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Mission Statement

It is hereby declared that it is the policy of the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts to provide leadership for the conservation of Wyoming's soil and water, to promote the control of soil erosion, to promote and protect the quality of Wyoming's waters, reduce the siltation of stream channels and reservoirs, promote wise use of Wyoming's water and all other natural resources, preserve and enhance wildlife habitat, protect the tax base and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the citizens of this state through a responsible conservation ethic.

The following 5-year strategic plan was developed by the more than 200 attendees of the 2006 annual convention of the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts. Participants included District Supervisors and Employees and partnering state and federal agency personnel. Special thanks to the following individuals for their assistance in facilitating and recording the planning sessions which resulted in this strategic plan:

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A special thanks to those who participated and shared their ideas, enthusiasm and vision to lead the Association for the next 5 years.

“To start any project, the first step is to convince your mind that you are capable.”

**Dr. Vincent Muli Wa Kituku, Author, Speaker and Seminar Leader
WACD 2006 Keynote Speaker**

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District Operations & Education

Strengthen existing partnerships and create new partnerships.

GOAL 1

Objective: Identify potential and existing partners by 2011.

Action Items

- WACD survey the districts to identify existing and potential partners.
- Participate in district identification of potential partners.
- Aid districts with public education outreach for potential partners interested in working with districts.

Objective: Increase district partnership-building skills by 2011.

Action Items

- Identify existing partnership-building training.
- Develop additional training necessary to achieve goal.
- Implement training.
- Educate districts on informal and formal tools to create partnerships.

Objective: Identify and develop tools that allow districts to increase and enhance partnerships by 2011.

Action Items

- WACD survey local districts on techniques used to reach out to partners (County Comm., Extension, etc...).
- Develop a matrix for communicating what is learned.
- Survey local partners to identify areas of mutual interest.
- Identify ways that educational materials can be used to communicate educational standards.

GOAL 2

Promote sustainable stewardship of natural resources through adult and youth education.

Objective: Assess and implement new forms of education outreach.

Action Items

- o Develop a continuing education program for natural resources (programs of interest i.e. grazing, xeriscaping, computer, etc...).

Objective: Strengthen and better utilize existing resources for education efforts.

Action Items

- o Train the trainer.
- o Database of training materials.
- o Better understanding and utilization of partners' resources.
- o Inventory and disseminate education resources.
- o Internal and external training.

GOAL 3

Increase public awareness of districts as leaders in natural resource issues.

Objective: The public will understand that districts have the statutory authority and ability to provide pre-decisional input to local, state and federal plans.

Objective: Education of the public, stakeholders, and civic groups regarding roles, functions and successes of the districts and NRCS.

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Conservation Forestry

Forest Management Tools

GOAL 1

Healthy forests that are resilient to impacts across the landscape and provide for sustainable products, uses, and ecosystem services.

Objective: Educate landowners, Conservation Districts, partners, and the public on the benefits and methods to achieve healthy forests.

Action Items

- o Work with partners to create an annual “Wyoming Forestry Days” to provide public information and education on forest management.
- o Work with partners to coordinate and promote a Wyoming Forest Landowners Association (which could include industry and other users).
- o Research and identify forestry education materials and distribute to Conservation Districts. Include information and materials (or links to information) on the WACD website.
- o Target informational materials for the public (including brochures, newsletters, and public service announcements, workshops) to explain the benefits of good forest management.

Objective: Increase forest management through promotion of planning and implementation of silvicultural practices.

Action Items

- o Explore partnership forestry positions between WACD, State Forestry, NRCs, and other partners.
- o Promote the development of landowner management planning through support of State Forestry Stewardship Plans (i.e. inform landowners, provide direct assistance).
- o Promote the use of management tools (such as fire and timber harvest) by providing comments on Forest Service and BLM management plans.
- o Identify markets for small diameter forest products and support development of industry within local communities (i.e. biomass use, wood pellets, fuels for schools).

- Scott Herold, Little Snake River Conservation District
- Mary Waldron, Little Snake River Conservation District
- Bryon Wilczewski, Lower Wind River Conservation District
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- Marji Patz, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Adolfo Perez, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Bruce Petersen, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Jim Pike, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Pammie Rapp, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Invasive Species Forest Pest Management

GOAL 1

WACD will support forest health through management and mitigation of invasive species and pests.

Objective: Raise knowledge and awareness of invasive species and forest pest management through a holistic approach to include prevention, identification, control and revegetation.

Action Items

- o Encourage and promote the creation of partnerships to enhance forest health.
- o Promote and provide information and education on invasive species and forest pests.

Federal Land Planning Processes

GOAL 1

Facilitate Conservation Districts' ability to participate in and influence federal planning processes and the implementation of those plans.

Objective: WACD will compile and disseminate all pertinent federal laws, rules, regulations, codes and/or policies that pertain to local government participation in forest planning and plan implementation.

GOAL 2

Facilitate Conservation District participation in planning and management of forested state land.

Objective: Negotiate a MOU through the State Forester to facilitate Conservation District participation in planning and management of forested state land.

Recommendation: To accomplish the goals and objectives, WACD create a cooperatively funded position in cooperation with (but not limited to) WACD, State Forestry, USFS, NRCS dedicated to conservation forestry.

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- Crystal Dilley, Campbell County Conservation District
- Debbie Hepp, Campbell County Conservation District
- Travis Hakert, Campbell County Conservation District
- Brenda Schladweiler, Campbell County Conservation District
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Private, State & Federal Lands

Objective: Encourage inclusion of aquatic and terrestrial habitat in watershed planning and give priority to projects planned on a watershed scale.

GOAL 4

Continue to develop, maintain and improve relationships with local, state and federal agencies.

Objective: Inform and encourage landowner participation in incentive-based wildlife habitat enhancement programs.

Building Partnerships

GOAL 1

WACD will accelerate the development of strong partnerships with all local, state and federal entities involved with the use of natural resources.

Objective: Within one year, WACD and districts will build partnerships by establishing and maintaining an infrastructure for formal dialogue with federal, state, and local natural resource agencies and organizations on a regular basis regarding discussion of timely district issues.

Action Items

- Identify, list and contact agencies/organizations and formulate guidelines for prioritization in partnership participation within 3 months.
- WACD will assist districts in attaining cooperating agency status on a statewide basis.
- WACD will evaluate the One Plan Approach (Idaho).
- Work with state and federal agencies on MOUs for natural resource issues (cooperating agency status) allowing districts to provide input on daily management and implementation of plans.
- Work with all local, state & federal agencies to achieve WACD and/or district positions on boards, commissions, coalitions and working groups. (e.g. Game & Fish, Wyoming Livestock Board, County Commissioners)
- Increase presence on NRCS State Technical Committee.
- Participate in obtaining a valid socioeconomic study of resource use on public lands utilizing the local level of government.
- Increase the working relationship of conservation districts and the Governor's Planning Office on federal resource management plans.
- Continue to lobby legislature and Congress regarding land use policy.

Maintain Open Spaces

GOAL 2

WACD will initiate and support efforts to maintain open space to sustain healthy agriculture, timber, wildlife, and communities.

Objective: WACD, in coordination with local conservation districts, will define open spaces and establish a policy. The policy should provide for a balance between the needs of the landowner and the desires of the public. WACD should refer to Wyoming Conservation District Law to help stabilize farming and ranching.

Action Item

- WACD, in coordination with local districts, will review and educate the public on the pros and cons of conservation easements.

Objective: WACD work with local conservation districts, in coordination with other local agencies, in developing land use plans.

Action Items

- Continue educational efforts and work with local governments on land use plans and zoning.
- WACD will address subdivision concerns and urban sprawl by reviewing state subdivision laws as they pertain to the districts.
- WACD shall work with local conservation districts and the Small Acreage Issue Team in accelerating the development of info/education for the management of subdivisions and small acreages.

Natural Resource Improvement Projects

GOAL 3

WACD, in conjunction with local districts, shall secure agency and constituency support to accelerate the coordination, development and implementation of natural resource management plans and improvement projects on private, state and federal lands.

Objective: WACD will accomplish this through the partnerships in priority #1.

GOAL1

Educate the public and partners about wildlife, habitat and land management issues.

Objective: Increase information and education on wildlife, habitat and land management issues to the following communities:

- Rural
- Urban
- Sportsmen
- Agriculture
- Energy

Objective: Promote education programs for K-12 and adults that include wildlife habitat and backyard conservation.

Objective: Provide public education about the importance of habitat management practices, the value of private lands and the protection of private property rights and open space.

GOAL 2

Continue to work on Endangered Species Act reform.

Objective: Encourage and support the cooperative collection and use of credible scientific data in ESA policy, including listing, delisting and habitat definitions.

Objective: Support and work to develop additional incentive-based programs for landowners.

Objective: Stay current and active on ESA issues and policy and provide information and education to local conservation districts and the public.

GOAL3

Promote aquatic and terrestrial wildlife habitat maintenance and enhancement in cooperation with partners.

Objective: Encourage increasing technical assistance availability for wildlife issues to landowners and agency personnel.

Objective: Initiate formal rule making for listing and de-listing process.

Objective: Ensure DEQ use sound science through standardized collection of credible data.

Objective: Request consistent review and timely acceptance of documents submitted for DEQ approval.

Objective: Provide leadership to assist DEQ in reviewing their regulations relative to septic systems to accommodate improved technologies.

Objective: Request prior notification of any water sampling analysis plans (MOU).

Objective: Assist districts in becoming true partners with DEQ.

Water Monitoring, Water Quality, Water Quantity

GOAL1

Provide assistance in obtaining credible water quality data to assess the condition of the states water-bodies.

Objective: Periodic guidance on funding sources to obtain additional local staff and equipment.

Objective: Periodic training for water quality monitoring.

Objective: Continue to provide water quality monitoring certification.

Objective: Educate stakeholders on benefits of monitoring data.

Objective: Continue the water quality training that has been provided and consider expansion to provide more detail.

GOAL 2

Continue involvement to ensure Wyoming waters meet their designated uses through appropriate classification and credible data collection.

Objective: WACD to continue to review water quality standards so that they are appropriate for Wyoming's waters.

Objective: Promote Wyoming based research for water quality issues (UW vs. outside states).

Action Item

- WACD shall seek increased funding for soil surveys on federal lands as a priority.
- Continue the efforts to secure funding for state lands.
- Provide assistance and explore opportunities for stewardship contracting on state and federal lands.
- Promote collection and recycling of hazardous waste.

Objective: WACD shall coordinate with conservation districts and partners to secure funding for natural resource improvement projects. Improvement projects should be ecologically sustainable, maximally productive, and economically profitable.

Action Items

- Pursue a state cost-share program on private, state, and federal lands for natural resource improvement projects.
- Continue with AFO/CAFO management projects and explore diverse funding sources.
- WACD shall coordinate with conservation districts through the partners to facilitate the flexible and efficient use of cost share funds through different sources on intermingled private, state and federal lands.

Objective: WACD shall coordinate with conservation districts in developing state and federal land management policies.

Action Items

- Encourage controlling agencies to enforce off-highway vehicle regulations.
- Develop and promote locally proven and/or science based reclamation policies on federal land.
- Raise priority of livestock grazing and implementation of management of healthy rangelands (e.g. water developments, fencing, grazing plans, prescribed burning etc.) with federal land agencies.
- WACD, in coordination with conservation districts, will establish a clear policy on RS2477 right of ways.
- Provide pros and cons and educate local constituents regarding sale and exchange of state & federal lands.
- Maximize multiple use within inventoried roadless areas.
- Encourage active involvement and support by Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service for conservation projects that benefit private, state and federal lands.

Water Resources

GOAL 1

Continue to promote watershed planning that is targeted to the needs of each individual watershed through the *WACD Watershed Strategic Plan*.

Objective: Continue to provide watershed planning assistance to local districts through the use of watershed coordinators.

Objective: Evaluate options to stabilize funding for watershed coordinators.

Objective: Provide guidance and assistance for districts to generate a credible watershed plan that is recognized.

Objective: Protect Wyoming water quality/quantity through total WACD watershed planning process.

Objective: Identify and prioritize watersheds for planning.

Objective: Assist districts educate stakeholders on benefits and uses of watershed plans.

Objective: Expand the scope of watershed planning beyond water quality.

Objective: Ensure leadership for watershed planning remains at the local level (taken care of thru *WACD Watershed Strategic Plan*).

Objective: Ensure the proper classifications by DEQ of all water-bodies according to Chapter 1 definitions.

GOAL 2

Ensure watershed planning that allows incorporation of the plan into all local, state, and federal planning processes (county land-use plans, city capital improvement plans, RMPs).

Objective: Assist the districts in producing watershed plans that are credible and can be used to guide policy and economic decision making on local, state, and federal level.

Objective: Pursue multi-district/state/government entity planning efforts.

Objective: Provide technical assistance to districts for the process of watershed planning.

Objective: Develop a framework for multi-district watershed planning process.

Objective: Improve coordination and communication between local, state(s) and federal entities.

Objective: Effectively educate and market watershed plan attributes/components to applicable government agencies.

Objective: Educate local, state, and federal entities on benefits and uses of watershed plans.

GOAL 3

Partner with federal, state, local entities, landowners to empower districts to implement the watershed planning process.

Objective: Continue to explore funding sources for implementation of watershed plans.

Objective: Provide templates for local districts to use in addressing state-wide issues.

Objective: Provide technical assistance to local districts for implementation activities.

Objective: Encourage cooperation with Wyoming DEQ through representation at all meetings.

Communication & Cooperation between DEQ
and Conservation Districts

GOAL 1

Improve communication and cooperation with Wyoming DEQ and conservation districts.

Objective: Clear and concise expectations from DEQ's administration of water quality laws.

Objective: Ensure the proper classifications by DEQ of all water-bodies according to Chapter 1 definitions.

Objective: Assist the legislature in providing statutory guidance for DEQ.