



Lewis and Clark Conservation District

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Strategic Plan 2022-2026

Mission Statement

The mission of the Lewis & Clark Conservation District (LCCD) is to provide leadership in the conservation and wise use of natural resources to the people of Lewis and Clark County Montana.

Future Vision

LCCD encourages the people of Lewis and Clark County to preserve/protect and promote the quality of their land and water for present and future generations by providing quality resources.

Values

- Locally Led Conservation-Conservation efforts in Lewis and Clark County are locally led and focus on issues sourced by landowners.
- Leadership-LCCD is a leader in natural resource conservation in the county.
- Education-LCCD provides quality education at a variety of levels, from in-person to web-based.
- Service-LCCD provides quality service to the people of Lewis and Clark County
- Collaboration-LCCD collaborates with partners to leverage resources for projects, programs, and education efforts in Lewis and Clark County
- Accountability-LCCD has the trust of the people of Lewis and Clark County in handling tax-payer funds allocated to their management.

Goal #1-Education & Outreach

Provide pertinent information to landowners in Lewis and Clark County, including agriculture, small acreages and urban settings, to assist them in property management goals using best management. Increase and diversify our marketing and communication strategies to ensure that our target audiences are aware of and know how to access our resources.

EDUCATION

Goal: LCCD will continue to develop and expand educational resources for CD target audiences

Key strategies for accomplishing this goal include:

- Develop and maintain robust online resources for distance learning, including webinar content
- Maintain an active presence in the school districts in the county
- Explore potential urban conservation education topics and programs to include in CD resources
- Ensure that Legislators in the Conservation District are kept up to date on resource concerns and activities through quarterly communication and local legislator 'meet and greet' events
- Continue collaboration and support of partner education organizations, such as Helena Community of Resource Educators (C.O.R.E), the Lake Helena Watershed Group, and the Sun River Watershed Group
- Sponsor County Envirothon team(s) as needed, and support event through volunteer efforts as available
- Establish and participate in annual education events
- Provide natural resource camp sponsorships funding to the Conservation Elders Event

OUTREACH/COMMUNICATIONS

Goal: Improve public awareness and perception of value of CD and our programs

Key strategies for accomplishing this goal include:

- Develop and enhance CD brand and brand recognition through audience specific messaging
- Add to catalog of 'success stories' for outreach purposes
- Continue activities begun in 2023 into 2026 to highlight history and relevance of LCCD
- Actively engage in outreach activities in historically underserved areas of the county
- Continue development of website to improve resource access and navigability

- Maintain and improve social networking communication tools, with the creation and posting of relevant, engaging content
- Maintain and improve CD's annual electronic newsletter *The Explorer*
- Encourage MACD to review and improve historical documents at the Montana Historical Society

Goal #2-Projects and Programs

The programs and projects that we participate in will be done collaboratively with landowners and partners. We will work with existing and new partners to promote the wise use and conservation of natural resources in Lewis & Clark County.

PROJECTS

Goal: Implement and support locally-driven projects across Lewis & Clark County

Key strategies for accomplishing this goal include:

- Identify and understand community-emphasized resource concerns through public outreach, partner collaboration, and outlets like the Resource Needs survey (website) and Local Work Group meetings
- Host Local Work Group meetings with NRCS to define priorities for the district's and NRCS long range plans
- By 2026 develop pilot project prioritization evaluation to maximize limited CD resources and overall project impact
- Explore funding sources for high impact projects that fall outside CD's budget
- Find funding sources OTHER than DNRC-CARDD funding
- Participate, as able (volunteer, funding, and/or outreach) in partner projects

PROGRAMS

Goal: Establish, maintain, and improve conservation programs that support locally-led conservation and education efforts.

Key strategies for accomplishing this goal include:

- Assess viability of re-starting cost share program, as funding and staff resources allow

- Oversee facilitation and maintenance of area Rolling Rivers trailer, including overseeing partner scheduling and educator training
- Continue Pollinator Initiative, with focus on collaboration with partner entities and rural areas of the county

Goal #3- Stream Permitting & Riparian Health

One of the key natural resource concerns in Lewis and Clark County, riparian health, is a focus as the Conservation District implements the state mandated Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act of 1975. Stream permitting will be viewed as a “value added” activity, allowing us to make contact with landowners we may not otherwise have communication with.

STREAM PROJECTS

Goal: LCCD will implement and fund effective stream restoration projects that provide value, both environmentally and educationally, to the District.

Key strategies for accomplishing this goal include:

- Work with landowners interested in stream improvement projects and provide technical and/or funding assistance
- Develop a process for evaluation, timing & prioritization of requests for stream project assistance
- Collaborate with partners on stream improvement projects to best utilize limited CD resources
- Monitor long term effectiveness of projects by follow up photography and communication with landowners

FLOODPLAIN PERMITTING ISSUES

Goal: LCCD will continue efforts to streamline the floodplain permitting process for small-scale stream restoration work with the ultimate goal of facilitating good projects in the state that currently would be limited by the current floodplain permitting program.

Key strategies for accomplishing this goal include:

- Continue work with the Montana Joint Stream Restoration Committee
- Karl Christians and Jeff Ryan to work with Lieutenant Governor, Senator/Representative regarding Red Tape Initiative

- Work with representatives of MACD, NACD, FEMA and other agencies to streamline permitting process/requirements for small-scale restoration projects on water resources

NATURAL STREAMBED AND LAND PRESERVATION ACT (“310 LAW”)

Goal: LCCD will implement the 310 permitting process as mandated by state law, advocating for community-minded, environmentally-sound projects in the District.

Key strategies for accomplishing this goal include:

- Manage permit applications, complaints and emergencies and maintain a database of past and present applications
- Utilize site inspections as “value-added” opportunities for education on riparian health principles and general CD mission
- Work with partners to develop creative, cost-effective solutions to common stream resource issues
- In 2026, LCCD will continue utilizing electronic file storage for current permits. Staff will continue scanning older files, indexing them and will prepare older hard copy files for disposal as able, following state requirements.

Goal #4-Capacity Building

LCCD will focus on staff and board development in an effort to build personnel capacity, create resources for internal use, and facilitate organizational continuity.

ORGANIZATIONAL INDEPENDENCE

Goal: Establish organizational independence

Key strategies for accomplishing this goal include:

- Assess potential and need for Conservation Center

BOARD DEVELOPMENT

Goal: Promote an involved and informed Board of Supervisors

Key strategies for accomplishing this goal include:

- Assess Supervisor training needs and provide training, dedicating funding for training needs
- Adhere to organizational priorities through the review of strategic and operational plans at board meetings on a quarterly basis and an annual planning meeting in December
- Identify potential associate Supervisors to build CD capacity and to facilitate supervisor succession

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Goal: LCCD will maintain a positive and supportive work environment with updated job descriptions, policies and procedures, and qualified, trained, and competitively compensated staff to administer programs and manage the organization.

Key strategies for accomplishing this goal include:

- Develop annual work plan for office–and for individual staff members as requested–and provide a robust evaluation process with board member feedback
- Provide training and professional development opportunities
- Regular contact with Chair and other board members to review pertinent information
- Develop strategies to secure income to provide competitive salary and benefits and retain outstanding staff
- Provide support to the Montana Conservation District Employee Organization

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LONGEVITY

Goal: LCCD will establish systems and operations to carry out its mission effectively, including smooth staff and board transitions, and organizational development.

Key strategies for accomplishing this goal include:

- Use of Governance Calendar to facilitate staff and supervisor transitions
- Complete and maintain Policies and Procedures Manuals that will improve staff and board transition over time
- Maintain updated job descriptions, governance calendar and other documents
- Complete policy for dealing with emergency situations (flood, fire etc.) that will allow the District to prioritize activities and functions during emergencies

- Identify and obtain adequate funding for District objectives through grant programs—especially outside of the DNRC— sponsorships, and donations
- Strengthen existing partnerships and actively seek out new partners with shared organizational goals
- Ensure that diversity, equity and inclusion are part of development of the board and staff
- Strategic Planning session for 2027-2031 in 2026