting and monitoring, fuels reduction/fire prevention implementation and maintenance including prescribed fire use, project coordination and oversight, and any logistical support needs for implementation as directed. This grant may support the implementation of the Kearsage Mill shaded fuel break.

AGRICULTURE AND SOIL HEALTH

Landowner Technical Assistance

Staff: Brian Pimentel, Mark White, Jerry Reioux, Ellen Murphy, Lewis Campbell, Andrew Justus-Fritz

Partners: NRCS, UCCE, US Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Budget: \$60,567

Strategic Plan Goal: 2

Objectives: Host Local Working Group Meeting, technical assistance for 15 landowners, 7 conservation plans, 1 educational workshop

Placer RCD offers Landowner Technical Assistance through a cooperative agreement between Placer RCD and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that enables Placer RCD staff to provide on-the-ground technical assistance and project or program management across a broad range of natural resource conservation practices, methods, and strategies.

Through this partnership, Placer RCD provides conservation planning and technical assistance to a variety of land-use types within the District including forest, small farm, commercial agriculture, and woodlands. Assistance will be provided to producers that are eligible for USDA funded practices through NRCS and Farm Bill programs.

Backyard and Community Ag Program

Staff: Andrew Justus Fritz, Brian Pimentel, Liana Vitousek

Partners: National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), NRCS, USDA

Budget: \$26,811

Strategic Plan Goals: 2.3,3.2

Objectives: Perform 2 backyard and community garden site visits, 1 community garden tour, development of a Community Garden Network website, installation of a living food pantry

With an emphasis on nurturing place and culture through relationships, conservation, and leadership, Placer RCD's Backyard and Community Ag Program provides technical assistance, create innovative, fresh food access initiatives, deliver peer-to-peer learning experiences, and create a county-wide community garden network to support and sustain strong conservation and innovative leadership values.

NRCS Equity Grant

Staff: Brian Pimentel, Andrew Justus-Fritz, Liana Vitousek

Partners: CARCD

Budget: \$12,175

Strategic Plan Goal: 2.3

Objectives: Organize and host one 1 climate-smart agriculture demonstration tour/workshop, and 1 conservation and climate-smart agriculture workshops for community gardens and small farms.

Improving Equity in Conservation Outreach in California through collaboration between NRCS and RCDs aims to enhance outreach efforts to historically underserved producers. This initiative supports conservation planning and cost-share assistance on behalf of NRCS, ensuring these producers receive the necessary resources and support. Throughout the course of the project Placer RCD will conduct a listening and survey tour of historically underserved farmers and ranchers to perform a needs assessment, provide technical assistance, identify local natural resource concerns, or provide NRCS assistance information.

Conservation Agriculture Planning Grants Program (CAPGP)

Staff: Brian Pimentel, Andrew Justus-Fritz

Partners: Sacramento Region RCD's, Yolo County RCD

Budget: \$12,910

Strategic Plan Goal: 2.3

Objectives: Complete 2 Soil Health Management Plans

The Conservation Agriculture Planning Grants Program (CAPGP) is a new program in the Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation. This program will fund the development of plans that will help farmers and ranchers identify actions for climate change mitigation and adaptation, further environmental stewardship on farms and ranches, and ensure agricultural food security into the future.

Healthy Soils Program

Staff: Brian Pimentel, Andrew Justus Fritz, Mark White, Liana Vitousek, Kate Espinola, Donna Thomassen

Partners: California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), Amador County RCD, El Dorado County RCD, Nevada County RCD, Sloughhouse RCD, Florin RCD, Tuolumne County RCD, Calaveras County RCD, Georgetown Divide RCD, Lower Cosumnes

Budget: \$1,255,374

Strategic Plan Goals: 2.1,2.3

Objectives: Establish 35-40 awarded 2023 HSP contracts, 2 soil health workshops

The Healthy Soils Program aims to provide farmers and ranchers with knowledge, resources, and financial support to improve soil health, sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in their agricultural operations. In partnership with CDFA, the program extends technical and implementation support to recipients of the 2021 CDFA Healthy Soils Program awards. To further support producers, the Placer RCD was awarded \$4 Million to administer a 2023 CDFA Healthy Soils Program Block Grant, benefiting the Central Sierra region and involving collaboration with nine resource conservation districts. This initiative entails outreach and

technical guidance to producers, encouraging grant applications for soil health projects. Successful applicants chosen for funding will enter into contracts receiving financial compensation and dedicated technical assistance to facilitate successful implementation for the funded producers.

PCWA Untreated Water Storage Tank Rebate Program

Staff: Brian Pimentel

Partners: Placer County Water Agency

Budget: \$12,300

Strategic Plan Goal: 2

Objectives: Technical assistance resulting in 15 rebate applications

Funded by the Placer County Water Agency (PCWA), the Untreated Water Tank Rebate Program provides up to \$1,000 to PCWA customers to improve untreated water system reliability through customer-side storage. Funding for this program is limited, and applications are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. If awarded, the customer will be issued as a credit on the customer's account. Participants are eligible for one storage tank rebate per account. Placer RCD will provide technical assistance, outreach and education for landowners and residents during the coordination and implementation of the program.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Placer County Cooperative Agreement

Staff: Mark White, Andrew Justus Fritz, Liana Vitousek,

Budget: \$45,431

Strategic Plan Goal: 3

Objectives: Ag Tour, Forestry Tour, 3 stormwater workshops

The overall goal of this Agreement is for the District to respond in a timely manner to variable requests from the county for assistance in supporting mutual objectives of the Placer County and the District. Mutual objectives include: the promotion of agriculture, enhancement of Placer County's water-course health, providing Placer County's staff and residents updated information that will reduce the threat of wildfire, the reduction of soil erosion and sediment deposition, and improvements to stormwater quality.

Forestry and Natural Resources Mentorship Program

Staff: Liana Vitousek

Partners: CAL FIRE, Bakersfield College, Cal Poly Humbolt, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, College of the Redwoods, Feather River College, Reedley College, Shasta College, University of California Berkeley, California Licensed Foresters Association, Women in Timber, UC Cooperative Extension

Budget: \$66,405

Strategic Plan Goals: 3.4

Objectives: Deliver the program to 50 students at 7 academic institutions throughout California. Organize and host 1 career development workshop, 1 in-person training on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice, and 2 career panels. Facilitate at least 3 in-person meetups for program participants. Complete the program's 2024-2025 academic year annual report.

The mission of the Forestry and Natural Resources Career Mentorship Program is to increase recruitment and retention of early-career forestry professionals by pairing university and community college students with a professional mentor, providing networking and training opportunities, and offering insight into a forestry career. The program recognizes that a diverse and expanded workforce is essential to addressing current and future challenges facing the field. We encourage support for underrepresented groups in the profession, including women, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, and LGBTQIA+ by providing training on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) for participants, pairing participants based on shared professional interests and identity (when requested), and highlighting the diversity of identities and specialties that exist within the field of forestry.

Wildfire Prevention Education Program

Staff: Liana Vitousek, Sarah Jones

Partners: CAL FIRE, Placer County Office of Emergency Services (OES)

Budget: \$63,104

Strategic Plan Goals: 1.3

Objectives: Coordinate with CAL FIRE and Placer County OES to host a minimum of 1 educational workshop

The CAL-FIRE Education Grant provides funding for outreach and education on wildfire prevention. The work to be completed this year includes primarily promotion of wildfire education through attendance at events and workshops.

Forestland Stewardship Newsletter (FSN)

Staff: Liana Vitousek

Partners: CAL FIRE, CARCD, USFS, UCCE

Budget: \$37,805

Strategic Plan Goal: 1.3

Objectives: 2 newsletters completed and distributed, 1 FSN website launch, and at least 8 social media posts per month (Facebook and Instagram)

The Forestland Steward newsletter is a collaborative publication between CAL FIRE, Placer RCD, UC Cooperative Extension, and the US Forest Service. The newsletter is published 2-3 times a year and offers private forest landowners throughout the state helpful and relevant information

for managing their land. With up-to-date policy information, agency input, and science-driven management recommendations, the newsletter strives to provide landowners with all the facts (and some fun, too!) to create a healthy and sustainable landscape.

DISTRICT INITIATIVES

Outreach & Communications

Staff: Andrew Justus Fritz, Liana Vitousek, Sarah Jones

Budget: \$34,526

Strategic Plan Goals: 2.3, 3.1, 4, 4.3

Objectives: Communications Plan, Annual Report, swag for events, lobby sign

Outreach and communications are essential for promoting the District as a community ally in the successful implementation of conservation and other natural resource projects, but to also increase visibility of our programs and services by community members and potential funders.

Organizational Improvement

Staff: Sarah Jones, Donna Thomassen, Kate Espinola

Budget: N/A

Strategic Plan Goals: 4.1, 4.2, 5

Objectives:

- Update Records Retention Policy
- Update Contracting Policy
- Executive Director will participate in a minimum of 2 committees or working groups
- Complete compensation and benefits analysis
- Create a digital "Director Binder"