



# ***SOLANO COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICTS MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW FINAL***

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*June 12, 2015*

Prepared for the  
Solano Local Agency Formation Commission  
by Policy Consulting Associates, LLC.



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# ***ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS***

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ABAG:	Association of Bay Area Governments
BCDC:	San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commissions
BOE	California State Board of Equalization
CEC:	Conservation Education Center
CIP:	Capital Improvement Plan
CPA:	Certified Public Accountant
CREP:	Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
CSDA:	California Special District Association
CY:	Calendar year
DFW:	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
DRCD:	Dixon Resource Conservation District
DOF:	California Department of Finance
DOT:	Department of Transportation
DRWJPA:	Dixon Regional Watershed Joint Powers Authority
DWR:	Department of Water Resources
DWRPA:	Dixon Watershed Real Property Acquisition Joint Powers Authority
FSA:	Farm Services Agency
FSSD:	Fairfield Suisun Sewer District
FTE:	Full-Time Equivalent
FY:	Fiscal year
GIS:	Geographic Information Systems
GM:	General Manager
GP:	General Plan
GVRD:	Greater Vallejo Recreation District
JPA:	Joint Powers Authority
LAFCO:	Local Agency Formation Commission
MOU:	Memorandum of Understanding
MPWD:	Maine Prairie Water District
MSA:	Municipal Service Area
MSR:	Municipal Service Review
NA:	Not applicable
NP:	Not provided
NRCD:	Napa Resource Conservation District
NRCS:	National Resource Conservation Service
OASA:	Out-of-Area Service Agreement
OPR:	Governor's Office of Planning and Research
PPP:	Public Private Partnership
RCD:	Resource Conservation District
RD:	Reclamation District
SCMAD:	Solano County Mosquito Abatement District
SCS:	Soil Conservation Service
SCWA:	Solano County Water Agency
SEC:	Sonoma Ecology Center
SLT:	Solano Land Trust

SMPA:	Suisun Marsh Preservation Agreement
SoRCD:	Solano Resource Conservation District
SOI:	Sphere of influence
SSJWC:	San Joaquin Delta Conservancy
SuRCD:	Suisun Resource Conservation District
SR:	State Route
USBR:	United States Bureau of Reclamation
USDA:	United States Department of Agriculture
VSFD:	Vallejo Sanitation and Flood District
WHIP:	Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program
WRP:	Wetlands Reserve Program
YRCD:	Yolo Resource Conservation District

# ***PREFACE***

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Prepared for the Solano Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), this report is a service specific municipal services review—a State-required comprehensive study of resource conservation services within Solano County. The intent of this document is to provide a detailed description of how resource conservation services are offered in Solano County.

## **CONTEXT**

Solano LAFCO is required to prepare this MSR by the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (Government Code §56000, et seq.), which took effect on January 1, 2001. The MSR reviews services provided by public agencies whose boundaries and governance are subject to LAFCO. Special districts providing resource conservation-related services are the focus of this review.

## **CREDITS**

The authors extend their appreciation to those individuals at the many agencies that provided planning and financial information and documents used in this report. The contributors are listed individually at the end of this report.

Solano LAFCO Executive Officer, Elliot Mulberg, provided project direction and review. Solano County prepared maps and provided GIS analysis. This report was prepared by Policy Consulting Associates, LLC, and co-authored by Oxana Wolfson and Jennifer Stephenson. Oxana Wolfson served as project manager. Jennifer Stephenson provided research analysis. Lauren Wilkins and Terrence Matsuo provided research assistance.

The local agencies provided a substantial portion of the information included in this document. Each local agency provided budgets, financial statements, various plans, and responded to questionnaires.





# **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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This report is a Municipal Service Review (MSR) of resource conservation services provided in Solano County by resource conservation districts prepared for the Solano Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). An MSR is a State-required comprehensive study of services within a designated geographic area, in this case, Solano County. The MSR requirement is codified in the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (Government Code §56000 et seq.). After MSR findings are adopted, LAFCO will begin updating the spheres of influence (SOIs) of the agencies covered in this report.

## **SERVICE PROVIDERS**

This report focuses on special districts under LAFCO jurisdiction in Solano County that provide resource conservation services. These providers were last reviewed in an MSR in 2006. Three resource conservation districts were reviewed as part of this report—Dixon Resource Conservation District (DRCD), Solano Resource Conservation District (SoRCD) and Suisun Resource Conservation District (SuRCD).

## **SPHERE OF INFLUENCE**

Spheres of Influence (SOIs) for all three resource conservation districts reviewed in this report were first established in 1984 as coterminous with the respective districts' boundaries. In 2006, after the completion of the Municipal Service Review for all the RCDs, their SOIs were updated and reaffirmed to be conterminous with their respective boundaries. No changes in the spheres of influence of Dixon RCD or SuRCD are anticipated after the adoption of this Municipal Service Review. Solano RCD expressed interest in expanding its SOI to include all of the Solano County unincorporated areas that are currently outside of an RCD. Additionally, Solano RCD is also considering including incorporated areas of Solano County that are currently not in boundaries of any RCD.

## **GROWTH AND SERVICE DEMAND**

Each resource conservation agency reviewed as part of this MSR considers its primary customer base to be landowners. The districts protect open space and agricultural lands, as well as natural resources and wildlife. Service demand for RCDs in Solano County is influenced by constituent outreach, a rise in regulatory compliance requirements, and changes in service needs due to environmental changes. All three districts reported an increase in service demand in the last several years.

There were approximately 424,233 residents in Solano County in 2014. Since 2000, the number of residents has grown by 7.5 percent. Projections for future growth differ depending on the source (California Department of Finance, California Department of Transportation, and the Association of the Bay Area Governments (ABAG)), and range between 0.7 and 0.9 percent average annual growth over the next two decades. According to ABAG, growth will be concentrated in three major centers—Fairfield, Vacaville and Vallejo. The City of Rio Vista, however, is anticipated to see the most dramatic population growth rate of all the cities in Solano County.

It is anticipated that there will be minimal development or population growth within unincorporated areas of each districts' boundaries. Growth is expected to occur within and around the incorporated areas of the districts.

## **PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT**

All resource conservation districts in California are governed by the Public Resources Code Division 9 (Section 9001-9978). The law outlines minimum requirements to guide the operations of a well-managed RCD, which includes regular financial audits, filing and paying appropriate payroll taxes, filing reports with the State Board of Equalization (BOE), developing and adopting annual and long-range plans and annual reports, and preparing an annual budget before the beginning of a fiscal year.

All three reviewed RCDs adopt annual budgets, perform regular financial audits, pay payroll taxes and file reports with the BOE. Dixon RCD and Solano RCD appropriately prepare long-range and annual plans that fulfill all the necessary requirements. Additionally, Dixon RCD prepares annual reports that are released to constituents. Solano RCD could improve its management practices by producing annual reports that could also be incorporated in the District's long-range plan. Suisun RCD could make improvements by developing and adopting a long-range plan, annual plans and annual reports.

Besides being one of the provisions of the Public Resources Code, a long-range plan provides a road map to agencies by setting priorities and identifying means to meet those goals. Priority setting helps a district determine which needs deserve attention first and enables it to focus its limited resources on addressing those needs. District priority setting is accomplished through creating a mission statement, identifying goals that support its mission, and then crafting objectives that help the district reach its goals. Also, having a clear mission, goals, and objectives—a strategic plan—helps identify shared interests an agency may have with other groups, agencies, or individuals and helps avoid duplicating the work of other groups.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

In addition to the previously mentioned administrative requirements, Public Resources Code Division 9 outlines regulations that must govern each resource conservation district. A well-governed RCD files an annual report to the State Controller with a Government Compensation Report, conducts ethics training every two years, files Forms 700 for all directors and designated staff, provides employees with sexual harassment literature, has directors take an oath of office, maintains written records of board meeting agendas and minutes, follows the Brown Act, and has appropriate board and personnel policies. At a minimum each district should have policies regarding the following: associate directors, bidding, conflicts of interest, fees for services, investments, reserves, nondiscrimination, personnel, public records requests, reimbursements, vehicles, and volunteers.

All three RCDs file annual reports to the State Controller with the Government Compensation Report, conduct ethics training, file appropriate Forms 700, have their directors take an oath of office, maintain records of agendas and minutes, and follow the Brown Act by posting agendas 72 hours in advance of board meetings. Solano RCD and Suisun RCD, however, should make efforts to ensure that their board agendas and minutes are also posted on their respective websites.

All the districts reviewed here generally had board and personnel policies in place. Dixon RCD, although guided by the County investment policy, could make an improvement by establishing one of its own. Solano RCD has not adopted associate director or bidding policies and could benefit from adding these policies to its bylaws. Suisun RCD does not have policies related to expense reimbursements, bidding, investments and reserves, public records requests, volunteers, and associate directors.

Overall, all of the districts reviewed demonstrated accountability by performing outreach activities beyond what is legally required, and maintaining a system in place to address customers' complaints. In addition, all districts reviewed demonstrated accountability in their cooperation with LAFCO during the MSR process.

## **FINANCING**

RCDs generally are limited or constrained by available funding sources and have to heavily rely on supplemental sources of income, such as grants and fees for service. RCDs serve primarily rural areas and tend to have large boundary areas, limited population, expansive open space and agricultural lands, which all contribute to a small tax base. While many RCDs around California receive no property tax, resource conservation districts in Solano County are an exception. Property tax revenue received by all three reviewed resource conservation districts constitutes only a small share of their respective budgets. Moreover, Suisun RCD, because of its mainly marsh composition and limited city territory in the District, receives less than one percent of its total revenue in property taxes.

DRCD, SoRCD and SuRCD rely heavily on grants and fees for services to supplement their incomes. Solano RCD is particularly successful among the three districts at applying for grants that finance SoRCD's projects.

All three districts receive a majority of their respective revenues from fees for services. Under Division 9 of the California Resource Code, resource conservation districts in the State of California are empowered to charge fees for services rendered, so long as charges for services do not exceed the actual cost of rendering them (§9403.5). Districts may assist the local community by providing various services, such as administrative services, gate monitoring services, fish screen maintenance, pre and post inspections for programs and projects, landowner workshops, or any other services of which the district has knowledge or technical expertise. All three districts in Solano County take full advantage of this law and partner and contract with other government agencies, organizations and landowners to provide services for which RCDs collect fees.

Despite the districts' success in supplementing their incomes, the RCDs reported multiple financing challenges, including 1) rising costs associated with operations and regulatory compliance, 2) stricter reporting responsibilities, which limit staff availability to spend time on regular operations, and 3) a limited tax base which constrains revenue opportunities.

All of the districts reported that financing levels were inadequate or marginally adequate; however, DRCD and SoRCD appear to be financially healthy based on their income surplus, adequate financial reserves, limited debt, success in grant writing, and multitude of fee-based contracts. On the other hand, Suisun RCD possesses some income

deficit. The District currently has sufficient reserves for one year of operations and can cover the deficit. In FY 14-15, there is a projected surplus.

## **CAPACITY, ADEQUACY AND CONSTRAINTS**

Generally, there is sufficient capacity<sup>1</sup> within all three districts to provide adequate services. Capacity is further enhanced through shared services and facilities, as well as partnerships and collaborations practiced by DRCD, SoRCD and SuRCD. Collaboration and resource sharing promote efficiency, best management practices, exchange of ideas and experiences, cost savings, and increased income due to fees for services collected from various partners in the case of the RCDs in Solano County.

All three RCDs use performance measures to evaluate their service adequacy. The evaluation process is mostly related to contract projects and uses fiscal and operational outcome measures. Each project has a scope, timeline and budget, and is reviewed to assess fiscal performance and efficacy of deliverables.

However, there were several capacity constraints reported by the reviewed districts, the primary one being the aforementioned limited tax base. Although the districts successfully collect additional revenue from grants and fees, these sources of income are volatile and subject to change depending on availability of grants, success in grant writing and need for services by landowners and partners. Capacity is also constrained by the condition of some of the facilities used by the districts and stricter legal regulations, as well as limited staffing in the case of Suisun RCD.

## **GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE OPTIONS**

During the course of this MSR process, Dixon, Solano and Suisun RCDs were assessed for potential governance structure alternatives.

One governance option is the consolidation of Dixon RCD with Solano RCD, since the two districts are adjacent to one another, share facilities and already closely collaborate. However, DRCD and SoRCD provide different types of services and carry out different purposes. Dixon RCD focuses almost entirely on the maintenance of the Dixon Drain, flooding problems, assistance to landowners with regulatory compliance, and wildlife habitat management. Solano RCD is engaged in water quality protection, reduction of soil erosion, invasive species control and weed management, promoting citizen-based land stewardship, outreach, and conservation education. Thus functioning as two separate autonomous entities and complementing each other's services may be the most efficient and logical approach to the governance structure of DRCD and SoRCD.

Similarly, Suisun RCD has an entirely different purpose and mission than the other two districts. Its services are specific and unique to the Suisun Marsh as designated in the 1977 Suisun Marsh Preservation Act. Additionally, SuRCD is not adjacent to either one of the other RCDs. SuRCD's boundaries are specific to the special legislation according to which SuRCD was formed, and the District is not considering expansion.

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<sup>1</sup> Capacity for RCDs is defined by ability to serve current and future service demand as described by financial adequacy,

The only presently viable governance structure option identified is the expansion of Solano RCD to include all unincorporated areas of Solano County currently outside of an RCD. The District has been serving various areas of the County outside of its boundaries for the last decade; inclusion of these areas into the SoRCD's boundary area would be a logical change. Extension of the District's boundaries would be subject to the establishment of a tax sharing agreement with the County. The District is reportedly currently working with Solano County LAFCO and the Department of Conservation to annex these areas, and attempting to conduct an analysis on whether the District would also need to annex incorporated areas currently not in an RCD. The first step in this process would be to extend the District's SOI to include the territory to be annexed when the Commission updates the Spheres of Influence for the RCDs after the adoption of this MSR.

## **2. LAFCO AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES REVIEWS**

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This report is prepared pursuant to legislation enacted in 2000 that requires LAFCO to conduct a comprehensive review of municipal service delivery and update the spheres of influence (SOIs) of all agencies under LAFCO's jurisdiction. This chapter provides an overview of LAFCO's powers and responsibilities. It discusses legal requirements for preparation of the municipal services review (MSR), and describes the process for MSR review, MSR approval and SOI updates.

### **LAFCO OVERVIEW**

LAFCO regulates, through approval, denial, conditions and modification, boundary changes proposed by public agencies or individuals. It also regulates the extension of public services by cities and special districts outside their boundaries. LAFCO is empowered to initiate updates to the SOIs and proposals involving the dissolution or consolidation of special districts, mergers, establishment of subsidiary districts, and any reorganization including such actions. Otherwise, LAFCO actions must originate as petitions or resolutions from affected voters, landowners, cities or districts.

Solano LAFCO consists of five regular members: two members from the Solano County Board of Supervisors, two city council members, and one public member who is appointed by the other members of the Commission. There is an alternate in each category. All Commissioners are appointed to four-year terms. Special districts are not represented on the Commission.

### **MUNICIPAL SERVICES REVIEW LEGISLATION**

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 requires LAFCO review and update SOIs not less than every five years and to review municipal services before updating SOIs. The requirement for service reviews arises from the identified need for a more coordinated and efficient public service structure to support California's anticipated growth. The service review provides LAFCO with a tool to study existing and future public service conditions comprehensively and to evaluate organizational options for accommodating growth, preventing urban sprawl, and ensuring that critical services are provided efficiently.

Government Code §56430 requires LAFCO to conduct a review of municipal services provided in the county by region, sub-region or other designated geographic area, as appropriate, for the service or services to be reviewed, and prepare a written statement of determination with respect to each of the following topics:

- ❖ Growth and population projections for the affected area;
- ❖ The location and characteristics of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the SOI (effective July 1, 2012);



- ❖ Present and planned capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services, including infrastructure needs or deficiencies (including needs or deficiencies related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, and structural fire protection in any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere of influence);
- ❖ Financial ability of agencies to provide services;
- ❖ Status of, and opportunities for shared facilities;
- ❖ Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies; and
- ❖ Any other matter related to effective or efficient service delivery, as required by commission policy.

## **MUNICIPAL SERVICES REVIEW PROCESS**

The MSR process does not require LAFCO to initiate changes of organization based on service review findings, only that LAFCO identify potential government structure options. However, LAFCO, other local agencies, and the public may subsequently use the determinations to analyze prospective changes of organization or reorganization or to establish or amend SOIs. Within its legal authorization, LAFCO may act with respect to a recommended change of organization or reorganization on its own initiative (e.g., certain types of consolidations), or in response to a proposal (i.e., initiated by resolution or petition by landowners or registered voters).

MSRs are exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to §15306 (information collection) of the CEQA Guidelines. LAFCO's actions to adopt MSR determinations are not considered "projects" subject to CEQA.

## **SPHERE OF INFLUENCE UPDATES**

The Commission is charged with developing and updating the sphere of influence (SOI) for each city and special district within the county.<sup>2</sup> SOIs must be updated every five years or as necessary. In determining the SOI, LAFCO is required to complete an MSR and adopt the seven determinations previously discussed.

An SOI is a LAFCO-approved plan that designates an agency's probable future boundary and service area. Spheres are planning tools used to provide guidance for individual boundary change proposals and are intended to encourage efficient provision of organized community services and prevent duplication of service delivery. Territory cannot be annexed by LAFCO to a city or a district unless it is within that agency's sphere.

The purposes of the SOI include the following: to ensure the efficient provision of services, discourage urban sprawl and premature conversion of agricultural and open space lands, and prevent overlapping jurisdictions and duplication of services.

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<sup>2</sup> The initial statutory mandate, in 1971, imposed no deadline for completing sphere designations. When most LAFCOs failed to act, 1984 legislation required all LAFCOs to establish spheres of influence by 1985.



LAFCO cannot regulate land use, dictate internal operations or administration of any local agency, or set rates. LAFCO is empowered to enact policies that indirectly affect land use decisions. On a regional level, LAFCO promotes logical and orderly development of communities as it considers and decides individual proposals. LAFCO has a role in reconciling differences between agency plans so that the most efficient urban service arrangements are created for the benefit of current and future area residents and property owners.

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg (CKH) Act requires to develop and determine the SOI of each local governmental agency within the county and to review and update the SOI every five years. LAFCOs are empowered to adopt, update and amend the SOI. They may do so with or without an application and any interested person may submit an application proposing an SOI amendment.

LAFCO may recommend government reorganizations to particular agencies in the county, using the SOIs as the basis for those recommendations.

In addition, in adopting or amending an SOI, LAFCO must make the following determinations:

- ❖ Present and planned land uses in the area, including agricultural and open-space lands;
- ❖ Present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area;
- ❖ Present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public service that the agency provides or is authorized to provide;
- ❖ Existence of any social or economic communities of interest in the area if the Commission determines these are relevant to the agency; and
- ❖ Present and probable need for water, wastewater, and structural fire protection facilities and services of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within the existing sphere of influence.

By statute, LAFCO must notify affected agencies 21 days before holding the public hearing to consider the SOI and may not update the SOI until after that hearing. The LAFCO Executive Officer must issue a report including recommendations on the SOI amendments and updates under consideration at least five days before the public hearing.

## **DISADVANTAGED UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES**

On October 7, 2011, Governor Brown signed SB 244, which makes two principal changes to the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000. SB 244 requires LAFCOs to: (1) deny any application to annex to a city territory that is contiguous to a disadvantaged unincorporated community (DUC) unless a second application is submitted to annex the disadvantaged community as well; and (2) evaluate disadvantaged unincorporated communities in a municipal service review (MSR) upon the next update of a sphere of influence after June 30, 2012.

The intent of the statute is to encourage investment in disadvantaged unincorporated communities that often lack basic infrastructure by mandating cities and LAFCOs to include them in land use planning.

SB 244 defines disadvantaged unincorporated community as any area with 12 or more registered voters, or as determined by commission policy, where the median household income is less than 80 percent of the statewide annual median.

SB 244 also requires LAFCOs to consider disadvantaged unincorporated communities when developing spheres of influence. Upon the next update of a sphere of influence on or after July 1, 2012, SB 244 requires LAFCO to include in an MSR (in preparation of a sphere of influence update): 1) The location and characteristics of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere; and 2) The present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services and infrastructure needs or deficiencies including needs or deficiencies related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, and structural fire protection in any disadvantaged unincorporated community within or contiguous to the sphere of influence.

In determining spheres of influence, SB 244 authorizes LAFCO to assess the feasibility of a reorganization and consolidation of local agencies to further orderly development and improve the efficiency and affordability of infrastructure and service delivery. LAFCOs should revise their local policies to include the requirements imposed by SB 244 to ensure they fulfill their obligations under this legislation. There are no DUCs in Solano County.

### **3. INTRODUCTION**

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Solano County is located about halfway between the cities of San Francisco and Sacramento and is bordered by Napa, Yolo, Sacramento, Sonoma, and Contra Costa counties. It is officially one of the nine Bay Area counties and one of four North Bay counties. The County is the easternmost county of the North Bay, and a portion of it geographically extends into the Sacramento Valley. The county seat is the City of Fairfield and the largest city is Vallejo. Other cities in the County include Benicia, Dixon, Rio Vista, Suisun City, and Vacaville.

Solano County was one of the original counties of California, created in the 1850s at the time of statehood. The County derives its name directly from a Native American chief—Chief Solano of the Suisun people.

The County encompasses approximately 910 square miles, consisting of 830 square miles of land and 80 square miles of water. About 128 square miles of the County, or 14 percent of the total land area, lies within seven incorporated cities. Because of Solano County’s commitment to focusing development within urban areas, about 95 percent of the County’s population lives in the cities.

Agriculture has historically been both, an important industry in Solano County and a central part of the County’s identity. Agricultural lands account for more land than any other land use. Agriculture contributes to regional economic health and prosperity, defines much of the County’s visual character, supports wildlife habitats and migration corridors, provides open space and recreational amenities for residents and visitors, and acts as community separators defining the County’s cities.<sup>3</sup>

Solano County also lies at the intersection of numerous geographical and geological provinces that, together with variations in hydrology and climate, have resulted in the formation of unique and rare biological and ecological conditions and a rich diversity of native species and habitats. Solano County is home to both natural gas deposits and valuable wind resources. Its soils and water resources contribute to a rich agricultural landscape.

The County’s location, at the junction of the San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta, and its varied topography has created a variety of habitat types, including extensive areas of marshland and wetlands along the Bay and Delta, forests of the Coast Range, and vernal pool complexes and riparian corridors found throughout the upland areas of the County. These habitat types support numerous species including rare or threatened animal and plant species, such as the California red-legged frog, Callippe butterfly, giant garter snake, Swainson’s hawk, fairy shrimp, California tiger salamander, and Boggs Lake hedge-hyssop. The Delta and surrounding areas are among the most diverse ecosystems in the world. Studies comparing species richness and rarity have identified the greater San Francisco Bay region as one of the five most valuable biological areas within the United States and one of the 25 most valuable regions in the world.

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<sup>3</sup> Solano County General Plan, *Agriculture*.

As previously mentioned, Solano County has remained relatively undeveloped, with large portions of the County remaining in agriculture and open space. Sizeable areas of habitat and wildlife movement corridors allow viable populations to persist. If protected, these lands could continue to play an important role in maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem processes. Incentive-based programs, mitigation banks, conservation easements, and other land use planning tools can enable the sustained protection and enhancement of these resources.

Many plans and programs enacted by federal, state, and local legislation relate directly to biological resources policies and programs. These plans and programs are administered by agencies with powers to enforce federal, state, and local laws. Both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) enforce regulations that protect wildlife resources. Special permits are required for alteration, dredging, or any activity in a lake or stream, as well as other activities that may affect fish and game habitat. Both agencies also regulate impacts on sensitive plant and animal species. Future development in Solano County that has the potential to affect wildlife habitat is subject to the regulations of both of these agencies. The Bureau of Reclamation, Solano County Water Agency (SCWA), and its eight member agencies, including the City of Vacaville, the City of Fairfield, Suisun City, the City of Vallejo, the Solano Irrigation District, and the Maine Prairie Water District, have agreed to implement conservation measures to ensure the protection of threatened and endangered species and their habitat within the SCWA service area (which includes all of Solano County, University of California at Davis in Yolo County, and a portion of Reclamation District 2068 in Yolo County). Resource conservation districts, including Dixon, Solano and Suisun, are legally charged with and empowered to protect natural resources in Solano County. Agencies engage in implementation of the Federal Endangered Species Act, California Endangered Species Act, Suisun Marsh Preservation Act, Oak Woodlands Conservation Act, and Solano Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan in Solano County.<sup>4</sup>

## RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICES

This section provides an overview of resource conservation services and resource conservation districts in Solano County. The most recent municipal service review (MSR) for the Solano resource conservation districts was completed in 2006. For a detailed description of each district, please refer to the agency-specific chapters of this report.

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### Overview

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In response to the national “Dust Bowl” crisis of the 1930s, when millions of acres of cropland were destroyed by drought and attendant soil loss, the federal government passed legislation in 1937 establishing the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). After realization that a federal agency in Washington may not be sufficiently responsive to local needs, local counterparts of the SCS were set up under state law to be controlled by local boards of directors. Thus “Soil Conservation Districts” were born, which began forming in

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<sup>4</sup> Solano County General Plan, *Resources*.

the late 1930s and quickly spread throughout the 48 states. Soil Conservation Districts began to perform the functions originally envisioned by the formation of the SCS.

Under Division 9 of the Public Resources Code, Soil Conservation Districts were originally empowered to manage soil and water resources for conservation, but these powers were expanded in the early 1970s to include “related resources,” including fish and wildlife habitat. This expansion of powers was reflected in the change of name from “Soil” Conservation Districts to “Resource” Conservation Districts (RCDs) in 1971.

Today, RCDs in California manage a diversity of resource conservation projects, including soil and water conservation projects, wildlife habitat enhancement and restoration, control of exotic plant species, watershed restoration, conservation planning, education, and many others.

Since most RCDs receive very little or no regular funding through local taxation, they rely heavily on grants and other types of fundraising to stay in operation. Under Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code, RCDs are permitted to function to a certain degree as enterprise districts because the directors may establish and charge fees for services provided by the district to, and upon the request of, persons or governmental entities. No fee must exceed the cost reasonably borne by the district in providing the service.

At one time, RCD directors were elected on a local basis. With rising costs for holding elections, most RCD directors are now appointed by County Boards of Supervisors. Division 9 enables districts to have five, seven, or nine directors, who serve as voting members of the Board of Directors. To be eligible to serve on the Board directors must reside within the district and either own real property in the district or alternatively have served, pursuant to the district’s rules, for two years or more as an associate director providing advisory or other assistance to the Board of Directors, or to be a designated agent of a resident landowner within the district. Because of the natural conditions prevailing in the territory of Suisun RCD (in Solano County) and Grasslands RCD (in Merced County), the majority of privately owned lands therein are owned by persons residing outside of these districts. Therefore, owners of land within these two districts or their agents may serve on their respective Boards of Directors regardless of whether they are residents of the districts. Associate directors who served on their Boards for two years or more are also eligible to become directors.

Many resource conservation districts in addition to the directors serving on their Boards also have associate directors. The position of an associate director has been established to allow members of the community opportunities to participate in RCD activities without being on the Board or when they do not meet the stricter requirements for directors, such as owning property in the district. Associates often are chosen for their special expertise in an area of one of the functions of the district. An associate director’s role is to assist with field days, field tours, annual meetings, contests, educational activities, and other special events, and serve in advisory capacity to the board. Associate directors may not vote on district business or assume the official responsibilities of board members. Under Division 9, however, associate directors may qualify for board positions after they have served for a period of time as associate directors, as was previously mentioned.

As a portion of the state Public Resources Code, Division 9 outlines the structures, powers, and authorities of RCDs under state law, it also provides for state-level support of

RCDs through the state Department of Conservation. Although Department of Conservation does not have regulatory oversight of RCDs it serves districts through offering ongoing training on Division 9 and related government codes, providing technical assistance through education, as well as offering some financial assistance to districts through competitive grant awards. On its website, the Department of Conservation provides RCDs with helpful governance and management guides, such as the Minimum CA RCD Requirements Checklist, The Resource Conservation District Guidebook, and California Resource Conservation District Director's Handbook to name a few.

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## Service Providers

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This report focuses on resource conservation service providers located in Solano County, which are under the jurisdiction of Solano LAFCO. As shown in Figure 3-1, three special districts were reviewed as part of this Municipal Service Review.

In addition to the districts reviewed as part of this MSR, Napa County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD), which is mainly located in Napa County, extends slightly into Solano County, as shown in Figure 3-2. Although there is a small area of NCRCD located in the southwestern Solano County, Napa County LAFCO is the principal LAFCO for NCRCD, as the assessed value of property within the District is greater in Napa County. As principal LAFCO, Napa LAFCO and not Solano LAFCO is responsible for adopting municipal service review determinations and updating the District's sphere of influence (SOI).

NCRCD was formed in 1945 and covers over 500,000 acres of predominantly rural land in Napa and Solano Counties including the Napa River watershed from Mt. St. Helena to the Napa-Sonoma Marsh, much of the Putah Creek watershed, and the upper portion of the Suisun Creek watershed. NCRCD's boundary includes most of Napa County (with the exception of those portions of the City of Napa that were incorporated as of 1945) and a small portion of Solano County known as "Cullinan Ranch," which has a population of zero. This area of approximately 2,000 acres was annexed to NCRCD in 1952 and is comprised of tidal wetlands providing habitat for a number of native fish, plants, and wildlife species.

Cullinan Ranch was once a network of deep water channels and vegetated marsh plain. A century of active farming has caused the land to sink as the rich organic soils of the marsh dried out, oxidized and literally blew away in the wind. Currently, the site has subsided some six feet and is below mean sea level. Reintroducing tidal flows into the site will initially create open water habitat, but sediment suspended in the fresh water flows of the Napa and Sacramento-San Joaquin Rivers will deposit inside the site and slowly build up to where vegetation can colonize.

NCRCD's primary concern in Napa County is the conservation, protection, and restoration of agricultural, rural, grazing, farming, parks and open space land, which constitutes the majority of land in Napa County. The services that NCRCD provides to landowners include erosion control plans and information regarding resources and regulations, watershed management, and other relevant data. Technical services for government agencies cover surface and ground water monitoring, soil analysis, and habitat assessments. NCRCD also works with local schools and community organizations to educate students and the public about natural resource functions and conservation practices.

According to Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code, RCDs are empowered to conserve natural resources within their districts by implementing projects on public and private lands and to educate landowners and the public about resource conservation. Beyond this, RCDs are given the right to form associations to coordinate resource conservation efforts on a larger level. The core functions of a district revolve around its right to use diverse means to further resource conservation within its boundaries.

Figure 3-1 details the various services provided by each of the three reviewed resource conservation agencies under Solano LAFCO purview—Dixon RCD, Solano RCD and Suisun RCD. The bounds of each of these agencies are shown in Figure 3-2.

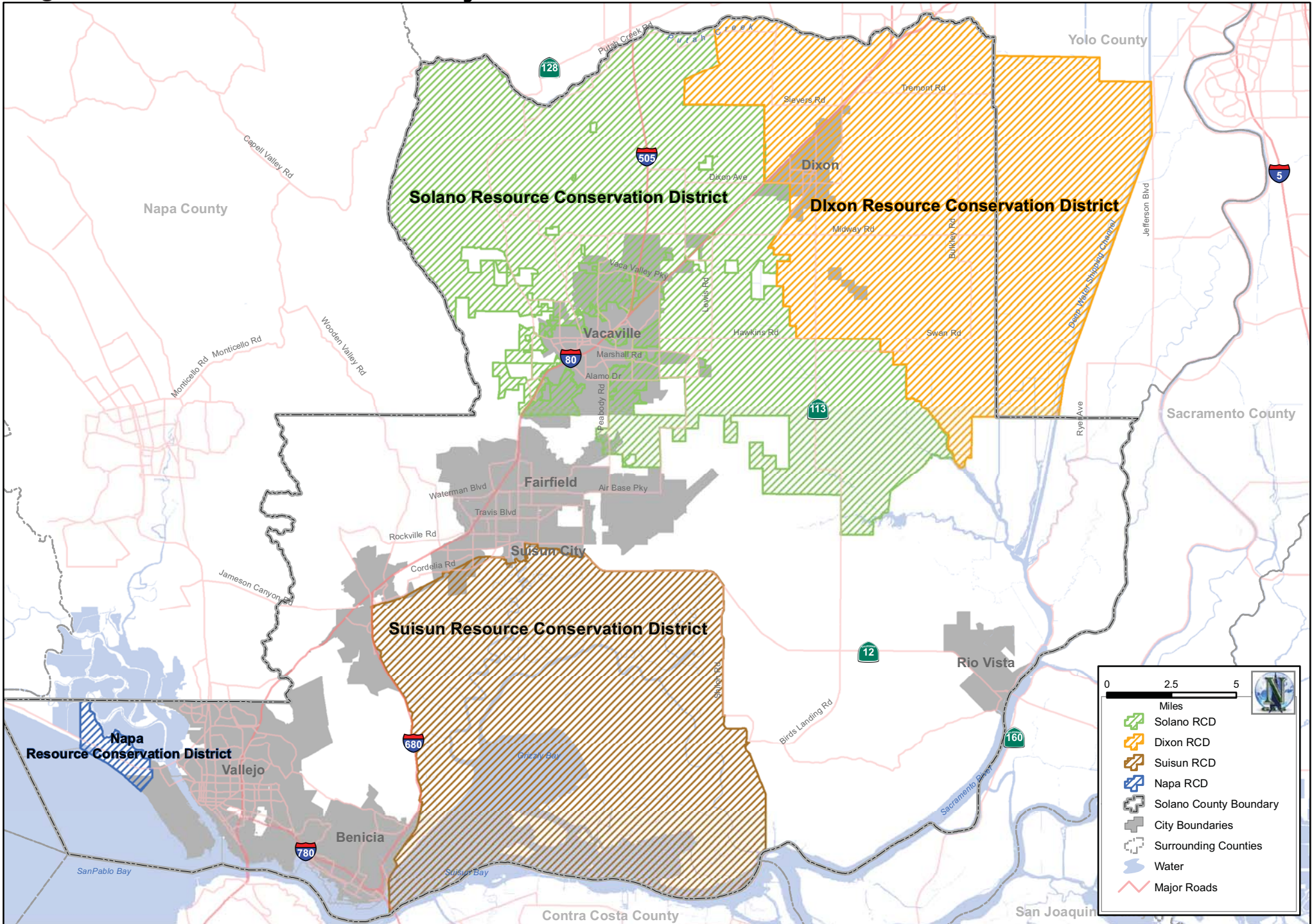


**Figure 3-1: Resource Conservation Service Providers in Solano County**

Service	DRCD	SoRCD	SuRCD
Soil conservation	Yes	Yes	Yes
Watershed conservation/management	Yes	Yes	No
Water quality conservation	Yes	Yes	Yes
Woodlands conservation	No	Yes	No
Wildlife conservation	Yes	Yes	Yes
Runoff control	Yes	Yes	No
Pollution control	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prevent and control soil erosion	Yes	Yes	No
Protect water quality	Yes	Yes	Yes
Develop and distribute water	No	No	No
Improve land capabilities	No	No	No
Facilitate coordinated resource management efforts	Yes	Yes	Yes
Watershed restoration and enhancement	Yes	Yes	No
Farm and range land conservation/management	Yes	Yes	No
Open space conservation	No	No	No
Waterway protection and restoration	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vegetation/habitat preservation	Yes	Yes	Yes
Erosion prevention	Yes	Yes	No
Invasive species control	Yes	Yes	Yes
Educational workshops	Yes	Yes	Yes
Informational fliers, brochures, and white papers	Yes	Yes	Yes
Scientific studies	Yes	No	Yes
Flood plain management	Yes	No	No
Creek/waterway cleanups	No	Yes	No
Documentation of native species	Yes	Yes	No
Advising and assisting individuals and public agencies	Yes	Yes	Yes
Conduit for grants and other financing	Yes	Yes	Yes
Source: Policy Consulting Associates research			



# Figure 3-2 Solano County Resource Conservation Districts



## GROWTH & POPULATION PROJECTIONS

This section reviews historical and recent population and economic growth, projected growth, and growth areas.

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### Land Use and Growth Policies

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The County has historically required that development requiring water and sewer service be incorporated within one of the County's cities. Based on this policy, most residential, commercial and industrial development in the County has been in incorporated areas.

In 1980, the Solano County Board of Supervisors adopted a General Plan Land Use and Circulation Element that established a development policy of city-centered growth. Under the 1980 General Plan, urban development was to be confined to patterns that did not conflict with essential agricultural lands, while rural and suburban development was to be confined to non-essential marginal agricultural lands. The 1980 General Plan was intended to provide policy guidance for shaping growth and development within the unincorporated areas of Solano County, and for protecting its agricultural and natural resources, until the year 1995.

Proposition A, an initiative measure passed by the voters of Solano County in June 1984, reaffirmed the 1980 General Plan's cornerstone policies of city-centered growth and farmland protection, and imposed strict limitations on the County Board of Supervisor's ability to allow new residential, commercial, or industrial development in agricultural and open-space areas. Proposition A was a limited-term measure that was to expire in December 1995.

In 1994, the voters of Solano County proposed the Orderly Growth Initiative, in order to extend the protections of Proposition A until December 31, 2010. In response to broad public support for that proposal, the Solano County Board of Supervisors adopted the Orderly Growth Initiative as its Resolution No. 94-170 on July 26, 1994.

On November 4 2008, Solano voters passed Measure T, which was an amendment to Solano County's 1994 Orderly Growth Initiative that updated certain provisions of the Solano County General Plan related to agriculture and open space policies and land use designations, and extended the amended initiative until December 31, 2028.

By passing Measure T, the voters required that the County would:

- ❖ Maintain the current development strategy of city-centered growth;
- ❖ Retain the overall function of the Orderly Growth Initiative, while updating and refining the initiative's policies and land use designations;
- ❖ Protect and support agriculture as an important component of Solano County's economy and quality of life;
- ❖ Provide an opportunity for farm-based, businesses, such as wineries, to develop successfully within Solano County;
- ❖ Encourage the location of new industrial and agricultural processing facilities;



- ❖ Sustain and enhance Solano County’s natural environment, including its diverse species, watersheds, natural communities, and wildlife corridors;
- ❖ Ensure sufficient opportunities for residential, commercial, and industrial development within areas served by the cities, in order to provide all of Solano County’s residents with a vibrant economy and affordable housing options;
- ❖ Protect the health, safety, and welfare of Solano County’s residents by avoiding more air pollution, water pollution, water shortages, traffic congestion, noise and other adverse environmental impacts from urban sprawl;
- ❖ Prevent costly and inefficient extensions of urban services and infrastructure to rural areas of the County;
- ❖ Permit Solano County to continue to bear its fair share of regional growth and provide safe, decent affordable places for people to live in Solano cities;
- ❖ Prevent piecemeal amendments of the Solano County General Plan that would allow development on agricultural and open space lands;
- ❖ Help increase the County’s supply of good jobs by encouraging job development in the growing agriculturally-based industries; and
- ❖ Allow the County to update and amend its General Plan periodically as necessary to comply with State law and changing conditions, while requiring that any such amendments be consistent with the cornerstone policies of city-centered growth and protection of farmlands and open space.

About 20 percent of the unincorporated land area in Solano County is some type of undeveloped natural resource land. This includes marsh and watershed lands in the southern and western portions of the County comprising 101,307 acres. Over 329,000 acres of land are in agricultural use, which is approximately 70 percent of the unincorporated land area. Agricultural land is concentrated in the eastern portion of the County and in smaller areas scattered throughout the County. Watershed lands are also in agricultural use.

Residential land uses occupy about 6,878 acres developed mostly at rural residential densities of one dwelling unit per 2.5 or more acres. Rural residential development has been concentrated in the area north of Vacaville in the English Hills, Allendale and Olive School areas, along Leisure Town Road east of Vacaville, in the Tolenas area of unincorporated Suisun City, and the Green Valley area north of Fairfield.

Residential estate use at densities of one unit per ¼ to 1 acre exist in the Green Valley, Rockville Corners, Willotta Oaks, Old Town Cordelia, Elmira, Birds Landing, and Collinsville areas. A small amount of the unincorporated county’s residential land is used for urban density residential single family and multifamily development including apartment buildings, duplexes, triplexes and similar housing types located in unincorporated areas in the Vallejo area.

Industrial land uses account for about 2,125 acres of land area in the unincorporated county. Most of the existing industrial development in the County is within cities.

Approximately 641 acres are in commercial land use, which includes retail, commercial services, and service stations. Smaller commercial developments are located in the unincorporated county areas to serve the needs of local residents and visitors. Highway-oriented commercial development represents the predominant commercial land use in the unincorporated area with the majority of such land located along I-80.

Other uses of land in the County include public use (such as schools, cemeteries, and federal lands), which accounts for about 1,517 acres, park and recreation land (791 acres), and vacant land, which comprises about 1,011 acres.

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## Historical Growth

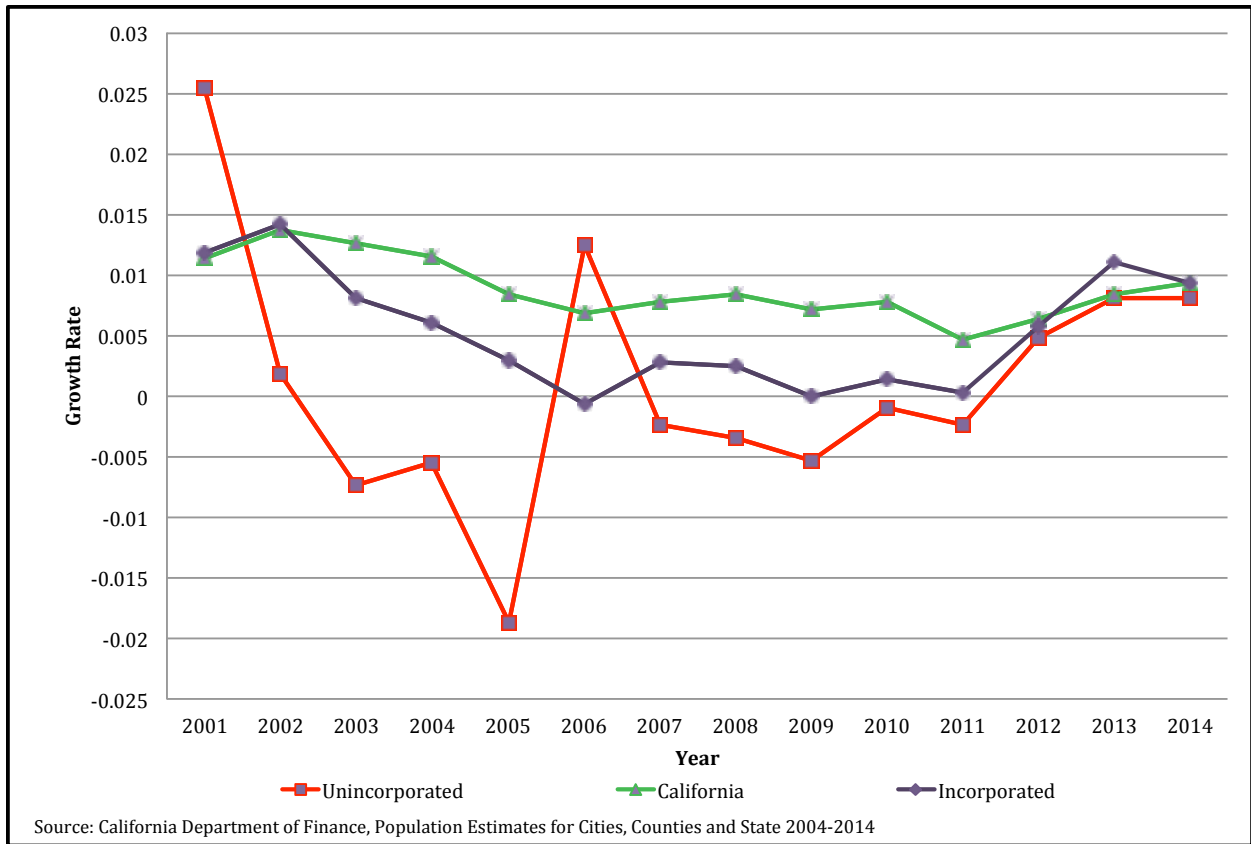
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There were 394,542 residents in Solano County in 2000, according to the 2000 Census. The population in the unincorporated communities was 19,322, composing five percent of the County's entire population. Since 2000, the rate of growth in the County has tapered off to small increments. Between 2000 and 2010, Solano grew by 18,802 or 4.8 percent, which is significantly less than the 15.9 percent population gain experienced in the previous decade. The population of the County in 2010 was 413,344. All of the growth during both decades occurred within the cities, due to the Orderly Growth Initiative discussed earlier. In fact, the population in the unincorporated portions of the County decreased by 11 percent between 1990 and 2000 and by three percent from 2000 to 2010.

The California Department of Finance's (DOF) January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014 estimate of the population of Solano County is 424,233. Between 2010 and 2014 the County grew by 10,889 residents or 2.6 percent. The population in the unincorporated communities grew by two percent during the same time period. From 2013 to 2014, DOF estimates that the total population of the County, as well as in unincorporated areas, rose by one percent. Solano County annually averaged 0.5 percent positive population growth from 2000 to 2014.

Among comparable counties, Solano County was in the middle tier of population growth. Placer and Solano counties experienced 0.6 percent population growth during 2012. Tulare and Stanislaus counties experienced the largest rate of growth—0.9 percent—among all counties. Marin and San Luis Obispo experienced the lowest rate of growth at 0.2 percent.

**Figure 3-3: Population Growth Rates in Solano County and California, DOF 2001-2014**



Population growth in the County (both incorporated and unincorporated) has been for the most part below the statewide growth rate over the last 14 years as shown in Figure 3-3. However, more recently, in 2012, countywide population growth equalized with that of the State, exceeded the State's in 2013, and became comparable again to the State's in 2014. After the growth rate of the unincorporated communities skyrocketed above the statewide growth rate in 2006, it declined to negative growth where it remained through 2011. After 2011, the growth rate in unincorporated Solano began to rise and equalized with the statewide rate during the period from 2012 to 2014. Growth in the incorporated areas of the County mirrored that of the County as a whole.

The Department of Transportation Solano County Economic Forecast published in 2013 explains that the Solano County population increase from 2007 to 2012 was due entirely to the natural increase (new births), as the County lost an average of 1,900 residents per year through net migration.

Solano County's population density is 466 residents per square mile, including both incorporated and unincorporated areas.

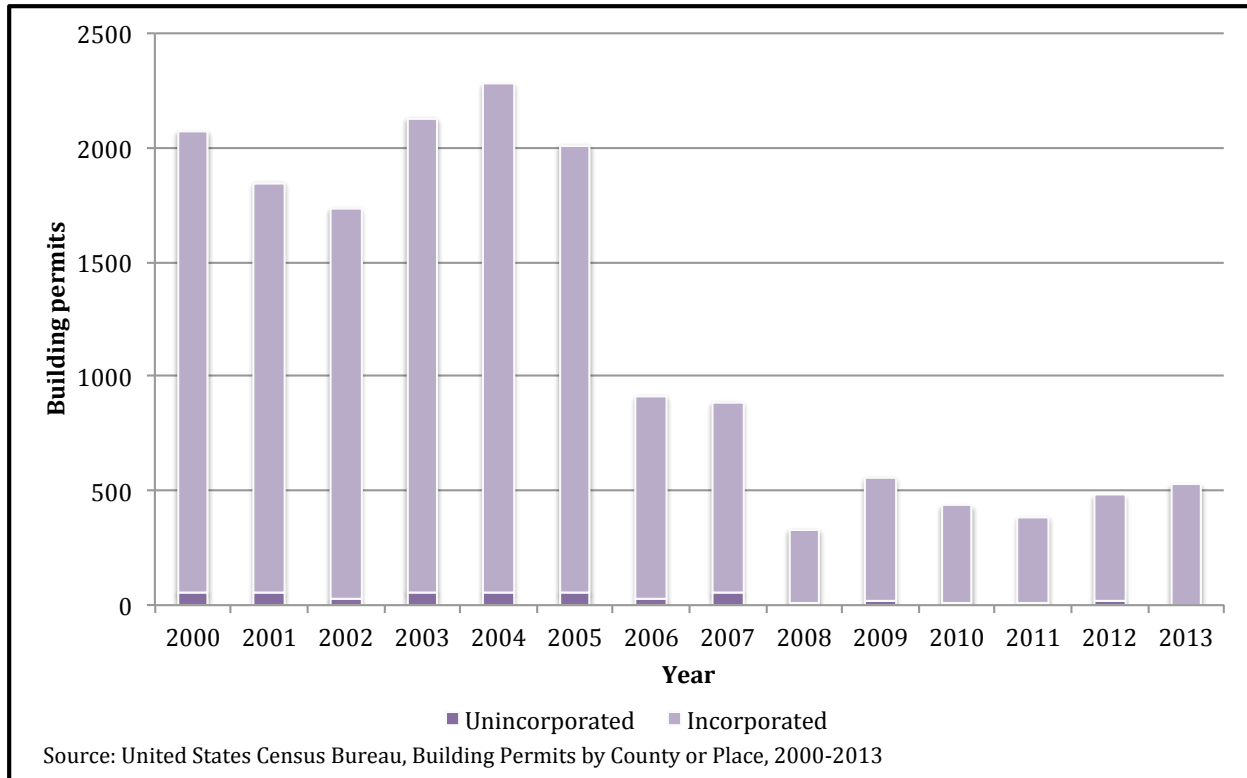
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## Development

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### *Historical Development*

**Figure 3-4: New Residential Building Permits, U.S. Census Bureau 2000-2013**



The number of new residential permits issued in unincorporated Solano County peaked in 2003 and 2004 at 57, as shown in Figure 3-4. Similarly, the number of permits issued in the incorporated cities of Solano County experienced a rise in 2004 to 2,278. Between 2000 and 2014, Solano County cities issued 97 percent of all the building permits approved in the County. The overall number of permits declined in 2006 and 2007, and went further down in 2008, after which it fluctuated minimally through 2013.

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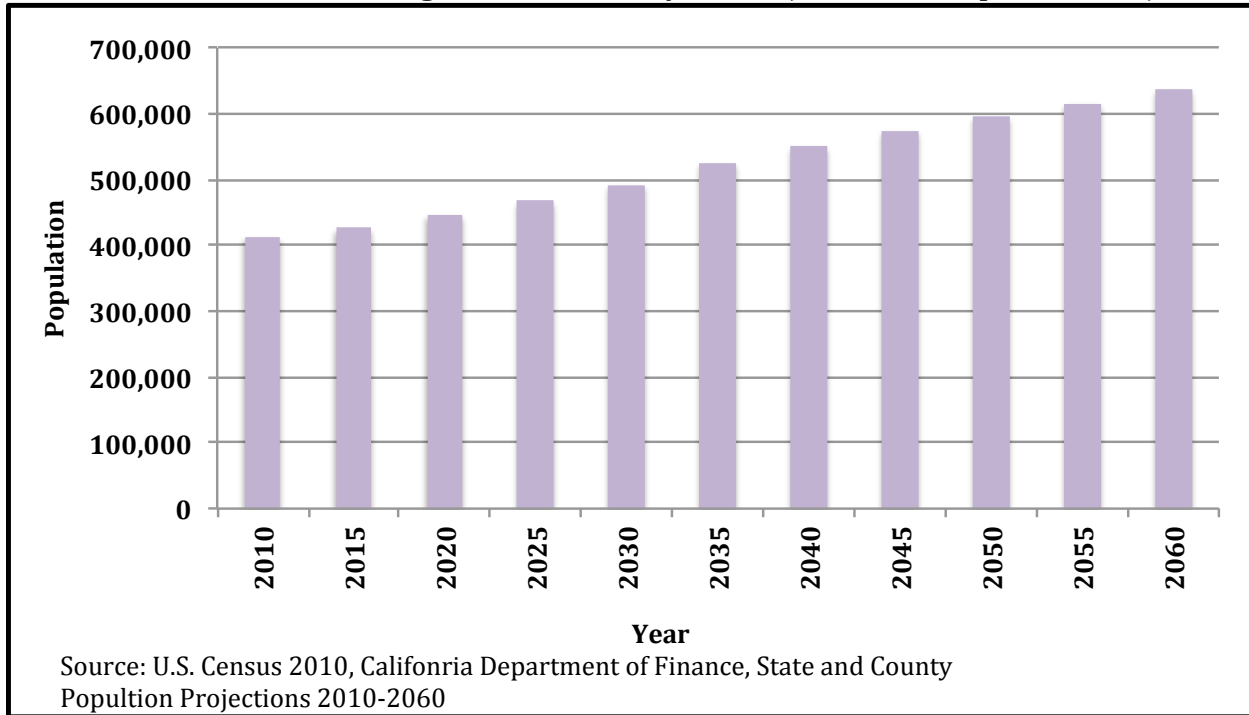
## Population Projections

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Population projections for the County vary depending on the data source that is used. Solano County relies on the Department of Finance for its population projections.

The population of Solano County is projected to grow to 634,852 by 2060 according to the latest projections by the DOF. The DOF has not used the 2010 Census benchmark in its long-term projections, however. Using the 2010 Census count and the DOF projected growth rate of 54 percent, the population of Solano County in 2060 is anticipated to be 636,550. Using the same Census 2010 benchmark method, the estimated population in 2020 and 2030 will be 446,412 (eight percent increase since 2010) and 491,879 (19 percent increase since 2010) respectively. The DOF projections adjusted to the 2010 Census benchmark through 2060 are shown in Figure 3-5.

**Figure 3-5: Countywide Adjusted DOF Population Projections**



Another source of population projections is the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), which is the regional land use planning agency for the Bay Area, including the counties of Napa, Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Alameda, Contra Costa, and Solano. ABAG's projections include a set of policy assumptions that are based on the region's principles for growth. The projections assume that, over time, State, regional, and local policies and programs will change in a way that shifts new growth toward areas near transit and existing downtowns. These policies and programs are assumed to have an increasing effect on population over the thirty-year forecast horizon.

According to ABAG's 2009 San Francisco Bay Area Vision Project, although other counties will experience higher absolute population increases, Solano County will have the highest percentage increase in population of any county in the Bay Area between 2000 and 2030. Solano's population will increase by 46 percent or nearly 182,000 residents, by 2030.

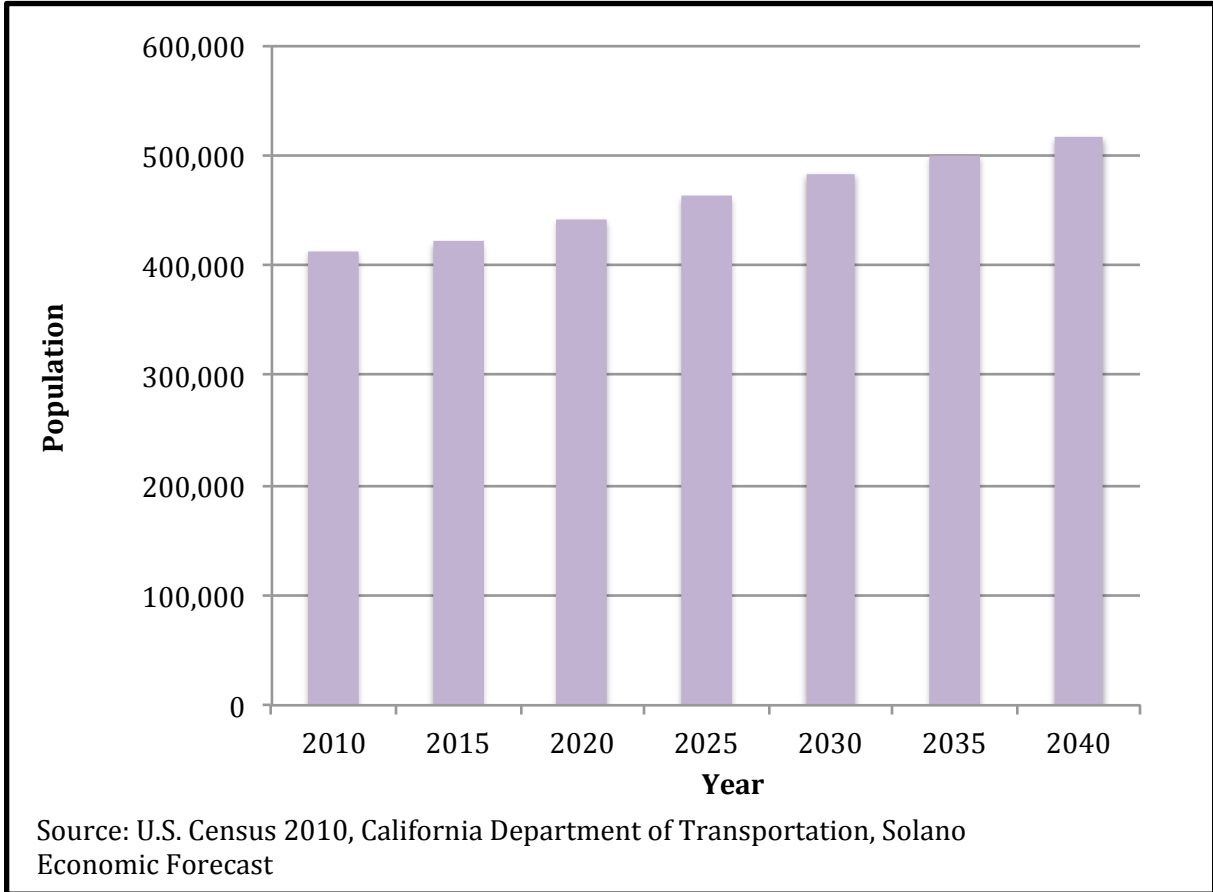
ABAG projects growth to be clustered in three major centers: Fairfield, Vacaville and Vallejo, which will account for nearly three-quarters of the County's 62,970 new households. Fairfield will have the most growth, with 16,190 new households. Vacaville will add 15,250 households, and Vallejo 14,890. Rio Vista is expected to have the largest percentage increase in its population of any city in the entire region between 2000 and 2015 of 229 percent.

Elsewhere in the County, Dixon is expected to continue to grow. The number of households in Dixon is projected to more than double between 2000 and 2030—one of the highest growth rates in the Bay Area. Fairfield, Suisun City, Vacaville, and Vallejo will continue to experience significant growth, while Benicia's population and households will grow at a relatively low rate. There is a potential to develop three- and four-story commercial buildings along portions of the I-80 corridor and mixed-use development

around Capitol Corridor rail stations. Transportation improvements include the creation of two new Capitol Corridor stations, one adjacent to Travis Air Force Base and another in Dixon. The pattern of development preserves Solano County's strong agricultural industry and character by focusing development within its incorporated cities. Significant household and employment growth is expected to occur in the downtowns of Vallejo (including adjacent Mare Island), Benicia, Fairfield, Suisun City, Vacaville, and Dixon.

ABAG's Jobs Housing Connection Strategy 2012 projects that the population of Solano County will grow by 24 percent from 2010 to 2040, amounting to 512,368 in 2040.

**Figure 3-6: Countywide Adjusted DOT Population Projections**



The California Department of Transportation (DOT) also makes population projections for each county in the State. According to the DOT, the population in Solano County was expected to grow by 0.4 percent in 2013. Annual growth in the period from 2013 to 2018 is forecasted to average 0.7 percent. Similar to the DOF, the DOT has not used the 2010 Census benchmark in its projections; therefore, estimates presented in this report are adjusted based on the benchmark. Based on adjusted estimates using the Census 2010 population count, the Solano population is projected to be 442,278 in 2020 and 483,612 in 2030. The DOT projections adjusted to the 2010 Census benchmark through 2040 are shown in Figure 3-6.



**Figure 3-7: Annualized Growth Projections by Method**

<i>Method</i>	<i>2010-2040</i>
DOF Projections	0.9%
Department of Transportation Projections	0.7%
ABAG Projections	0.7%
Source: California Department of Finance, California Department of Transportation, Association of Bay Area Governments	

A comparison of the annualized growth rates through 2040 for each of the projection methods discussed is shown in Figure 3-7. As shown, the DOT and ABAG projections are similar and slightly more conservative than DOF projections. Over the period of 30 years, DOF projected that Solano County population will grow by 33 percent, DOT projections showed an increase of 25 percent, while ABAG estimated a rise of 24 percent.

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### Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities

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LAFCO is required to evaluate disadvantaged unincorporated communities as part of this service review, including the location and characteristics of any such communities. A disadvantaged unincorporated community is defined as any area with 12 or more registered voters, or as determined by commission policy, where the median household income is less than 80 percent of the statewide annual median.<sup>5</sup>

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has developed a mapping tool to assist in determining which communities meet the disadvantaged communities median household income definition.<sup>6</sup> According to DWR, there are no communities that meet the definition of a disadvantaged unincorporated community in Solano County.

DWR is not bound by the same law as LAFCO to define communities with a minimum threshold of 12 or more registered voters. Because income information is not available for this level of analysis, disadvantaged unincorporated communities with smaller populations that meet LAFCO’s definition cannot be identified at this time.

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<sup>5</sup> Government Code §56033.5.

<sup>6</sup> Based on Census data, the median household income in the State of California in 2010 was \$57,708, 80 percent of which is \$46,166.

## **4. DIXON RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

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Dixon Resource Conservation District (DRCD) is a multi-county district operating in Solano and Yolo counties. Solano County LAFCO is the principal LAFCO for DRCD, as the assessed value of property within the District is greater in Solano County. As principal LAFCO, Solano LAFCO is responsible for adopting service review determinations and updating the District's sphere of influence (SOI). The most recent MSR for the District was completed in 2006.

Dixon RCD supports responsible resource use and planning by encouraging the controlled use of soil, water and related natural resources. Additionally, DRCD operates and maintains the existing drainage system while researching ways to improve or expand the level of storm drainage. The District has also developed specific policies and programs to guide its involvement with regional growth, farmland preservation, water and soil conservation, and wildlife habitat establishment and improvement.

### **AGENCY OVERVIEW**

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#### **Background**

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DRCD was formed on September 2, 1952 to construct, operate and maintain the Dixon Drain, which is a 70-mile long system of ditches designed to prevent or alleviate flooding on agricultural lands. DRCD acted as the sponsor and the lead agency of the project; the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provided cost-sharing funds to farmers for the construction of the drain. The District currently oversees the operation and maintenance of the drain, which, while originally designed to remove only winter water, now also collects irrigation tailwater in spring and summer.

The principal act that governs the District is Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code.<sup>7</sup> The principal act empowers resource conservation districts to control runoff, prevent and control soil erosion, protect water quality, develop and distribute water, improve land capabilities, and facilitate coordinated resource management efforts for watershed restoration and enhancement.<sup>8</sup> Districts must apply and obtain LAFCO approval to exercise services authorized by the principal act but not already provided.<sup>9</sup>

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#### **Boundaries**

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DRCD is located within Solano and Yolo counties, as shown in Figure 4-1. The District borders Solano RCD in Solano County to the west and Yolo RCD in Yolo County to the east and north. The southern boundary of DRCD is adjacent to Solano County lands that lack a

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<sup>7</sup> Public Resources Code §9001 et seq.

<sup>8</sup> Public Resources Code §9001.

<sup>9</sup> Government Code §56824.10.

designated resource conservation service provider. DRCD includes 180 square miles, about 65 percent of which are located in Solano County and 35 percent in the southern portion of Yolo County in an area known as the Yolo Bypass. The District's boundaries include most of the City of Dixon.

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## Sphere of Influence

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The sphere of influence (SOI) for Dixon RCD was first established in 1984 as coterminous<sup>10</sup> with the District's boundaries. The SOI was then updated in 2006, at which time it was reaffirmed to be conterminous with the DRCD boundaries.

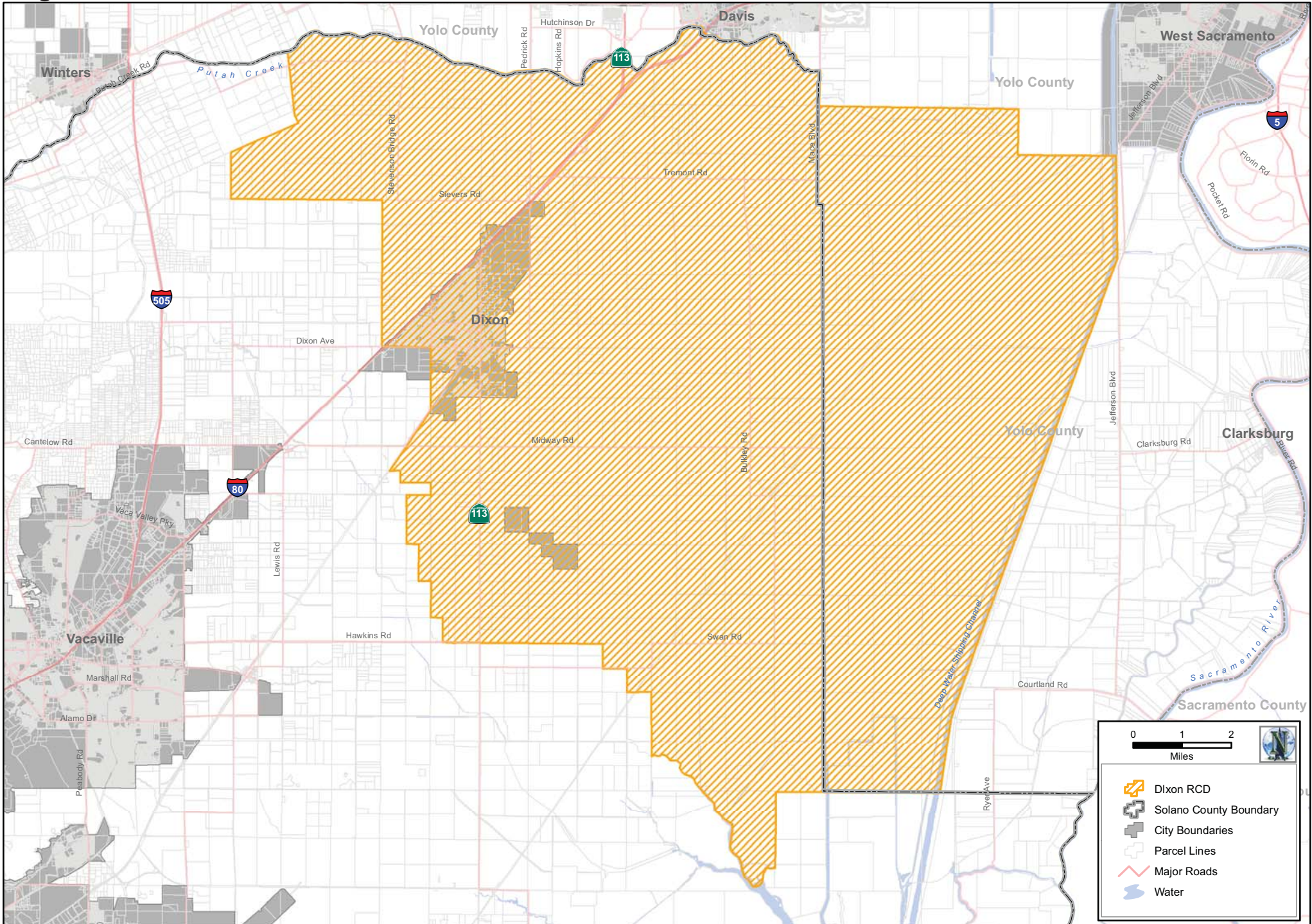
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<sup>10</sup> Meaning, the District's SOI is the same as its boundaries.



Figure 4-1

# Dixon Resource Conservation District





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## Type and Extent of Services

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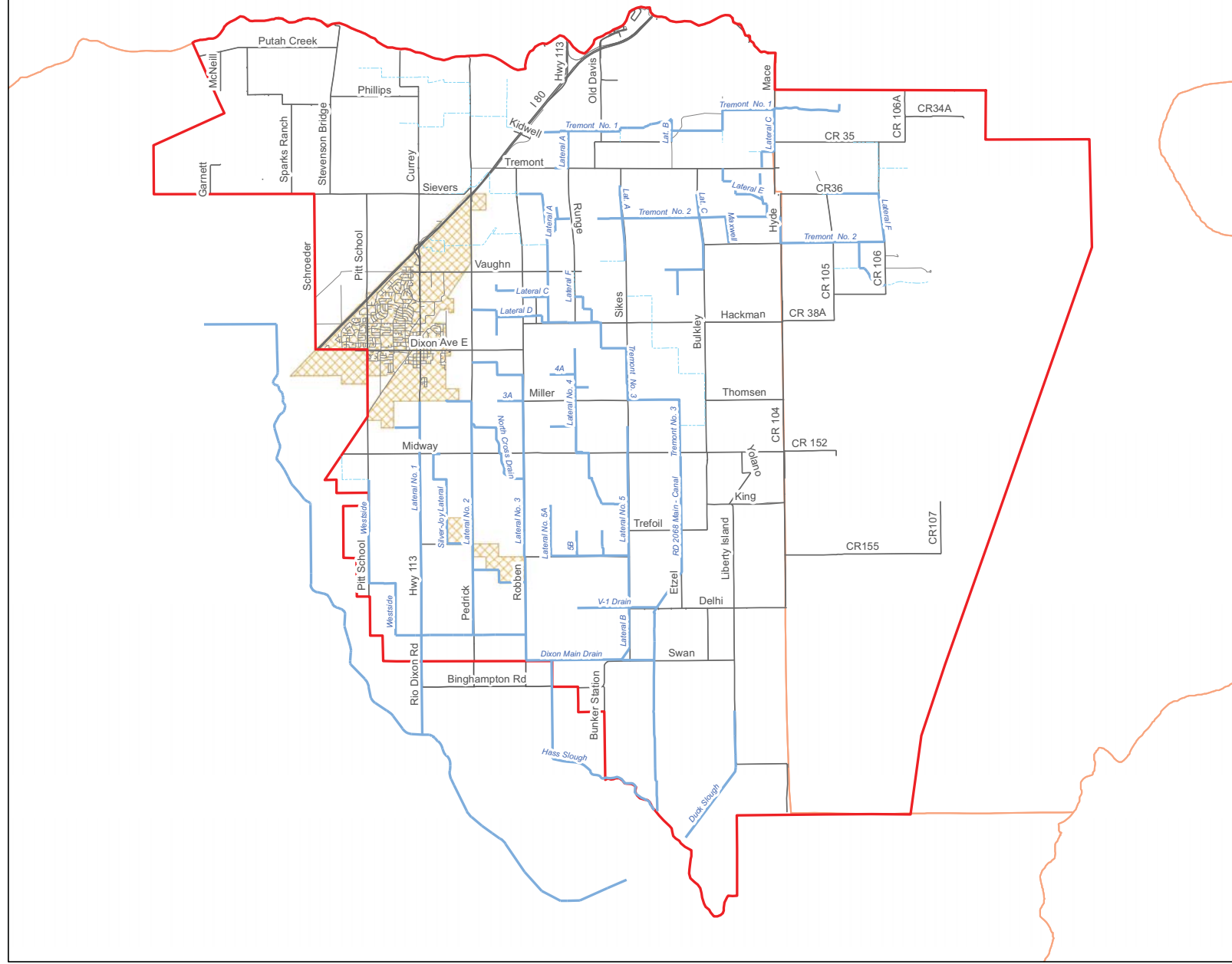
### *Services Provided*

DRCD's services can generally be divided into four categories that include drainage services, regional drainage services through Dixon Regional Watershed Joint Powers Authority, services provided as part of the Dixon/Solano RCD Water Quality Coalition, and services that were provided in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. The District conducts extensive constituent outreach related to all four categories.

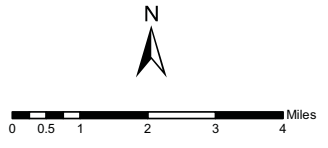
- ❖ **Drainage Services:** DRCD operates and maintains a system of ditches (as shown in Figure 4-2) designed to provide winter drainage, reduce duration of flooding and diminish ponding of winter water on agricultural lands. The District also strives to make available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land manager for conservation of soil, water and related natural resources. To operate the system, the District participates in the Dixon Regional Watershed Management Plan and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DRCD, Reclamation District (RD) 2068, Maine Prairie Water District (MPWD), and the City of Dixon. Maintenance of the drainage system is financed by an annual ditch maintenance fee collected from all landowners in the drainage service area, as shown in Figure 4-8.
- ❖ **Dixon Regional Watershed Joint Powers Authority (JPA):** The parties to the previously mentioned MOU created the Dixon Regional Watershed JPA to construct, own, and operate regional drainage facilities that were previously planned for in the Dixon Regional Watershed Management Plan. DRCD is currently providing administrative and secretary service to the JPA, for which it is reimbursed for the cost of providing this service.
- ❖ **Dixon/Solano RCD Water Quality Coalition:** As a result of the Regional Water Quality Control Board adopting the Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for discharges from irrigated lands the District decided to partner with Solano RCD to achieve economies of scale in providing assistance to landowners to comply with this new regulation. The two districts formed a coalition in 2003 and started to enroll landowners in the water quality program; currently, the coalition has about 92 percent of eligible irrigated acres enrolled in the program. The two districts are also signatories to the larger Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition. Owners of irrigated lands pay membership fees that are used to pay for monitoring and a portion of the Sacramento Water Quality Coalition's cost. Both districts provide service to the local coalition as contractors and are reimbursed for the cost of providing the service.
- ❖ **Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area:** The District entered into a lease agreement with the Department of Fish and Wildlife in 2004 and held the master lease covering all agricultural activities on the 16,000-acre Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. DRCD sublet portions of the property to tenants, who in cooperation with the Department and the District produced corn, tomatoes, rice, wild rice, livestock, and other crops, while demonstrating how, if properly implemented, farming and grazing can produce valuable wildlife habitat. Rent collected from tenants was used to support

improvements and operations on the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. DRCD received a fee of 15 percent from all rents from the agricultural activities. As of April 30, 2015, however, the master lease agreement has ended.

Figure 4-2: DRCD Drainage Ditch System



## Dixon RCD Drainage Ditch System



### Legend

- Roads
- County Boundaries
- ▨ City of Dixon Boundary
- ▭ Dixon RCD Outer Legal Boundary
- Ditch - Private
- Ditch - Public

Creation Date: Dec 14  
 Created by: DRCD

Notes:  
 - DRCD Outer Legal Boundary was verified with the 1972 Solano tax map and 1962 recorded boundary.



Figure 4-3 further details the services provided by DRCD. If a service is not provided by DRCD, but is offered by another agency, it is indicated in the figure.

**Figure 4-3: DRCD Services**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Details</b>
Soil conservation	Yes	Assist landowners and farmers in partnership with USDA NRCS programs
Watershed conservation/management	Yes	Assist landowners and farmers in partnership with USDA NRCS programs
Water quality conservation	Yes	Assist landowners and farmers in partnership with USDA NRCS programs
Woodlands conservation	No	
Wildlife conservation	Yes	Assist landowners and farmers in partnership with USDA NRCS programs
Runoff control	Yes	Assist landowners and farmers comply with Regional Board Irrigated Lands Regulator Program
Pollution control	Yes	Assist landowners and farmers comply with Regional Board Irrigated Lands Regulator Program
Prevent and control soil erosion	Yes	Assist landowners and farmers comply with Regional Board Irrigated Lands Regulator Program
Protect water quality	Yes	Assist landowners and farmers comply with Regional Board Irrigated Lands Regulator Program
Develop and distribute water	Solano Irrigation District, Maine Prairie Water District and RD 2068	
Improve land capabilities	Natural Resources Conservation Service	
Facilitate coordinated resource management efforts	Yes	Participate with other local and state agencies to address resource management efforts
Watershed restoration and enhancement	Yes	Assist landowners and farmers in partnership with USDA NRCS programs
Farm and range land conservation/management	Yes	Assist landowners and farmers in partnership with USDA NRCS programs
Open space conservation	Solano Land Trust and cities	



<b>Service</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Details</b>
Waterway protection and restoration	Yes	Assist landowners and farmers in partnership with USDA NRCS programs
Vegetation/habitat preservation	Yes	Assist landowners and farmers in partnership with USDA NRCS programs, design and implement drainage system improvement to included habitat components
Erosion prevention	Yes	Assist landowners and farmers comply with Regional Board Irrigated Lands Regulator Program
Invasive species control	Yes	Participate in the Solano County Weed Management Area and identify and remove invasive species in Dixon RCD drainage system
Educational workshops	Yes	Provide workshops for landowners and farmers to inform them of requirements of the Regional Board's Irrigated Lands Regulator Program
Informational fliers, brochures, and white papers	Yes	Provide informational fliers, brochures and white papers for landowners and farmers to inform them of requirements of the Regional Board's Irrigated Lands Regulator Program
Scientific studies	Yes	Participate with UC and other research to better understand the water quality issues in local drainages
Flood plain management	Yes	Participate in and lead some drainage and flood planning projects
Creek/waterway cleanups	Solano RCD and other local agencies	
Documentation of native species	Yes	Through planning documents
Advising and assisting individuals and public agencies	Yes	Primarily focused on drainage, water quality, and wildlife friendly farming practices
Conduit for grants and other financing	Yes	Farm and Ranch Cleanup and USDA Bay-Delta initiative bring state and federal funds to landowners to address their resource concerns
Source: Policy Consulting Associates research, Dixon Resource Conservation District		

On an annual basis, Dixon RCD implements multiple programs and projects that are generally classified as one of the specific categories that include drainage and flooding, water quality, wildlife habitat, weed control, land use and planning, outreach, or management of DRCD.

Service Area

The District provides services outside of its boundary area. DRCD and Solano RCD (SoRCD) jointly manage the Dixon/Solano RCD Water Quality Coalition for all irrigated land in the Central Valley portion of the County. Until recently, DRCD also provided lease management services within the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, half of which is located outside of the District’s bounds.

The District reported that there were areas within DRCD where services were not provided by the District. Specifically, drainage services are not provided to the areas that have not participated in the drainage system improvements. Generally these lands are in the upper watershed to the northwest of the City of Dixon and the Union Pacific Railroad Right of Way.

Services to Other Agencies

Figure 4-4 lists and provides details on the contract services provided by DRCD to other agencies.

**Figure 4-4: DRCD Contract Services**

Agency	Type of Service	Compensation	Areas Served
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Lease management	15% of gross rents	Yolo bypass wildlife area
Water Coalition	Program management	Fee for service	Solano County (central valley)
Dixon Regional Watershed JPA	Agency management	JPA jurisdiction	JPA jurisdiction
DWRPA <sup>11</sup> JPA	Agency management	JPA jurisdiction	JPA jurisdiction

Source: Dixon Resource Conservation District

Contracts for Services

The District receives management and administrative services from other agencies and organizations provided through contracts. Accounting services are provided by Solano County. Perry, Bunch & Johns provides auditing, while payroll services are performed by Aegean Tax and Accounting.

Overlapping Service Providers

Within the District’s boundaries, National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provides cost-sharing assistance for the implementation of conservation practices on agricultural lands. This overlap has presented an opportunity to foster a cooperative relationship between the national and local levels of conservation. Dixon RCD works in

<sup>11</sup> Dixon Watershed Real Property Acquisition JPA was formed by the members of Dixon Regional Watershed JPA to be able to exercise all property acquisition options.

cooperation with NRCS to assist with projects located on agricultural lands and managed wetlands.

The District's boundaries, which include the City of Dixon and the southern Yolo Bypass, were created to serve discrete watersheds within the northeastern portion of Solano County and the southern portion of Yolo County; these watersheds are consistent with the drainage services provided. Maine Prairie Water District, Reclamation District No. 2068 and Solano Irrigation District provide drainage services to lands within their respective boundaries, which complement the district drainages.

Solano RCD also provides services within the District's boundaries to DRCD residents at the request of DRCD. However, these services, which include assistance with developing a rural property, grant writing, and expertise in vegetative practices, are complimentary since DRCD does not provide the same services.

## **GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Accountability of a governing body is signified by a combination of several indicators. The indicators chosen here are limited to 1) agency efforts to engage and educate constituents through outreach activities, in addition to legally required activities such as agenda posting and public meetings, 2) a defined complaint process designed to handle all issues to resolution, and 3) transparency of the agency as indicated by cooperation with the MSR process and information disclosure.

According to the Division 9 of the Public Resources Code, the Board of Directors of an RCD must consist of five, seven or nine directors serving four-year terms. Directors can either be elected in a general election or appointed by the County Board of Supervisors. The directors receive no compensation for their services as such, but each is allowed reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in attendance at meetings of the Board or when otherwise engaged in the work of the district at the direction of the Board of Directors. To be eligible to serve on the Board directors must be registered voters in the State, "reside within the district and either own real property in the district or alternatively have served, pursuant to the district's rules, for two years or more as an associate director providing advisory or other assistance to the Board of Directors, or be a designated agent of a resident landowner within the district."<sup>12</sup>

Associate director positions were established to allow members of the community opportunities to participate in RCD activities without being on the Board or give those who did not meet the qualifications of a director a chance to take an active role in the district. Associates often are chosen for their special expertise in an area of one of the functions of the district. Associate directors do not have the right to vote on Board matters. However, they can attend meetings and provide the district with extra expertise. Frequently associate directors also contribute by serving on various district committees.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Public Resources Code §9352 (a), (b).

<sup>13</sup> California Conservation Partnership and California Department of Conservation, *The Resource Conservation District Guidebook: A Guide to District Operations and Management*, 1999, pp. 1-8, 1-9.

The Dixon RCD Board of Directors is composed of five local property owners who are appointed by the Solano County Board of Supervisors, in-lieu of election, to four-year staggered terms. There is currently one vacancy. In addition to the Board members, two persons currently serve as associate directors. Board members take an oath of office. If a position opens up mid-term, the new position opening is posted in public locations and on the District’s website. The new position is filled by appointment by the Board of Supervisors.

Dixon RCD holds Board meetings on the second Wednesday of each month at 6:00 pm March through October and at noon November through February in the conference room at the district office. Information about Board meetings is shown in Figure 4-5.

**Figure 4-5: Dixon Resource Conservation District Governing Body**

<b>Dixon Resource Conservation District</b>	
<b>Governing Body and Board Meetings</b>	
<i>Manner of Selection</i>	Appointed by Board of Supervisors
<i>Length of Term</i>	Four years
<i>Meetings</i>	On the second Wednesday of every month at 6 pm March through October and at noon November through February in the conference room at the district office.
<i>Agenda Distribution</i>	Agendas are posted online.
<i>Minutes Distribution</i>	Minutes are available online and upon request.
<b>Contact</b>	
<i>Contact</i>	John. S. Currey, District Manager
<i>Mailing Address</i>	1170 N Lincoln St., Suite 110, Dixon, CA.
<i>Phone</i>	707-678-1655 ext. 105
<i>Fax</i>	707-678-5001
<i>Email/Website</i>	John-currey@dixonrcd.org/www.dixonrcd.org
Source: Dixon Resource Conservation District	

Board meeting agendas and minutes are posted online. Agendas are also posted in the front window of the District’s office. In addition to the required agendas and minutes, the District tries to reach its constituents through annual newsletters, water quality outreach efforts and the website that contains information regarding Board meetings, education and outreach, programs, and contact information. However, some of the program information is out of date, and a few web pages do not contain any information.

DRCD board members receive no compensation; however, they do get reimbursed for some expenses. Government Code §53235 requires that if a district provides compensation or reimbursement of expenses to its board members, the board members must receive two hours of training in ethics at least once every two years and the district must establish a written policy on reimbursements. It was reported that the District’s board members last received ethics training in spring of 2015. The District has established a policy on expense reimbursements.

If a customer is dissatisfied with the District's services, complaints may be submitted to the district manager who tries to resolve them. If the district manager is unable to find a solution, the Board will hear the complainant. There have been no complaints in 2013 or 2014.

DRCD has adopted a set of policies that guides and directs the District's governance and administration, including policies related to fees for services, public record requests, vehicle use, volunteers, associate directors, bidding, and nondiscrimination. There is no investment policy, but DRCD funds are deposited in the Solano County treasury and governed by the County investment policy. The District has established its personnel policies and provides its employees with sexual harassment literature. As required by Government Code §53065.5, the District filed an annual report to the State Controller with a government compensation report for 2013.

The Political Reform Act (Government Code §81000, et seq.) requires state and local government agencies to adopt and promulgate conflict of interest codes. The Fair Political Practices Commission has adopted a regulation (California Code of Regulations §18730), which contains the terms of a standard conflict of interest code, which can be incorporated by reference in an agency's code. The District provided its conflict of interest code.

Government Code §87203 requires persons who hold office to disclose their investments, interests in real property and incomes by filing appropriate forms with the appropriate filing agency (i.e., the County or the Fair Political Practices Commission) each year. In addition, the conflict of interest code of each district determines who among the officers and directors files the Form 700 with the County's Registrar of Voters. The District reported that all of the Board directors had filed Forms 700 with the Fair Political Practices Commission for 2013. The District's conflict of interest code requires the DRCD designated employees file their Forms 700 with the District, which then makes these forms available for public inspection and reproduction.

During the course of this MSR process, DRCD demonstrated full accountability in its disclosure of information and cooperation with Solano LAFCO. The District responded to the questionnaires and cooperated with document requests.

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## Determinations

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- ❖ DRCD is governed by the Board of Directors that consists of five landowners who are appointed by the Board of Supervisors to four-year staggered terms. Directors receive no compensation. There is currently one vacancy. The District also has two associate directors.
- ❖ Dixon RCD holds Board meetings on the second Wednesday of each month at six in the evening March through October and at noon November through February in the conference room at the district office.
- ❖ The District demonstrated accountability and transparency with regard to its governance by cooperating with the MSR process, adopting an annual budget prior to the start of the fiscal year, publishing agendas for public meetings as legally required, maintaining a website, and filing Form 700 Statements of Economic Interest.

- ❖ DRCD follows all the minimum requirements legally mandated by Public Resources Code Division 9, including basic reporting and training requirements, quarterly and monthly requirements, and policies and plans requirements.
- ❖ The District's Board members receive ethics training as required; DRCD has established a policy on expense reimbursements.
- ❖ There is one governance structure option for DRCD, which is consolidation with Solano RCD. The two districts currently closely collaborate and share facilities. However, DRCD and SoRCD serve different territories and demographic groups, in addition to providing different services that do not overlap but complement each other.

## **GROWTH AND POPULATION PROJECTIONS**

This section discusses the factors affecting service demand, such as land uses, and historical and anticipated population growth.

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### **Land Use**

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Land use within the Solano County portion of the District is predominately agricultural; similarly, the land uses in the Yolo County portion of the District are agricultural and open space. Land uses in the District's boundary area within the City of Dixon are largely residential, commercial and industrial. The District's boundaries encompass approximately 180 square miles.

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### **Population**

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There are about 20,456 residents within the District, based on Solano County GIS analysis of 2010 Census population information.<sup>14</sup> The population density within the District is about 114 people per square mile.

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### **Projected Growth and Development**

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The District reported that minimal growth had occurred within the District over the last five years. The demand for services, however, has reportedly increased. According to DRCD, the increase in service demand occurred due to the increase in regulatory compliance requirements for irrigated lands.

The District generally expects moderate growth in the next 10 years. Vast majority of growth within DRCD is concentrated in the City of Dixon. DRCD is aware of four proposed developments within its boundaries, shown in Figure 4-6.

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<sup>14</sup> This population figure may be slightly inflated based on comparison of known populations in other areas with those generated through the GIS analysis.



**Figure 4-6: Planned Developments in DRCD**

Development	Units/square footage	Location	Status	Will DRCD serve the development?
Brookfield Homes	About 400 housing units	South Dixon, east side of SR 113	Ongoing construction of models and senior housing	Yes
Pulte Homes	About 300 housing units	South Dixon, west side of SR 113	May be constructing models next	Yes
Northeast Quadrant- Multiple landowners	600 acres of industrial and retail development	Northeast Dixon, west of Pedrick Road	On hold	Yes
Northeast Dixon Agricultural Service Area	640 acres of agricultural support industries	Northeast Dixon, east of Pedrick Road	One individual project under construction (40 acres)	To be determined

Source: Dixon Resource Conservation District.

The City of Dixon has enacted a Measure B Residential Growth Implementation Ordinance that limits annual residential growth in the City to a number of new dwelling units equal to three percent or less of the total number of housing units existing on December 31<sup>st</sup> of each prior calendar year. Each calendar year the Community Development Director must estimate the number of new allotments for the coming year. The estimate for 2015 was 189 new allotments; however, there are no residential developments proposed that would be requesting all or part of the 2015 estimated allocation to date. The development agreements for Brookfield and Pulte Homes have already been approved in prior years.

The California Department of Finance (DOF) projects that the population of Solano County will grow by eight percent from 2010 to 2020. Thus, the average annual population growth in the County is anticipated to be approximately 0.8 percent. Based on these projections, the District’s population would increase from 20,456 in 2010 to approximately 22,092 in 2020. It is anticipated that demand for service within the District will increase minimally, based on the DOF population growth projections through 2020.

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### Growth Strategies

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The District is not a land use authority, and does not hold primary responsibility for implementing growth strategies. The land use authority for unincorporated areas is the County. DRCD reviews and comments on county and city planning documents.

The District usually receives a public notification of any new developments constructed in the County and the City of Dixon. These notifications are reviewed by staff to determine potential impacts to the District's drainage system and to landowners within the District. Any new development projects that may impact the District are reviewed at Board meetings to determine the projects' impacts and how the impacts may be reduced.

A majority of the lands within the District are designated in the Solano County's General Plan as agricultural, with some territory covered by the resource conservation overlay. Similarly, land uses in Yolo County are agricultural and open space, with delta protection overlay. Because of these agriculture and open space oriented land uses, it is anticipated that there will be minimal development or population growth within the District. A majority of growth in the District occurs in the City of Dixon. Solano County has historically required that developments requiring water and sewer service be incorporated within one of the County's cities. Based on this policy, most residential, commercial and industrial development in the County has been in incorporated areas. Similarly, Yolo County focuses on protecting its agricultural and open space resources, resisting urbanization, and directing growth into the existing incorporated cities. Over 93 percent of Yolo County remains as farmland and open space.<sup>15</sup>

Although some of the District's territory is within the City of Dixon's SOI, meaning that it is anticipated that the areas will eventually be annexed by the City, DRCD will be minimally affected. These areas will not be detached from the District since the cities do not provide resource conservation services and most of the city territory is already included in the District. Annexation would affect DRCD by transferring land use authority from the County to the City of Dixon and through the potential urbanization of these annexed areas.

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## Determinations

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- ❖ In 2010, DRCD had an estimated population of 20,456.
- ❖ The District reported that minimal growth had occurred within the District over the last five years. Demand for services has reportedly increased. The District generally expects moderate growth in the next 10 years. Growth is concentrated in the City of Dixon. There are four known planned development within DRCD boundaries, three of which are anticipated to be served by the District (e.g. drainage services).
- ❖ Based on the Department of Finance (DOF) population forecasts, the District's population is projected to increase from 20,456 in 2010 to approximately 22,092 in 2020.
- ❖ Because the territory within DRCD is primarily agricultural and open space, it is anticipated that there will be minimal development or population growth within the District, with the exception of the City of Dixon.

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<sup>15</sup> Yolo County General Plan 2030, *Land Use Element*, LU-1, LU-8.



## **DISADVANTAGED UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES**

LAFCO is required to evaluate disadvantaged unincorporated communities as part of this service review, including the location and characteristics of any such communities. A disadvantaged unincorporated community is defined as any area with 12 or more registered voters, or as determined by commission policy, where the median household income is less than 80 percent of the statewide annual median.<sup>16</sup>

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has developed a mapping tool to assist in determining which communities meet the disadvantaged communities median household income definition.<sup>17</sup> According to DWR, there are no communities that meet the definition of disadvantaged unincorporated community in Solano County. As such, there are no disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or adjacent to DRCD's bounds and sphere of influence.

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### **Determinations**

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- ❖ According to the Department of Water Resources, there are no communities that meet the definition of a disadvantaged unincorporated community in Solano County. As such, there are no disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or adjacent to DRCD's bounds and sphere of influence.

## **FINANCIAL ABILITY TO PROVIDE SERVICES**

The financial ability of agencies to provide services is affected by available financing sources and financing constraints. This section discusses the major financing constraints faced by the District and identifies the revenue sources currently available to the District.

The District reported that its financing level was marginally adequate to deliver services. The main financial challenge is an increase in the regulatory compliance cost for ditch maintenance. In order to add a new revenue source, the District is considering a contract with USDA to provide engineering support for farm bill programs.

In the last several years, the District has implemented some cost-containment strategies, including annual review of reconciled financial reports for expenditures that have been steadily increasing and regular review of purchases.

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### **Revenues and Expenses**

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In FY 13-14, the District's revenue was \$419,288, which consisted of 22 percent of property taxes, 61 percent of charges for services, nine percent of intergovernmental revenue, eight percent of miscellaneous revenue, and less than one percent of revenue from use of money.

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<sup>16</sup> Government Code §56033.5.

<sup>17</sup> Based on census data, the median household income in the State of California in 2010 was \$57,708, 80 percent of which is \$46,166.

For its internal controls, the District divides its revenues and expenditures into two overall categories—governmental services and professional services. Governmental services include standard drainage services and assistance to landowners within the District to address natural resource concerns. The “drainage systems revenue” is from annual ditch maintenance fees (see Figure 4-8), and “other governmental activities revenue” is from property tax revenues. DRCD’s goal is to keep the net position between the drainage system and other governmental activities close to a zero balance.

Professional services include providing staff to other programs and support services that benefit landowners and growers within the District that further the mission of the District. DRCD has continued to accumulate revenues in excess of expenses from professional services. Some of these reserves are being used toward long-term improvements to local drainage and projects, such as updating and improving the District’s policies, drainage standards and records.

In 2013, the District reviewed its ditch maintenance charge and the Dixon/Solano RCD Water Quality Coalition membership fee. The ditch fee remained \$2 per acre, while the coalition membership fee increased by \$0.50 per acre from \$2 to \$2.50 per acre. The lease management of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area used to bring the District 15 percent of its lease income; however, the master lease agreement has recently ended.

The District’s expenditures in FY 13-14 amounted to \$405,094, out of which 44 percent was spent on salaries and benefits and 54 percent on services and supplies. A small portion was spent on other charges and fixed assets.

At the end of FY 13-14, the District revenues exceeded its expenditures by \$14,192. In fact, DRCD’s revenues exceeded expenditures in each of the last five years, as is clear from Figure 4-7.

**Figure 4-7: DRCD revenue and expenditures, FYs 09-10 through FY 13-14**

Year	FY 09-10	FY 10-11	FY 11-12	FY 12-13	FY 13-14
Revenues	\$318,027	\$321,711	\$336,867	\$348,509	\$419,288
Expenditures	\$291,932	\$278,769	\$314,655	\$296,681	\$405,094
<b>Balance</b>	<b>\$26,095</b>	<b>\$42,942</b>	<b>\$22,212</b>	<b>\$51,828</b>	<b>\$14,194</b>

Source: Audited Financial Statements FYs 09-10, 10-11, 11-12, 12-13. Unaudited Financial Statements FY 13-14.

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## Capital Improvements

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The District does not adopt a capital improvement plan (CIP). Capital improvements are limited to the annual assessment of ditch and culvert repairs and long-term regional planning and implementation by the Dixon Regional Watershed JPA of needed improvements as outlined in the Dixon Watershed Management Plan from 2000 and subsequent individual project documents. Thus DRCD’s capital improvement planning is conducted in partnership with local agencies and recorded in the regional planning documents.

In FY 13-14, the District spent \$4,497 on fixed assets. In FY 13-14, DRCD was also planning to spend \$26,000 on office repairs, ditch improvements and a three-mile drain extension. The District is in the process of evaluating its office location and rental options. By July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, DRCD will reportedly either move its office to a new location or invest in the improvements of the existing location. The District continuously makes ditch improvements.

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## Outstanding Debt

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The District's long-term liability consists entirely of compensated absences. The balance at the end of FY 12-13 was \$10,606.

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## Reserves

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The District does not have a policy regarding financial reserves, but has the Board's standing direction that each September or October the Board would review the prior year's reconciled financial reports and make allocations to the reserve accounts as needs are identified.

DRCD has five reserve accounts. The imprest cash reserve reflects the cash held outside of the county funds, such as the District's First Northern Bank accounts, which are used on an ongoing basis for payroll and petty cash needs. The reserve had \$25,500 at the end of FY 13-14. The general reserve is intended for fiscal uncertainty. When approved by the Board, it is used to buffer yearly variations in cash flow and to defer staffing level adjustments as future needs or projects are developed. The general reserve contained \$50,000 as of June 30, 2014. The future equipment acquisition reserve, which had \$20,000 at the end of FY 14, is used to plan for and purchase new equipment, such as anticipated computer needs and other office equipment. The future capital improvement acquisition district reserve, with \$50,000 in it at the end of FY 13-14, is used to plan for and implement a schedule of DRCD drainage system improvements, such as anticipated major culvert replacements. Additionally, there is a future improvement acquisition regional reserve that amounted to \$350,000 at the end of FY 14. The regional reserve is used to plan for and implement regional drainage system improvements, such as anticipated assistance to the Dixon Main Drain/V-drain project.

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## Determinations

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- ❖ The District reported that its financing levels were marginally adequate to deliver services. The main financial challenge is an increase in the regulatory compliance cost for ditch maintenance.
- ❖ At the end of FY 13-14, the District revenues exceeded its expenditures by \$14,192. The District's expenditures exceeded revenues in each of the last five fiscal years.
- ❖ In FY 13-14, a majority of the District's revenue came from contract fees that included ditch maintenance charges, coalition membership fees, and fees for lease

management of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.<sup>18</sup> Property tax revenue constituted about 22 percent of the total revenue.

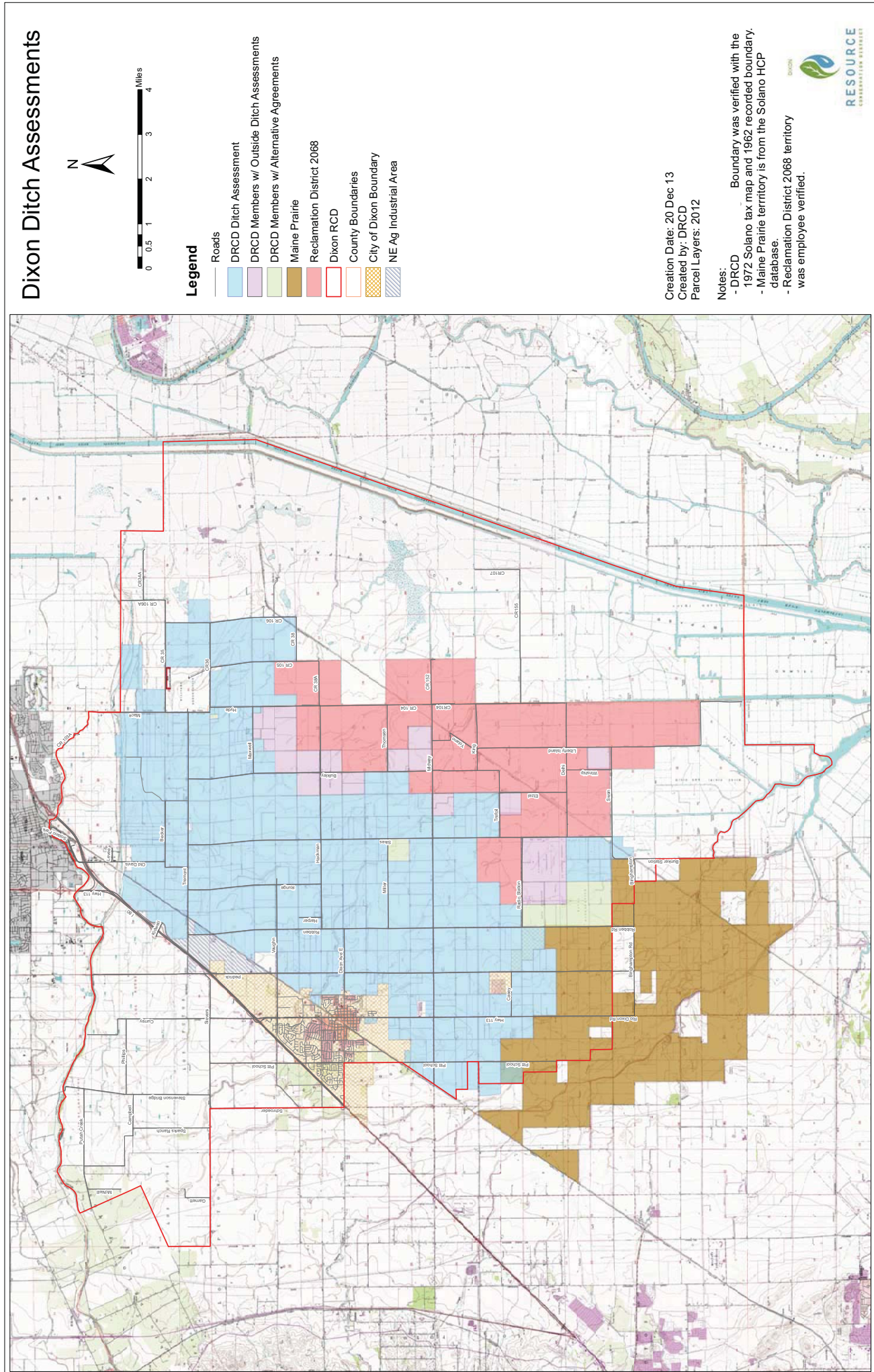
- ❖ Capital improvement needs and improvements are planned in partnership with local agencies and recorded in the regional planning documents.
- ❖ The District's long-term liability consists entirely of compensated absences.
- ❖ The District has been directed by the Board to maintain five financial reserves, which include reserve accounts for imprest cash, general, future equipment acquisition, future capital improvement acquisition district, and future capital improvement acquisition regional.
- ❖ Based on the District's income surplus for the last five fiscal years, adequate financial reserves, and limited debt, as well as ability to receive substantial income from fees for services, DRCD appears to be in adequate financial health.

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<sup>18</sup> The District's lease agreement for the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area has ended as of April 30, 2015.



Figure 4-8: DRCD Ditch Maintenance Fee Map



## PRESENT AND PLANNED CAPACITY

The District reported that it presently had sufficient capacity to provide adequate services to its existing service area, however, not to the future growth area. New capacity, as related to drainage facilities, will have to be constructed in partnership with the Dixon Regional Watershed Joint Powers Authority and Solano County.

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### Existing Demand

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The District's customers include landowners in the Dixon RCD drainage project service area, all rural landowners, and farmers with property in the District.

The District expects an increase in service demand due to further escalation in regulatory compliance requirements for irrigated lands and increased industrial and residential developments needing drainage services. DRCD accommodates increases in service demand through planning of the expansion of drainage service areas and coordination with the Dixon Regional Watershed JPA and its other member agencies that include Dixon RCD, Maine Prairie Water District, Reclamation District 2068, and the City of Dixon.

The District developed the 2007-2012 Long Range Plan, which was subsequently updated in 2011 with the planning horizon of another five years. The plan contains short- and long-term goals directed at planning for future service needs. Examples of these goals include completing drainage projects, continuing work on the water quality issues, and providing input on the Solano General Plan updates. The plan identifies New South Channel as a priority geographic area. Priority issues are drainage, water quality, wildlife friendly farming, countywide education, and district operations. The plan highlights key trends and culture changes in the District that should be taken into consideration when planning for future services. Some trends and changes of note include the decreasing size of land parcels, increasing urbanization, changing expectations of service for drainage, change in the perception of agricultural water quality, higher understanding of environmental needs and conditions, use of technology in agriculture, and increases in regulation.

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### Facilities

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The District's office is located in the USDA-leased Dixon Service Center, which is provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In the late summer of 2015 USDA Service Center will be relocating. Dixon RCD and Solano RCD have determined that the most cost-effective option is to stay in the current location. The two districts will jointly lease office space that they are currently occupying at 1170 N Lincoln St, Suite 110 in Dixon.

DRCD's office hours are Monday through Friday from 8 am till 5 pm. The condition of the office was reported to be good.

As shown in Figure 4-2, DRCD operates and maintains the drainage system, which is a network of ditches that drains the land within DRCD south of Dixon, emptying into the RD 2068 canal on Swan Road. The Dixon Drain system, constructed by DRCD, is comprised of four segments within three distinct watersheds, including Putah Creek Watershed, Yolo Bypass Watershed and Dixon-Dudley Creek Watershed, as can be seen in Figure 4-9.

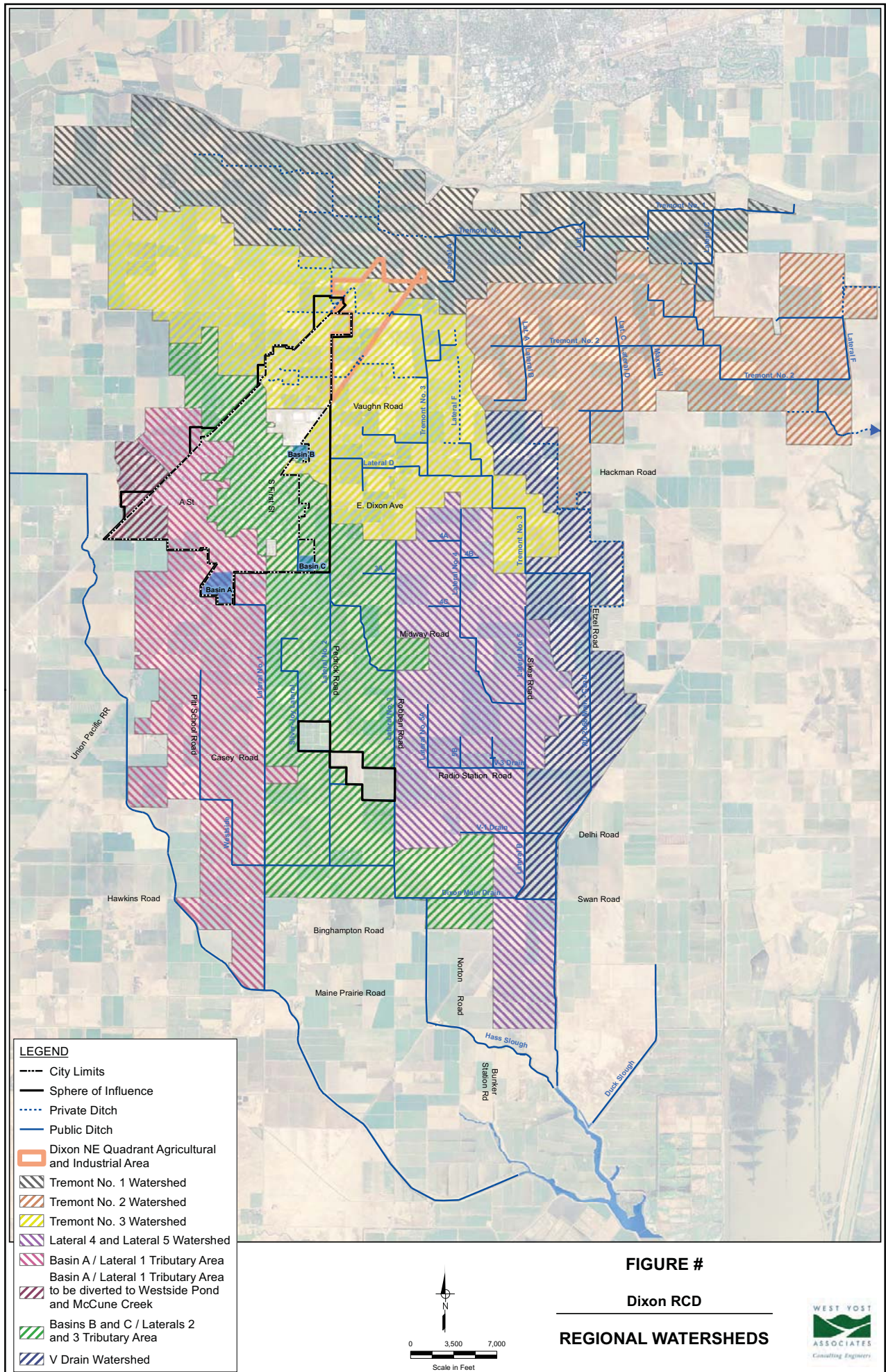
The system played a big role in bringing formerly non-arable land into production and in reducing crop damage due to winter flooding. Increased runoff from the City of Dixon has increased the load on the Dickson-Dudley Creek Watershed. As a result, Dixon Regional Watershed JPA was formed to study the regional drainage needs with the goal of reducing flooding by regaining the level of service originally constructed in the regional drainage facilities and increasing capacities where feasible.

As shown in Figure 4-10, the system consists of existing earthen channel and numerous culverts, the overall condition of which was reported to be good. The annual maintenance consisting of sediment removal and culvert replacement has maintained the current condition.

It appears that currently the District's facilities have sufficient capacity to provide adequate services; however, capacity is marginally constrained by the rising costs of maintenance, permitting and regulatory compliance.



Figure 4-9: Regional Watersheds



N:\GIS\2014 Dixon RCD\11-03 Beneficial Use Map\GIS\Figures\Figure 4-9 Regional Watersheds.mxd 6/8/2012



Figure 4-10: DRCD Facilities

Solano Habitat Conservation Plan

Dixon Resource Conservation District Facilities

Legend

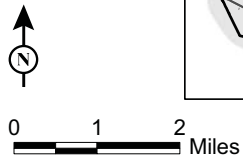
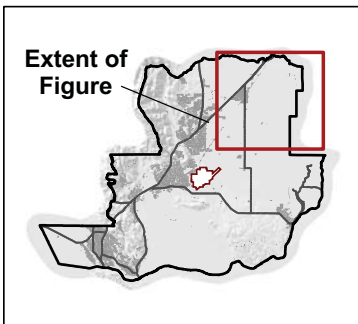
- Plan Area
- Dixon Resource Conservation District Drainage Service Area
- Dixon Resource Conservation District Potential Drainage Service Expansion Areas
- Interstate Highways
- State Routes
- Major Roads
- Streets

CWA Jurisdictional Features

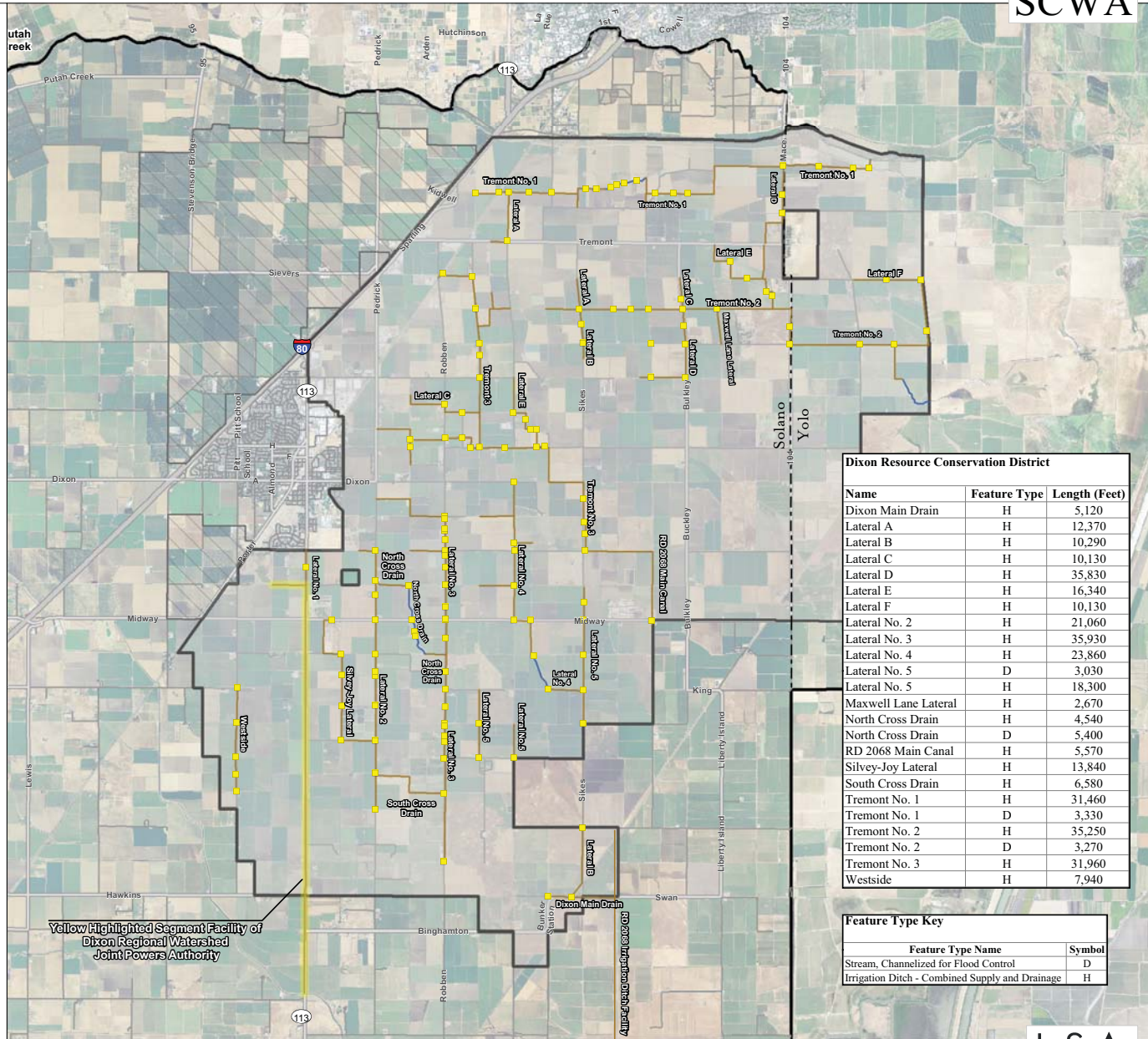
Feature	Total on Map
Culvert or Bridge Crossing	141
Stream, Channelized for Flood Control	15,000 ft.
Irrigation Ditch - Combined Supply and Drainage	341,800 ft.

Non-jurisdictional Features

None on map



Note: Streams and irrigation ditches are mapped as reported by the Dixon Resource Conservation District. Culvert and bridge crossings mapped by LSA.



Dixon Resource Conservation District		
Name	Feature Type	Length (Feet)
Dixon Main Drain	H	5,120
Lateral A	H	12,370
Lateral B	H	10,290
Lateral C	H	10,130
Lateral D	H	35,830
Lateral E	H	16,340
Lateral F	H	10,130
Lateral No. 2	H	21,060
Lateral No. 3	H	35,930
Lateral No. 4	H	23,860
Lateral No. 5	D	3,030
Lateral No. 5	H	18,300
Maxwell Lane Lateral	H	2,670
North Cross Drain	H	4,540
North Cross Drain	D	5,400
RD 2068 Main Canal	H	5,570
Silvey-Joy Lateral	H	13,840
South Cross Drain	H	6,580
Tremont No. 1	H	31,460
Tremont No. 1	D	3,330
Tremont No. 2	H	35,250
Tremont No. 2	D	3,270
Tremont No. 3	H	31,960
Westside	H	7,940

Feature Type Key	
Feature Type Name	Symbol
Stream, Channelized for Flood Control	D
Irrigation Ditch - Combined Supply and Drainage	H

SOURCE: Aerial Imagery from the USDA; NAIP (2009) and Dixon Resource Conservation District

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## Infrastructure Needs

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The District's infrastructure needs generally consist of ditch and culvert repairs, as well as extensions of the existing system.

Routine drainage system improvements range from minor culvert replacements to major culvert replacements under the County roads. The District's process is to complete several repairs a year and to identify new repair needs through its annual inspection.

The major drainage improvements are coordinated and planned through the Dixon Regional Watershed JPA. The current Dixon Main Drain/V-drain Enlargement Project is planned to be completed by the fall of 2016. DRCD has committed to fund a portion of this project.

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## Challenges

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Challenges reported by the District include the increasing costs of drainage system maintenance and increased permitting and regulation requirements, which also increase the cost of providing services and expand the District's customer base.

## **SERVICE ADEQUACY**

California Conservation Partnership and California Department of Conservation developed the Resource Conservation District Guidebook in 1999, which outlines best management practices for RCDs. Many of these practices are difficult to assess for adequacy, and almost all indicators of service levels are not easily quantifiable when compared with a defined industry standard; consequently, a relatively subjective judgment of adequacy is necessary. In order to evaluate the adequacy of DRCD's services the following criteria were considered: 1) long-range and strategic planning practices; 2) project evaluation practices; and 3) ability to find a supplemental source of income.

A strategic plan provides a road map to agencies by setting priorities and identifying means to meet those goals. Priority setting helps a district determine which needs deserve attention first and enables it to focus its limited resources on addressing those needs. District priority setting is accomplished through creating a mission statement, identifying goals that support its mission, and then crafting objectives that help the District reach its goals. Also, having a clear mission, goals, and objectives—a strategic plan—helps identify shared interests an agency may have with other groups, agencies, or individuals and helps avoid duplicating the work of other groups. Beyond these practical reasons for planning strategically, long-range planning is one of the provisions outlined in Division 9 of the Public Resources Code for the administration of a resource conservation district. Additionally, districts wishing to take advantage of state grant programs through the California Department of Conservation will only be able to do so if they maintain long- and short-range plans and publish annual progress reports. As identified in §9413 of Division 9, long-range plans shall:

- ❖ Establish long-range goals,
- ❖ Be five-year plans,

- ❖ Address the soil and related resource problems found to occur within the district,
- ❖ Identify resource issues within the district for local, state, and federal resource conservation planning,
- ❖ Involve other agencies in the strategic planning process,
- ❖ Provide a framework for setting annual priorities,
- ❖ Create a basis for evaluating annual work plan achievements and allocating state funds to the district, and
- ❖ Provide for disseminating information concerning district programs and goals to local, state, and federal government agencies and the public.

The District's long-range plan from 2012 to 2017 meets these requirements.

Additionally, §9413 of Division 9 also requires that in order to receive grant funding through the Department of Conservation, RCDs must publish annual reports to summarize the District's progress toward meeting the goals and objectives outlined in the long-range plan. Annual reports can be used to 1) provide a summary of the work accomplished over the previous year and set priorities for the coming year, 2) provide a means to track district activities from year to year, 3) offer a reference regarding project specifics in later years, 4) inform long-range planning efforts, 5) provide a useful introduction to the District's efforts for new employees and stakeholders, and 6) supplement grant applications to provide information on district programs and goals. DRCD produces annual reports in the form of newsletters that are disseminated to the District's constituents.

DRCD uses its own performance measures to evaluate its service adequacy. Both, fiscal outcomes and maintenance measures are used. Each project is reviewed to determine its fiscal performance, such as whether the project is covering the cost to provide adequate level of service. Ditch maintenance review consists of the number of miles maintained and cost of performing the service.

RCDs generally are limited or constrained by available funding sources and have to heavily rely on supplemental source of income, such as grants. Tax revenue received by DRCD constitutes only a small portion of its total budget. DRCD relies heavily on charges for services for its supplemental income.

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## Determinations

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- ❖ The District expects an increase in service demand due to further regulatory compliance requirements for irrigated lands and increased industrial and residential developments needing drainage services.
- ❖ The District reported that it presently had sufficient capacity to provide adequate services to its existing service area; however, existing capacity would not be sufficient to serve any future growth. Additional capacity, as related to drainage facilities, will have to be constructed should growth occur.
- ❖ The District's infrastructure needs generally consist of ditch and culvert repairs, as well as extensions of the existing system.

- ❖ The District's services appear to be adequate based on DRCD's strategic planning practices, project evaluation practices and supplemental revenue source practices.
- ❖ District management methods appear to generally meet accepted best management practices. The District prepares a budget before the beginning of the fiscal year, conducts regular financial audits, maintains current transparent financial records, tracks employee and district workload, and has an established process to address complaints.

## **STATUS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SHARED FACILITIES**

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### Shared Facilities and Regional Cooperation

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#### Shared Facilities

The District leans heavily on sharing resources and responsibilities with its partners, which benefits the District's constituents as it increases DRCD efficiency.

DRCD shares the USDA Dixon Service Center with USDA NRCS, USDA Farm Services Agency (FSA), and Solano Resource Conservation District. Besides sharing facility costs, the tenants build greater cooperation and partnership.

#### Collaboration

DRCD takes an active part in three main types of partnerships, as previously discussed in the *Services Provided* section:

- ❖ The District provides drainage services by maintaining and operating the Dixon Drain system facilities, as well as participating in the operations of the regional drainage facilities as part of the Dixon Regional Watershed JPA that consists of DRCD, RD 2068, MPWD, and the City of Dixon.
- ❖ DRCD, along with SoRCD, is a member of the Dixon/Solano RCD Water Quality Coalition that assists landowners in complying with the Regional Water Quality Control Board regulations. The two districts are also signatories to the larger Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition.
- ❖ Until recently DRCD managed the lease agreement for the Department of Fish and Wildlife for the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. The District cooperated with the Department and the tenants in producing different crops while creating valuable wildlife habitat.

DRCD also works with USDA's NRCS assisting it in implementing the national conservation goals. Some of the assistance provided includes planning on several Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) projects and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) projects along with general information regarding drainage and water quality projects. For local conservation projects, the District continues to partner with Solano RCD on many of SoRCD grants to expand the area of coverage and to provide technical assistance as needed.

More details on the District's collaborations and memberships are shown in Figures 4-11 and 4-12.



**Figure 4-11: DRCD Memberships**

Organization	Purpose
Association of Resource Conservation Districts	Education, training and advocacy
California Special Districts Association	Education, training and advocacy
Yolo Basin Foundation	Education, training and advocacy of youth and interest in the Yolo Bypass
Joint Powers Authority	Purpose
Special District Risk Management Authority	Pooled insurance for liability and workers compensation insurance and training
Dixon Regional Watershed Joint Powers Authority	Planning, financing, acquisition, ownership, construction, operation, and maintenance of regional drainage facilities within the Dixon Regional Watershed
Source: Dixon Resource Conservation District	

**Figure 4-12: DRCD Collaborations**

Collaboration	Purpose
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services	To assist NRCS with outreach and implementation of Federal Farm and Conservation Policies; also covers shared office space, vehicles and staffing
Reclamation District 2068	Agreement establishing operations and cost share obligations between parties
Maine Prairie Water District	Agreement establishing operations and cost share obligations between parties
City of Dixon	Agreement establishing operations and cost share obligations between parties
Solano Irrigation District	Agreement establishing operations and cost share obligations between parties
Solano County Water Agency	Provides for funding of regional drainage improvements
Source: Dixon Resource Conservation District	

The District's constituents directly benefit from the District's collaboration practices. DRCD makes available to its residents services provided by its partners, including:

- ❖ Technical and financial assistance for practices that benefit water quality, water conservation, and fish and wildlife habitat provided by USDA NRCS;
- ❖ Grants for small flood control projects provided by Solano RCD;
- ❖ Assistance with developing a farm, ranch or rural property conservation plan provided by Solano RCD;
- ❖ Expertise on how to successfully design, install and maintain vegetative practices provided by Solano RCD; and
- ❖ Watershed education programs for local schools and volunteer clean up days arranged by Solano RCD.

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## Management Efficiencies

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While public sector management standards vary depending on the size and scope of the organization, there are minimum standards. Well-managed organizations evaluate employees annually, track employee and agency productivity, periodically review agency performance, prepare a budget before the beginning of the fiscal year, conduct periodic financial audits to safeguard the public trust, maintain relatively current financial records, conduct advanced planning for future service needs, and plan and budget for capital needs.

DRCD employs five personnel or 3.5 full-time equivalent employees that include one full-time district manager, one part-time project manager, one part-time project engineer, one part-time water quality coalition membership coordinator, and one part-time office manager. The district manager oversees the rest of the staff and is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the District. Additionally, the district manager performs employee evaluations.

The operations and productivity of DRCD are also routinely evaluated. The Board reviews the District's performance twice a year. In September, the Board reviews the overall fiscal position of the District as a result of the prior year's operations and directs staff and committees (ditch maintenance, personnel, budget, and policy) to consider issues in the winter. Items from the committees are brought to the Board for consideration in spring during the budget planning cycle.

DRCD tracks the workload handled by its personnel. All employees track their work hours by project in timesheets, and the cost of staffing is apportioned to each project.

The District's financial planning efforts include an annually adopted budget and biennially audited financial statements. Additionally, the District adopts a long-range plan, which currently has a planning horizon through 2017 and an annual plan. The District's annual reports are presented in a form of annual newsletters released to the public (mailed and posted on the website). DRCD establishes long-term objectives during the annual budget cycle. The Board also reviews the prior long-range plan goals on a biennial basis. The District's Board of Directors has directed staff to update the long range plan and review DRCD policy for needed updates during winter of 2014-2015.



Dixon RCD's mission is to provide leadership and to make available technical, financial and educational resources to local land users for drainage, water quality, and habitat management through competent, cost effective services and partnerships.

The District reported that it had undertaken several efforts to increase its operational efficiency in the last three years. The District is currently digitizing its critical records and updating its ditch maintenance tracking practices to a GIS based system. In the last two years, DRCD has digitized and made searchable all district minutes from 1952 to present. The District has produced a GIS map of the District's ditch facilities and recorded all known easements, utilities and encroachments and will be digitizing all ditch designs, permits, easements, encroachments and water agreements over the next 18 months. Additionally, the District has had informal discussions about maintenance efficiency by sharing resources.

All special districts are required to submit annual audits to the County within 12 months of the completion of the fiscal year, unless the Board of Supervisors has approved a biennial or five-year schedule.<sup>19</sup> In the case of DRCD, the District must submit audits biennially. The most recently performed audit for FY 12-13 had been submitted to the County Auditor's Office.

Government Code §53901 states that within 60 days after the beginning of the fiscal year each local agency must submit its budget to the county auditor. These budgets are to be filed and made available on request by the public at the county auditor's office. DRCD reportedly has submitted its budget for the most recent fiscal year to the County Auditor-Controller's Office.

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## Determinations

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- ❖ Currently, the District's main office in Dixon is shared by Solano Resource Conservation District (SoRCD), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and USDA Farm Services Agency (FSA). NRSC and FSA are expected to relocate; Dixon RCD and Solano RCD will remain co-located.
- ❖ No additional opportunities for facility sharing were identified by DRCD.
- ❖ The District practices extensive collaboration with other agencies and organizations. It is a member of multiple organizations and associations.

## LAFCO POLICIES AFFECTING SERVICE DELIVERY

Solano LAFCO has adopted a policy that affects service delivery by resource conservation districts in the County. Standard 9 in the LAFCO Standards and Procedures manual requires urban growth to be guided away from prime agricultural land unless such action would not promote planned, orderly and efficient development for the agency. LAFCO encourages development of existing vacant or non-prime agricultural lands within the agency limits first before any proposal is approved for urbanization outside of the agency's limits. One of the services provided by an RCD in Solano County is protection of

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<sup>19</sup> Government Code §26909.

prime agricultural lands. When LAFCO approves applications that result in annexation of these lands into cities and/or urbanization, it directly affects services provided by RCDs.

Similarly, Standard 8 in the LAFCO Standards and Procedures requires that prior to approving an annexation, LAFCO has to make a determination that the proposed conversion of open space lands to urban use is justified by probable urban growth within a 10 year-period of time. This means that RCDs engaged in protection of open space are affected when LAFCO approves an annexation involving conversion of open space lands to urban use.

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## Determinations

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- ❖ Standards 8 and 9 of the LAFCO Standards and Procedures manual that control urban growth and protect open space and prime agricultural land through approval (or denial) of the annexation applications directly affect Solano County RCDs' service provision since the districts engage in protection of agricultural and open space lands as part of their main missions and strategic goals.

## DIXON RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT DETERMINATIONS

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### Growth and Population Projections

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- ❖ In 2010 Dixon Resource Conservation District (DRCD) had an estimated population of 20,456.
- ❖ The District reported that minimal growth had occurred within the District over the last five years. Demand for services has reportedly increased. The District generally expects moderate growth in the next 10 years. Growth is concentrated in the City of Dixon. There are four known planned development within DRCD boundaries, three of which are anticipated to be served by the District.
- ❖ Based on the Department of Finance (DOF) population forecasts, the District's population is projected to increase from 20,456 in 2010 to approximately 22,092 in 2020.
- ❖ Because the territory within DRCD is primarily agricultural and open space, it is anticipated that there will be minimal development or population growth within the District, with the exception of the City of Dixon.

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### The Location and Characteristics of Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities Within or Contiguous to the Agency's SOI

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- ❖ According to the Department of Water Resources, there are no communities that meet the definition of a disadvantaged unincorporated community in Solano County. As such, there are no disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or adjacent to DRCD's bounds and sphere of influence.

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### Present and Planned Capacity of Public Facilities and Adequacy of Public Services, Including Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies

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- ❖ The District expects an increase in service demand due to further regulatory compliance requirements for irrigated lands and increased industrial and residential developments needing drainage services.
- ❖ The District reported that it presently had sufficient capacity to provide adequate services to its existing service area; however, existing capacity would not be sufficient to serve any future growth. Additional capacity, as related to drainage facilities, will have to be constructed should growth occur.
- ❖ The District's infrastructure needs generally consist of ditch and culvert repairs, as well as extensions of the existing system.
- ❖ The District's services appear to be adequate based on DRCD's strategic planning practices, project evaluation practices and supplemental revenue source practices.

- ❖ District management methods appear to generally meet accepted best management practices. The District prepares a budget before the beginning of the fiscal year, conducts regular financial audits, maintains current transparent financial records, tracks employee and district workload, and has an established process to address complaints.

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### Financial Ability of Agencies to Provide Services

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- ❖ The District reported that its financing levels were marginally adequate to deliver services. The main financial challenge is an increase in the regulatory compliance cost for ditch maintenance.
- ❖ At the end of FY 13-14, the District revenues exceeded its expenditures by \$14,192. The District's expenditures exceeded revenues in each of the last five fiscal years.
- ❖ A majority of the District's revenue in FY 13-14 came from contract fees that included ditch maintenance charges, coalition membership fees, and fees for lease management of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.<sup>20</sup> Property tax revenue constituted about 22 percent of the total revenue.
- ❖ Capital improvement needs and improvements are planned in partnership with local agencies and recorded in the regional planning documents.
- ❖ The District's long-term liability consists entirely of compensated absences.
- ❖ The District has been directed by the Board to maintain five financial reserves, which include reserve accounts for imprest cash, general, future equipment acquisition, future capital improvement acquisition district, and future capital improvement acquisition regional.
- ❖ Based on the District's income surplus for the last five fiscal years, adequate financial reserves, and limited debt, as well as ability to receive substantial income from fees for services, DRCD appears to be in adequate financial health.

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### Status of, and Opportunities for, Shared Facilities

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- ❖ Currently, the District's main office in Dixon is shared by Solano Resource Conservation District (SoRCD), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and USDA Farm Services Agency (FSA). NRCS and FSA are expected to relocate; Dixon RCD and Solano RCD will remain co-located.
- ❖ No additional opportunities for facility sharing were identified by DRCD.
- ❖ The District practices extensive collaboration with other agencies and organizations. It is a member of multiple organizations and associations.

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<sup>20</sup> The District's lease agreement for the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area has ended as of April 30, 2015.

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## Accountability for Community Service Needs, Including Governmental Structure and Operational Efficiencies

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- ❖ DRCD is governed by the Board of Directors that consists of five landowners who are appointed by the Board of Supervisors to four-year staggered terms. Directors receive no compensation. There is currently one vacancy. The District also has two associate directors.
- ❖ Dixon RCD holds Board meetings on the second Wednesday of each month at six in the evening March through October and at noon November through February in the conference room at the district office.
- ❖ The District demonstrated accountability and transparency with regard to its governance by cooperating with the MSR process, adopting an annual budget prior to the start of the fiscal year, publishing agendas for public meetings as legally required, maintaining a website, and filing Forms 700 Statement of Economic Interest.
- ❖ DRCD follows all the minimum requirements legally mandated by Public Resources Code Division 9, including basic reporting and training requirements, quarterly and monthly requirements, and policies and plans requirements.
- ❖ The District's Board members receive ethics training as required; DRCD has established a policy on expense reimbursements.
- ❖ There is one governance structure option for DRCD, which is consolidation with Solano RCD. The two districts currently closely collaborate and share facilities. However, DRCD and SoRCD serve different territories and demographic groups, in addition to providing different services that do not overlap but complement each other.

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## LAFCO Policies Affecting Service Delivery

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- ❖ Standards 8 and 9 of the LAFCO Standards and Procedures manual that control urban growth and protect open space and prime agricultural land through approval (or denial) of the annexation applications directly affect Solano County RCDs' service provision since the districts engage in protection of agricultural and open space lands as part of their main missions and strategic goals.

## **5. SOLANO RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

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Solano Resource Conservation District (SoRCD) has the charge of conserving and enhancing the living resources within the District. The District accomplishes its goals by providing Solano County residents with information, technical assistance and on-site support in habitat conservation matters, as well as assisting with soil conservation, water quality protection, and flood reduction issues. SoRCD works collaboratively with other local agencies and organizations to meet the environmental and conservation needs of Solano County's residents and to preserve the region's valuable natural resources and assets.

The most recent MSR for the District was completed in 2006.

### **AGENCY OVERVIEW**

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#### **Background**

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SoRCD was originally created in 1956 as Ulatis RCD to provide flood protection and drain the land in the Ulatis Creek Watershed. Currently, the District works closely with the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and a wide variety of other partners throughout the County on the scale of the watershed. In 2000, the District changed its name to Solano RCD to reflect this broader mission.

The principal act that governs the District is Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code.<sup>21</sup> The principal act empowers resource conservation districts to control runoff, prevent and control soil erosion, protect water quality, develop and distribute water, improve land capabilities, and facilitate coordinated resource management efforts for watershed restoration and enhancement.<sup>22</sup> Districts must apply and obtain LAFCO approval to exercise services authorized by the principal act but not already provided.<sup>23</sup>

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#### **Boundaries**

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SoRCD is located entirely within Solano County in the northwest, as shown in Figure 5-1. The District borders Dixon Resource Conservation District to the east. In the north and west, it is adjacent to Yolo and Napa Counties, respectively; to the south there is Solano County territory without a designated resource conservation service provider. The boundaries of the District are the Vaca Mountains west of Vacaville to Cache Slough, approximately 15 miles southeast of Vacaville. SoRCD partially includes the cities of Vacaville, Dixon and Fairfield. The present bounds of the District encompass approximately 206 square miles.

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<sup>21</sup> Public Resources Code §9001 et seq.

<sup>22</sup> Public Resources Code §9001.

<sup>23</sup> Government Code §56824.10.



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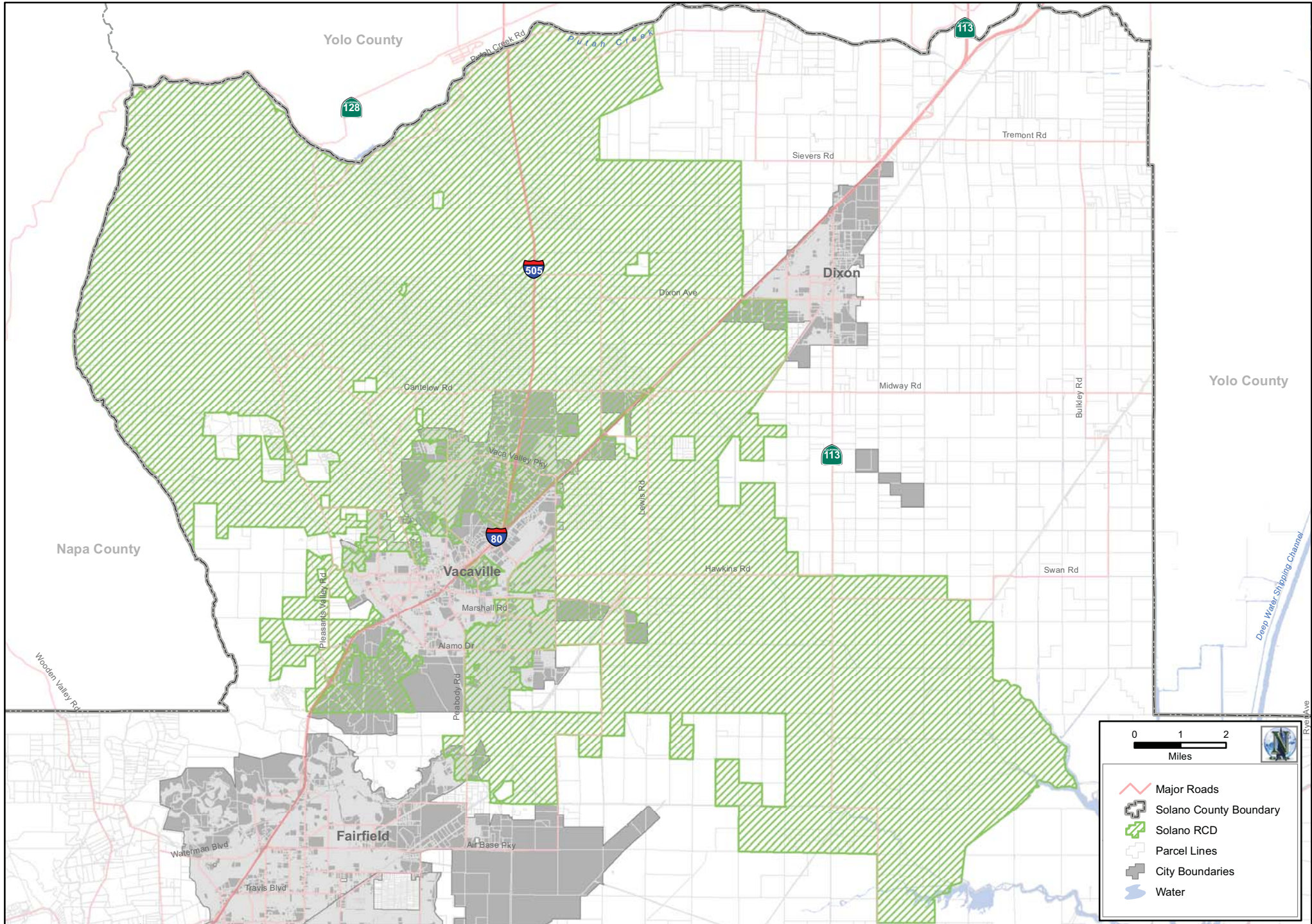
## Sphere of Influence

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The sphere of influence (SOI) for Ulatis RCD (now SoRCD) was first established in 1984 as coterminous with the District's boundaries. The SOI was then updated in 2006, at which time it was reaffirmed to be conterminous with the SoRCD boundaries.

Figure 5-1

# Solano Resource Conservation District



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## Type and Extent of Services

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### *Services Provided*

SoRCD provides natural resource management advice, ecosystem restoration and enhancement project design and implementation, watershed-based environmental education programs for school children and adults, semi-annual California native plant and watershed-friendly plant sales, workshops and hands-on training events, invasive weed control and eradication support, project permitting assistance, agricultural water quality support, flood control coordination, Solano County Water Agency (SCWA) small grant program support, conservation planning for rural and agricultural properties, and watershed coordination for private and public stakeholders.

Figure 5-2 details the services provided by SoRCD. If a service is not provided by SoRCD, but is offered by another agency, it is indicated in the figure.



**Figure 5-2: SoRCD Services**

Service	Agency	Details
Soil conservation	Yes	Erosion control conservation planning and active planting on private and public lands for erosion control
Watershed conservation/management	Yes	Conservation planning and watershed plans have been and will continue to be created when appropriate
Water quality conservation	Yes	Water quality monitoring and education for multiple agencies in the County
Woodlands conservation	Yes	Conservation planning with landowners and on public lands
Wildlife conservation	Yes	Conservation planning and habitat restoration and creation projects
Runoff control	Yes	Designing and planting of filter strips and native perennial grasses; erosion control planting projects and planning
Pollution control	Yes	Education and outreach on recycling, oil use and disposal and clean water programs
Prevent and control soil erosion	Yes	Erosion control conservation planning and active planting on private and public lands for erosion control
Protect water quality	Yes	Water quality monitoring and education for multiple agencies
Develop and distribute water	Solano County Water Agency and Solano Irrigation District	
Improve land capabilities	Natural Resources Conservation Service	
Facilitate coordinated resource management efforts	Yes	Many of the projects are shared with multiple partners and involve multi-agency conservation plans.
Watershed restoration and enhancement	Yes	Over half of projects are related to watershed restoration and enhancement work throughout the County.
Farm and range land conservation/management	Yes	Conservation planning and habitat restoration and creation projects and on farm BMP installation and management.
Open space conservation	Solano County and Solano Land Trust	

Service	Agency	Details
Waterway protection and restoration	Yes	Management of weeds in waterways and promotion of native species of plants for erosion control, reduced herbicide use habitat.
Vegetation/habitat preservation	Yes	SoRCD does not use easements but it works with people to educate them on the importance of native vegetation and the habitat.
Erosion prevention	Yes	Erosion control planting projects and planning.
Invasive species control	Yes	Lead on Solano County Weed Management Area and invasive weed control occurs at most sites.
Educational workshops	Yes	A multitude of workshops and field days with students and the general public throughout the year.
Informational fliers, brochures, and white papers	Yes	Two newsletters per year and website with projects listed.
Scientific studies	UC Davis	
Flood plain management	Solano County Water Agency	
Creek/waterway cleanups	Yes	SoRCD contracts to the County to run the Coastal Cleanup Day for Solano County.
Documentation of native species	Yes	The District does vegetative field surveys at all sites before implementing weed control or restoration.
Advising and assisting individuals and public agencies	Yes	Site visits to private and public lands and conservation planning.
Conduit for grants and other financing	Yes	The District links grants and government cost share programs to landowners to build successful projects.
Source: Policy Consulting Associates research, Solano Resource Conservation District		

On an annual basis, Solano RCD implements multiple programs and projects throughout Solano County. The District also implements two plant sales per year, produces two newsletters per year and updates its website quarterly. The projects for FY 14-15 include:

- ❖ **Spring and fall annual plant sales:** Through plant sales the District practices outreach to its constituents, sells native plants at fair prices and holds workshops that assist landowners with resource conservation. The plant sales include training opportunities, as well as wildlife shows where various birds, reptiles and mammals are displayed. Cost of the plant sale is between \$1,200 and \$2,500 per sale.

- ❖ **Delta Arundo Control and Habitat Restoration Project:** Department of Water Resources (DWR) provided San Joaquin Delta Conservancy (SJDC) with \$387,015 to coordinate and contract with SoRCD and Sonoma Ecology Center (SEC) to map Arundo infestations in the legal Delta, develop a prioritization model for future work and to begin Arundo control and re-vegetation on levees in the Cache Slough Complex.
- ❖ **Centennial Park Riparian Forest Restoration and Loop Trail Project:** This project, in the amount of \$680,286 funded by the California Resource Agency, restores natural systems on undeveloped Vacaville park acreage. It will create a new recreational riparian trail system, use native plants to restore two tributaries of Horse Creek in Centennial Park, and control various invasive weeds.
- ❖ **Solano County Delta Habitat Restoration Partnership:** DWR provided \$453,700 to the partnership between Reclamation District 2068, Dixon RCD and Solano RCD, with the purpose of implementing two large habitat restoration projects and one noxious weed control and survey project. SoRCD will implement the projects, which include planting trees, shrubs, grasses, hedges, and rushes.
- ❖ **Centennial Park Bike Trail Tree Planting:** Cal Fire provided \$60,398 to the partnership of the City of Vacaville and SoRCD to shade a 4,500 foot stretch of the Centennial Park bike path by planting 354 native trees along the path.
- ❖ **Working Waterways:** This project, funded by the Department of Fish and Wildlife (\$64,550), is a partner effort with Yolo RCD, Audubon California, and Solano Land Trust to establish riparian habitat, conduct extensive outreach, and to research the future efficacy and opportunity of restoring riparian habitat in Yolo and Solano counties.
- ❖ **Alamo Creek Restoration Project:** The funding for this project is derived from the Easterly Wastewater Treatment Plant (City of Vacaville). The focus of the work is on Alamo Creek to keep the passage of effluent water from the plant free by removing vegetation and fallen debris. SoRCD also installs and maintains riparian habitat projects along the creek and engages the local community of Elmira in restoration activities.
- ❖ **Alamo Creek Community Based Restoration Project:** Strategic Growth Council's Urban Greening Program awarded \$522,000 to the District, which will work with local agencies and community organizations to install a diverse native riparian plant community on a series of interconnected projects sites along Alamo Creek where it runs through the City of Vacaville.
- ❖ **City of Winters Tree of Heaven Control Project:** The project, funded by the City of Winters (\$18,000), is a subcontract from the Putah Creek Streamkeeper via the City of Winters to control the invasive Tree of Heaven on Dry Creek near the City of Winters.
- ❖ **Migratory Bird Initiative:** This project costs \$109,179 and was funded by NRCS. It is a partnership between Dixon RCD, Solano RCD, and NRCS that focuses on working with landowners in pre-determined focus areas throughout Solano County to engage groups of landowners to create conservation plans.



- ❖ **Blue Rock Spring's Creek Corridor Restoration Project:** This SoRCD led project, which costs \$291,870 and is funded by Coastal Conservancy, is a partnership with Greater Vallejo Recreation District, Vallejo Watershed Alliance, CA Conservation Corp, the City of Vallejo, and local Vallejo schools. The focus is to enhance and restore 53 acres and 3,798 feet of riparian and associated upland habitat by controlling weeds and planting native plants.
- ❖ **Flood Awareness Program:** This program is funded by Solano County Water Agency (\$29,070) and focuses on facilitating the Small Grants Flood Program and on producing Flood Awareness manuals.
- ❖ **CalTrans Mitigation Program:** This program is funded by CalTrans in the amount of \$2,532,000 and focuses on implementation of restoration projects with a focus on tree and shrub planting in order to mitigate for a loss of habitat on a CalTrans road project.
- ❖ **Irrigated Lands Program:** The program costs \$120,000 and is paid for by the State Water Board. It is a Dixon and Solano RCD partnership program that aims to implement an economical and scientifically valid water monitoring program for area rivers and agricultural drains.
- ❖ **Monitoring and Reporting Program (MRP) Water Quality Monitoring Project:** The project was awarded \$70,076 by Fairfield Suisun Sewer District and Vallejo Sanitation and Flood District. SoRCD has contracted with FSSD and VSFD to carry out the urban run-off monitoring program.
- ❖ **Lake Solano Partnership Program:** This program costs \$5,000 and is funded by Solano County. It is a partnership between Solano County, Putah Creek Council and SoRCD. The project focuses on treatment and removal of invasive weeds, restoration of diverse plant communities and creation of an outreach and environmental education program.
- ❖ **SCWA Pleasants Creek Project:** The project was awarded \$64,769 by Solano County Water Agency. The SoRCD focus on this project is to establish sites for habitat restoration and erosion control on Pleasants Creek and to control tree of heaven in specific stretches of Pleasants Creek.

#### Education Programs

- ❖ **Welcome to the Watershed Program:** Solano RCD's is funded by SCWA (\$17,186) and focuses on outreach to landowners in Solano County about relevant conservation issues.
- ❖ **Lake Berryessa Boater Outreach Program and Rio Vista Boater Outreach Program:** These programs cost \$53,335 and are funded by SCWA and State Oil Funds. These programs are person to person outreach programs about individual water quality protection actions, water conservation, and invasive species protection and management.
- ❖ **Watershed Explorers Program:** Funding in the amount of \$77,794 was provided by multiple agencies and organizations for the program, which utilizes science and place-based learning to build awareness and understanding of how storm water

affects the unique ecosystems of local creeks and watersheds and how people's behavior plays an important role in watershed health.

- ❖ **Suisun Marsh Program:** SCWA and Fairfield Suisun Sewer District provided \$62,210 so the County's sixth and seventh graders can take part in the Suisun Marsh Education Program, which is a full-day trip at Solano Land Trust's Rush Ranch Nature Center.
- ❖ **Vallejo/Solano Bio-monitoring Program:** The program was funded by Vallejo Sanitation and Flood District (\$42,426) and offers students an opportunity to investigate their watershed and assess the health of local creeks utilizing citizen monitoring techniques.
- ❖ **Coastal Clean-up Program:** The program costs \$5,465 and is funded by Solano County and Anheuser Busch/River Network. It focuses on the annual Cleanup Day, which will take place at more than 800 locations around the State on the third Saturday of September.
- ❖ **World Environment Day:** This one day project is paid for by the Anheuser Busch/River Network (\$2,000) and is a day to build global awareness of the environment, encourage political attention, and support individual and community projects. Locally, volunteers pick up trash after the Memorial Day weekend.
- ❖ **Keep America Beautiful:** This project, with a cost of \$4,696 funded by Solano County, is a partnership between Solano County and SoRCD to organize a day of service for volunteers to pick up trash and learn more about recycling, clean water, and the environment in general.
- ❖ **Used Oil Grant:** This grant, in the amount of \$72,691, was given by the Integrated Waste Management Board for used oil recycling education and used oil bilge pad tracking at Lake Berryessa and Sandy Beach Park.

### Service Area

SoRCD provides extensive services outside of its boundary area, including several cities, landowners in the County, Solano County itself, and other agencies outside of the District. The District has service contracts to work with agencies on education, conservation planning and restoration throughout the County. The District is able to provide these out-of-boundary services through grants or on a fee-for-service basis, as allowed in State law. SoRCD does not spend any district tax-based funds outside of its boundaries.

SoRCD reports that there is a significant need for resource conservation and education services throughout the County. The District has been serving almost every corner of Solano County for the last 10 years. SoRCD expressed a desire to annex unincorporated areas in Solano County that are currently outside of the boundaries of any RCD. Extension of the District's boundaries to include these properties would be subject to the establishment of a tax sharing agreement with the County. The District is reportedly currently working with Solano County LAFCO and the Department of Conservation to annex these areas, and attempting to conduct an analysis on whether the District would also need to annex incorporated areas. The first step in this process would be to extend the District's SOI to include the territory to be annexed when the Commission updates the Spheres of Influence for the RCDs after the adoption of this MSR.

Services to Other Agencies

Figure 5-3 lists and provides details on the contract services provided by SoRCD to other agencies.

**Figure 5-3: SoRCD Contract Services**

Agency	Type of Service	Compensation	Areas Served
City of Vacaville	Habitat restoration	Grant \$400,000 for 4 years	In SoRCD, City of Vacaville
Solano County Water Agency	Flood awareness	\$29,000 per year	Countywide
Solano County	Education	\$50,000 per year	Countywide
Fairfield Suisun Sewer District	Water quality, education	\$65,000 per year	Western Solano County
Vallejo Sanitation and Flood Control District	Education	\$25,000 per year	Western Solano County

Source: Solano Resource Conservation District

Contracts for Services

The District reportedly receives budget and financial services from Solano County through a contract. SoRCD pays the County \$25,000 per year.

Overlapping Service Providers

As reported by SoRCD, Solano County Water Agency provides similar services in the form of restoration on Putah Creek.

## GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability of a governing body is signified by a combination of several indicators. The indicators chosen here are limited to 1) agency efforts to engage and educate constituents through outreach activities, in addition to legally required activities such as agenda posting and public meetings, 2) a defined complaint process designed to handle all issues to resolution, and 3) transparency of the agency as indicated by cooperation with the MSR process and information disclosure.

According to the Division 9 of the Public Resources Code, the Board of Directors of an RCD must consist of five, seven or nine directors serving four-year terms. Directors can either be elected in a general election or appointed by the County Board of Supervisors. The directors receive no compensation for their services as such, but each is allowed reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in attendance at meetings of the Board or when otherwise engaged in the work of the district at the direction of the Board of Directors. To be eligible to serve on the Board directors must be registered voters in the State, “reside within the district and either own real property in the district or alternatively have served, pursuant to the district’s rules, for two years or more as an associate director

providing advisory or other assistance to the Board of Directors, or be a designated agent of a resident landowner within the district.”<sup>24</sup>

Associate director positions were established to allow members of the community opportunities to participate in RCD activities without being on the Board or give those who did not meet the qualifications of a director a chance to take an active role in the district. Associates often are chosen for their special expertise in an area of one of the functions of the district. Associate directors do not have the right to vote on Board matters. However, they can attend meetings and provide the district with extra expertise. Frequently associate directors also contribute by serving on various district committees.<sup>25</sup>

Solano RCD is governed by a seven-person Board of Directors appointed by the Solano County Board of Supervisors to serve four-year terms. Currently, there are no vacancies. There are presently two additional associate directors serving on the Board. Board members take an oath of office. If a position opens up mid-term, the rules of Division 9 of the State Resources Code are followed, and the new open position is posted in public locations. The new position is filled by the Board of Supervisors unless an election is necessary.

The Board of Directors meets on the third Wednesday of every month at the conference room at the district office in Dixon. Information about board meetings is shown in Figure 5-4.

**Figure 5-4: Solano Resource Conservation District Governing Body**

<b>Solano Resource Conservation District</b>	
<b>Governing Body and Board Meetings</b>	
<i>Manner of Selection</i>	Appointed by Board of Supervisors
<i>Length of Term</i>	Four years
<i>Meetings</i>	On the third Wednesday of every month at 6 pm in the conference room at the district office.
<i>Agenda Distribution</i>	Agendas are posted online.
<i>Minutes Distribution</i>	Minutes are available online and upon request.
<b>Contact</b>	
<i>Contact</i>	Christopher Rose, Executive Director
<i>Mailing Address</i>	1170 N Lincoln St., Suite 110, Dixon, CA.
<i>Phone</i>	707-678-1655 ext. 119
<i>Fax</i>	707-679-5000
<i>Email/Website</i>	Chris.rose@solanorcd.org/www.solanorcd.org
Source: Solano Resource Conservation District	

Board meeting agendas and minutes are posted online; however, that particular webpage is currently unavailable. Agendas are also posted in the front window of the

<sup>24</sup> Public Resources Code §9352 (a), (b).

<sup>25</sup> California Conservation Partnership and California Department of Conservation, *The Resource Conservation District Guidebook: A Guide to District Operations and Management*, 1999, pp. 1-8, 1-9.

District's office. In addition to the required agendas and minutes, the District tries to reach its constituents through two plant sales per year, newsletters produced twice a year and updating its website with relevant volunteer activities, job openings and project updates. The District's website additionally contains information on how to contact the District, the Board of Directors, and SoRCD history.

SoRCD board members receive no compensation; however, they do get reimbursed for some expenses. Government Code §53235 requires that if a district provides compensation or reimbursement of expenses to its board members, the board members must receive two hours of training in ethics at least once every two years and the district must establish a written policy on reimbursements. It was reported that the District's board members receive ethics training every other year. The District has established a policy on expense reimbursements.

If a customer is dissatisfied with the District's services, complaints may be submitted by coming into the office, attending a public board meeting or speaking directly to a board member or an associate director. The executive director of the District is responsible for handling complaints to resolution. SoRCD reported that the District had not had any complaints; however, if there were questions from the public, which are generally regarding plants, they can be answered by staff.

SoRCD has adopted a set of bylaws that guides and directs the District's governance and administration, including policies related to fees for services, investments and reserves, public record requests, vehicle use, volunteers, and nondiscrimination. The District does not have an associate director policy. Similarly, SoRCD does not have a bidding policy, although the District reportedly follows the rules and regulations for bidding in each contract awarded through state and federal grants. The District has established its personnel policies and provides its employees with sexual harassment literature. SoRCD reports that its operating procedures and guidelines, as well as governing body policies and procedures follow the requirements in Public Resources Code Division 9. As required by Government Code §53065.5, the District filed an annual report to the State Controller with a government compensation report for 2013.

The Political Reform Act (Government Code §81000, et seq.) requires state and local government agencies to adopt and promulgate conflict of interest codes. The Fair Political Practices Commission has adopted a regulation (California Code of Regulations §18730), which contains the terms of a standard conflict of interest code, which can be incorporated by reference in an agency's code. The District provided its conflict of interest code.

Government Code §87203 requires persons who hold office to disclose their investments, interests in real property and incomes by filing appropriate forms with the appropriate filing agency (i.e., the County or the Fair Political Practices Commission) each year. In addition, the conflict of interest code of each district determines who among the officers and directors files the Forms 700 with the County's Registrar of Voters. The District reported that all of the Board directors had filed Forms 700 with the Fair Political Practices Commission for 2013. The District's conflict of interest code requires the SoRCD manager and consultants to file their Forms 700 with the District, which then makes these forms available for public inspection and reproduction.

During the course of this MSR process SoRCD demonstrated full accountability in its disclosure of information and cooperation with Solano LAFCO. The District responded to the questionnaires and cooperated with document requests.

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## Determinations

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- ❖ SoRCD is governed by a seven-person Board of Directors appointed by the Board of Supervisors to serve four-year terms. Directors receive no compensation. Currently, there are no Board vacancies. There are presently two additional associate directors serving on the Board. The District should adopt an associate director policy.
- ❖ Solano RCD holds Board meetings on the third Wednesday of every month at six in the evening at the conference room at the district office in Dixon.
- ❖ The District demonstrated accountability and transparency with regard to its governance by cooperating with the MSR process, adopting an annual budget prior to the start of the fiscal year, publishing agendas for public meetings as legally required, maintaining a website, and filing Form 700 Statement of Economic Interest.
- ❖ SoRCD follows all the minimum requirements legally mandated by Public Resources Code Division 9, including basic reporting and training requirements, quarterly and monthly requirements, and policies and plans requirements.
- ❖ The District's Board members receive ethics training every two years as required; SoRCD has established a policy on expense reimbursements.
- ❖ Governance structure options for SoRCD include annexation of unincorporated areas of the County that are presently not within the bounds of an RCD. Additionally, another option is to include incorporated areas as well.

## **GROWTH AND POPULATION PROJECTIONS**

This section discusses the factors affecting service demand, such as land uses, and historical and anticipated population growth.

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### Land Use

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Land uses within the District mainly consist of agriculture and watershed. The District's bounds encompass approximately 206 square miles.

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### Population

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There are about 63,972 residents within the District, based on Solano County GIS analysis of 2010 Census population information.<sup>26</sup> The population density within the District is about 311 people per square mile.

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<sup>26</sup> This population figure may be slightly inflated based on comparison of known populations in other areas with those generated through the GIS analysis.



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## Projected Growth and Development

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The District reported that normal growth had occurred within the District over the last five years. The demand for services has reportedly increased. According to SoRCD, population growth has affected service demand only minimally; a majority of the increase in service demand was attributed to the outreach and education of constituents.

The District generally expects moderate growth in the next 10 years. Growth is concentrated in and around the City of Vacaville (within the District's boundaries) where the land used to be rural but has become developed overtime. SoRCD is aware of one proposed development within its boundaries. The approved Brighton Landing Vacaville LLC development consists of 218 acres of land, 4.8 acres of which will be commercial and the rest is residential, parks and schools. The approved development, which will be served by SoRCD, is located in southeast Vacaville north of Elmira Road adjacent to Leisure Town Road. Additionally, Solano LAFCO is aware of developments that are resulting from recent annexations to cities. The City of Vacaville is planning on having 939 new residential units in Vanden Meadows and 767 residences in Brighton Landing. Southtown Development and North Village also in Vacaville are still under construction. The City of Fairfield portion within the District includes a part of the train station annexations that are planned to be developed.

The California Department of Finance (DOF) projects that the population of Solano County will grow by eight percent from 2010 to 2020. Thus, the average annual population growth in the County is anticipated to be approximately 0.8 percent. Based on these projections, the District's population would increase from 63,972 in 2010 to approximately 69,090 in 2020. It is anticipated that demand for service within the District will increase minimally, based on the DOF population growth projections through 2020.

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## Growth Strategies

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The District is not a land use authority, and does not hold primary responsibility for implementing growth strategies. The land use authority for unincorporated areas is the County. SoRCD does not execute development land use planning, but provides information on conservation of resources on private and public lands through conservation plans.

The District usually receives a public notification of any new developments constructed in the County. These notifications are reviewed at Board meetings and help the District plan for future service needs.

As previously mentioned, a majority of the lands within the District are designated in the County's General Plan as agricultural and watershed, with much of the territory covered by the resource conservation overlay. Because the territory within SoRCD is mostly farmland and agricultural open space, it is anticipated that there will be minimal development or population growth within the District. A majority of growth in the District occurs in and around the City of Vacaville. The County has historically required that developments requiring water and sewer service be incorporated within one of the County's cities. Based on this policy, most residential, commercial and industrial development in the County has been in incorporated areas.

Although some of the District's territory is within the cities of Vacaville, Fairfield and Dixon SOIs, meaning that it is anticipated that the areas will eventually be annexed by these respective cities, SoRCD will be minimally affected. These areas will not be detached from the District since the cities do not provide resource conservation services and some of the city territory is already included in the District. Annexation would affect SoRCD by transferring land use authority from the County to the respective cities and through the potential urbanization of these annexed areas, which would change the type of services provided by the District in these areas to focus on urban and suburban environment.

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## Determinations

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- ❖ In 2010, SoRCD had an estimated population of 63,972.
- ❖ The District reported that normal growth had occurred within the District over the last five years. Demand for services has reportedly increased. The District generally expects moderate growth in the next 10 years. Growth is concentrated in and around the City of Vacaville.
- ❖ Based on the Department of Finance (DOF) population forecasts, the District's population is projected to increase from 63,972 in 2010 to approximately 69,090 in 2020.
- ❖ Because the territory within SoRCD is primarily agricultural and watershed, it is anticipated that there will be minimal development or population growth within the District, with the exception of the Vacaville area.

## **DISADVANTAGED UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES**

LAFCO is required to evaluate disadvantaged unincorporated communities as part of this service review, including the location and characteristics of any such communities. A disadvantaged unincorporated community is defined as any area with 12 or more registered voters, or as determined by commission policy, where the median household income is less than 80 percent of the statewide annual median.<sup>27</sup>

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has developed a mapping tool to assist in determining which communities meet the disadvantaged communities median household income definition.<sup>28</sup> According to DWR, there are no communities that meet the definition of a disadvantaged unincorporated community in Solano County. As such, there are no disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or adjacent to SoRCD's bounds and sphere of influence.

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## Determination

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- ❖ According to the Department of Water Resources, there are no communities that meet the definition of a disadvantaged unincorporated community in Solano County.

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<sup>27</sup> Government Code §56033.5.

<sup>28</sup> Based on census data, the median household income in the State of California in 2010 was \$57,708, 80 percent of which is \$46,166.

As such, there are no disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or adjacent to SoRCD's bounds and sphere of influence.

## **FINANCIAL ABILITY TO PROVIDE SERVICES**

The financial ability of agencies to provide services is affected by available financing sources and financing constraints. This section discusses the major financing constraints faced by the District and identifies revenue sources currently available to the District.

The District reported that its financing levels were inadequate to deliver services. SoRCD has a limited tax base, but also provides services outside of its boundaries. Since the District may not use district tax revenue to serve areas outside of the District, SoRCD applies for grants and contracts with other agencies to fund programs for services. The District is currently pursuing expansion of its boundaries to receive tax revenue from areas where it is already providing services.

In the last several years the District has implemented some cost-containment strategies. Specifically, by updating its billable rates and overhead schedule to match actual expenses, the District has been able to clarify actual costs associated with each project and pay for these costs with the associated billable rate for services and grants.

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### **Revenues and Expenses**

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The District's revenue in FY 13-14 totaled \$1.1 million, of which 13 percent was received from property taxes, 13 percent from intergovernmental revenue (homeowners property tax relief and grant revenue) and 74 percent from contract charges for services. Other minor revenue sources included interest income and miscellaneous revenue.

A majority of the District's revenue in FY 13-14 came from fees for services. SoRCD reported that it had not adopted a set rate schedule for its services. The District's personnel have billable rates that change every year after the adoption of the annual budget. During the budget process the District calculates its staff costs and overhead for its actual cost for implementing grant projects and/or providing education services to partners. In 2006, the Board of Directors adopted a fee-for-service policy, according to which services provided by SoRCD to Solano County landowners outside of the district boundaries are provided at a minimum of \$35 per hour per contracted employee with a minimum charge of \$140 per project. These fees are subject to change depending on the size and scope of the project. The District should consider conducting a rate study to determine a more accurate fee schedule and potentially increase its revenue.

Additionally, a significant portion of the District's revenues every year is received from state and federal grants (approximately 10 to 30 percent).

The District's expenditures amounted to \$921,117 in FY 13-14—67 percent was spent on salaries and benefits, 31 percent on services and supplies, and two percent on fixed assets.

In FY 13-14, the District's revenues exceeded expenditures by \$186,088. As shown in Figure 5-5, SoRCD's revenues exceeded expenditures in four out of the last five years. In FY 10-11, the District expected to receive twice as much revenue from charges for services as it had actually received.

**Figure 5-5: SoRCD revenue and expenditures, FYs 09-10 through FY 13-14**

Year	FY 09-10	FY 10-11	FY 11-12	FY 12-13	FY 13-14
Revenues	\$777,459	\$603,374	\$1,040,358	\$883,500	\$1,107,205
Expenditures	\$667,497	\$930,768	\$724,199	\$791,021	\$921,117
<b>Balance</b>	<b>\$109,962</b>	<b>-\$327,394</b>	<b>\$316,159</b>	<b>\$92,479</b>	<b>\$186,088</b>

Source: Audited Financial Statements FYs 09-10, 10-11, 11-12. Unaudited Financial Statements FYs 12-13 and 13-14.

### Capital Improvements

The District does not adopt a capital improvement plan; however, it does conduct ongoing capital improvement planning. Capital improvement needs and improvements are discussed at board meetings and recorded in the minutes. Planned capital improvements are also listed as part of the district annual budget and approved by the Board. Typical capital improvements include structural improvements to the District’s equipment facility and purchasing of small tools and equipment.

SoRCD spent \$21,408 on capital improvements in FY 13-14, which included improvements on vehicles and equipment and computer equipment. The well project planned for FY 14-15 is expected to cost \$10,000.

### Outstanding Debt

The District’s long-term liability consists entirely of compensated absences. The balance at the end of FY 11-12 was \$46,780. There are no outstanding debts.

### Reserves

The District has adopted a policy to keep four financial reserves. At the end of FY 14, there was \$2,000 in cash reserve, \$22,000 in general reserve, \$60,000 in equipment and infrastructure reserve, \$11,112 in vehicle maintenance and purchase reserve, and \$150,000 in staff reserve.

The staff reserve fund was established in order to maintain staff continuity and continued conservation services. The staff reserve could pay for staff expenses should there be a pause or delay in government grant funding. The staff reserve may also be utilized to fund staff during short-term funding shortages for a defined period of time.

The general reserve has been established to allow for funds to be used for miscellaneous expenses above those designated for operation costs.

The equipment reserve was established to allocate funds for program equipment needs and facility maintenance and improvement at the Conservation Education Center (CEC).

After the final reconciliation for the fiscal year that takes place in September, the Board decides where income over expenses would be allocated according to the District's reserve policy.

At the end of FY 13-14, the District had \$645,112 available in cash. SoRCD estimates that cash flow needed for operation (based on past cash need) is about \$400,000.

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## Determinations

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- ❖ Despite some financing challenges reported by SoRCD, the District appears to be financially healthy based on its income surplus in the last four out of five fiscal years, adequate financial reserves, and limited debt, as well as success in grant writing and multitude of fee-based contracts.
- ❖ A majority of the District's revenue comes from grants and contract fees. Fees vary from project to project. Property tax revenue constitutes about 13 percent of the total revenue.
- ❖ Capital improvement needs and improvements are discussed at Board meetings and recorded in the minutes. Planned capital improvements are also listed as part of the District's annual budget and approved by the Board.
- ❖ The District's long-term liability consists entirely of compensated absences.
- ❖ The District has adopted a policy to maintain four financial reserves, which include cash, general, equipment, and staff reserves.

## **PRESENT AND PLANNED CAPACITY**

The District reported that it presently had sufficient capacity to provide adequate services to its existing service area and future growth area. Potential new contracts and partnerships may provide additional opportunities to deliver services more effectively.

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### **Existing Demand**

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The District reported that its service needs were forecasted by attending meetings throughout the District's service area and staying involved in the community. According to SoRCD, the recent increase in service demand was caused by community outreach and education on the part of the District.

Landowners within SoRCD's boundaries are considered customers of the District. The issues of primary concern to the District include the changing ratios of rural, suburban, urban and agricultural landowners, and the increase in the number of new landowners within the District's service area. As more landowners move to rural areas from more urban locations, the District expands its outreach activities in an effort to educate new residents about local flood prevention, wildlife habitat, soil conservation, and water quality protection issues.

Service needs are established based on parameters that are regularly discussed and established at monthly Board meetings. Parameters include observations of demographic changes, observations of government program changes, concerns voiced by district landowners, and discussions with other service agencies in the region.

The District has developed the 2013-2018 Long Range Plan, which contains short- and long-term goals directed at planning for future service needs. These goals include partnering with other agencies and groups, improvement, enhancement and preservation of wildlife habitat, control of invasive species, citizen-based land stewardship within the watershed, conservation education and outreach, water quality protection and flood damage reduction, and sustainable agriculture.

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### **Facilities**

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The District owns a 1.5-acre parcel with an office, barn and nursery facility located in the City of Vacaville. The facility is known as the Conservation Education Center (CEC). The District uses this site to raise and sell native plants, and has a demonstration garden on the property. The equipment yard houses the District's vehicles and equipment. The facilities on the site were reported to be in fair condition.

The District's main office is located in the USDA-leased Dixon Service Center, which is provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In the late summer of 2015 USDA Service Center will be relocating. Dixon RCD and Solano RCD have determined that the most cost-effective option is to stay in the current location. The two districts will jointly lease office space that they are currently occupying at 1170 N Lincoln St, Suite 110 in Dixon.

The main watershed in the District is the Ulatis Creek System. It is composed of many smaller creeks, including Barker Slough, Alamo, Ulatis, Horse, Gibson Canyon, Sweeney, and



McCune Creeks. A second watershed located to the north, is Putah Creek, which includes Pleasants Creek, Miller Creek, Pleasants Valley Creek and Putah Creek. The Suisun Marsh watershed is located in Southern Solano County and includes many waterways such as Green Valley, Suisun, Dan Wilson, Laurel, American Canyon, Ledgewood, McCoy, and Denverton Creeks.

It appears that currently the capacity of the District's facilities to provide adequate services is constrained by the fair condition of these facilities.

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### Infrastructure Needs

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As previously mentioned, the CEC is currently in fair condition and requires appropriate upgrades to improve its condition.

Additionally, the District reported that it had a planned project to fix a well head in its well. The anticipated completion time is January 2015. The well project is anticipated to cost \$10,000 and be financed from the District's financial reserves.

SoRCD is not planning to acquire new lands, easements or other property.

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### Challenges

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The District has a relatively small tax base compared to the vastness of the territory served; therefore, it has to supplement its funding with grant funds and fees for services. The District believes that having a stronger tax base to serve a larger part of the County would have a stabilizing effect on SoRCD and result in improved services.

## SERVICE ADEQUACY

California Conservation Partnership and California Department of Conservation developed the Resource Conservation District Guidebook in 1999, which outlines best management practices for RCDs. Many of these practices are difficult to assess for adequacy, and almost all indicators of service levels are not easily quantifiable when compared with a defined industry standard; consequently, a relatively subjective judgment of adequacy is necessary. In order to evaluate the adequacy of SoRCD the following criteria were considered: 1) long-range and strategic planning practices; 2) project evaluation practices; and 3) grant writing success.

A strategic plan provides a road map to agencies by setting priorities and identifying means to meet those goals. Priority setting helps a district determine which needs deserve attention first and enables it to focus its limited resources on addressing those needs. District priority setting is accomplished through creating a mission statement, identifying goals that support its mission, and then crafting objectives that help the District reach its goals. Also, having a clear mission, goals, and objectives—a strategic plan—helps identify shared interests an agency may have with other groups, agencies, or individuals and helps avoid duplicating the work of other groups. Beyond these practical reasons for planning strategically, long-range planning is one of the provisions outlined in Division 9 of the Public Resources Code for the administration of a resource conservation district. Additionally, districts wishing to take advantage of state grant programs through the California Department of Conservation will only be able to do so if they maintain long- and

short-range plans and publish annual progress reports. As identified in §9413 of Division 9, long-range plans shall:

- ❖ Establish long-range goals,
- ❖ Be five-year plans,
- ❖ Address the soil and related resource problems found to occur within the district,
- ❖ Identify resource issues within the district for local, state, and federal resource conservation planning,
- ❖ Involve other agencies in the strategic planning process,
- ❖ Provide a framework for setting annual priorities,
- ❖ Create a basis for evaluating annual work plan achievements and allocating state funds to the district, and
- ❖ Provide for disseminating information concerning district programs and goals to local, state, and federal government agencies and the public.

The District's long-range plan from 2013 to 2018 meets these requirements.

Additionally, §9413 of Division 9 also requires that in order to receive grant funding through the Department of Conservation, RCDs must publish annual reports to summarize the District's progress toward meeting the goals and objectives outlined in the long-range plan. Annual reports can be used to 1) provide a summary of the work accomplished over the previous year and set priorities for the coming year, 2) provide a means to track district activities from year to year, 3) offer a reference regarding project specifics in later years, 4) inform long-range planning efforts, 5) provide a useful introduction to the District's efforts for new employees and stakeholders, and 6) supplement grant applications to provide information on district programs and goals. SoRCD produces and presents a verbal annual report each year to the Board of Directors. The District could make improvements by starting to produce written annual reports that can also be incorporated in the long-range planning.

SoRCD uses its own performance measures to evaluate its service adequacy. All of the District's projects have a scope of work, timeline and budget to which they strive to adhere. If all the requirements of the projects are not met by the District, SoRCD does not receive compensation for its services. Additionally, contracts would reportedly not be renewed if services are not performed at a high level.

RCDs generally are limited or constrained by available funding sources. Tax revenue received by the District constitutes only a small portion of its total budget. SoRCD relies heavily on grants and fees for services. The District has had particular success in receiving grant funds through its grant writing.

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## Determinations

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- ❖ SoRCD anticipates additional growth in service demand resulting from the District's extensive outreach activities and public education.

- ❖ The District is reporting that it presently has sufficient capacity to provide adequate services to its existing and future growth areas; however, capacity is constrained by the fair condition of district facilities.
- ❖ Planned capital improvements include a well head project that will be completed in January 2015 and is anticipated to cost \$10,000. Additionally, SoRCD needs to conduct necessary repairs to improve the condition of its facilities.
- ❖ The District's services appear to be adequate based on SoRCD's strategic planning practices, project evaluation practices and grant writing success. The District could improve its service adequacy by starting to produce written annual reports.
- ❖ District management methods appear to generally meet accepted best management practices. The District prepares a budget before the beginning of the fiscal year, conducts regular financial audits, maintains current transparent financial records, tracks employee and district workload, and has an established process to address complaints.

## **STATUS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SHARED FACILITIES**

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### Shared Facilities and Regional Cooperation

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#### *Shared Facilities*

The District reported that it allowed the University of California cooperative extension's Master Gardeners to utilize the CEC once a year for fundraiser activities. Solano County Water Agency currently stores habitat restoration supplies at the CEC.

The District's main office in Dixon is shared by Dixon Resource Conservation District (DRCD). This allows the two Districts to not only save costs on facilities, but to build greater cooperation and coordination.

No additional opportunities for facility sharing were identified by SoRCD.

#### *Collaboration*

SoRCD partners with private citizens, local, regional, state and federal government agencies, research institutions, nonprofits and private sector organizations to design and implement large and small ecosystem restoration programs, habitat enhancement projects and watershed-based environmental education for kids and adults.

**Figure 5-6: SoRCD Memberships**

Organization	Purpose
California Association of RCDs	The purpose of the organization is to support RCDs and their work throughout the State. SoRCD participates to keep abreast of new legislation and partnerships.
California Special District Association	The District is involved with this group to receive group benefits and support.
Special Districts Risk Management Authority	The organization provides insurance and safety training.
California Society of Ecological Restoration	This group is a resource for on-point restoration information, workshops and conferences.
California Invasive Plant Council	CalIPC is a resource for up-to-date information on invasive weeds as well as workshops.
California Native Grasslands Association	CNGA is a resource for information on grassland management and the use of native grasses.
Source: Solano Resource Conservation District	

The District provides direct assistance to Solano County farmers and landowners, who work with SoRCD voluntarily to protect their soil, water, and natural habitats. The District also partners with agricultural and natural resource protection organizations and agencies throughout the County and region to implement watershed programs with local and regional benefits. A detailed list of the organizations and associations that the District is a member of is shown in Figure 5-6. Additionally, Figure 5-7 depicts organizations that SoRCD collaborates with through formal agreements.

**Figure 5-7: SoRCD Collaborations**

Collaboration	Purpose
City of Vacaville	Grant project partnership to restore two ephemeral creeks and interpretive signage in a park in Vacaville and for demonstration gardens and weed control along Alamo Creek in Vacaville.
Solano County Water Agency	The District provides education outreach and technical assistance to landowners.
Vallejo Sanitation and Flood Control District	The District provides outdoor experience education and water quality sampling for VSFD.
Fairfield Suisun Sewer District	SoRCD provides water quality sampling and education outreach for FSSD.
Greater Vallejo Recreation District	The District partners with GVRD on restoration and education project in Vallejo.
Solano County	SoRCD works with Solano County on several projects in Solano County from education to Coastal Cleanup.
Reclamation District 2068	The District is implementing a weed control and habitat restoration project with RD 2068.
The Delta Conservancy	SoRCD signed a contract with the Delta Conservancy to work with landowners in the North Delta to implement habitat restoration and conservation projects.
Natural Resources Conservation Service	SoRCD works collaboratively with NRCS on a number of joint projects and provide technical assistance on habitat restoration projects through contracts with NRCS.
Solano Land Trust	SoRCD has provided technical and fiduciary assistance to SLT.
Source: Solano Resource Conservation District	

The District has been the chair of the Solano County Weed Management Area for over six years and participates in the County Habitat Conservation Plan.

Additionally, the District partners with Dixon RCD, Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee, Putah Creek Council, Solano Irrigation District, Audubon California, Yolo RCD, cities of Dixon, Vallejo, Fairfield, and Suisun City, Vallejo Watershed Alliance, Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve, Cooperative Extension, Center for Landbased Learning, Suisun



RCD, Collinsville Levee District, CalTrans, Department of Conservation, Department of Fish and Game, Department of Water Resources, California Department of Food and Agriculture, Coastal Conservancy, United States Fish and Wildlife, Potrero Hills Landfill, Valero Refinery, and Anheuser Busch.

As demonstrated, the District engages in extensive collaboration with other agencies and organizations. SoRCD believes that there are some additional opportunities for partnerships. The District has started to use inmates for many implementation projects, which fulfills the need for the prison community service and work release programs, and at the same time provides labor to the District.

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## Management Efficiencies

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While public sector management standards vary depending on the size and scope of the organization, there are minimum standards. Well-managed organizations evaluate employees annually, track employee and agency productivity, periodically review agency performance, prepare a budget before the beginning of the fiscal year, conduct periodic financial audits to safeguard the public trust, maintain relatively current financial records, conduct advanced planning for future service needs, and plan and budget for capital needs.

SoRCD employs 16 personnel, including one full-time executive director, one full-time assistant executive director, two full-time and two part-time project managers, one full-time education program manager, one part-time education program coordinator, one part-time office manager, one part-time restoration field technician, and six part-time extra help staff. Additionally, there is an environmental education and conservation consultant, who is a contractor. The assistant executive director, the consultant and all managers report to the executive director. The education program coordinator and five extra help employees are managed by the environmental education program manager. A field technician and one extra help employee are subordinate to the rest of the managers.

The District's executive director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of SoRCD. Employee evaluations, performed by the executive director, are conducted once a year. Additionally, the District evaluates its own performance through financial audits and by assessing efficacy of deliverables in each project. Many projects withhold 10 percent until the end of the project to verify that tasks are completed to a satisfactory level. All of the District's grant and fee-for-service projects have a scope of work, timeline and budget that must be adhered to. District staff receive input on performance from the Board of Directors throughout the year.

SoRCD tracks the workload handled by its staff. The District creates its annual budget using hours of work, which are attributed to each project based on the funds available to complete the deliverable. SoRCD tracks every hour worked through timesheets for each project or cost category. Projects are invoiced for hours worked and for materials based on "hours per job" sheet, which are the detailed hours by project. All vendor claims, reimbursements and timesheets are submitted to the County of Solano that acts as the District's bank.

The District's financial planning efforts include an annually adopted budget and biennially audited financial statements. Additionally, the District adopts a long-range plan, which currently has a planning horizon through 2018. SoRCD uses its annual budget and

project list as its annual plan. The annual report is given verbally, with the annual budget reconciliation and staff presentations on project progress. District staff establishes long-term objectives through strategic planning sessions with the Board.

The mission of the District is to protect, promote and enhance the soil, water, wildlife, plant-life and air quality resources within Solano County.

The District reported that it managed to increase its operational efficiency in the last three years. A certified public accountant (CPA) assists the District with reconciliation of its books on a quarterly basis; a different accountant assesses SoRCD's budget procedures. Additionally, employee evaluations started focusing on the time budgeting, invoicing and efficiency.

All special districts are required to submit annual audits to the County within 12 months of the completion of the fiscal year, unless the Board of Supervisors has approved a biennial or five-year schedule.<sup>29</sup> In the case of SoRCD, the District must submit audits biennially. The District reported that it had not submitted its audit for the most recently completed fiscal year to the County Auditor's Office, as the audit for FY 13-14 has not yet been performed. The audit for FY 11-12 had been submitted to the County.

Government Code §53901 states that within 60 days after the beginning of the fiscal year each local agency must submit its budget to the county auditor. These budgets are to be filed and made available on request by the public at the County Auditor's Office. SoRCD reportedly has submitted its budget for the most recent fiscal year to the County Auditor-Controller's Office.

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## Determinations

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- ❖ The District shares CEC with the Solano County Water Agency Master Gardeners program.
- ❖ The District's main office in Dixon is shared by Dixon Resource Conservation District (DRCD).
- ❖ No additional opportunities for facility sharing were identified by SoRCD.
- ❖ The District practices extensive collaboration with other agencies and organizations and participates in the regional plans. It is a member of multiple organizations and associations.

## LAFCO POLICIES AFFECTING SERVICE DELIVERY

Solano LAFCO has adopted a policy that affects service delivery by resource conservation districts in the County. Standard 9 in the LAFCO Standards and Procedures manual requires urban growth to be guided away from prime agricultural land unless such action would not promote planned, orderly and efficient development for the agency. LAFCO encourages development of existing vacant or non-prime agricultural lands within the agency limits first before any proposal is approved for urbanization outside of the

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<sup>29</sup> Government Code §26909.

agency's limits. One of the services provided by an RCD in Solano County is protection of prime agricultural lands. When LAFCO approves applications that result in annexation of these lands into cities and/or urbanization, it directly affects services provided by RCDs.

Similarly, Standard 8 in the LAFCO Standards and Procedures requires that prior to approving an annexation, LAFCO has to make a determination that the proposed conversion of open space lands to urban use is justified by probable urban growth within a 10 year-period of time. This means that RCDs engaged in protection of open space are affected when LAFCO approves an annexation involving conversion of open space lands to urban use.

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## Determinations

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- ❖ Standards 8 and 9 of the LAFCO Standards and Procedures manual that control urban growth and protect open space and prime agricultural land through approval (or denial) of the annexation applications directly affect Solano County RCDs' service provision since the districts engage in protection of agricultural and open space lands as part of their main missions and strategic goals.

## **SOLANO RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT DETERMINATIONS**

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### **Growth and Population Projections**

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- ❖ In 2010 SoRCD had an estimated population of 63,972.
- ❖ The District reported that normal growth had occurred within the District over the last five years. The demand for services has reportedly increased. The District generally expects moderate growth in the next 10 years. The growth is concentrated in and around the City of Vacaville.
- ❖ Based on the Department of Finance (DOF) population forecasts, the District's population is projected to increase from 63,972 in 2010 to approximately 69,090 in 2020.
- ❖ Because the territory within SoRCD is mostly agricultural and watershed, it is anticipated that there will be minimal development or population growth within the District, with the exception of the Vacaville area.

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### **The Location and Characteristics of Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities Within or Contiguous to the Agency's SOI**

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- ❖ According to the Department of Water Resources, there are no communities that meet the definition of a disadvantaged unincorporated community in Solano County. As such, there are no disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or adjacent to SoRCD's bounds and sphere of influence.

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### **Present and Planned Capacity of Public Facilities and Adequacy of Public Services, Including Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

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- ❖ SoRCD anticipates additional growth in service demand resulting from the District's extensive outreach activities and public education.
- ❖ The District is reporting that it presently has sufficient capacity to provide adequate services to its existing and future growth areas; however, capacity is constrained by the fair condition of district facilities.
- ❖ Planned capital improvements include a well head project that will be completed in January 2015 and is anticipated to cost \$10,000. Additionally, SoRCD needs to conduct necessary repairs to improve the condition of its facilities.
- ❖ The District's services appear to be adequate based on SoRCD's strategic planning practices, project evaluation practices and grant writing success. The District could improve its service adequacy by starting to produce written annual reports.
- ❖ District management methods appear to generally meet accepted best management practices. The District prepares a budget before the beginning of the fiscal year,

conducts regular financial audits, maintains current transparent financial records, tracks employee and district workload, and has an established process to address complaints.

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### Financial Ability of Agencies to Provide Services

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- ❖ Despite some financing challenges reported by SoRCD, the District appears to be financially healthy based on its income surplus in the last four out of five fiscal years, adequate financial reserves, and limited debt, as well as success in grant writing and multitude of fee-based contracts.
- ❖ A majority of the District's revenue comes from grants and contract fees. Fees vary from project to project. Property tax revenue constitutes about 13 percent of the total revenue.
- ❖ Capital improvement needs and improvements are discussed at Board meetings and recorded in the minutes. Planned capital improvements are also listed as part of the District's annual budget and approved by the Board.
- ❖ The District's long-term liability consists entirely of compensated absences.
- ❖ The District has adopted a policy to maintain four financial reserves, which include cash, general, equipment, and staff reserves.

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### Status of, and Opportunities for, Shared Facilities

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- ❖ The District shares CEC with the Solano County Water Agency Master Gardeners program.
- ❖ The District's main office in Dixon is shared by Dixon Resource Conservation District (DRCD).
- ❖ No additional opportunities for facility sharing were identified by SoRCD.

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### Accountability for Community Service Needs, Including Governmental Structure and Operational Efficiencies

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- ❖ SoRCD is governed by a seven-person Board of Directors appointed by the Board of Supervisors to serve four-year terms. Directors receive no compensation. Currently, there are no Board vacancies. There are presently two additional associate directors serving on the Board. The District should adopt an associate director policy.
- ❖ Solano RCD holds Board meetings on the third Wednesday of every month at six in the evening at the conference room at the district office in Dixon.
- ❖ The District demonstrated accountability and transparency with regard to its governance by cooperating with the MSR process, adopting an annual budget prior to the start of the fiscal year, publishing agendas for public meetings as legally required, maintaining a website, and filing Form 700 Statement of Economic Interest.

- ❖ SoRCD follows all the minimum requirements legally mandated by Public Resources Code Division 9, including basic reporting and training requirements, quarterly and monthly requirements, and policies and plans requirements.
- ❖ The District’s Board members receive ethics training every two years as required; SoRCD has established a policy on expense reimbursements.
- ❖ Governance structure options for SoRCD include annexation of unincorporated areas of the County that are presently not within the bounds of an RCD. Additionally, another option is to include incorporated areas as well.

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### LAFCO Policies Affecting Service Delivery

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- ❖ Standards 8 and 9 of the LAFCO Standards and Procedures manual that control urban growth and protect open space and prime agricultural land through approval (or denial) of the annexation applications directly affect Solano County RCDs’ service provision since the districts engage in protection of agricultural and open space lands as part of their missions and strategic goals.



## **6. SUISUN RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

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Suisun Resource Conservation District (SuRCD) represents and works with private landowners on a variety of issues related to quality of water supply and habitat management. The District's services are specific and unique to the Suisun Marsh as designated in the 1977 Suisun Marsh Preservation Act.

The most recent MSR for the District was completed in 2006.

### **AGENCY OVERVIEW**

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#### **Background**

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SuRCD was formed on June 6, 1963 as an independent special district for the purpose of regulating and improving water management practices related to the wetlands and wildlife habitat in the Suisun Marsh. Today, the District provides the landowners with technical assistance in permitting, water control, and habitat management to ensure the wetland and wildlife values of the Suisun Marsh are sustained and enhanced.<sup>30</sup>

The principal act that governs the District is Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code.<sup>31</sup> The principal act empowers resource conservation districts to control runoff, prevent and control soil erosion, protect water quality, develop and distribute water, improve land capabilities, and facilitate coordinated resource management efforts for watershed restoration and enhancement.<sup>32</sup> In addition to the provisions relevant to all RCDs, SuRCD is governed by The 1977 Suisun Marsh Preservation Act.<sup>33</sup> The Act empowers SuRCD to promote wetland conservation of the Suisun Marsh through improvements in water management practices on private lands within the primary management area of the Suisun Marsh.<sup>34</sup> RCDs must apply and obtain LAFCO approval to exercise services authorized by the principal act but not already provided.<sup>35</sup>

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#### **Boundaries**

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SuRCD is entirely within Solano County in the southcentral portion, as shown in Figure 6-1. The District's western boundary follows SR 680, veering due north, northeast toward the cities of Suisun City and Farfield. The District's northern boundary follows SR 12 for approximately seven miles and then continues directly south toward just east of Honker

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.suisunrcd.org/>

<sup>31</sup> Public Resources Code §9001 et seq.

<sup>32</sup> Public Resources Code §9001.

<sup>33</sup> Public Resources Code §§9960-9965.

<sup>34</sup> Public Resources Code §9962.

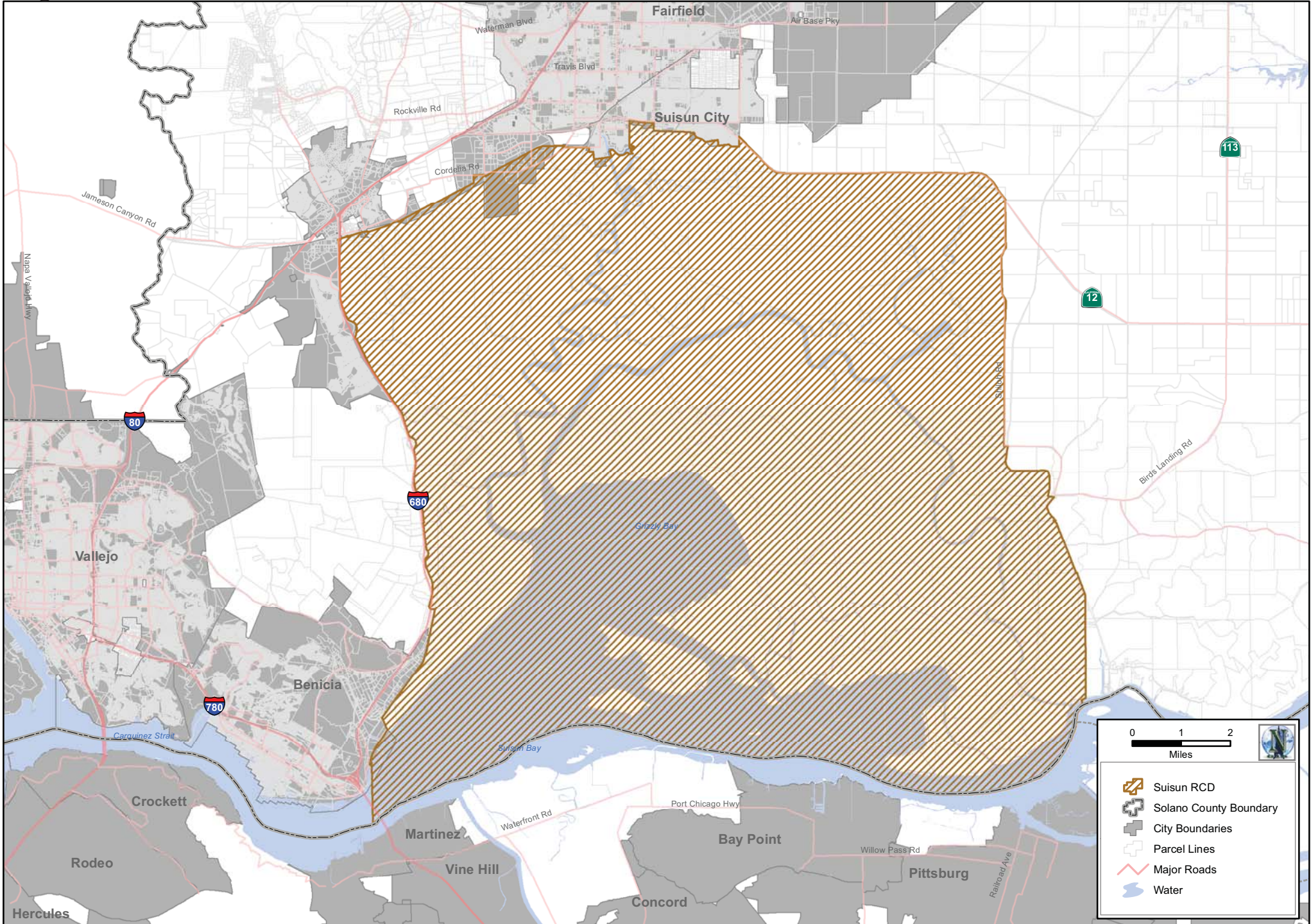
<sup>35</sup> Government Code §56824.10.

Bay. This eastern boundary overlaps a portion of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The southern boundary follows the Contra Costa County line from just east of Honkers Bay to the City of Benicia. SuRCD does not directly border any other resource conservation districts in Solano County. The present bounds encompass approximately 180 square miles. Limited areas of the cities of Suisun, Fairfield and Benicia are included in SuRCD boundaries.



Figure 6-1

# Suisun Resource Conservation District



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## Sphere of Influence

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The sphere of influence (SOI) for the District was first established in 1984 as coterminous with the District's boundaries. The SOI was then updated in 2006, at which time it was reaffirmed to be conterminous with SuRCD's boundaries.

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## Type and Extent of Services

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### *Services Provided*

SuRCD provides landowners technical assistance in permitting, water control, and habitat management to ensure the wetland and wildlife values of the Suisun Marsh are sustained and enhanced.

The District provides technical and support services to Reclamation Districts (RDs) in SuRCD through individual landowners within the RDs. The RDs' responsibilities vary based on their articles of formation, taxing powers and responsibilities. Through assisting landowners with technical support, habitat management advice and environmental permitting, SuRCD thus indirectly assists RDs with implementation of their duties.

Figure 6-2 details the services provided by SuRCD. If a service is not provided by SuRCD, but is offered by another agency, it is indicated in the figure.



**Figure 6-2: SuRCD Services**

Service	Agency	Details
Soil conservation	Yes	Soil salinity and habitat management, and conservation planning on private and public lands in the Suisun Marsh.
Watershed conservation/management	Solano Resource Conservation District	Conservation and watershed planning in the Bay Delta Region and Solano County.
Water quality conservation	Yes	Water management, water quality monitoring and education.
Woodlands conservation	Solano Resource Conservation District	Conservation planning with landowners and on public lands.
Wildlife conservation	Yes	Wildlife and wetland habitat management, enhancement and restoration.
Runoff control	Water Quality Control Board	
Pollution control	Regional Water Quality Control Board	
Prevent and control soil erosion	No	
Protect water quality	Yes	Water management, water quality monitoring and education.
Develop and distribute water	Department Water Resources	
Improve land capabilities	No	
Facilitate coordinated resource management efforts	Yes	Implementation of the 2013 Suisun Marsh Habitat Management, Preservation, and Restoration Plan in partnership with private landowners and State and Federal Agencies
Watershed restoration and enhancement	Solano Resource Conservation District	Conservation and watershed planning of environmental restoration and enhancement work throughout the County and Bay Delta Region.
Farm and range land conservation/management	Solano Resource Conservation District	Conservation planning and habitat restoration and creation projects and on-farm best management practices installation and management
Open space conservation	Solano Land Trust	
Waterway protection and restoration	Yes	Implementation of the 2013 Suisun Marsh Habitat Management, Preservation, and Restoration Plan and planning for managed wetland habitat enhancement and tidal restoration projects.

Service	Agency	Details
Vegetation/habitat preservation	Yes	Assisting landowners in implementing existing individual ownership management plans for 150 privately owner managed wetlands in the Suisun Marsh.
Erosion prevention	No	
Invasive species control	Yes	Implement annual invasive species control programs with private and public partners in the Marsh.
Educational workshops	Yes	Workshops and field days with students and the general public throughout the year.
Informational fliers, brochures, and white papers	Yes	Three newsletters per year, website with projects listed, annual landowner workshop and mailings.
Scientific studies	Yes	In partnership with DFW, DWR, UC Davis and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).
Flood plain management	Department Water Resources (DWR)	
Creek/waterway cleanups	Delta Conservancy	
Documentation of native species	Department of Fish & Wildlife (DFW)	
Advising and assisting individuals and public agencies	Yes	Site visits to private and public lands for conservation planning, habitat management and enhancements.
Conduit for grants and other financing	Yes	The District applies for and administers cost share grant programs to landowners to implement successful wetland enhancement and restoration projects.
Source: Policy Consulting Associates research, Suisun Resource Conservation District		

Suisun RCD implements a number of programs and projects in Suisun Marsh. The projects currently listed on the District’s website include:

- ❖ **Permit Administration:** SuRCD administers the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Regional General Permit #3 (Permit Number; 2012-00258N) for DWR, DFW, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and Suisun Marsh private landowners to maintain and operate managed wetlands within the Suisun Marsh.
- ❖ **Permit Administration:** Administers the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer Letter of Permission for the annual Suisun Marsh Dredging Program.
- ❖ **Fall Flood-Up Program:** Joint facilitated program between Solano County Mosquito Abatement District (SCMAD) and SuRCD. The goal is to reduce the production of mosquito populations during flooding periods of the managed wetlands. SCMAD will



spray any properties that produce large quantities of mosquitoes. Cost-sharing is provided when available.

- ❖ **Pest Weed Control Program:** The primary goal of pest weed control is to control invasive weeds in the Suisun Marsh. SuRCD offers various options for chemicals to purchase, application practices (by hand or with a helicopter), and provides cost-sharing when available.
- ❖ **Portable Pump Program:** Under SuRCD direction, two types of portable pumps are available to the landowners (at some cost) to aid and enhance marsh habitat. Water managers will oversee operation, maintenance, and distribution of pumps. The pumps are available for draining operations (leach cycles) on private properties and state-owned lands.
- ❖ **Water Manager Program:** The water manager program is fully funded by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) through the Suisun Marsh Preservation Agreement (SMPA) Amendment Three, Article VIII. The main program goals are:
  - ❖ To ensure proper water management and to maximize the potential of an individual parcel,
  - ❖ Provide cooperative service between SuRCD and Suisun Marsh private landowners,
  - ❖ Provide technical support to private land owners of the marsh,
  - ❖ Answer questions and to educate landowners on beneficial management techniques,
  - ❖ Promote effective and efficient use of channel water,
  - ❖ Avoid potential impacts to fisheries resources and protect sensitive species within managed wetlands,
  - ❖ Administer the portable pump program,
  - ❖ Monitor the operation of the fish screen facilities and perform routine maintenance, and
  - ❖ Assist landowners in avoidance of vector production.
- ❖ **Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP):** Provision of a seed mix that includes a blend of perennials and annuals that are known (through studies in the Marsh and on-the-ground experience) to provide optimal structure and cover to the upland habitats. SuRCD provides cost-sharing when available.

### Service Area

The District reported that it did not provide any services outside of its boundary area. There are no areas within SuRCD that are currently unserved by the District.

SuRCD, however, participates in numerous regional planning forums including a liaison advisor seat on the Delta Conservancy Board.

Services to Other Agencies

Figure 6-3 lists and provides details on the contract services provided by SuRCD to other agencies.

**Figure 6-3: SuRCD Contract Services**

Agency	Type of Service	Compensation	Areas Served
Department of Fish and Wildlife	Wetland conservation; administering and amending the enforceable standards contained in the SuRCD Local Protection Plan	\$250,473 for 3 years	Suisun Marsh
Department of Water Resources	Wetland conservation; provide assistance to landowners for the operations and maintenance of fourteen conical fish screens	\$35,650 for 3 years	Suisun Marsh on Montezuma Slough
Department of Water Resources	Wetland conservation; technical support on activities related to the implementation of the Suisun Marsh Habitat Management, Preservation and Restoration Plan	\$300,686 for 3 years	Suisun Marsh

Source: Suisun Resource Conservation District

Contracts for Services

The District receives management and administrative services from other agencies and organizations provided through contracts. The District reportedly receives payroll, audit and legal services from Solano County, as well as legal services from Somach Simmons & Dunn.

Overlapping Service Providers

In partnership with SuRCD, Solano RCD occasionally provides services within the SuRCD boundaries, including watershed conservation and management, woodlands conservation, watershed restoration and enhancement, farm and range land conservation and management, and public education and outreach based on contracts, partnerships and agreements with other government agencies and landowners.

## GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability of a governing body is signified by a combination of several indicators. The indicators chosen here are limited to 1) agency efforts to engage and educate constituents through outreach activities, in addition to legally required activities such as agenda posting and public meetings, 2) a defined complaint process designed to handle all issues to resolution, and 3) transparency of the agency as indicated by cooperation with the MSR process and information disclosure.

According to the Division 9 of the Public Resources Code, the Board of Directors of an RCD must consist of five, seven or nine directors serving four-year terms. Directors can either be elected in a general election or appointed by the County Board of Supervisors. The directors receive no compensation for their services as such, but each is allowed reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in attendance at meetings of the Board or when otherwise engaged in the work of the district at the direction of the Board of Directors. To be eligible to serve on the Board directors must be registered voters in the State, “reside within the district and either own real property in the district or alternatively have served, pursuant to the district’s rules, for two years or more as an associate director providing advisory or other assistance to the Board of Directors, or be a designated agent of a resident landowner within the district.”<sup>36</sup>

Legislature, however, caveated the director eligibility rule with a provision specific to Suisun Resource Conservation District, according to which the primary function of SuRCD in maintaining wildlife and wetland habitats will be impaired unless there is adequate opportunity for participation by landowners on the Board of Directors. Because of the natural conditions prevailing in the territory of SuRCD, the majority of privately owned lands therein are owned by persons residing outside of the District. Therefore, owners of land within Suisun RCD, or their agents, may serve on the SuRCD Board of Directors regardless of whether they are residents of the District.<sup>37</sup>

Associate director positions were established to allow members of the community opportunities to participate in RCD activities without being on the Board or give those who did not meet the qualifications of a director a chance to take an active role in the district. Associates often are chosen for their special expertise in an area of one of the functions of the district. Associate directors do not have the right to vote on Board matters. However, they can attend meetings and provide the district with extra expertise. Frequently associate directors also contribute by serving on various district committees.<sup>38</sup>

Suisun RCD is governed by a five-person Board of Directors appointed by the Solano County Board of Supervisors to serve four-year terms. Currently, there are no vacancies. If a position opens up mid-term the new open position is posted in public locations and filled by the Board of Supervisors. The District currently has four associate directors.

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<sup>36</sup> Public Resources Code §9352 (a), (b).

<sup>37</sup> Public Resources Code §9352 (d).

<sup>38</sup> California Conservation Partnership and California Department of Conservation, *The Resource Conservation District Guidebook: A Guide to District Operations and Management*, 1999, pp. 1-8, 1-9.

The Board of Directors meets on the second Wednesday of every month at 2:00 pm at the Solano County Board of Supervisors Chambers in Fairfield, CA. Information about board meetings is shown in Figure 6-4.

**Figure 6-4: Suisun Resource Conservation District Governing Body**

<b>Suisun Resource Conservation District</b>	
<b>Governing Body and Board Meetings</b>	
<i>Manner of Selection</i>	Appointed by Board of Supervisors
<i>Length of Term</i>	Four years
<i>Meetings</i>	On the second Wednesday of every month at 2 pm in Fairfield, CA.
<i>Agenda Distribution</i>	County Clerk's Office, 675 Texas Street, Fairfield, CA
<i>Minutes Distribution</i>	Upon request
<b>Contact</b>	
<i>Contact</i>	Steven Chappell, Executive Director
<i>Mailing Address</i>	2544 Grizzly Island Road, Suisun City, CA 94585
<i>Phone</i>	707.425.9302
<i>Fax</i>	707.425.4402
<i>Email/Website</i>	<a href="http://www.suisunrcd.org">www.suisunrcd.org</a> / <a href="mailto:schappell@suisunrcd.org">schappell@suisunrcd.org</a>
Source: Suisun Resource Conservation District	

Board meeting agendas are posted at the County Clerk's office in Fairfield, CA. Both the meeting agendas as well as the meeting minutes are not available on the District's website. The District tries to reach its constituents through its website, a tri annual newsletter, the annual Landowner Workshop, and various other mailings. The District's website additionally contains information on how to contact the District, the Board of Directors, district staff, the mission statement, links to resources and articles of interest, and photos and information about the District's programs.

SuRCD board members receive no compensation. Government Code §53235 requires that if a district provides compensation or reimbursement of expenses to its board members, the board members must receive two hours of training in ethics at least once every two years and the district must establish a written policy on reimbursements. It was reported that all SuRCD directors were current with required ethics training. SuRCD reports that the District does not have a policy on expense reimbursements, as its directors do not receive reimbursements.

If a customer is dissatisfied with the District's services, complaints may be submitted to the executive director or by attending a Board meeting. The executive director or the Boards president is responsible for handling complaints to resolution; however, there is no formal mechanism tracks such complaints to completion. SuRCD reported that it had not had any complaints in 2013 or 2014.

SuRCD has adopted a set of policies that guides and directs the District's governance and administration, including policies related to fees for services and purchasing policies and procedures. The District has not adopted policies on investments and reserves, public record requests, volunteers, and associate directors. SuRCD did not report whether it had a bidding policy, although it is assumed the District follows the rules and regulations for

bidding in each contract awarded through state and federal grants. The District has established a conflict of interest code, as well as extensive personnel policies that include policies on nondiscrimination and vehicle use. SuRCD provides its employees with sexual harassment literature. As required by Government Code §53065.5, the District filed an annual report to the State Controller with a government compensation report for 2013.

The Political Reform Act (Government Code §81000, et seq.) requires state and local government agencies to adopt and promulgate conflict of interest codes. The Fair Political Practices Commission has adopted a regulation (California Code of Regulations §18730), which contains the terms of a standard conflict of interest code, which can be incorporated by reference in an agency's code. The District provided its conflict of interest code.

Government Code §87203 requires persons who hold office to disclose their investments, interests in real property and incomes by filing appropriate forms with the appropriate filing agency (i.e., the County or the Fair Political Practices Commission) each year. In addition, the conflict of interest code of each district determines who among the officers and directors files the Forms 700 with the County's Registrar of Voters. The District reported that all of the Board directors had filed Forms 700 for 2013. According to the District's conflict of interest code, SuRCD's executive director also files Form 700.

During the course of this MSR process, SuRCD demonstrated full accountability in its disclosure of information and cooperation with Solano LAFCO. The District responded to the questionnaires and cooperated with interview and document requests.

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## Determinations

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- ❖ SuRCD is governed by a five-person Board of Directors appointed by the Board of Supervisors to serve four-year terms. Directors receive no compensation. Currently, there are no Board vacancies. There are presently four additional associate directors serving on the Board. The District should establish an associate director policy.
- ❖ The District could additionally make improvements by establishing policies on investments and reserves and public record requests.
- ❖ Suisun RCD holds Board meetings on the second Wednesday of every month at two in the afternoon at the Solano County Supervisors Chambers in Fairfield.
- ❖ The District generally demonstrated accountability and transparency with regard to governance by cooperating with the MSR process, adopting an annual budget prior to the start of the fiscal year, maintaining a website, and filing of Forms 700 Statement of Economic Interest. SuRCD could improve its accountability practices by posting its Board meeting agendas and minutes on its website.
- ❖ SuRCD follows some of the minimum requirements legally mandated by Public Resources Code Division 9, including basic reporting and training requirements, quarterly and monthly requirements, and select policies and plans requirements.
- ❖ There are no identified alternative governance structure options for SuRCD. No annexations or consolidations are being considered at this time.



## **GROWTH AND POPULATION PROJECTIONS**

This section discusses the factors affecting service demand, such as land uses, and historical and anticipated population growth.

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### **Land Use**

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Land uses within the District mainly consist of agriculture and wetland wildlife habitat. The District's bounds encompass approximately 180 square miles.

SuRCD's territory encompasses 52,000 acres of managed wetlands, 6,300 acres of unmanaged tidal wetlands, 30,000 acres of bays and sloughs, and 27,000 acres of upland grasslands.

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### **Population**

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There are about 15,192 residents within the District, based on GIS analysis of 2010 Census population information.<sup>39</sup> The population density within the District is about 84 people per square mile.

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### **Projected Growth and Development**

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SuRCD reported that minimal growth had occurred within the District in the last five years. The District noted that within its bounds SuRCD is populated primarily by acreage of wetlands and wildlife habitat, not people. Accordingly, the District anticipates no to minimal growth in the next decade. The Suisun Marsh is protected from development under the Suisun Marsh Preservation Act, the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commissions (BCDC), and Solano County policies and regulations.

The California Department of Finance (DOF) projects that the population of Solano County will grow by eight percent from 2010 to 2020. Thus, the average annual population growth in the County is anticipated to be approximately 0.8 percent. Based on these projections, the District's population would increase from 15,192 in 2010 to approximately 16,407 in 2020. It is anticipated that demand for services within the District will increase minimally, based on the DOF population growth projections through 2020.

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### **Growth Strategies**

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The District is not a land use authority, and does not hold primary responsibility for implementing growth strategies. The land use authority for unincorporated areas is the County. SuRCD provides information on conservation of resources on private and public lands through conservation plans.

As previously mentioned, the Suisun Marsh is fully protected from future development. The regulations and policies are in place to preserve and enhance the quality and diversity of the Suisun Marsh aquatic and wildlife habitats. Therefore, the existing land use of managed wetlands for waterfowl hunting clubs, tidal wetlands, agricultural practices, and

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<sup>39</sup> This population figure is approximate; it is the sum of Census Tract 2527.02, (1/4 of) 2521.02, 2524.02 and 2523.05.

open spaces are the only significant future uses of the Suisun Marsh.<sup>40</sup> It is reasonable to assume that any growth that may take place in the District will be in the cities.

SuRCD may be impacted in the future by development and growth occurring outside district bounds. This growth may impact SuRCD service provision as it faces the challenge of mitigating possible side effects from smoke from wildlife burns and human disturbance of wildlife and pollution.<sup>41</sup>

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## Determinations

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- ❖ In 2010, SuRCD had an estimated population of 15,192.
- ❖ SuRCD reported that limited growth had occurred within the District in the last five years. Similarly, the District anticipates minimal growth in the next decade given the County's policy of directing a majority of development to areas within cities, as well as the protections placed specifically on Suisun Marsh.
- ❖ Based on the California Department of Finance population forecasts, the District's population is projected to increase from 15,192 in 2010 to approximately 16,407 in 2020.
- ❖ Because a majority of the land in SuRCD is protected, it is anticipated that there will be minimal residential development or population growth within the District. SuRCD, however, could be impacted by growth and development outside of the District's bounds.

## **DISADVANTAGED UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES**

LAFCO is required to evaluate disadvantaged unincorporated communities as part of this service review, including the location and characteristics of any such communities. A disadvantaged unincorporated community is defined as any area with 12 or more registered voters, or as determined by commission policy, where the median household income is less than 80 percent of the statewide annual median.<sup>42</sup>

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has developed a mapping tool to assist in determining which communities meet the disadvantaged communities median household income definition.<sup>43</sup> According to DWR, there are no communities that meet the definition of a disadvantaged unincorporated community in Solano County. As such, there are no disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or adjacent to SuRCD's bounds and sphere of influence.

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<sup>40</sup> 2006 SuRCD MSR.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Government Code §56033.5.

<sup>43</sup> Based on census data, the median household income in the State of California in 2010 was \$57,708, 80 percent of which is \$46,166.

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## Determination

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- ❖ According to the Department of Water Resources, there are no communities that meet the definition of a disadvantaged unincorporated community in Solano County. As such, there are no disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or adjacent to SuRCD's bounds and sphere of influence.

## **FINANCIAL ABILITY TO PROVIDE SERVICES**

The financial ability of agencies to provide services is affected by available financing sources and financing constraints. This section discusses the major financing constraints faced by the District and identifies revenue sources currently available to the District.

The District reported that its financing levels were marginally adequate to deliver services. SuRCD has virtually no tax base, and relies heavily on contracts from other government agencies, charges for services, donations, and licenses and permits.

The District reported it has had to "do more with less" with respect to budget constraints.

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## Revenues and Expenses

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As the District had not yet completed a financial audit for FY 13-14, an unaudited financial statement for FY 13-14 was used to garner the revenue and expenditure information reported here.

The District's revenue in FY 13-14 totaled \$1,002,654, of which 48 percent was received from intergovernmental revenue (grants), 20 percent from charges for services, 15 percent from licenses and permits, and 16 percent from miscellaneous revenue. Property tax income constitutes less than one percent of the District's total revenue. The District also received a minimal amount of interest income.

The fees charged by the District for services are based on the actual cost to SuRCD, including employee hourly rate of pay, benefits and operating cost for each project. The District's Board of Directors established certain fees for equipment rental. The permit and program fees to participating landowners are based on wetland acreage at \$4 per acre. Fish screen maintenance charges are based on a prorated cost share of landowners involved and the actual costs of labor, equipment used, and equipment and supplies purchased for repairs to be made. Administrative costs are charged based on a pre-arranged written agreement between parties involved.

The District's expenditures amounted to \$1,032,574 in FY 13-14, of which 55 percent was spent on salaries and benefits, 35 percent was spent on services and supplies, 10 percent was spent on other charges, and the remaining amount on fixed assets.

In FY 13-14, the District's expenditures exceeded revenues by \$29,920.

According to the District's audited financial statements for FY 12-13, SuRCD received \$1,005,725 in revenues, including 48 percent from intergovernmental revenue, 22 percent from charges for services, 11 percent from donations and contributions, and 15 percent from licenses and permits. Property taxes, revenue from use of money and property and miscellaneous income constituted the rest of the revenues.

In FY 12-13, SuRCD’s expenditures were \$1,022,780, 57 percent out of which were spent on salaries and benefits, 14 percent on professional and specialized services, 10 percent on administrative overhead, six percent on maintenance, three percent on transportation and travel, and three percent on insurance. The rest was spent on supplies, utilities, communication, rents and leases, education and training, capital outlay and miscellaneous.

At the end of FY 12-13, the District’s expenditures exceeded revenues by \$17,055. In fact, as shown in Figure 6-5, during the last three out of five fiscal years, the SuRCD’s expenditure exceeded revenues. The loss in revenue is due in part to lost grant and donation funding caused by economic downturn. DRCD also experienced an increase in administrative overhead expenditures. The District currently has sufficient reserves for one year of operations and can cover the deficit. In FY 14-15, there is a projected surplus of approximately \$19,000.

**Figure 6-5: SuRCD revenue and expenditures, FYs 09-10 through FY 13-14**

Year	FY 09-10	FY 10-11	FY 11-12	FY 12-13	FY 13-14
Revenues	\$1,102,090	\$1,008,304	\$1,065,306	\$1,005,725	\$1,002,654
Expenditures	\$1,067,656	\$977,581	\$1,076,375	\$1,022,780	\$1,032,574
<b>Balance</b>	<b>\$34,434</b>	<b>\$30,723</b>	<b>-\$11,069</b>	<b>-\$17,055</b>	<b>-\$29,920</b>

Source: Audited Financial Statements FYs 09-10, 10-11, 11-12, 12-13. Unaudited Financial Statements FY 13-14.

## Capital Improvements

The District does not adopt a capital improvement plan. The District did not report how or when capital improvement needs and improvements are discussed. Planned capital improvements can be found in the District’s annual budget, which is approved by the Board. Typical capital improvements include structural improvements to the District’s facilities and purchasing of small tools and equipment.

SuRCD spent \$13,649 on capital improvements in FY 12-13, but did not specify exactly what this was spent on. The District’s FY 13-14 financial statement did not clearly identify expenses that were dedicated to capital improvements. The District budgeted \$19,300 for improvements to the building on Lower Joice Island for FY 14-15.

## Outstanding Debt

Based on the District’s audited financial statement the District had \$16,621 in long-term debt at the end of FY 12-13, which was composed of entirely compensated absences.

## Reserves

The District does not have a formal policy on financial reserves and reserve goal amounts each fiscal year. The Board is responsible for establishing or changing assigned

fund balance policies. At the end of FY 12-13, the District maintained \$400,668 in unrestricted net assets. Additionally, the District maintains four restricted funds each of which maintained the following fund balances at the end of FY 12-13: special projects (\$451,33), general (\$89,416), imprest cash (\$5,700), and long term assets (\$0).

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## Determinations

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- ❖ The District reported that its financing levels were marginally adequate to deliver services.
- ❖ A majority of the District's revenues are received from contracts with other government agencies and charges for services. SuRCD does not receive any revenues from special taxes or benefit assessments.
- ❖ The District does not have a formal reserve policy. At the end of FY 12-13, the District maintained \$400,668 in unrestricted net assets. Additionally, the District maintains four restricted funds, including special projects, general, imprest cash, and long-term assets.
- ❖ While the District's financial statements for the last three fiscal years exhibited income deficit, the District reports it is able to deliver services. The District currently has sufficient reserves for one year of operations and can cover the deficit. In FY 14-15, there is a projected surplus of approximately \$19,000.

## PRESENT AND PLANNED CAPACITY

The District reported that it presently had sufficient capacity to provide adequate services to its existing service area. However, limited staffing resources constrains that capacity.

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## Existing Demand

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The District reported that it did not engage in any planning or activities to forecast service needs. However, SuRCD observed an increase in service demand over the last five years due to the drought causing higher salinities. The District established a Portable Pump Program to address the problem.

Landowners within SuRCD's boundaries are considered to be the customers of the District. The District provides the landowners technical assistance in permitting, water control, and habitat management to ensure the wetland and wildlife values of the Suisun Marsh are sustained and enhanced. The Suisun Marsh Preservation Act precludes growth and development in the area.

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## Facilities

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The District operates out of three facilities and properties—the SuRCD office, the water manager's office and Lower Joice Island (1,300 acres). While the SuRCD office is owned by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the other two facilities are owned by SuRCD. SuRCD office and the water manager's office are open from 8:00 a.m. till 4:30 p.m. Lower Joice Island is a wetland conservation area, which was purchased with grant money and donations from previous landowners; it is not open to the public. All operating costs



associated with this property are funded by an endowment and managed by the Suisun Conservation Fund.<sup>44</sup> All of the facilities were reported to be in fair condition by the District.

It appears that currently the capacity of the District's facilities to provide adequate services is constrained by the fair condition of these facilities.

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## Infrastructure Needs

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The District did not report any infrastructure needs or deficiencies associated with its facilities and properties, although all three are considered to be only in fair condition, which means that upgrades and repairs are needed to improve the condition of the facilities.

The District has planned infrastructure on Lower Joice Island in the amount of approximately \$19,000 in FY 14-15.

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## Challenges

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The District reported that it was a challenge to effectively deal with environmental permit conditions, new regulatory requirements and reporting responsibilities, which limit staff availability to spend time in the field. Limited staffing resources also hamper the ability of the District to provide landowners with outreach and support.

## SERVICE ADEQUACY

California Conservation Partnership and California Department of Conservation developed the Resource Conservation District Guidebook in 1999, which outlines best management practices for RCDs. Many of these practices are difficult to assess for adequacy, and almost all indicators of service levels are not easily quantifiable when compared with a defined industry standard; consequently, a relatively subjective judgment of adequacy is necessary. In order to evaluate the adequacy of SuRCD the following criteria were considered: 1) long-range and strategic planning practices; 2) project evaluation practices; and 3) ability to find a supplemental source of income.

A strategic plan provides a road map to agencies by setting priorities and identifying means to meet those goals. Priority setting helps a district determine which needs deserve attention first and enables it to focus its limited resources on addressing those needs. District priority setting is accomplished through creating a mission statement, identifying goals that support its mission, and then crafting objectives that help the District reach its goals. Also, having a clear mission, goals, and objectives—a strategic plan—helps identify shared interests an agency may have with other groups, agencies, or individuals and helps avoid duplicating the work of other groups. Beyond these practical reasons for planning strategically, long-range planning is one of the provisions outlined in Division 9 of the Public Resources Code for the administration of a resource conservation district. Additionally, districts wishing to take advantage of state grant programs through the California Department of Conservation will only be able to do so if they maintain long- and

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<sup>44</sup> According to the 2006 SURCD MSR.

short-range plans and publish annual progress reports. As identified in §9413 of Division 9, long-range plans shall:

- ❖ Establish long-range goals,
- ❖ Be five-year plans,
- ❖ Address the soil and related resource problems found to occur within the district,
- ❖ Identify resource issues within the district for local, state, and federal resource conservation planning,
- ❖ Involve other agencies in the strategic planning process,
- ❖ Provide a framework for setting annual priorities,
- ❖ Create a basis for evaluating annual work plan achievements and allocating state funds to the district, and
- ❖ Provide for disseminating information concerning district programs and goals to local, state, and federal government agencies and the public.

The District does not have a long-range plan of its own. SuRCD, however, participated in the completion the 2013 Suisun Marsh Habitat Management, Preservation and Restoration Plan, which is a 30-year regional plan for providing environmental permitting, recovery of endangered species, and maintenance and protection of the wetland and wildlife resources of the Suisun Marsh. SuRCD has developed this regional plan along with other agencies that have primary responsibility for Suisun Marsh management, including U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, California Department of Water Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, and CALFED Bay-Delta Program.

It would, nonetheless, be beneficial for the District to establish its own long- and short-range plans that would describe various ways and milestones of the District's management program to preserve, protect and enhance the plant and wildlife communities within Suisun Marsh. The authors of Division 9 have specifically stated that long- and short-range plans would be an integral part of district functioning.

It is a best management practice among RCDs to publish annual reports to summarize the district's progress toward meeting the goals and objectives outlined in the long-range plan. Annual reports can be used to 1) provide a summary of the work accomplished over the previous year and set priorities for the coming year, 2) provide a means to track district activities from year to year, 3) offer a reference regarding project specifics in later years, 4) inform long-range planning efforts, 5) provide a useful introduction to the District's efforts for new employees and stakeholders, and 6) supplement grant applications to provide information on district programs and goals. SuRCD does not produce a verbal or written annual report each year.

SuRCD reported that it evaluated its own performance based on the effective delivery of programs. However, it did not report any qualitative or quantitative measurements used to determine effectiveness of delivery. Although the District does not have formal metrics, it is currently engaged in three large government service contracts, as well as receiving a large portion of revenue from fees for services. District's services are thus evaluated by its clients

through assessment of the fulfilled contractual obligations. District's services appear to be adequate based on renewal of contracts, as well as new contracts received.

RCDs generally are limited or constrained by available funding sources and have to heavily rely on supplemental source of income, such as grants. SuRCD receives almost no revenue from property taxes and relies heavily on grants and charges for services for its supplemental income. Ability to regularly receive grants is also an indicator of the District's adequate performance and ability to provide services in accordance with the Suisun Marsh Preservation Act.

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## Determinations

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- ❖ SuRCD has experienced increase in service demand; however not due to population increase.
- ❖ The District reported that it presently has sufficient capacity to provide adequate services to its existing and future growth areas; however, capacity is constrained by limited staffing resources and fair condition of the District's facilities.
- ❖ Planned capital improvements include improvements on Lower Joice Island in the amount of approximately \$19,000.
- ❖ The District's services appear to be adequate based on SuRCD's ability to secure long-term government service contracts as well as the revenue received from fees for services and grants. However, the District could improve upon its services by producing a long- and short-range plans and annual reports.
- ❖ District management methods appear to generally meet accepted best management practices. The District prepares a budget before the beginning of the fiscal year, conducts regular financial audits, maintains current transparent financial records, and tracks employee and district workload.

## STATUS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SHARED FACILITIES

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### Shared Facilities and Regional Cooperation

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#### Shared Facilities

The District's office is located at the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) Grizzly Island Wildlife Area and is provided rent-free as a condition of the DFW contract services, under the 1977 Suisun Marsh Preservation Act.

No additional opportunities for facility sharing were identified by SuRCD.

#### Collaboration

SuRCD partners with private citizens, local, regional, state and federal government agencies, research institutions, nonprofits and private sector organizations on various projects.

The District provides direct assistance to landowners, who work with SuRCD voluntarily to protect their soil, water, and natural habitats. The District also partners with

agricultural and natural resource protection organizations and agencies throughout the County and region to implement watershed programs with local and regional benefits.

SuRCD works with Solano County Mosquito Abatement District (SCMAD), the Department of Water Resources (DWR), the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), Bay Conservation and Development Commission, Solano County, Regional Water Quality Control Board, Solano Resource Conservation District, Solano Land Trust, and Delta Conservancy and Department of Fish & Wildlife.

Additionally, the District participates in regional plans, including Suisun Marsh Habitat Management, Preservation and Restoration Plan, and Suisun Marsh Protection Plan.

The District reported that increased partnerships with other wetland conservation organizations may bring additional funding to implement the ground habitat improvements.

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## Management Efficiencies

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While public sector management standards vary depending on the size and scope of the organization, there are minimum standards. Well-managed organizations evaluate employees annually, track employee and agency productivity, periodically review agency performance, prepare a budget before the beginning of the fiscal year, conduct periodic financial audits to safeguard the public trust, maintain relatively current financial records, conduct advanced planning for future service needs, and plan and budget for capital needs.

SuRCD employs seven full-time personnel and one part-time employee. Full-time staff includes one executive director, one operations manager, an office supervisor, three water managers, and a resident manager. A part-time person is called in when extra help is needed.

The District's executive director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of SuRCD. Employee evaluations, performed by the executive director, are conducted quarterly and annually. The District evaluates its own performance through the effective delivery of programs.

SuRCD tracks the workload handled by its staff. Staff prepares weekly work logs, attend weekly staff meetings, and use coded time sheets.

The District's financial planning efforts include an annually adopted budget and annually audited financial statements. The District's long-term objectives and goals are mandated by the 1977 Suisun Marsh Preservation Act and implemented through the District's management program to preserve, protect and enhance the plant and wildlife communities within the primary management area of the Suisun Marsh. The District does not adopt a long-range plan, an annual plan or an annual report.

The mission of the District is to continue to represent the private landowners on a variety of matters at the Federal, State, and local levels. Its historic goal is to achieve a water supply of adequate quality so that preferred wetland habitat values will be retained through appropriate management practices. Through cooperation with the landowners and various agencies, the District seeks to develop new programs aimed at protecting and improving the Marsh for future generations.

All special districts are required to submit annual audits to the County within 12 months of the completion of the fiscal year, unless the Board of Supervisors has approved a biennial or five-year schedule.<sup>45</sup> The District is required to submit audits annually. The District reported that it had submitted its FY 12-13 audit to the County Auditor's Office.

Government Code §53901 states that within 60 days after the beginning of the fiscal year each local agency must submit its budget to the county auditor. These budgets are to be filed and made available on request by the public at the county auditor's office. SuRCD reportedly has submitted its budget for the most recent fiscal year to the County Auditor-Controller's Office.

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## Determinations

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- ❖ The District shares office space with the Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- ❖ No additional opportunities for facility sharing were identified by SuRCD.
- ❖ The District practices extensive collaboration with other agencies and organizations and participates in the regional plans. It is a member of multiple organizations and associations.
- ❖ Partnerships with other wetland conservation organizations may bring additional funding to implement the ground habitat improvements.

## **LAFCO POLICIES AFFECTING SERVICE DELIVERY**

Solano LAFCO has adopted a policy that affects service delivery by resource conservation districts in the County. Standard 9 in the LAFCO Standards and Procedures manual requires urban growth to be guided away from prime agricultural land unless such action would not promote planned, orderly and efficient development for the agency. LAFCO encourages development of existing vacant or non-prime agricultural lands within the agency limits first before any proposal is approved for urbanization outside of the agency's limits. One of the services provided by an RCD in Solano County is protection of prime agricultural lands. When LAFCO approves applications that result in annexation of these lands into cities and/or urbanization, it directly affects services provided by RCDs.

Similarly, Standard 8 in the LAFCO Standards and Procedures requires that prior to approving an annexation, LAFCO has to make a determination that the proposed conversion of open space lands to urban use is justified by probable urban growth within a 10 year-period of time. This means that RCDs engaged in protection of open space are affected when LAFCO approves an annexation involving conversion of open space lands to urban use.

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## Determinations

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- ❖ Standards 8 and 9 of the LAFCO Standards and Procedures manual that control urban growth and protect open space and prime agricultural land through approval (or denial) of the annexation applications directly affect Solano County RCDs'

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<sup>45</sup> Government Code §26909.



service provision since the districts engage in protection of agricultural and open space lands as part of their main missions and strategic goals.

## **SUISUN RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT DETERMINATIONS**

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### **Growth and Population Projections**

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- ❖ In 2010, SuRCD had an estimated population of 15,192.
- ❖ SuRCD reported that limited growth had occurred within the District in the last five years. Similarly, the District anticipates minimal growth in the next decade given the County's policy of directing a majority of development to areas within cities, as well as the protections placed specifically on Suisun Marsh.
- ❖ Based on the California Department of Finance population forecasts, the District's population is projected to increase from 15,192 in 2010 to approximately 16,407 in 2020.
- ❖ Because a majority of the land in SuRCD is protected, it is anticipated that there will be minimal residential development or population growth within the District. SuRCD, however, could be impacted by growth and development outside of the District's bounds.

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### **The Location and Characteristics of Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities Within or Contiguous to the Agency's SOI**

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- ❖ According to the Department of Water Resources, there are no communities that meet the definition of a disadvantaged unincorporated community in Solano County. As such, there are no disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or adjacent to SuRCD's bounds and sphere of influence.

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### **Present and Planned Capacity of Public Facilities and Adequacy of Public Services, Including Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

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- ❖ SuRCD has experienced increase in service demand; however not due to population increase.
- ❖ The District reported that it presently has sufficient capacity to provide adequate services to its existing and future growth areas; however, capacity is constrained by limited staffing resources and fair condition of the District's facilities.
- ❖ Planned capital improvements include improvements on Lower Joice Island in the amount of approximately \$19,000.
- ❖ The District's services appear to be adequate based on SuRCD's ability to secure long-term government service contracts as well as the revenue received from fees for services and grants. However, the District could improve upon its services by producing a long- and short-range plans and annual reports.

- ❖ District management methods appear to generally meet accepted best management practices. The District prepares a budget before the beginning of the fiscal year, conducts regular financial audits, maintains current transparent financial records, and tracks employee and district workload.

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### Financial Ability of Agencies to Provide Services

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- ❖ The District reported that its financing levels were marginally adequate to deliver services.
- ❖ A majority of the District's revenues are received from contracts with other government agencies and charges for services. SuRCD does not receive any revenues from special taxes or benefit assessments.
- ❖ The District does not have a formal reserve policy. At the end of FY 12-13, the District maintained \$400,668 in unrestricted net assets. Additionally, the District maintains four restricted funds, including special projects, general, imprest cash, and long-term assets.
- ❖ While the District's financial statements for the last three fiscal years exhibited income deficit, the District reports it is able to deliver services. The District currently has sufficient reserves for one year of operations and can cover the deficit. In FY 14-15, there is a projected surplus of approximately \$19,000.

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### Status of, and Opportunities for, Shared Facilities

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- ❖ The District shares office space with the Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- ❖ No additional opportunities for facility sharing were identified by SuRCD.
- ❖ The District practices extensive collaboration with other agencies and organizations and participates in the regional plans. It is a member of multiple organizations and associations.
- ❖ Partnerships with other wetland conservation organizations may bring additional funding to implement the ground habitat improvements.

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### Accountability for Community Service Needs, Including Governmental Structure and Operational Efficiencies

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- ❖ SuRCD is governed by a five-person Board of Directors appointed by the Board of Supervisors to serve four-year terms. Directors receive no compensation. Currently, there are no Board vacancies. There are presently four additional associate directors serving on the Board. The District should establish an associate director policy.
- ❖ The District could additionally make improvements by establishing policies on investments and reserves and public record requests.
- ❖ Suisun RCD holds Board meetings on the second Wednesday of every month at two in the afternoon at the Solano County Supervisors Chambers in Fairfield.

- ❖ The District generally demonstrated accountability and transparency with regard to governance by cooperating with the MSR process, adopting an annual budget prior to the start of the fiscal year, maintaining a website, and filing of Forms 700 Statement of Economic Interest. SuRCD could improve its accountability practices by posting its Board meeting agendas and minutes on its website.
- ❖ SuRCD follows some of the minimum requirements legally mandated by Public Resources Code Division 9, including basic reporting and training requirements, quarterly and monthly requirements, and select policies and plans requirements.
- ❖ There are no identified alternative governance structure options for SuRCD. No annexations or consolidations are being considered at this time.

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### LAFCO Policies Affecting Service Delivery

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- ❖ Standards 8 and 9 of the LAFCO Standards and Procedures manual that control urban growth and protect open space and prime agricultural land through approval (or denial) of the annexation applications directly affect Solano County RCDs' service provision since the districts engage in protection of agricultural and open space lands as part of their missions and strategic goals.

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