



Trinity County
Resource Conservation District

Trinity County Resource Conservation District

Strategic Plan

2018-2023



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction and Organization	3
District Boundary Map.....	5
District Program Areas.....	6
Major Accomplishments (2012- 2017).....	8
Resource Challenges and Opportunities.....	10
2018-2023 Goals, Objectives, and Strategies	11
• Goal 1: Build and support programs that improve forest health, fish and wildlife habitat, water quantity and quality, and ecosystem resiliency in a changing climate	11
• Goal 2: Expand the District’s influence by building strategic partnerships at the local and regional levels	13
• Goal 3: Enhance the public’s understanding of resource conservation practices and land stewardship and the District’s role in implementation.....	13
• Goal 4: Enhance the District’s ability to implement its mission through continuous improvements in internal and external communications, staff recruitment and enrichment, capacity building, and board development.....	15
• Goal 5: Increase sustainable financial strength.....	16
Plan Implementation	17

Introduction and Organization

Resource Conservation Districts are one of California's earliest grassroots conservation organizations that identify conservation needs and support local land managers in implementing solutions on a voluntary basis. The catastrophic soil losses of the dust bowl 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 provide assistance to local managers in addressing soil and resource conservation challenges.

Description of the District:

Trinity County Resource Conservation District has come a long way in its 60 years of existence and has accomplished a wide array of projects to assist landowners and land managers in this county. The District was formed in 1956 under Division 9 of the State Resources Code. It is a non-regulatory special district, self-governed by volunteer directors who are appointed by the Trinity County Board of Supervisors.

The board of directors is guided by landowners and the community in their decisions and actions. District employees carry out the day-to-day operations, guided by priorities and policies set by the board.

The District serves all areas of Trinity County, yet receives no base funding from county, state or federal governments. The majority of District funding comes from submitting competitive grant applications and receiving merit-based awards and agreements.

The purpose of the District is similar to that of the 3,000 conservation districts across the nation. Conservation districts focus on land, water and related resource problems, develop programs to solve them, and enlist and coordinate help from public and private sources that can contribute to accomplishing goals. Districts work to advance conservation education in the community, coordinating educational programs and serving as a community-clearing house for information and services.

This document is an adaptable 5-year strategic plan for 2018-2023 that will assist in guiding Trinity County Resource Conservation District operations. This Plan defines our organization's goals and how it can best achieve its mission. The District has taken a look at its purpose, where we have been, where we are now, where we want to be in the future, and how to arrive at our destination. In the process we have examined our strengths, weaknesses, and resource opportunities.

We felt it imperative that our resource conservation delivery system be strengthened to work with landowners and partners in our community, who help ensure the health of our watersheds, forests, and economy.

Geography:

Trinity County is 3,222 square miles located in the rugged terrain of the northwestern mountains of California. Elevation ranges from 600 to 9,025 feet. Several deep river canyons traverse the County and the resulting dissected relief has steep slopes. The mild climate has four distinct seasons, although none is extreme. The majority of the County is under some form of public ownership, including the Trinity Alps, Chancelulla and Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness Areas, the Shasta-Trinity and Six Rivers National Forests, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, and various state and county entities. Land uses in the County have generally centered around natural resource development. Recreation, logging, fisheries, and agriculture are the predominant uses. The communities are small and rural. Weaverville, the county seat, is the largest with 3,500 residents. As a result of the extent of public land ownership, relative inaccessibility, combined with a limited job market, Trinity County is only sparsely settled, with a population of less than 15,000 residents.

Leadership and Governance:

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

District Mission:

To assist in protecting, managing, conserving and restoring the natural resources of Trinity County through information, education, technical assistance and project implementation.

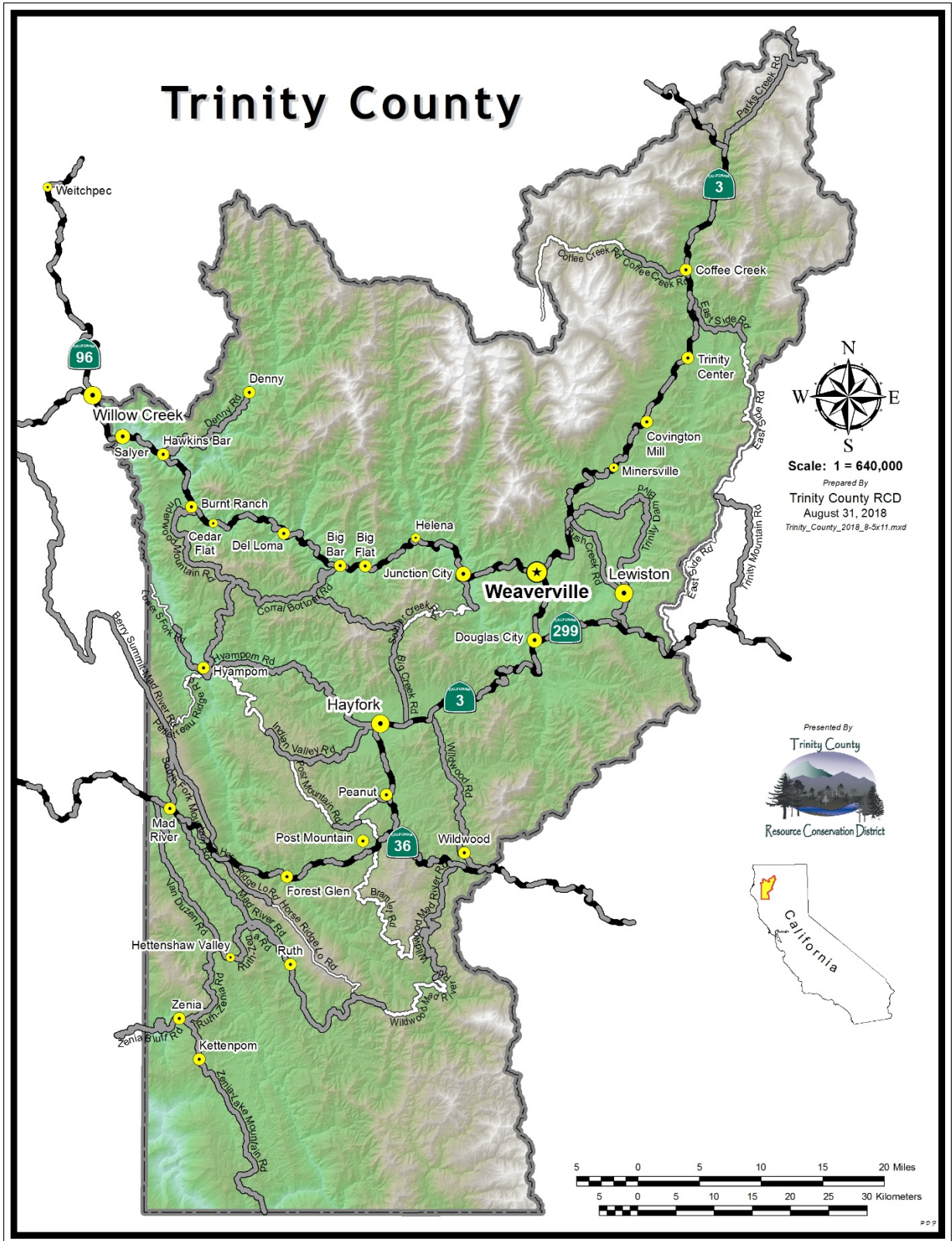
District Vision:

Trinity County Resource Conservation District envisions a balance between utilization and conservation of our natural resources. Through economic diversity and ecosystem management, our communities will achieve and sustain a quality environment and healthy economy.

Guiding Principles:

The Trinity County Resource Conservation District does not have regulatory authorities and must rely on partnerships with individuals, community organizations, and other government agencies to fund and implement our conservation programs. We are committed to utilizing cooperative and scientifically sound methods to achieve our mission.

District Boundary Map



District Program Areas

The District provides technical and educational assistance to property owners/managers and other stakeholders to identify and achieve their natural resource and agricultural goals. We serve as a clearinghouse of information and can provide technical guidance, permitting assistance, and financial incentives for landowners/managers interested in implementing conservation or habitat enhancement practices. Participation in our programs is voluntary. While our program areas are listed individually below, our departments and staff regularly reach across program lines to ensure the long-term sustainability of our mission. This integrated approach within our organization provides the foundation for the collaborative quality of District interactions with all of our partner agencies and stakeholders.

- Agriculture
 - Support sustainable and local agriculture
 - Promote Best Management Practices
 - Rentals of the no-till drill and apple cider press
 - Cannabis issues
- Education/Outreach
 - Experiential environmental education
 - Quarterly newsletter
 - Electronic and print media presence
 - Educational workshops and events
 - Trinity River Salmon Festival
 - Young Family Ranch activities
- Forest Health
 - Trinity County Community Wildfire Protection Plan support and project implementation
 - Fuels reduction
 - Chipping services
 - Weaverville Community Forest stewardship
- Native Habitat Restoration
 - Native plant nursery
 - Integrated Pest Management (noxious weeds)
 - Revegetation
 - Post-fire restoration
- Organization
 - Fiscal policies
 - Personnel policies
 - Board support and development
 - Sustainable funding
 - Partnership development

- Programmatic Support Services
 - Agency policy support
 - Provide Geographic Information System support
 - Environmental compliance planning (NEPA, CEQA)

- Recreation
 - Infrastructure maintenance and development

- Watershed Management
 - Road decommissioning
 - Road upgrade
 - Stream and habitat restoration
 - Watershed planning and coordination
 - Trespass cannabis grow site and illegal dumping cleanup

Major Accomplishments (2012- 2017)

The TCRCDD has worked throughout Trinity County on a diverse mix of projects during the five years of 2012-2017. Wildfires have had devastating effects on several communities in Trinity County over this time, but especially Junction City in 2017. The District implemented several emergency rehabilitation projects for the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the Trinity Public Utility District in the footprint of the Helena Fire (2017), River Complex Fire (2015), and Oregon Fire (2014). These projects included road rehabilitation and culvert replacement, slope stabilization, fuels reduction, and mapping services to assist Trinity County in its efforts to secure fire relief funding to assist landowners who sustained severe property losses. Other fuels reduction and community wildfire protection efforts implemented by the District throughout the county from Trinity Center, to Weaverville, to Hyampom, to Ruth included defensible space fuel reductions, roadside fuel breaks, and chipping services for various communities and neighborhoods.

The District continued to expand its implementation and monitoring efforts on revegetation and restoration projects for Caltrans on various sites in Trinity County such as the Slate Creek slide on Highway 3 north of Weaverville and the Collins Bar curve improvement along Highway 299 west of Big Bar. Invasive species removal took place in Junction City, Weaverville, Lewiston, Coffee Creek and many locations along Highway 3 north of Weaverville. Species removed include Scotch broom, Spanish broom, diffuse knapweed, spotted knapweed and Dyer's woad.

Road related sediment reduction continues to be a high priority for the District. Projects include several new road maintenance and/or decommissioning projects in the South Fork Trinity River Watershed, Sims Fire rehabilitation near Hyampom, Browns Ranch Road area in Weaverville, Lewiston Lake area, and Grass Valley Creek Watershed. During this five year period, the District addressed 234 roads in over 30 different watersheds. Nearly 50 miles of roads were decommissioned and nearly 280 miles of roads were upgraded. Maintenance work included brushing roads, clearing logs, clearing culvert inlets, and installing road signs. Road upgrade projects have the goal of reducing controllable road-related sediment delivery to creeks. This can include installation of rocked rolling dips, disconnecting ditches from stream crossings, construction of critical dips and the replacement of undersized culverts with larger diameter pipes so water will not overwhelm the road, causing a washout of the road crossing. Decommissioning involves the excavation of all stream crossings, swales and hydrologic features with the intention of restoring the hillslope and the restoration to the pre-road conditions.

For three years, from the beginning of 2012 through the end of 2014, the District collaborated with the Watershed Center as South Fork Trinity River Watershed Coordinators to work with landowners, land managers and stakeholders to improve watershed conditions and help implement the South Forth Trinity River TMDL. In addition to direct on the ground work, this project allowed the watershed coordinators to apply for grant funding on a regular basis which brought in \$3.4 million into a county with less than 14,000 residents.

Implementation of an in-stream restoration project on West Weaver Creek was completed in 2017 upgrading several hundred feet of salmon habitat, and about half an acre of upland habitat in an area heavily impacted by past mining and wildfires. The project reconnected the creek to the floodplain, added stream features such as riffles and step-pools, and revegetated the project site after in-stream construction was completed.

The Geographic Information Systems (GIS) department accomplishments included county parcel configuration changes, creating and administering data for the creation of the County's cannabis ordinance, updating the general accuracy of County and District data, and mapping for the Helena fire recovery effort. The Trinity County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was updated for the third time in 2016 and GIS was an important part of that process. With the threat of wildfire being ever-present in our communities, the Trinity County Fire Chiefs Association, emergency responders, and Sheriff's Department funded a project to replicate the Weaverville Fire Protection District's map book for each of the Volunteer Fire Departments throughout the county. The map books are detailed, atlas-style books that include all labeled streets, physical addresses, and locations of infrastructure features such as hydrants, water sources, gates, and hazardous materials. Map books were made for Hayfork, Lewiston, Douglas City, Junction City, Hawkins Bar and Salyer, Down River, Trinity Center, Coffee Creek, Post Mountain, Hyampom, Southern Trinity, and Kettenpom/Zenia VFDs.

The Education and Outreach department implemented efforts for both the District and the Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP). The District created new Facebook pages and began engaging on a regular basis in social media outreach. The website was expanded and new content added. Efforts for TRRP included over 30 community events to gather feedback and improve community relations; creation of ten different printed brochures, a new website, new Facebook pages, and a watershed map; and installation of new kiosks at river access sites. These combined efforts resulted in reaching over 2000 students through classes, camps, field trips and student-focused events. All-age efforts reached over 4000 adults with events such as birding and wildflower walks, the Trinity County Fair booth, Trinity River Salmon Festival, electronic and public meeting outreach, and the YFR Annual Plant and Seed Exchange.

Other ongoing projects and programs the District continued to implement over the 2012-2017 period include:

- Facilitation of the Trinity County Collaborative Group, and the Trinity County Fire Safe Council, and coordination of the Trinity River Watershed Council
- Distribution of the quarterly newsletter, Conservation Almanac
- Summer Day Camp in Weaverville, and 6th grade Environmental Camp at Bar 717 in Hyampom
- Stewardship of the Young Family Ranch including the construction of a community learning pavilion to host public activities ranging from gardening workshops and public seminars to children's events and musical offerings, while providing shelter from weather

- Stewardship of the award-winning Weaverville Community Forest (WCF), obtaining a new 10-year agreement with the Bureau of Land Management with an additional 2,100 BLM-managed acres being added to the WCF in 2015
- Operation of a native plant nursery and greenhouse to propagate native plants for use in restoration projects
- Rehabilitation of both trespass cannabis grow sites and garbage dump sites on timber lands with partners through CalRecycle grants
- Ongoing maintenance work on the Weaver Basin Trail System along with updating the Weaver Basin Trail System map. The new trail map incorporates highly accurate GPS location data and features five color-coded loop routes with corresponding elevational profiles
- Created a 501(c)3, non-profit organization, The Friends of the Trinity County Resource Conservation District (FOTCRCD), to assist the Resource Conservation District in meeting the mission statement of the District.

Resource Challenges and Opportunities

Given current economic realities and increased competition for grant funds, implementation of District programs to address resource issues will be increasingly challenging in upcoming years. To achieve our goals it is critical that the District prioritize our actions to meet the natural resource conservation, protection, restoration, and management needs of our community. We surveyed our staff, board of directors, and stakeholders to get a better understanding of the priority issues to focus on over the next five years, as well as the opportunities that exist to enhance our mission to assist in protecting, managing, conserving and restoring the natural resources of the county.

Priority resource issues in Trinity County include:

- Wildfire protection and fuels reduction
- Water supply and availability
- Fish and wildlife habitat, biodiversity, and ecosystem function
- Climate change and adapting to climate change

Many of these issues and resource management solutions are intricately connected. The District will strive to focus our efforts where they will be most cost-effective. We will also support and engage with the community and other organizations regularly to meet common goals and to address existing and emerging resource issues in Trinity County.

Priority opportunities that exist for the District to build effectiveness include:

- Clarification of District identity through branding in all media
- Pursuit of additional funding sources for sustainable operations
- Build new, and enhance existing relationships with partner agencies and private landowners

- Improvement of external and internal communications
- Development of online marketing of services and fee-for-service contracts
- Perform restoration services for vacated cannabis grows
- Development of a paid internship program
- Pursuit of training opportunities for staff through independent and partner programs
- Facilitate NEPA process with federal partners to reduce compliance planning delays

2018–2023 Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

The District has developed this Strategic Plan to guide our actions and intentions through 2023. Through implementation of Annual Plans the District will generate and operate programs and services consistent with this Strategic Plan. District programs and projects are intended to be implemented in a coordinated manner such that they build upon and support one another in meeting District goals.

Opportunities for coordination and integration of programs and projects are continuously explored among staff. The programs and activities of the District must be adaptively managed and implementation will necessarily be dependent upon available resources and staffing.

This Strategic Plan can be amended by the District Board of Directors at any time. The Trinity County Resource Conservation District has adopted the following goals, objectives, and strategies to address priority resource challenges and opportunities and to support conservation, protection, and restoration of natural resources in a landscape that supports agriculture, urban areas, and wild spaces.

Goal 1: Build and support programs that improve forest health, fish and wildlife habitat, water quantity and quality, and ecosystem resiliency in a changing climate.

Objective 1. Implement and oversee high priority habitat enhancement, water quality improvement and “climate smart” projects on private and public land.

- *Strategy 1: Continue to work with public and private partners to implement road improvement projects where road drainage may be impacting water quality. Seek opportunities to address multiple contiguous properties in watersheds that support anadromous fish.*
- *Strategy 2: Continue to coordinate and engage volunteers and youth (e.g., student groups, business groups, etc.) in implementation of local enhancement projects including, but not limited to, native plant restoration, native oak regeneration projects, noxious weed removal, and illegal dumping clean-up events.*

- *Strategy 3: Continue to support Trinity County and public and private land managers in implementation, monitoring, and management of the Trinity River Restoration Program projects and other restoration, enhancement, and maintenance projects that are undertaken in partnership.*
- *Strategy 4: Expand partnerships with organizations in all watersheds in Trinity County to assess watershed conditions and prepare and implement conservation and restoration projects (e.g., non-native plant management, erosion control projects, and management plans, etc.).*
- *Strategy 5: Work in partnership with others to gain grant funding to implement conservation projects and programs that address local resource challenges.*

Objective 2. Provide technical assistance to support implementation of stewardship practices to conserve resources and improve ecosystem function.

- *Strategy 1: Continue to serve as a technical advisory resource to residents and land managers regarding erosion control in associated rural lands, and roads.*
- *Strategy 2: Continue to develop and initiate implementation of conservation planning and Best Management Practices implementation program to meet water quality requirements in Trinity County.*
- *Strategy 3: Continue to conduct sediment source assessments and prepare road-treatment recommendations on private and public lands for rural, agricultural, and improved road systems.*
- *Strategy 4: Expand partnerships with owners/managers of public and private land to assist in conservation planning and recommendations for Best Management Practices to meet resource management goals.*
- *Strategy 5: Offer training courses to practitioners/installers of “on-the-ground” restoration, improvement, protection and enhancement practices (e.g. topics such as installation of erosion control practices, road grading and maintenance practices, rainwater harvesting and rain garden installation, etc.)*
- *Strategy 6: Support NRCS in efforts to provide conservation planning assistance and implementation of Farm Bill and other resource conservation and protection projects.*
- *Strategy 7: Provide leadership and participate in development and understanding of innovative conservation practices and programs as part of County initiatives to address transportation infrastructure, climate change, air quality, water supply and greenhouse gas emissions.*

- *Strategy 8: Seek opportunities to work with partner agencies to develop and/or better understand and quantify the benefits of conservation practices to address resource challenges such as climate change. Assist landowners with implementation of identified practices.*
- *Strategy 9: Continue to expand partnerships with CalFire and land managers interested in management of forests and wild lands to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires.*
- *Strategy 10: Pursue integrated pest management for invasive weed control.*

Goal 2: Expand the District’s influence by building strategic partnerships at local and regional levels.

Objective 1. Continue to work with public and private partners to implement road improvement projects where road drainage may be impacting water quality. Seek opportunities to address multiple contiguous properties in watersheds that support anadromous fish.

- *Strategy 1: Continue to support Trinity County and public and private land managers in implementation, monitoring, and management of the Trinity River Restoration Projects and other restoration, enhancement, and maintenance projects that are undertaken in partnership.*
- *Strategy 2: Expand partnerships with organizations in the Trinity River watershed to assess watershed conditions and prepare and implement conservation and restoration projects (e.g., non-native plant management, erosion control projects, etc.).*
- *Strategy 3: Work in partnership with others to gain grant funding to implement conservation projects and programs that address local resource challenges.*

Goal 3: Enhance the public’s understanding of resource conservation practices and land stewardship and the District’s role in implementation.

Objective 1. Effectively communicate results related to the condition of the watersheds to the community, land managers and policy makers to inform resource management decisions and policies.

- *Strategy 1: Publish easy to understand articles in District newsletters, on our website, and in other partner newsletters and local newspapers.*

- *Strategy 2: Remain engaged with, and provide watershed condition monitoring results to, applicable resource agencies (such as EPA, Water Quality Control Board, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, National Marine Fisheries Service) so that scientifically sound information can be used to update and shape policies, plans, and requirements that are cost effective, reasonable, and meaningful.*
- *Strategy 3: Seek opportunities to present District project work at local, regional, state and/or national conferences.*
- *Strategy 4: Explore and utilize other mechanisms of creative outreach including video, social media, etc.*

Objective 2. Engage in and encourage dialogue amongst the community regarding stewardship of natural resources.

- *Strategy 1: Disseminate results of District's programs and lessons learned from restoration activities locally and regionally.*
- *Strategy 2: Enhance the District's ongoing engagement with diverse constituents to maintain an up-to-date understanding of their issues and priorities.*
- *Strategy 3: Effectively engage with local constituents and regulatory agencies in conversations regarding the impacts and benefits of proposed regulations on the environment, landowners, and agriculture.*
- *Strategy 4: Serve as a communication and coordination hub for conservation, providing accurate and timely information.*
- *Strategy 5: Sponsor natural resource related films, panel discussions, symposiums, workshops, and forums related to topics of interest to the community.*
- *Strategy 6: Continue to update the content of the District website.*
- *Strategy 7: Increase District participation, coordination, and partnership with local and regional efforts and organizations working to promote local food production.*
- *Strategy 8: Continue to expand collaborative partnerships throughout the County and the region to cost effectively address local resource challenges.*

Objective 3. Support and encourage an ethic and understanding of resource stewardship in the youth of Trinity County.

- *Strategy 1: Continue to provide resources for in-class presentations to multiple-day field experiences (such as Environmental Camp). Incorporate opportunities to*

engage high-school students in learning about careers in natural resource management.

- *Strategy 2: Engage with local elementary schools, other interested organizations, and other stakeholders regarding use of Young Family Ranch for youth learning experiences.*
- *Strategy 3: Engage youth volunteers and interns in District programs.*
- *Strategy 4: Seek opportunities to engage youth at Trinity High School and Shasta and Humboldt Colleges in District programs through internships, volunteer opportunities, and workshops.*

Goal 4: Enhance the District’s ability to implement its mission through continuous improvements in internal and external communications, staff recruitment and enrichment, capacity building, and board development.

Objective 1. Strive for excellence in areas of fiscal responsibility, transparency, and overall operation of the District.

- *Strategy 1: Continue to implement existing District policies, update and improve them as needed, and develop new policies and procedures as needed to improve District operations and transparency. Specific policies and procedures for evaluation and update include: personnel policy manual, records retention policy, drug and alcohol policy, and fiscal procedures.*
- *Strategy 2: Ensure that District has adequate office facilities and equipment/vehicles to carry out District work.*
- *Strategy 3: Continue to increase diversification of revenues and expand fee for service opportunities.*
- *Strategy 4: Support CARCD in efforts to strengthen funding structures for Districts state-wide.*
- *Strategy 5: Work on a regional basis with neighboring Resource Conservation Districts and conservation organizations to create programs that meet local interests and are competitive for grant funding.*
- *Strategy 6: Maintain a knowledgeable, effective Board of Directors, who are focused on the District’s mission. Seek diversification of interests and skill sets among Directors.*
- *Strategy 7: Continue to update electronic database to track the history of the District’s past, current and future projects, programs, outcomes, and participants.*

Objective 2. Improve marketing and the District's capacity to provide information about District programs.

- *Strategy 1: Update and develop new marketing tools and outreach materials for public relations, correspondence, and fundraising.*
- *Strategy 2: Seek opportunities to have District information, logo and/or photographs in community publications and visible at community events (e.g., Farmers Market, Salmon Festival, movie theater ads, local newspapers, National Trail Day, and Earth Day publicity, etc.).*

Objective 3. Foster an engaged, knowledgeable, and happy staff.

- *Strategy 1: Continue to offer training opportunities to staff that will support professional development that will benefit the District and will enrich the professional lives of staff.*
- *Strategy 2: Continue to provide flexible work schedules to accommodate the needs of staff, to the extent allowed by law and consistent with District policies.*
- *Strategy 3: Continue to implement an "open door" policy and foster positive working relationships among staff and the Board of Directors.*

Goal 5: Increase sustainable financial strength

Objective 1. Develop and adopt a financial sustainability plan.

- *Strategy 1: Pursue a tax based source of revenue.*
- *Strategy 2: Market fee-for-service projects.*
- *Strategy 3: Utilize the Friends of the Trinity County Resource Conservation District to obtain additional funding from non-profit foundations.*

Plan Implementation

Annual implementation plans are developed by staff and adopted each year by the District Board of Directors to provide specific information relative to the projects and programs intended to implement the strategies identified in this strategic plan. In each year, implementation of the strategies identified in this plan requires revenue far beyond what is reliably available to the District on an annual basis through grant opportunities. To implement the programs and achieve the mission of the District, funds are sought from a variety of sources including state and federal grant programs, agreements with local and regional government agencies, fee-for-service agreements with for-profit and non-profit organizations, and general fundraising.

Approximately 97% of revenue is derived from grants and agreements with other organizations. Several existing and pending grant agreements have been acquired to carry out a significant portion of this strategic plan. However, additional funding will be necessary to implement the plan. The most likely sources of funds are additional grants, agreements with local and regional organizations and fee-for-service agreements. The District continues to explore other opportunities such as endowments, memberships, fundraising events, and expanded fee-for-service work.

For the past several years the District has had an annual budget of approximately \$2.1 million and a staff of 10 - 20 employees. It is anticipated that this plan can be carried out with similar annual budgets and staffing levels.

Targeted implementation benchmarks for annual plans include the following:

- Road improvement and decommissioning projects implemented for erosion control
- Acres of fuels reduction implemented
- Community chipping
- Noxious weeds removed
- Native plants established (revegetation)
- Stream enhancement
- Trail enhancement
- Provide technical assistance to landowners
- Monitoring
- Provide GIS services to county and community
- Watershed collaboration, planning and assessments
- Newsletters distributed quarterly
- Increase use of social media to improve communication with our constituents
- Additional grants to support planning and implementation projects in every year
- A minimum of one community panel, symposium, forum, or movie night held every year
- District Policy and Financial Manual fully updated and implemented
- Develop a financial sustainability plan