



# ALAMEDA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

*... Making Conservation Happen in Alameda County*



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## Strategic Plan

2007 - 2012

## ALAMEDA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN 2007 - 2012

### Mission Statement

“The Alameda County Resource Conservation District provides leadership in the County and region about natural resources conservation and agricultural enhancement through partnerships, education, outreach, resource services, technical assistance, and funding.”

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### Fundamental Principles Provide Focus for Programs & Activities

- The Annual Work Plan will focus on natural resources conservation, working landscape enhancement, and agricultural heritage. (“Working Landscape” is productive land in harmony with a healthy environment.)
  - Programs will utilize the Conservation Partnership’s (the District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)) unique capacity to combine technical and educational resource services and to “work in the middle”.
  - Work will be based on watershed management planning and collaboration.
  - Programs will benefit District constituents and the working landscape.
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### Focus on Priority Natural Resource Issues, Education and Conservation Partnership Operations

- Conservation Partnership Operations
  - Education and outreach will include both stand-alone programs and integration with conservation programs.
  - Stewardship and preservation of sustainable, privately owned and managed working landscapes
  - Stewardship of public working landscapes and linkage to private working landscapes
  - Wildlife habitat enhancement and management
  - Watershed planning and water quality protection and enhancement
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## **VISION: Natural Resource Accomplishments**

**The District provides leadership and working landscape and conservation services that provide resources planning, enhancement and restoration, education and outreach, and policy. Conservation and agricultural viability will benefit.**

**“By March 2012 ....”**

### **Conservation Leadership**

Leadership: “Working in the middle to bring people together to facilitate conservation”

- The Conservation Partnership will be the demonstrated “go to” leader for County and regional planning in agriculture and conservation planning and delivery.
- The Conservation Partnership will be the cutting edge model of conservation services delivery for the Bay Area.

### **Resources Planning**

- All Alameda County watersheds will be mapped, conservation plans will be in place, and 25% of the plans will be in some stage of implementation.
- The identification of critical habitat areas in rural Alameda County will be 50% completed.
- Natural resource planning will be more consistent across 75% of our district as a result of gathering data and providing leadership.
- The Conservation Partnership will have brought together all public agencies in Alameda County and their constituents to work on a joint vision for conservation in Alameda County. (Note: could be ROSA)
- The Conservation Partnership will be poised to manage resource issues and whatever new endangered and threatened species rules and regulations are authorized.

### **Resources Enhancement, Restoration and Protection**

- Fifty percent of interested private land owners will have received resource enhancement and/or protection services.
- Fifty plus stock pond habitat restoration projects will be completed, resulting in additional, enhanced habitat for threatened and endangered species.
- One hundred percent of the Bay Area public grasslands will be healthier due to the Conservation Partnership’s regional leadership.

### Resources Enhancement, Restoration and Protection (continued)

- The reach of the Arroyo De la Laguna Creek from the Verona Bridge to the confluence of Alameda Creek will be restored to functional status, restoration of habitat values will be increased, and sediment loading to Alameda Creek will be measurably reduced from baseline.
- The Conservation Partnership will provide adequate technical assistance and cost-share for equine facilities and will become the state model.
- The Conservation Partnership will coordinate leveraged and strategic utilization of USDA programs in the region. (note: i.e. FSA office day here, Rangeland Coalition advocacy)
- Permit Coordination will be sustainable and effectively facilitate enhancement activities and use of Farm Bill allocations.
- The Partnership for Land Conservation and Stewardship (PLCS) will be sustainable and effectively facilitate land protection and resources mitigation on private lands.
- The Conservation Partnership will facilitate leadership and integration of the Farm Bill and other NRCS programs with other local, state and federal conservation programs. (note: i.e. innovative programs, Rangeland Coalition pilot project)
- The Conservation Partnership's restoration and enhancement activities will be integrated with our working land protection activities.
- Conservation Crediting and other innovative tools will be in place and will become routine.
- Surface water quality will be assessed and improved across every rural land use sector.
- A staff position will have the primary responsibility to identify mitigation funds and direct them to land owners and PLCS for conservation projects through both enhancement and protection.

### **Vision: Education and Outreach**

- Education activities will increase 100%.
- Seventy-five percent of rural landowners, 50% of conservation entities, and 100% of all government agencies in the District will know about the accomplishments and activities of the District with emphasis on soil-related activities.
- The urban population will be brought together with the on-the-ground land managers to educate the urban neighbors about:
  - what the real resources are on the ground,
  - what land managers do to protect those resources and
  - what the urban population can do to influence natural resource conservation efforts.
- The Equine Education Program will function as a state model.
- The Conservation Partnership will earn a significant conservation award with state and national recognition.

### **Vision: Agricultural Viability**

- Public land stewardship by private property owners/operators working with public landlords will be more positive.
- On a county-wide basis we will identify what the land owners' needs are.
- Ten thousand acres of private working landscape will be protected with conservation easements.
- Twenty percent of our private rangeland managers will produce 100% of their income with the use and management of rangeland.
- The Williamson Act Program will be well-planned and managed.

### **Vision: Other Accomplishments**

- The Livermore NRCS office will be a fully-funded Field Office and training center.
  - The Conservation Partnership will be on retainer with many public agencies.
  - The next generation of conservationists will be involved in District programs, activities, and leadership.
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## Focus 1 - Conservation Partnership Operations

### By March 2012:

**As a result of operational enhancements and stability and to address priority issues and opportunities for natural resources and agriculture, the Conservation Partnership team will increase in size and expertise and be more capable to sustain and provide the conservation leadership, education and technical expertise required to achieve this strategic plan.**

**The Conservation Partnership Team will be a significantly diversified and larger RCD and NRCS staff to meet operational needs.**

1. A staffing plan will be implemented to attract and maintain a competent, motivated and professional team resulting from staff development and training, recognition and competitive compensation.
2. The team will include staff members, volunteers, interns, SCEP students, and consultants.
  - The Livermore NRCS will be a fully-funded Field Office and training center.
  - The Conservation Partnership office will serve like a consultant.
  - Specific position additions will include at least:
    - 1 staff position with the primary responsibility for legislative affairs
    - 4 additional full time positions working on billable projects
    - 1 outreach and 1 fund development position
    - Administrative staff for the District
    - Administrative staff for PLCS
3. Agricultural experience, particularly local experience, will be desirable for all new staff.

**Financial stability will be achieved and sustainable.**

Fiscal stability: self-sustainability with diverse funding sources and significant reserves.

1. Retainers with our partners for long term technical assistance will result in additional staffing.
2. The County of Alameda will match the District's parcel tax revenue.
3. A tax increase on ballot will be developed to provide new District revenue.

## **Conservation Partnership Operations (continued)**

### **The Board of Directors will become more active in achieving District goals.**

1. Director-led committees will utilize Conservation Partnership staff and community expertise and will provide program and operational leadership.
2. Directors will be actively engaged in legislative and outreach activities.
3. The public will participate in meetings and activities and as committee members.
4. A succession plan will be in place for the Board, including recruitment of agricultural cooperators and others as Associate Directors.
5. The next generation of conservationists will be involved in District programs, activities, and leadership.

### **Other Operations will be enhanced with administrative, communications and legislative affairs improvements.**

1. Administrative excellence
2. Up-to-date policies & procedures
3. Effective internal communications and external outreach
4. Effective legislative affairs
5. Outreach on working landscape issues to Alameda County and other partners

## **Focus 2 - Education and Outreach will include Stand-alone Programs and Integration with Conservation Programs**

**By March 2012,**

**As a result of expanded education and outreach annual polling will indicate an 80% increase in public recognition of the important values of agriculture and its heritage and of natural resource conservation. Education and outreach will also increase public understanding about the public's own role to positively influence natural resource conservation and agriculture.**

### **Education and Outreach activities will increase.**

1. Watershed Adventures will continue to be fully funded by Alameda county, and will be expanded to additional areas in the county.
2. Outdoor watershed education/stewardship programs will be provided for Alameda County youth at restoration sites, agricultural sites such as the Sunol AgPark, Palomares School, and other appropriate locations. Local Ag classes will be especially encouraged to attend and participate.
3. A new outdoor education (i.e. science camp) program will be made available to all 6<sup>th</sup> graders in the District.
4. Fifty targeted workshops will reach 1500 participants, including:
  - o Range Camp for adults
  - o Expanded technical topics
  - o Rangeland rides and other events for decision makers and media
  - o Land succession planning and agriculture business, including equine facilities
5. Conservation education for equine facilities will reach 25 facilities in the district and provide educational materials and/or presentations at twenty other venues in California.
6. NRCS will utilize the office to provide urban conservation and Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) training.
7. Monthly outreach activities, including regular press releases, will be broadly disseminated in the region.

### **Education and Outreach will be multi-media.**

1. The District will produce a video for public access television.
2. Directors will appear at telecasted agency meetings promoting District activities.
3. The District website will be used as a regional information resource.
4. Outreach will feature working landscape stewards, including youth and multi-generational families.



5. Outreach will include partnership and co-sponsorship with other organizations' activities and participation in regional natural resource boards and organizations such as Bay Area Open Space Council, LAFCo, SF Bay Joint Venture.

### **Focus 3 - Stewardship and Preservation of Sustainable, Privately Owned and Managed Working Landscapes**

**By March 2012:**

**As a result of private lands preservation and stewardship enhancement, there will be no net loss of agricultural operations in Alameda County, based on the agriculture census and agricultural sustainability will be increased. The public will recognize the important values of privately-owned working landscapes and will invest in working landscape preservation through easements.**

**Preservation of private lands will include the use of conservation easements.**

1. The regional leadership and participation of the Conservation Partnership and PLCS in organizations such as the Bay Area Open Space Council and the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition will direct resources strategically to working landscapes.
2. Twenty habitat or conservation easements, or 10,000 acres will be recorded on privately-owned working landscapes and 50 more will be being negotiated.
3. The funding source pool for easements will grow by 50%.
4. PLCS will continue to be self-sustainable.
5. The District will hold and manage 10 easements and endowments.
6. The District will own two habitat mitigation properties in fee.
7. The Conservation Partnership will be a model for innovative conservation tools and for collaboration.

**Private agriculture operations will be more sustainable, well-managed working landscapes**

1. Fifty land owners have completed land succession and business plans.
2. Twenty-five agriculture business workshops will be provided for multi-generation landowners.
3. The Conservation Partnership will develop easement stewardship plans for private landowners that meet conservation as well as agricultural business objectives that together sustain the working landscapes.
4. The Conservation Partnership will work with the Agriculture Commissioner and others for increased management of invasive weeds.
5. The Conservation Partnership will work with cities, Alameda County, agencies and conservation partners to remove and simplify “barriers to conservation”.

6. NRCS Farm Bill and Conservation Technical Assistance funds will increase twenty percent and will be used strategically to model urban-edge, private conservation.
7. The District will assist Alameda County and cities with planning and policy for working lands, including the Williamson Act program implementation.

## **Focus 4 - Stewardship of Public Working Landscapes with Linkage to the Private Working Landscapes**

### **By March 2012:**

**As a result of providing technical assistance to public landowners, stewardship of public working landscapes will be ongoing and enhanced. It will be supported by an effective relationship with the local agricultural industry and by technical assistance by rangeland professionals. There will be no net loss of working rangeland due to public ownership. Grazing will be re-introduced to 50% of the currently un-grazed public lands, where appropriate. Also, urban and park development plans will provide for rangeland stewardship infrastructure.**

**Land acquisition will be planned and funded to sustain the ongoing, healthy stewardship of the working landscape and to utilize the region's agricultural industry and resources.**

1. Fifty percent or more of public land acquisition in Alameda County will be for easements rather than fee title.
2. There will be a 20% increase in public land available for private agriculture operators.
3. The Conservation Partnership will work with cities, Alameda County and other agencies to require that suitable 'development leftovers' be sustainable working landscapes with stewardship plans and funding in place.

**Stewardship of public working landscapes will be enhanced, sustainable and managed to be consistent with well-managed private landscapes.**

1. Fifty percent of public and private organizations' working lands in Alameda County will have a written stewardship plan that is actively implemented and is consistent with beneficial management practices.
2. The Conservation Partnership will work with cities, Alameda County, public landowners and agencies to require stewardship planning and funding when working landscapes are acquired by the public as fee or easement.
3. The Conservation Partnership will work with cities, Alameda County, and public landowners and agencies to enhance public rangeland grazing and stewardship policy. (i.e. general plans, ordinances, rangeland management plans)
4. The Conservation Partnership will develop 10 stewardship plans for public entities that meet conservation as well as agricultural business objectives that, together sustain the working landscapes and the local agricultural industry.
5. NRCS Farm Bill and CTA funds will be strategically utilized for public landowners to model and provide incentives for urban-edge working landscape conservation that supports local agriculture.

## **Focus 5 - Wildlife Habitat Enhancement & Stewardship**

### **By March 2012:**

**As a result of collaborative conservation leadership, at least 200,000 acres of strategic wildlife habitat will be evaluated and will have conservation plans in place, and 50 significant habitat areas will be protected and enhanced.**

### **Collaboration, reducing conservation barriers, and providing voluntary incentives will increase wildlife conservation activities and funding.**

1. The Alameda County Permit Coordination Program will be renewed.
2. The Wildlife-Friendly Ponds Program will have restored 40 ponds.
3. The Arroyo de la Laguna will be functionally restored from the Verona Bridge to Alameda Creek.
4. The California permit coordination program will be in place and demonstrated in Alameda County.
5. The Conservation Partnership will work with cities, Alameda County and other agencies to require stewardship planning and funding to be in place when working landscapes are acquired by the public as fee or easement.
6. Leadership in the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition and demonstration with the Wildlife-Friendly Ponds Pilot Project will provide opportunities to develop and leverage funding and to develop innovative tools that benefit the species and the working landscape.
7. Annual Conservation Partnership Awards and other special events will recognize conservation innovators and provide incentive for others.

### **Regional regulatory mitigation will benefit local working landscapes.**

1. The Conservation Partnership and PLCS will provide leadership for the East County Conservation Strategy that will support PLCS and Conservation Partnership programs, augment and leverage partnerships and support the stewardship goals of the Districts Strategic Plan.

## **Focus 6 - Watershed Planning and Water Quality Protection and Enhancement**

**By March, 2012:**

**As a result of providing watershed planning, education and technical leadership, all watersheds in Alameda County will be mapped, 200,000 acres will have NRCS conservation plans in place, and 50% of the watershed plans will be implemented and consistently monitored.**

**The Conservation Partnership will provide watershed planning and leadership in Alameda County.**

1. The Conservation Partnership will be on retainer with numerous entities.
2. The Conservation Partnership will strategically participate in collaborative planning groups.
3. The Conservation Partnership will strategically leverage its resources and opportunities.

**All County watersheds will be inventoried, evaluated and planned.**

1. Inventory will include NRCS' consideration of soil, air, water, plants, animals, people, as well as agricultural viability.
2. Collaboration with conservation partners will provide shared technical expertise and funds.

**Water quality protection and enhancement will be integrated into Conservation Partnership programs, including planning, monitoring, education, and legislative participation.**

1. Rangeland water quality will be an area of focus.
2. Rangeland conservationists will provide technical services and outreach.