

A stylized, light green water tower with a circular top section divided into many radial segments, resembling a fan or a sunburst. The tower's legs are also stylized and light green.

SLOUGHHOUSE

Resource Conservation District

5-year Plan
(2022-2027)

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Mission, Vision, and Goals

The Sloughouse Resource Conservation District (SRCD) 5-Year Plan is intended to inform the work of SRCD, embrace opportunities to broaden and enhance the range of SRCD's activities, and to meet requirements set forth in Government Code Section 9084.

Our Mission: To serve the diverse constituency within the SRCD to become better stewards of our natural resources through education, outreach, and implementing conservation projects to advance the long-term sustainability of working landscapes, rural life, and our unique environment.

Our Vision: To support management of natural resources through collaboration with partners in the district to successfully balance the wide range of programs that protect groundwater for long-term sustainability, soil for agricultural productivity and environmental values, surface water for multiple uses including agriculture, fish, and wildlife, and natural areas for their habitat value.

To operationalize the adopted SRCD mission and vision, the following set of goals have been identified:

1. Achieve long-term natural resource sustainability to address current and future changes and needs.
2. Have a diverse Board of Directors that represents the community Sloughouse RCD serves to work together and build partnerships.
3. Collaborate with local, regional, and statewide agencies and develop partnerships on sustainability projects across all focus areas.
4. Educate the public about sustainable agricultural and natural resources management.
5. Develop projects and programs to serve the diverse members of the Sloughouse RCD community.

Priority Focus Areas for SRCD:

The SRCD Board of Directors have identified seven Priority Focus Areas that will be the foundations of the District's efforts to reach our goals during the coming five years. This Plan will be adaptively managed, if unforeseen opportunities arise that allow us to advance our goals, modifications to the Plan will be made.

1. Water Sustainability (WS)

Over the past seven years we have worked with local partners to develop a groundwater sustainability plan (GSP) for the Cosumnes Subbasin and South American Subbasin. This effort has consumed the overwhelming majority of the effort of SRCD. Given our responsibilities as a GSA, we will continue to devote significant effort implementing the GSPs. This work will include participating in and supporting the work of the Cosumnes Groundwater Authority's Board and sub-committees; continued engaged with the South American Subbasin Working Group, identifying and applying for grants to fund demand management and aquifer recharge planning and implementation, as appropriate; conducting outreach and soliciting input from our constituents on water sustainability issues and plans; working with NGOs such as the Cosumnes Coalition and The Nature Conservancy on monitoring, assessment, and planning projects of mutual interest; and other activities that advance our water sustainability goals and responsibilities.

2. Watershed Health (WH)

A watershed is all the land that drains into a common point at or near the mouth of a river or stream. The SRCD's district includes a significant portion of the Cosumnes Watershed and many of its tributaries including Dry Creek, Laguna Creek, and Badger Creek. These waterways supply water for agriculture, offer opportunities for recreation, provide habitat to numerous plants and animals, and are connected to the groundwater aquifer in certain locations. The activities conducted on the land within a watershed affect the quality and quantity of water in the waterways. We recognize this relationship and strive to take advantage of opportunities to manage the land in a way that protects the Cosumnes River and its tributaries.

3. Soil Health and Conservation (SHC)

In keeping with the origins of National Resources Conservation Service and Resource Conservation Districts, maintaining the health of the soil is vital to the long-term viability of agriculture in the Cosumnes Basin. Not only does healthy soil underpin productive agriculture, but it also sequesters carbon and can act as a sponge, soaking up water to reduce runoff and facilitating aquifer recharge. The SRCD seeks to develop programs to improve soil health and conservation.

4. Hazard Planning and Support (HPS)

Flooding and fires have always been a concern in the Cosumnes Basin. The approach to managing hazards has evolved in recent years. In the past, fires were regularly suppressed and floods minimized by building and fortifying levees. While these approaches remain useful,

newer methods of management, including prescribed burns, carving around defensible space around structures, and widening flood corridors to reduce flood risk and optimize aquifer recharge. involves adapting to these natural processes. We will seek opportunities to reduce the risk of hazards in our district.

5. Protection of Rural Lifestyle (PRL)

Many of our constituents have moved to the Wilton/Herald area in recent years to benefit from the rural lifestyle. Others have farmed or ranched in our district for generations. All value the opportunities farm or raise livestock on a small or large scale, the natural beauty of the oak woodlands, and the habitat provided for aquatic life. Many smaller farms growing fresh produce or raising grass-fed beef or hogs are found in our area. Further, the Wilton/Herald area is known throughout northern California as a hub of equestrian sports, including trail riding, jumping, and cutting, to name a few. The SRCD strives to support and foster rural living. When opportunities arise, we will work with others to advance the long-term viability of rural living within our district.

6. Community Engagement (CE)

Decades ago, the SRCD area was composed of almost exclusively of agricultural constituents. Given this and the roots of RCDs in general, SRCD's work focused on the needs of farmers and ranchers. While this focus remains a central impetus for our work, we recognize the district's constituents now include more rural residential landowners, a continually growing number of horse training facilities, and many small farms which grow specialty crops. Our community outreach efforts will continue to include production agriculture and ranching, but also the interest and needs of the newer sectors within the district. We will work develop stronger conversations with all constituents within the district.

7. District Operations (DO)

Sloughhouse RCD has taken on significant new responsibilities as a GSA. Balancing our traditional work focused on natural resources with the new responsibilities as a groundwater agency has presented challenges, including assuming a greater level of transparency and accountability, establishing new policies and procedures, and budgeting for new expenses, to name a few. The SRCD has had to broaden its understanding of a number of natural resource, policy, and legal issues now facing the District. To assume this new level of leadership, to continue to develop its internal capacity, SRCD will need to expand staff and Board member education, utilize new management tools, and consider increasing human resources, as appropriate.

Priority Focus Area – Water Sustainability

Background and SRCD’s Role

Both surface water and groundwater sustainability are important to Sloughouse RCD. Groundwater sustainability targets maintaining stable groundwater conditions that support all beneficial uses of groundwater within the Cosumnes and South American Subbasin, in line with our efforts as a Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA). Surface water sustainability refers to maintaining flows in the Cosumnes River and other waterways that supports both farming and environmental needs. Surface and groundwater sustainability are interconnected. Surface water can recharge the aquifer and groundwater can contribute to baseflow in waterways. Sloughouse RCD’s attention to water sustainability will be central to all other areas of focus.

As a GSA, we are responsible for working with the other GSAs to implement the Groundwater Sustainability Plans in the Cosumnes and South American Subbasins. As an RCD, we are well positioned to support and implement projects that foster long term sustainability of water.

Planned Activities

- W.S. 1: Implement a long-term assessment to support work on the Cosumnes Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan.
- W.S. 2: Work with the other South American Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Agencies to implement the South American Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan.
- W.S. 3: Identify funding to implement a water efficiency technical assistance program.
- W.S. 4: Support and implement projects to monitor and enhance flows in the Cosumnes River.
- W.S. 5: Work with the County of Sacramento, the Natural Resources Conservation Services, UC Cooperative Extension, and others to create incentives and programs to transfer knowledge and technologies to assist farmers with new irrigation methods and drought-tolerant species.

Potential Resources to Support Activities

- California Department of Water Resources
- State Water Resources Control Board
- CA Dept. of Food and Agriculture’s Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation
- California Department of Conservation

Priority Focus Area – Watershed Health

Background and SRCD’s Role

The Cosumnes watershed supports a rich community of native flora and fauna. SRCD has the unique responsibility of being one of the main stewards of the Cosumnes River and its watershed. We are well positioned to support and implement projects that improve watershed conditions and to foster regional collaboration among partners working within the watershed.

Planned Activities

- W.H. 1: Identify multi-benefit projects (soil-health, groundwater recharge, ecosystem rehabilitation, etc.) to enhance watershed conditions while at the same time continue to support the productive use of the land for the varied services it provides. One example of this multi-benefit approach is a proposed project along Laguna Creek, involving an assessment to determine where creek channel stabilization is needed and the potential for in-channel recharge with the goal of enhancing conveyance of water to farms for managed aquifer recharge and habitat improvement.
- W.H. 2: Identify opportunities to improve nutrient management when practical to reduce nutrient runoff and/or leaching of nutrients into the aquifer.
- W.H. 3: Identify locations and landowners interested in floodplain rehabilitation in order to enhance aquifer recharge and improve habitat for anadromous fish and other aquatic life.

Potential Sources to Support Activities

- California Department of Conservation
 - Working Lands and Riparian Corridors Program
 - Sustainable Agricultural Conservation Program
 - Watershed Coordinator Program
- California Department of Water Resources
- California State Water Resource Control Board
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- National Marine Fisheries Services/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Program

Priority Focus Area – Soil Health and Conservation

Background and SRCD’s Role

The Resource Conservation Districts evolved from the Soil Conservation Service, which was a response to the Dust Bowl of the 1930s and the need to develop and implement conservation practices to reduce soil loss and promote healthy soil resources. More recently, another important function of soil that has been an area of interest to RCDs is carbon sequestration. SRCD plans to work with partners, most notably the United States Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA NRCS), to advance all aspects of soil health. We strive to share practices and new information on soil health with local farmers and learn from farmers who are pioneering implementation of these practices.

Planned Activities

S.H.C. 1: Develop a program to promote carbon sequestration education and resources. The County of Sacramento Climate Action Plan identifies a goal of sequestering 146,934 MT CO₂ county-wide per year by 2030. Potential practices to sequester carbon include, but are not limited to:

- i. Applying compost instead of synthetic fertilizer;
- ii. Managing grazing to improve irrigated pasture conditions; and,
- iii. Altering tillage practices to reduce, eliminate, or change strip tillage.

S.H.C. 2: Promote USDA NRCS and CDFA funding opportunities (ex: EQIP, Healthy Soils Program) for on-farm soil conservation practices.

S.H.C. 3: Explore partnerships with NRCS to assist in outreach, engagement, and technical support.

Potential Sources to Support Activities

- California Department of Food and Agriculture
 - Healthy Soils Program
- Carbon Cycle Institute
- United States Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resource Conservation Service

Priority Focus Area – Hazard Planning and Support

Background and SRCD’s Role

From fires to floods, areas within Sloughhouse RCD have been greatly impacted by a number of natural disasters and continue to be at risk. In addition to worst case scenarios where human life is threatened, productive land can become unproductive, watershed health can decline, and countless other negative impacts are potential results from these incidents. Sloughhouse RCD is keenly positioned to work with partners (like Rancho Murieta Fire Safe Council, RD 800, Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency, and others) to minimize risk and support recovery from multiple types of disasters.

We seek to work with Fire Safe Councils throughout the County to coordinate regional fire prevention efforts. We also plan to support flood prevention efforts that also provides groundwater recharge benefits.

Planned Activities

- H.P.S. 1: Provide regular updates and outreach to local organizations responsible for hazard planning, prevention, and recovery including Reclamation District 800, Rancho Murieta Fire Safe Council, and Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency.
- H.P.S. 2: Partner with the County of Sacramento and other agencies/organizations to implement programs and projects to reduce wildfire hazards.
- H.P.S. 3: Assist the County of Sacramento and other agencies/organizations in mapping and identify locations that are newly at risk, or at higher risk for fire hazards.
- H.P.S. 4: Assist the County of Sacramento and other agencies/organizations in understanding the tolerance of current crop mixes to withstand increased temperatures.

Potential Sources to Support Activities

- California Fire Safe Council
- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Priority Focus Area – Protection of Rural Lifestyle

Background and SRCD’s Role

Sloughhouse RCD covers rural Southeast Sacramento County. Open space and agricultural activity are characteristics of our region that many residents value. Programs that support rural living (groundwater well support, small farms support, etc.) and promote resource conservation should be prioritized. Many of our constituents have moved to the Wilton/Herald area in recent years to benefit from the rural lifestyle. Others have farmed or ranched in our district for generations. All value the opportunities farm or raise livestock on a small or large scale, the natural beauty of the oak woodlands, and the habitat provided for aquatic life. The SRCD strives to support and foster rural living. When opportunities arise, we will work with others to advance the long term viability of rural living within our district.

Planned Activities

- P.R.L. 1: Develop a guide to rural living that provides information on how local residents can contribute to groundwater sustainability, support local conservation efforts, and engage with local agencies.
- P.R.L. 2: Support urban-rural agricultural connections by promoting local providers of Community-Supported Agriculture/food delivery services and local Farm-to-Fork events.
- P.R.L. 3: Support Sacramento County Parks Department in the development and implementation of a Dillard Ranch Master Plan.

Potential Sources to Support Activities

- Sacramento Area Council of Government’s Rural-Urban Connection Program
- Department of Conservation
- Private foundations

Priority Focus Area – Community Engagement

Background and SRCD’s Role

Making progress towards reaching our goals will require strong relationships with our community. Sloughhouse RCD strives to be as transparent as possible. We will work with partners (ex: other special districts, community organizations, etc.) and existing outreach plans (ex: Cosumnes Subbasin Outreach and Engagement Plan) to elevate our efforts. As a RCD we are in service to our constituents and should work to promote our priorities, successes, and challenges.

Planned Activities

- C.E. 1: Publish an RCD Annual Report yearly.
- C.E. 2: Publish quarterly e-newsletters highlighting conservation funding and support available to local landowners.
- C.E. 3: Update website to help broaden outreach and dialogue with the community

Potential Sources to Support Activities

- California Department of Conservation
 - Resource Conservation District Financial Assistance Program

Priority Focus Area – District Operations

Background and SRCD's Role

Sloughhouse RCD is a Resource Conservation District, a California Special District, and a Groundwater Sustainability Agency. Each designation has a variety of minimum requirements that we must meet as defined in State Code. Additionally, Sloughhouse RCD strives to be a trusted public agency in which our constituents find great value.

Planned Activities

- D.O. 1: Meet all legal requirements stipulated by the Department of Conservation for RCDs (Tier 1 of The RCD Vision & Standards) on an annual basis.
- D.O. 2: Maintain membership in the California Association of RCDs and the California Special District Association.
- D.O. 3: Meet requirements of the Special District Leadership Foundation's District Transparency Certificate of Excellence on an annual basis.
- D.O. 4: Send staff to CARCD Conference annually.

Potential Sources to Support Activities

- California Department of Conservation
 - Resource Conservation District Financial Assistance Program
- Special District Leadership Foundation