

Hereford Natural Resource Conservation District

2013-2018 Long Range Plan

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Mission Statement

Working together to enhance our natural resources.

Vision

To conserve natural resources by promoting and demonstrating policies and practices that are economically feasible and environmentally responsible.

History

The Hereford Natural Resource Conservation District (District) was established August 17, 1944 by the State of Arizona, organized by the vote of landowners within the District with management by a Board of Directors elected by local cooperators. The large majority of land ownership was private and state. There was very little Federal Land other than Fort Huachuca at the time. The economic base was agriculture and mining. The towns within the District were Bisbee, Tombstone and Fry (now Sierra Vista). Huachuca City was not incorporated until 1958.

Fort Huachuca was established at the current location as a temporary camp in March 1877. It continued as an active military army post until after World War 2. Fort Huachuca was closed after World War 2 and transferred to the State of Arizona (Arizona Game and Fish Department) and a Bison (Buffalo) range was established. Then during the Korean War the post was reactivated as an Army Engineers post. In 1954 control passed to the Chief Signal Officer, for the U.S. Army Electronic Proving Ground (EPG) and from that time on it has steadily increased as a vital contributor to the national defense and local economy. The geology of the area makes Fort Huachuca the only place in the country with the unique electromagnetic spectrum necessary to test certain electronic equipment including many of our newest unmanned aircraft technologies.

The District, a local division of State Government, ARS 37, Chapter 6, is authorized to identify and address resource conservation needs within its boundaries. The elected District Board of Supervisors has the responsibility for determining those needs, for developing and coordinating long range plans and programs for natural resource conservation and implementing them under the District's annual plan of work.

The District works with and coordinates its efforts with Federal, State and local governments, organizations, agencies and individuals to accomplish soil, water and species conservation. Arizona's conservation district law is embodied in legislation and establishes the State's natural resource policy, carried out on a local level by the District. The District also promotes a balanced environmental education program in the schools and with workshops on many natural resource subjects.

Physical Characteristics

The District is located primarily within Cochise County with small amounts of acreage in Santa Cruz and Pima counties and includes an area of approximately 594,762 acres. The District boundaries are very irregular. The southern boundary starts from the Border just east of Bisbee Junction and goes north on an uneven track past Tombstone along the Little Dragoon Mountains. It then heads west across the San Pedro River into the Whetstone Mountains before turning south and going through the Huachuca Mountains back to the Border along the west edge of the Coronado National Monument.

Included in the District are all of Fort Huachuca, the southern portion of the Dragoon Mountains and part of the Whetstone Mountains, the east side of the Huachuca Mountains and west portion of the Mule Mountains.

The Babocomari River originates in Santa Cruz NRCD area and runs for a short distance in that NRCD and then runs through the District for about 3 miles before it moves back into Santa Cruz NRCD west of Elgin. It comes back into District about even with Elgin and is within the District all the way to where it joins with the San Pedro River. All of the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) except for the tip of the north end is within the District.

All of the San Ignacio Del Babocomari Land Grant is within the District.

The towns of Sierra Vista, Bisbee, Tombstone, Huachuca City and the communities of Naco, Hereford, Palominas, Whetstone and Fairbank are in the District.

<u>Land Ownership</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Private	220,400
State	164,529
BLM	81,533
Forest Service	44,780
National Parks	4,004
Military	79,433
Local/State Parks	83
 TOTAL	 594,762

Purpose, Duties and Responsibility

The purpose for creating the Natural Resource Conservation Districts by legislation is mandated in Arizona *Title 37-1001. Declaration of policy*

It is declared the policy of the legislature to provide for the restoration and conservation of lands and soil resources of the state, the preservation of water rights and the control and prevention of soil erosion, and thereby to conserve natural resources, conserve wildlife, protect the tax base, protect public lands and protect and restore this state's rivers and streams and associated riparian habitats, including fish and wildlife resources.

The intent of the District is to provide leadership in promoting the voluntary conservation of all natural resources within the district on private land and coordinate with government agencies for accomplishment of conservation on government land.

The District promotes programs which protect the health, culture and economic well being of the people and enrich the understanding of the conservation of all natural resources important to the District. Such programs are those that:

- Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences.
- Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage.
- Achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities.
- Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

Conservation districts are also responsible for prioritizing natural resource concerns for federal program funding through the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008.

The fact that we are non-regulatory does not diminish our importance in local land use planning, but makes our efforts that much more successful in that landowners follow our leadership and develop conservation planning on a voluntary basis.

General Policies and Procedures

The District members meet no less than monthly and more often as business dictates. Meetings are normally held *in the large conference room at the Sierra Vista County Complex located at 4001 E. Foothills Dr.; Sierra Vista, Arizona* but can be moved to other locations depending upon the business at hand and other factors. All meeting notices and agendas are posted on the District's web site www.herefordnrzd.com and at Sierra Vista City Hall in accordance with AZ Open Meeting Law. Special meetings will be called as needed to handle urgent business.

State funding is available for such expenses as Supervisor travel, employee/consultant contracts, and educational activities.

Arizona statutes mandate that an election will be held every two years for one of the three elected supervisors. Each elected supervisor serves for a period of six years and can succeed him or herself. After each election, the three elected supervisors submit recommendations to the State Land Commissioner for two supervisors who (after being approved for appointment by the Secretary of State) will serve until the next election

The District Board of Supervisors is responsible for informing the general public of available assistance and progress being made on local issues of public concern. The district develops an annual plan of work which sets forth the high priority issues and conservation projects/ educational workshops in the coming year. Supervisors make themselves available to district landowners to address concerns and questions.

The District contracts for administrative and professional services including a clerk for preparing and organizing meeting agendas and minutes, correspondence, newsletters and the web site.

The District publishes a quarterly newsletter and maintains a web site to provide information on current and planned programs and activities. The newsletter published in August includes the Annual Report, which highlights the District's past fiscal year accomplishments.

Memberships and Partnerships

The District is a member of the following organizations:

- Arizona Natural Resource Conservation District State Association (AZNRCD)
- Coronado Resource Conservation & Development Area Inc (RC&D)
- Arizona Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) State Technical Committee
- Upper San Pedro Partnership (USPP)
- American Stewards of Liberty
- US Department of Agriculture (USDA), NRCS Program

The District works in partnership with the following agencies, local governments, and colleges.

USDA, Forest Service (USFS)
USDA, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
USDA NRCS Plant Material Center
USDA Agriculture Research Service SW Watershed Research Center
Department of Defense (DOD), US Army Fort Huachuca
Department of Interior (DOI) Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
DOI US Geological Survey (USGS)
DOI Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)
DOI US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Arizona State Land Department (ASLD)
Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD)
Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR)
Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ)
Cochise County
Cities of Sierra Vista, Bisbee, Tombstone and Huachuca City
Cochise College
University of Arizona (UofA)
Tombstone High School Agriculture and Future Farmers of America (FFA)
Arizona Community Foundation

The District coordinates with the NRCS to implement programs authorized and funded by the USDA Farm Bill. One of the most utilized programs, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), delivers technical and financial assistance to local agriculture producers.

The District develops and prioritizes a list of resource concerns within the district and assembles cost data for each practice. Additionally, the District conducts local programs and outreach in conjunction with USDA-NRCS.

In partnership with NRCS under the Farm Bill Program from 1996 to 2010 the District participated in 26 contracts with cooperators involving 70,768 acres at a cost of \$865,660. In partnership with Arizona Game and Fish from 2006 to present there were 15 projects totaling \$203,550.

AZ-NM Borderlands Conservation Initiative contributed \$40,000 in Partnership with the District, Arizona NRCD, Arizona BLM, Arizona NRCS, and Arizona State Land Department for chemical treatment of 2,635 acres of brush invested rangeland.

Land Use Goals

- To provide leadership and guidance in promoting the voluntary conservation of all natural resources within the District on private land and coordinate with government agencies for such conservation on government land.
- To promote and support programs for watershed improvement and soil erosion reparation on all lands within the District.
- To promote methods of cultivation, cropping practices, land leveling and improvement on agricultural lands and programs for proper range use, reseeding and the eradication of noxious growth on grazing lands.
- To promote programs which will protect the historic culture and the economic stability of the District.

Objectives

The objectives set forth are to provide specific conservation measures that are to be implemented through this plan and by guidance and direction provided by the District's approved policies and procedures in the attainment of District goals.

1. Promote the protection of private property rights including water rights

a. The District will oppose any transfer of water by artificial means to or from areas outside the District until such time as the scientific and economic data which meets the requirement of the Data Quality Act (Public Law 106-554, 2001) supports such action. Data must also support that there will be absolutely no resource or economic harm now or in the future to the urban and rural property owners within the District.

b. The District opposes any requirement for water meters on private wells.

2. Embrace the multiple use philosophy of the Federal Land and Management Act of 1976.

Agriculture, mining, recreation, hunting, hiking, and camping are all a part of the multiple use of public lands. The District supports all these multiple uses along with the requirement for the conservation of natural resources and the economic well being of the people and the local governments. All documents published by government agencies for management and use of public land must be based on the most current best available science and in compliance with all Agency regulations, the Federal Land and Management Act of 1976, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Data Quality Act.

3. Establish protocols for monitoring and studies

a. All federal and state agencies with management responsibilities in the District for species and/or its habitat, provide the District with an annual update of the monitoring programs they have in place, data collected and specifics about their collection protocols. Also that these agencies inform the District of proposed research projects and allow for the District's input and collaboration prior to implementation.

b. Regular monitoring, within the scope of published protocols, of the resources within the District is essential to ensuring the policies and best management practices are updated and implemented.

c. All data shall be collected and studies prepared using protocols that will ensure the quality, utility, objectivity and integrity of the information as required under the Data Quality Act.

d. All data that is gathered must be shared with the District in a timely manner regardless of the state of completion of a final report.

e. Private landowners are also encouraged to monitor and share data collected on private property within the District.

f. All data that is shared with the District that is not public information will be treated as confidential and used by the District only to help update and implement its policies and best management practices.

4. Coordination with the federal and state agencies

- a. Enter into coordination with the federal and state agencies and the county in the management of lands and/or resources located within the District to insure agency plans are either consistent with the District plans or contain an explanation for the non-consistence areas.
- b. Provide information to and consult with the Governor on inconsistencies between the District plans and the final NEPA documents.

5. Species Management

- a. Artificial introductions or reintroductions of threatened, endangered, and protected species, or species of special concern or species proposed for listing is opposed by the District.
- b. Promote the control of noxious and invasive plant species by establishing a good working relationship with the federal and state agencies.
- c. Present workshops to educate the public about how they can be involved with the control of noxious and invasive species.
- d. Develop a program to educate and support brush removal on small parcels of land utilizing both mechanical methods and herbicides.
- e. Develop a District native seed production program.

6. Livestock Grazing

The District has a long history of livestock grazing both on private and public lands. When properly managed, livestock are an important tool for resource management, helping improve habitat and decrease fire hazards. Livestock grazing should continue to be managed to benefit human health, historic culture and economic well being by observing the following.

- a. Maintain sustainable grazing consistent with historic land use and ranching practices.
- b. Livestock grazing is an important tool to properly manage habitat and should be used in resource management.
- c. Any grazing restrictions or conservation measures that are implemented through a grazing permit shall be based solely on the conditions and science, specific to that permitted grazing allotment.
- d. Annual precipitation measurements should become a part of annual operating plans. If the monitoring data shows there is an increase in forage that supports additional livestock in a suitable habitat area, then increased grazing should be considered.
- e. Prioritize completion of land (range) health assessments and grazing permit NEPA analysis on allotments.

- f. Allotment management changes must be tailored to address specific problems when the cause of the problems is determined using the best available science including the flexibility to change the number of livestock the designated period of time and season of use.
- g. Changes in grazing management should only occur when supported by appropriate monitoring data in conjunction with the property owner, permittee, NRCS, District and government agency.
- h. Management changes, when needed, must be tailored to specifically address habitat objectives that need improvement, but should not adversely affect the habitat of other species.
- i. Altering grazing schemes in allotments, where needed and appropriate, may be facilitated by enhanced grazing opportunities with brush removal and grass seeding when needed. The unintended consequences of altering grazing use, such as possible increased risk of wildfire, must be carefully considered in any management proposal.
- j. Encourage grazing, brush control and fire management to improve the resource conditions of the SPRNCA and on properties of all ownerships.
- k. Have continued managed grazing on the 6521 acres of former State Trust land within the SPRNCA in accordance with the State exchange agreements. This area includes state lands acquired by BLM with the development of the SPRNCA.
- l. Waters used for rural domestic, livestock, and wildlife should be classified as beneficial and minimal uses which are essential to the continued use and conservation of natural resources for the benefit of all residents of the District.
- m. Inform District livestock operators about potential livestock health problems.
- n. Expand the brush eradication and grassland restoration projects which have proven to be so effective to the improvement of habitat and water.
- o. Coordinate, educate, and promote efforts for the control of noxious and invasive plants.
- p. Establish experimental mechanical mesquite removal projects with requirement for before and after monitoring according to an established protocol.
- q. Increase or maintain agricultural economic sustainability and protect the historic culture of the District.
- r. Continue to document range improvement accomplished within the District with production, editing and posting videos of the projects on the District web site.

7. Promote soil, flood, erosion and sediment control

- a. Encourage practices that reduce water and wind erosion.

- b. Encourage practices that protect stream banks and maintain existing channels in the San Pedro River
- c. Promote the improvement of irrigation distribution systems, irrigation efficiencies, and irrigation water management on farmlands within the District.
- d. Encourage practices that conform to long term water management goals.
- e. Promote practices which improve vegetative cover on District watersheds.
- f. Stay active on water quality issues along the San Pedro River and throughout the District.
- g. Develop projects and find funding to accomplish flood, erosion and sediment control, restoration and water recharge projects.

8. Mineral Development

- a. Mining has always been an important part of the District's history and should continue. Mineral access, claim access and future mineral development can all be pursued, as has been done historically following best management practices and with the advancement of technology that continues to reduce short-term and long-term impacts.
- b. Full access to all resources must be maintained in order to ensure a productive economy and the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the District.

9. Infrastructure and Roads

- a. Infrastructure and roads are important for safety, fighting fires, access and management for virtually every aspect of the economy within the District including ranching, recreation, and hunting.
- b. Infrastructure includes highways, high voltage transmission lines, commercial wind projects, energy development (e.g. solar), airports, mines, cell phone towers, landfills, residential and commercial subdivisions.
- c. Roads provide necessary access to the area to ensure proper management of resources, infrastructure and assets, and accessibility in the event of emergencies. Full recreational access to public land including hunting, hiking and camping must be available to all the people
- d. Limit motorized travel to existing and primitive roads which must all remain open for access to infrastructure, range resource improvements, hunting, hiking, camping and private property.
- e. The District and the public must be notified and have an opportunity to provide meaningful input to all proposed road, primitive road, or trail closures and other restrictions that would change current access within the District prior to the changes.

10. Support Resource Restoration after Wildfire

- a. Wildfire can be extremely destructive to natural resources including soil, water, and vegetation as well as infrastructure and property.
- b. In the event of a wildfire, coordinate with appropriate agencies in developing and implementing rehabilitation plans.
- c. When pursuing habitat restoration or rehabilitation, use native plant species produced within the District when available.
- d. Coordinate with appropriate agencies for support for controlled burns by cooperators.

11. Provide and support resource improvement and management on small parcels of land.

- a. Promote, support and assist owners of small parcels of land with making improvements to their land and eliminating their resource concerns. Utilize workshops and property visits by NRCD and/or NRCS personnel to accomplish this objective.
- b. Provide information on type and source of seed for reestablishment of native grasses.
- c. Instruct and provide information on erosion control projects which can be accomplished on small plots of land. Workshops can be used for this purpose.
- d. Provide information on proper livestock and manure management.
- e. Provide guidance on correct wildlife conservation practices.

12. Approximate 30 miles of the US/Mexican border—within the District

- a. With approximately 30 miles of the US/Mexican border including the San Pedro River within the District, the District should share resource concerns and solutions with resource managers in Mexico.
- b. Investigate ways to improve communication and coordinate actions with the US Border Patrol and law enforcement to address resource and property right concerns.

13. Natural resource education

- a. Promote, develop and maintain natural resource education projects to benefit the resources and the people.
- b. Utilize the District website www.herefordnrkd.com to provide educational information including educational material, workshop announcements, and videos.
- c. Support the development of District operation and training videos.

- d. Post completed videos on the District web site
- e. Publish a quarterly newsletter to keep Cooperators and other informed of District activities.
- f. Provide workshops for District cooperators, students and the public.
- g. Provide natural resource workshops for grade school students at schools within the District
- h. Provide support to the Natural Resource Conservation Workshop for Arizona Youth.
- i. Produce and acquire programs which provide education about resource management and make them available to schools in the District using the workshops, the web site, and the newsletter.
- j. Invite knowledgeable speakers to the District.
- k. Encourage the District Supervisors to attend workshops and seminars to improve their knowledge of resource management and to develop better leadership skills.
- l. Promote and encourage training sessions for agency personnel.
- m. Encourage State and National leaders and the press to tour the District and learn more about the resource management efforts and concerns.
- n. Hold workshops with other organizations to improve communication and understanding.
- o. Encourage Universities to utilize the District resource for field training.
- p. Maintain a District Supervisor handbook.
- q. Provide recognition for outstanding and innovative conservation programs or service within the District .
- r. Maintain a booth at the County Fair, and continue to present educational and historical material to students and adults.
- s. Support 4-H Activities within the District.
- t. Provide support to and coordinate resource management education programs with the Tombstone High School Agriculture FFA program.. Encourage schools in the District to hold resource education fairs.

14. District Facility Development.

- a. Acquire land for construction of an office, meeting and education building.
- b. Develop and outdoor education and plant center.
- c. Construct an office, meeting and education building.

Hereford Natural Resource Conservation District 2013-2018 Long Range Plan

BOARD MEETINGS

Third Wednesday of every month

9:30 AM

Sierra Vista Cochise County

Complex Conference Room

Hwy 92 and Foothills Drive, Sierra Vista

Note: Date, location and time is subject to change.
We invite District Cooperators and the general
public's attendance

www.herefordnrcd.com

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