**HIGH.DESERT CONSERVATION Dl**S**TRICT**

**3-Year Plan (2023 to 2025)**

Executive Summary

**For More Informa**tion **Contact: 970-529- 8368**

Info at [www.montezumacountyconservationdistricts.org](http://www.montezumacountyconservationdistricts.org)

**Organization of the. High Desert Conservation District**

A political subdivision of the State of Colorado - authorities, powers and structure contained in Colorado Revised Statutes, Title 35, Article 70. The High Desert Conservation District was organized following an election of landowners in the District on April 11, 1942. The original name of the District was the Dolores Soil Conservation District. District activities are directed by consensus of a seven member Board of Supervisors and operations are conducted by a part-time District Manager.

**Function of the High Desert Conservation District**

To make available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land manager with conservation of soil; adopting practices that promote soil health, efficient agricultural water use and sustainable management of related natural resources.

**Mission of the High Desert Conservation District**

Planting Seeds of Inspiration to Promote Conscious Stewardship of our Natural Resources is the mission of the High Desert Conservation District.

Trends Impacting Conservation in the High Desert Conservation District

1. Salinity of waters being released from the area is overly high, contributing to high salinity in water released downstream.
2. Increase in resilient soil health, forest, and range management practices
3. Locally grown foods are being demanded by the community.
4. The Colorado Water Plan is demanding greater scrutiny of irrigation water usage.
5. Improvement of understanding of conservation practices
6. Improve sustainability and profitability for small and large agricultural producers
7. Decline in generational sustainability and a lack of estate succession plans for agricultural producers
8. Increased negative impacts of climate change and drought

**Natural Resource Data:**

The High Desert Conservation District and Mancos Conservation District share the resources of Montezuma County. The 2012 population of Montezuma County was 25,431 with a land area of 2,037 square miles. Of these, 30% are private lands, 33% are tribal (Ute Mountain Ute), and 37% are state and federal lands. In 2012 farmlands occupied 690,656 acres of land, with an average farm size of 607 acres. There were 1,138 farms in Montezuma County in 2012.

Natural Resource Priorities & Goals:

Soil Health

Goal: Improve soil health through conservation practices that support resilient and productive ecosystems.

Objective 1: Provide educational opportunities, equipment, and financial incentives to increase soil conservation.

Objective 2: Monitor soil health and quality through participation in the STAR Plus program and other soil health initiatives.

Water Use, Quality, and Management

Goal: Improve water use, management, and quality through conservation practices, education, and on-the­-ground projects.

Objective 1: Provide staff that can work one-on-one with producers to improve water use efficiency

Objective 2: Continue with education and outreach through partnerships, programs, and workshops that connect individuals to watershed literacy.

Objective 3: Continue to improve irrigation infrastructure in the McElmo Watershed

Objective 4: Implement a water quality monitoring program at McElmo Watershed.

##### Promotion, District Development, and Agriculture

Goal: Maintain and promote information dissemination with the technologies most widely accepted and requested by the producers in Montezuma County. Communicate our organization's mission, vision, and values that concern natural resource issues in the High Desert Conservation District boundaries through collaboration with landowners and organizations.

Objective 1: High Desert Conservation District be recognized by all of the community as a hub for conservation information. Promoting and supporting agriculture in Montezuma County.

Objective 2: Continue to share resources with the public through our website, social media, printed materials, and public interaction.

Objective 3: Continue to develop partnerships that increase community dialogue and education across age groups based on prioritized natural resource issues and goals.

Objective 4: Continue to encourage both Board Supervisor and staff professional development

Objective 5: Continue to research and acquire funding that is available for accomplishing our resource goals

Forest Health

Goal: Improve forest health through conservation practices that prioritize fire adaptation and natural resiliency.

Objective 1: Collaborate with Mancos Conservation District to facilitate the creation of conservation plans that promote healthy forest stands.

Objective 3: Prioritize and implement projects that provide cross-boundary benefits to both private landowners and public lands.

## HIGH DESERT CONSERVATION DISTRICT

### Natural Resource Goals & Objectives

#### Long Range Plan for: 2023 - 2025

**Natural Resource Issue: Soil Health and Practices**

**Why is this issue a concern and what is the location:** In Montezuma County, fertile top-soil is being lost to wind and water erosion, soil fertility and production is lost with mismanagement of irrigation water (leaching and salinity) and irrigation water is becoming less available due to drought and greater demand for water throughout Colorado. Producers are trying to remedy a loss of production by increasing primarily synthetic inputs. Many of these inputs have become too costly to allow for a profit from the crop(s) and continue to exacerbate the loss of soil fertility.

Coupled with concern of losing irrigation water if participating in a conservation effort, producers continue to over irrigate, contributing to the leaching of soil nutrients of all types. Additionally, the demand for locally grown foods is increasing and with it, the number of small acreage production farms. Although the principles of healthy soil are the same regardless of the number of acres being farmed, this demand has created the need for more information on farming for profit with a smaller number of acres.

##### Three Year Goal(s):

* Landowners and land managers within the District will improve soil health and resiliency of their properties
* Producers will be aware of the connection between soil fertility and efficient use of irrigation water

# Soil Health and Practices

| **PROGRAM YEAR** | **MEASURABLE ANNUAL OBJECTIVES** | **COOPERATING AGENCY/GROUP** | **TIME AND FUNDING NEEDED** | **SOURCE OF FUNDING** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | The DCT (District Conservation Technician) will be retained | **NRCS** (Natural | 50 hrs per year | **HDCD** (High |
| **2023** | by the HDCD (High Desert Conservation District).  Continue promotion of soil health through cover crops, no-till | Resources Conservation | 500 Board | Desert Conservation |
|  | practices, sale of conservation supplies, rental of seed-drill, | Service), **CSCB** | Supervisor Hours | District) |
|  | and sales of seedling trees.  One soil health workshop | (Colorado State Conservation Board) |  | **NRCS** |
|  |  |  | $10,000 | **CSCB** |
|  |  | **CSFSN** (Colorado |  | (Colorado State |
|  |  | State Forest Service  Nursery, **Southwest** | 2080 DCT Hours  & Funding | Conservation  Board) **SWCD** |
|  |  | **Seed**  **CACD** | $3500 | (Southwestern |
|  |  |  |  | Water |
|  |  |  |  | Conservation |
|  |  |  |  | District)  **CACD** Demonstration Grant |
| **2024** | The DCT (District Conservation Technician) will be retained by the HDCD (High Desert Conservation District).  Continue promotion of soil health through cover crops, no-till practices, sale of conservation supplies, rental of seed-drill, and sales of seedling trees.  Provide one soil health workshop | **NRCS CSCB**  **CSFSN**  **CACD** | 50 hrs per year  500 Board Supervisor Hours  $10,000  2080 DCT Hours & Funding  $3500 | **HDCD NRCS CSCB SWCD**  **CSFSN** |
| **2025** | * The DCT (District Conservation Technician) will be retained by the HDCD (High Desert Conservation District). * Continue promotion of soil health through cover crops, no-till practices, sale of conservation supplies, rental of seed-drill, and sales of seedling trees. * Provide for one soil health workshop | **NRCS CSCB**  **CSFSN**  **CACD** | 50 hrs per year  500 Board Supervisor Hours  $10,000  2080 DCT Hours & Funding  $3500 | **HDCD NRCS CSCB SWCD**  **CSFSN** |
|  |  |  |  |  |

\* Use of acronyms - please spell out each acronym the first time it is used followed by the acronym. From that point on, use only the acronym.

## HIGH DESERT CONSERVATION DISTRICT

### Natural Resource Goals & Objectives

#### Long Range Plan for: 2023-2025

**Natural Resource Issue: Water Use, Quality, and Management**

##### Why is this issue a concern and what is the location:

High salinity soils in Montezuma County contribute to making water unusable downstream if irrigation waters are mismanaged. Promoting a healthy downstream watershed depends on the understanding and willingness of farmers to irrigate appropriately without bringing additional salts to the surface for deposit into surface water.

Yield is also dependent on appropriate water distribution. Erosion and loss of soil fertility can be a by-product of mismanaged irrigation waters. Aging irrigation projects have lost their efficiency and need to be evaluated and landowners provided with a current water use and management plan that will meet their production needs. In addition, new technology has become available that may be able to increase the efficiency of this dwindling resource.

Acknowledging the limited sources of water in this area and the dry environment, the efficient use of irrigation water is crucial to the agricultural and economic development of this area.

##### Three Year Goal(s):

Provide staff that can work one-on-one with producers to improve water use efficiency. Initiate a water quality program within the High Desert CD boundaries. Develop education and outreach materials to increase watershed literacy.

# Water Use, Quality, and Management

| **PROGRAM YEAR** | **MEASURABLE ANNUAL OBJECTIVES** | **COOPERATING AGENCY/GROUP** | **TIME AND FUNDING NEEDED** | **SOURCE OF FUNDING** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2023** | * Provide services to **NRCS** (Natural Resources Conservation Service) for EQIP (Environmental * Quality Incentives Program) through DCT program * Provide financial support to **WIP** (Water Information Program) including Children's Water Festival * Provide one Irrigation Water Management workshop * Initiate water quality monitoring program | **NRCS**  **CSCB** (Colorado State Conservation Board)-Matching Grants Programs  **WIP** (Water Information Program) **SWCD**  (Southwestern Water Conservation  District) | 240 DM Hours  24 Supervisor Hours  $850  832 Staff Hours | **CSCB-Matching Grants Program SWCD**  **DCT**  **Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB)** |
| **2024** | * Provide services to NRCS for EQIP through DCT program * Provide financial support to Water Information Program including Children's Water Festival * Provide IWM workshop * Develop water quality monitoring program | **NRCS CSCB WIP SWCD** | 240 DM Hours  24 Supervisor Hours  $850  832 Staff Hours | **CSCB- matching grants**  **NRCS**  **SWCD**  **DCT**  **CWCB** |



| **2025** | * Provide services to NRCS for EQIP with DCT program * Provide financial support to Water Information Program including Children's Water Festival * Provide one IWM workshop * Implement water quality monitoring program | NRCS CSCB WIP SWCD | 240 DM Hours  24 Supervisor Hours  $850  832 Staff Hours  Basin Salinity  Funding | CSCB-  Matching Grant and DCT  SWCD  CWCB |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

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## HIGH DESERT CONSERVATION DISTRICT

### Natural Resource Goals & Objectives

#### Long Range Plan for: 2023-2025

**Natural Resource Issue:** Promotion and District Development and Local Agriculture

##### Why is this issue a concern and what is the location:

The agricultural community by the nature of its requirements, tends to separate by distance many of the people involved in production. It is crucial that producers have a hub for information.

Three Year Goal(s):

Maintain and promote information dissemination with the technologies most widely accepted and requested by the producers in Montezuma County. High Desert Conservation District is recognized by all of the community as a hub for conservation information. Promoting and supporting agriculture in Montezuma County. Provide educational opportunities and workshops to the public on issues of concern (drought, soil, irrigation, forestry, and other natural resource areas).

# Promotion, District Development, & Local Agriculture

| **PROGRAM YEAR** | **MEASURABLE ANNUAL OBJECTIVES** | **COOPERATING AGENCY/GROUP** | **TIME AND FUNDING NEEDED** | **SOURCE OF FUNDING** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2023 | * Website development and maintenance. Facebook and other social media. * Promotional/Branding materials * District staff to pursue 2 educational trainings * Provide 3 public education workshops | NRCS, CSU-Ext, Montezuma Land Conservancy (MLC), Montezuma School to Farm, Mancos Conservation District (MCD), USFS, Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company (MVIC) etc. | 350 hours  $30,000 | HDCD(High Desert Conservation District), CSCB-matching grants, in-kind partnerships |
| 2024 | * Website development and maintenance. Facebook and other social media. * Promotional/Branding materials * District staff to pursue 2 educational trainings * Provide 3 public education workshops | NRCS, CSU-Ext,  MLC, Montezuma School to Farm, MCD, USFS, MVIC, etc. | 350 hours  $30,000 | HDCD, CSCB-matching grants, in-kind partnerships |
| 2025 | * Website development and maintenance. Facebook and other social media. * Promotional/Branding materials * District staff to pursue 2 educational trainings * Provide 3 public education workshops | NRCS, CSU-Ext, MLC, Montezuma School to Farm, MCD, USFS, MVIC, etc. | 350 hours  $30,000 | HDCD, CSCB-matching grants, in-kind partnerships |

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# HIGH DESERT CONSERVATION DISTRICT

**Natural Resource Goals** & **Objectives**

#### Long Range Plan for: 2023 - 2025

Natural Resource Issue:Forestry

Why is this issue a concern and what is the location: Healthy burnable forests provide wildlife habitat while protecting and sustaining our watershed. These resources are vital to the health and well-being of the High Desert CD community.

Three Year Goal: Improve forest health through partnerships that provide for conservation plans prioritizing fire adaptation and natural resiliency for private landowners and cross-boundary partners.

# Forestry

| PROGRAM YEAR | MEASURABLE ANNUAL OBJECTIVES | COOPERATING AGENCY/GROUP | TIME AND FUNDING NEEDED | SOURCE OF FUNDING |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2023 | * Initiate partnership with Mancos Conservation District and NRCS to facilitate the creation of conservation plans that promote healthy forest stands. * Provide one wildfire safety workshop | US Forest Service-USFS, Dolores Watershed Resilient Forests-DWARF, National Park Service-NPS, NRCS, Colorado State Forest Service-CSFS, Colorado Parks and Wildlife-CPW, Wildfire Adapted Partnership-WAP | 40 hours  DCT | DCT grant  CSCB-matching grant |
| 2024 | * Develop partnership with Mancos Conservation District and NRCS to facilitate the creation of conservation plans that promote healthy forest stands. * Provide one wildfire safety workshop | USFS, DWRF, NPS, NRCS, CSFS, CPW, WAP | 40 hours  DCT | DCT grant  CSCB-matching grant |
| 2025 | * Implement partnership with Mancos Conservation District and NRCS to facilitate the creation of conservation plans that promote healthy forest stands. * Provide one wildfire safety workshop | USFS, DWRF, NPS, NRCS, CSFS, CPW, WAP | 40 hours  DCT | DCT grant  CSCB-matching grant |

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**RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION**

THEREFORE, Be It Resolved that this Long Range Program of the High Desert Conservation District be adopted as the official program of the District as of this 13th of December, 2022.

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,President

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,Vice President

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, Secretary / Treasurer

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, Member

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, Member

Reviewed by the Colorado State Conservation Board

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Date Date

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