

DRAFT FY 2016-2019 Strategic Plan

Conservation the Idaho Way: sowing seeds of stewardship



Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission

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www.swc.idaho.gov



SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Conservation the Idaho Way: Sowing the Seeds of Stewardship

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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



The Conservation Commission was created in 1939 during the Dust Bowl to address significant soil erosion issues. At the time, there were more than 27 million acres of land in Idaho had serious soil erosion problems.

The first order of business was to form soil conservation districts at the county level. Farmers and ranchers were elected directors of the districts, providing leadership on project priorities. As districts formed, NRCS and the Conservation Commission provided technical assistance to assist with stewardship projects.

*Today there are 50 soil and water conservation districts located from Bonners Ferry to Montpelier. Their efforts are guided by 5-year plans containing conservation goals and prioritized projects and activities. We provide funding and technical staff to empower districts - the boots on the ground - to get **things done.***

While we began working 75 years ago to reduce soil erosion, our efforts now include soil, water, plants, air, and animal conservation activities, as well. This FY2016-2019 Strategic Plan provides our detailed roadmap for sowing seeds of stewardship across this great State.

H. Norman Wright, Chairman

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CONSERVATION THE IDAHO WAY

Idaho is endowed with a magnificent blend of diverse natural landscapes — rivers, lakes, mountains, forests and desert canyons -- combined with rich and fertile agricultural lands well suited for growing a wide variety of crops and raising livestock. People who work in Idaho agriculture have deep roots in the land. They know that caring for the land will reap benefits for future generations.

"Conservation the Idaho Way" reflects the conviction that the very best way to care for and enhance the soil, water, air, plants and wildlife is through voluntary, locally led projects. Our philosophy is to use the state's natural resources to benefit Idaho people while maintaining and improving those resources for future generations.

MISSION

We facilitate coordinated non-regulatory, voluntary, and locally-led conservation by federal, state, and local governments including Idaho's conservation districts and other partners to conserve, sustain, improve, and enhance soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources. (IC 27:22)

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VISION

Conservation in Idaho reflects locally-led natural resource conservation leadership and priorities, is voluntary and incentive-based, non-regulatory, and demonstrates scientifically sound stewardship. The Conservation Commission and local conservation districts are the primary entities to lead coordinated conservation efforts with partners to provide landowners and land-users with assistance and solutions for natural resource concerns and issues.



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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Address legislative intent and statute
- Benefit the environment and Idaho's agricultural-based economy
- Benefit conservation districts' locally led, voluntary, non-regulatory priorities and projects
- Benefit the Commission's ability to serve and meet statutory authorities
- Promote fiscal responsibility
- Strengthen existing and build new conservation partnerships
- Incorporate valid scientific data and practices
- Benefit conservation work on natural resource priority issue area.
- Promote innovative conservation measures



CORE FUNCTIONS

The Conservation Commission focuses on three core functions:

1. Providing support to Idaho's 50 locally led, volunteer conservation districts.
2. Providing incentive-based and general conservation programs and services.
3. Supporting services and programs in a fiscally prudent, inclusive, and transparent manner.

KEY EXTERNAL FACTORS

There are key external factors that could affect the agency's ability to meet the goals and objectives contained in this Strategic Plan. They include:

- Changing demographics and land use designations.
- State and federal regulatory pressure and mandates that could shift priorities and resources away from current activities.
- Changing economics and pressures of agricultural and natural resources dependent industries which could result in significant increases or decreases in conservation program participation.
- Changing economics of state and federal budgets, which could result in additional agency cuts or fewer conservation dollars available to be spent in the state.

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CORE FUNCTIONS & KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES	BENCHMARKS
1. Support Districts' voluntary conservation efforts	Provide districts w/technical and capacity building assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct annual survey to identify satisfaction with services & programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ % of districts satisfied with services & programs
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist in updating 5-Year Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ # district 5-Year Plans updated
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct annual technical & comprehensive assistance request process, assign field staff reasonable/flexible discretionary time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quantify and track assistance provided <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ # of technical assistance hours requested/awarded ▪ # served with projects ▪ # new projects ▪ # ongoing projects ▪ # landowners served
2. Provide Conservation Programs & Services	Incentive-Based Programs	Resource Conservation & Rangeland Development Program (RCRDP) Make low interest conservation loans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quantify and track: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ # of new loans ▪ Total \$ loaned in prior FY
		Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Provide technical leadership and oversight to reduce ground water use, improve water quantity and quality, enhance wildlife habitat, and decrease the risk of agriculture-related chemical and sediment runoff in Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quantify & track: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ # contracts ▪ # of acres ▪ # contracts certified (achieving program goals) ▪ # certified acres

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GOALS	OBJECTIVES	KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES	BENCHMARKS
	General Conservation Programs & Services	Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Implementation Planning Program – subject to DEQ priorities, write plans/ designated lead for voluntary ag/grazing projects on listed/impaired waterways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quantify & track: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ # of new plans assigned by DEQ ▪ # plans completed ▪ # in progress ▪ # pending
		Ground Water Quality/Nitrate Priority Areas - Facilitate cooperative ground water protection, promote and support implementation of water quality projects to maintain and enhance ground water quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quantify & track: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ # acres treated ▪ Nitrates reduced (#s) ▪ Phosphorus reduced (#s) ▪ Sediments reduced (tons)
3. Build Support for Voluntary Conservation	Conduct outreach and communication – educate/inform public, decision makers, partners, and other stakeholders	Maintain Facebook & Twitter content about voluntary conservation activities of Commission and districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quantify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ # of Facebook posts ▪ # of Twitter tweets
		Publish monthly newsletter about voluntary conservation activities of Commission and districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quantify # of subscriptions

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C.L. "Butch" Otter, Governor

Board

H. Norman Wright, Chairman
Roger Stutzman, Vice Chair
Gerald Trebesch, Secretary
Dave Radford, Member
Leon Slichter, Member

Administrator

Teri Murrison

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FY 2016 WORK PLAN & INTERNAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	OVERALL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	FY 2016 WORK PLAN DELIVERABLES
1. Support District conservation efforts			
	1.1 Provide technical assistance	Technical assistance available to districts that request services (as resources allow)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct inventory of available field staff hours ▪ Invite district requests through formal allocation process ▪ Convene Division stakeholder workgroup(s) to rank and recommend awards ▪ Leadership Team allocates district support time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ~40% of available field staff time to technical assistance ○ ~10% of available field staff time to general discretionary hours ▪ Provide technical assistance to awarded projects and on discretionary basis as time permits ▪ Conduct pilot project with Div. 2 to determine feasibility of using task-based assistance requests, adjust process if warranted ▪ Convene division Technical Assistance Work Group (TAWG) meetings (6), review prior year's processes



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GOALS	OBJECTIVES	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	FY 2016 WORK PLAN DELIVERABLES
	1.2 Provide comprehensive assistance	Comprehensive assistance and capacity building assistance services provided to districts as resources allow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ See deliverables above relating to process for awarding district requests ▪ Field staff attend district board meetings min. of once per quarter
		All districts update 5-Year Plans annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist districts that request service
		Statutory requirements met for annually holding district budget hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct annual budget/unmet needs for implementation of water quality improvement projects as identified/prioritized in 5-year, other plans in June ▪ Disseminate results to Board, public, decision-makers as appropriate
		Districts aware of potential capacity building opportunities with other partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify new partnership and funding opportunities, notify districts, facilitate connections
	1.3 Distribute State Funding	Base allocations distributed in compliance with IDAPA 60.05.04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Distribute by July 31 ▪ Annually award district requests for available funding for capacity building activities. Distribute funds by July 31
		\$100,000 in operating funds distributed annually (equal distribution to each district)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Distribute by July 31
		\$50,000 distributed annually to districts for capacity building/outreach purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Solicit requests, set awards for following fiscal year by June 15th ▪ Distribute by July 31st of each year ▪ Districts report on funds use by 12/20

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GOALS	OBJECTIVES	OVERALL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	FY 2016 WORK PLAN DELIVERABLES
		Funds distributed annually subject to local matching formula in IDAPA 60.05.04.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advise districts in timely documenting submission of the receipt of local matching contributions ▪ Districts submit reports detailing local matching funds by August 15th ▪ Convene workgroup annually to review Financial & Match Reports, make recommendations to Conservation Commission by August 30th ▪ Assess and recommend need for 10% holdback due to economy ▪ Distribute state matching funds by September 30th of each year
2. Provide Conservation Programs & Services			
Incentive-Based Programs			
	2.1 Resource Conservation & Rangeland Development Program (RCRDP)	Low interest loans provided to individual borrowers for conservation practices and equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase loan portfolio by a minimum of the annual CPI increase ▪ Set %s and terms, monitor, evaluate, revise loan policies annually ▪ Support Commissioner Loan Committee to review and recommend actions to Board
		Loan review process conducted timely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct annual tracking of two loan applications, report results to Board

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GOALS	OBJECTIVES	OVERALL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	FY 2016 WORK PLAN DELIVERABLES
		Program marketed to agricultural landowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and update marketing plan annually ▪ Conduct annual review of prior year's marketing efforts ▪ Provide regular training to all field staff and districts as identified in Marketing Plan.
	2.2 State Revolving Loan Fund	Existing loan and/or future loans serviced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service and track existing loan ▪ If RCRDP resources become fully committed, seek re-capitalization from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
	2.3 Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)	Ground water usage reduced, water quantity and quality improved, wildlife habitat enhanced, and the risk of agriculture-related chemical and sediment runoff in Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer decreased via program efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Serve as lead agency for statewide program, provide technical leadership and oversight ▪ Conduct annual leadership and regular interagency meetings ▪ Strive to achieve goals and objectives for the CREP program as outlined in the 2006 agreement with the USDA Farm Service Agency as feasible ▪ Work to achieve increased program goals as outlined in CREP annual reports ▪ Submit annual report to Farm Service Agency and other partners
	<i>Unfunded: Water Quality Program for Agriculture (WQPA)</i>	Funding pursued to reactivate water quality implementation grant funding program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report annually to Board ▪ Work with partners to identify and secure new funding

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GOALS	OBJECTIVES	OVERALL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	FY 2016 WORK PLAN DELIVERABLES
	<i>Unfunded: Conservation Improvement Grants</i>	Funding pursued to reactivate program to provide cost sharing for conservation practices, evaluate feasibility of funding the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report annually to Board ▪ Work with partners to identify and secure new funding
General Conservation Programs & Services			
	2.6 Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Implementation Planning Program	Timely implementation plans written for approved TMDLs on listed/impaired waterways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In coordination with DEQ, complete existing TMDL Agricultural Implementation Plans within 18 months of approval ▪ Initiate assigned addendums, and assist with five-year reviews on existing DEQ Sub-basin Assessment (SBA) TMDLs ▪ Conduct annual meetings with six DEQ regional offices to coordinate activities , conduct Interagency meetings with DEQ/ other partners ▪ Provide technical assistance to districts implementing BMPs outlined in implementation plans (as requested in allocation process and resources allow)
	2.7 Ground Water Quality/Nitrate Priority Areas <i>(unfunded, but some work done through district technical allocation process)</i>	Reduce nitrate contamination in Nitrate Priority Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide technical assistance to districts through allocation process (see 1.1, above) ▪ Meet responsibilities as outlined in the Cooperative Agreement and in agreement with the updated Idaho Agricultural Pollution Abatement Plan as resources allow
	2.8 Idaho Agricultural Pollution Abatement Plan	Guidance document in support of the abatement of agricultural non-point source pollution updated every 10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement strategies as funding is available ▪ Work with other state agencies and stakeholders to increase funding for implementation measures

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GOALS	OBJECTIVES	OVERALL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	FY 2016 WORK PLAN DELIVERABLES
	<i>Unfunded: Watershed Improvement District Services (low effort maintenance)</i>	Per statute, provide mechanism for creation/discontinuance of Watershed Improvement Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respond to formation and dissolution requests
	<i>Unfunded: Idaho OnePlan Services (minimum level of maintenance)</i>	Promote OnePlan Conservation Planning system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make annual report to Partner Executive Committee on potential for enhancements, ongoing funding, and operation ▪ Pursue funding to develop web-based infrastructure as available ▪ Evaluate relevant statute to determine need to adjust requirements for steering committee, etc. and ensure flexibility for continued participation and funding
	<i>Unfunded: Carbon Sequestration Program</i>	Sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with agricultural and forestry practices, management systems, and land uses on cropland, forest land, and rangeland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor support for program and seek funding if reactivated ▪ Monitor ongoing carbon issues
3. Build Support for Conservation			
	3.1 Partner Participation	Commission engaged in district issues, meetings, activities/districts engaged in Commission issues, meetings, activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct annual district listening session to solicit input from partners ▪ Administrator attend district meetings (5-10), tours (4) ▪ Invite districts to present results of capacity building funding distributed prior year from Board

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GOALS	OBJECTIVES	OVERALL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	FY 2016 WORK PLAN DELIVERABLES
		Districts satisfied with services & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 85% of technical & comp assistance awards accomplished to districts' satisfaction ▪ Annual survey demonstrates maintenance or improvement in district satisfaction ▪ Conduct annual Listening Session, address emerging issues as they arise ▪ Prepare, disseminate 1 page district fact sheets to Legislature
		Transparency & involvement maximized, info regarding services and activities shared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Post regular and special public meeting agendas online, provide supporting documentation, and minutes/audio ▪ Utilize online video streaming to encourage participation
		Important district/Commission news and updates shared regularly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilize field staff, social media, Commission website, newsletter, and email distribution lists to keep districts informed
	3.2 Internal and External Communications	Staff, public, partners, and others informed of progress - successes and challenges	<p>Internal Outreach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Distribute Monthly Updates to staff for presentations at district meetings, and their own knowledge ▪ Conduct bi-weekly LTeam (leadership) video conferences ▪ Conduct monthly ATeam (all staff) video conferences ▪ Conduct annual All Staff meetings, communicate info, training <p>External Outreach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Publish monthly newsletter for districts, public, partners, Legislature and Executive Branch, maintain presence on social media ▪ Attend Governor's Capitol for the Day (3), legislative events ▪ Encourage newsletter reprinting (Farm Bureau, etc.) ▪ Publish Performance Measures Report (Sept. 1) ▪ Distribute newsletters through businesses resources permitting ▪ Make presentations to germane committees, JFAC (district fact sheets included), IASCD participate in presentations ▪ Plan & execute tri-state Commission meeting, tour

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GOALS	OBJECTIVES	OVERALL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	FY 2016 WORK PLAN DELIVERABLES
	3.3 Intergovernmental Relations	Actively-facilitated interaction and participation in other agency programs and projects (local, state, and federal governments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop new partnerships, resources for programs and districts ▪ Provide technical assistance to other agencies (including engineering) ▪ Review rules/policies that impact Commission and/or districts; review proposed and adopted plans, programs, environmental documents, activities and initiatives impacting conservation, take action as appropriate ▪ Convene advisory group as needed to make recommendations to Board and staff
	3.4 Collaborate w/industry associations and other stakeholders	Commission services, programs enhanced by regular interaction and collaboration with associations and other voluntary conservation stakeholders	<p>IASCD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attend IASCD meetings (annual conference, spring and fall division meetings, and Board meetings) ▪ Report at Spring & Fall IASCD Division Meetings ▪ Conduct biannual joint Board meetings to identify and promote common goals and strategy ▪ Form Commission/IASCD leadership planning group, meet as needed ▪ Encourage IASCD participation in monthly Commission meetings via partner reports <p>IDEA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attend IDEA Board meetings biannually and/or when invited ▪ Provide district employee training opportunities as requested and resources permit

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GOALS	OBJECTIVES	OVERALL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	FY 2016 WORK PLAN DELIVERABLES
			<p>Others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meet with resource and ag groups to publicize partnership activities ▪ Attend association meetings including Food Producers meetings weekly during legislative session. ▪ Participate in natural resource groups and processes to attract partners and resources. ▪ Participate in, speak at, and attend field trips and tours, annual conferences, attend meetings, conferences, and other functions to represent the Conservation Commission and promote good stewardship of Idaho's natural resources.
4. Provide Agency & Board Administrative & Support Services			
	4.1 Administer agency	Operations provide fiscally sound, efficient support to achieve mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fiscal - Conduct all day to day fiscal activities and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review existing agreements, update ○ Change over from contract fiscal support to ¾ time in-house financial specialist ○ Develop monthly cumulative sub-object budget tracking for expenditures, evaluate internal tracking and monitoring reports for all funds ○ Oversee risk management renewals for property, inventory ○ Facilitate annual audit ▪ HR - Perform regular recordkeeping, evaluation, and planning activities and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recruit, retain highly qualified staff to carry out mission of agency ○ Evaluate field staff annually in March. ○ Update Performance Plans in June for field staff to include technical assistance allocations ○ Update Compensation Policy and Plan annually ○ Annually evaluate employee performance and eligibility for compensation adjustments/bonuses ○ Annually evaluate employee comp ratios and adjust compensation as appropriate and as funding is available ○ Identify and offer advanced training as needed

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GOALS	OBJECTIVES	OVERALL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	FY 2016 WORK PLAN DELIVERABLES
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fleet Management Regularly maintain fleet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Replace vehicles at ~150,000 miles ○ Evaluate ATVs for replacement ▪ Facilities – Ensure office and work space is ample, safe, and functional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Update ongoing contract with NRCS for field staff office space and IT support ○ Secure new office space that meets need for increased Boise FTPs ▪ IT – Provide IT support on a day to day basis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evaluate need and implement IT replacement schedule ○ Convert staff file and data retention from local hard drives to centralized, shared system ▪ Operating procedure documentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evaluate and if necessary, update operating manuals for programs, services, and positions
	4.2 Agency governance	Facilitate excellent governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist Commissioners and Governor’s office during appointment process ▪ Support Commissioners to establish & oversee policies, ops ▪ Conduct up to 12 regular monthly Commission meetings annually and special meetings as necessary to conduct business ▪ Staff ad hoc and ongoing committees ▪ Agendas and reports distributed electronically and filed on website Provide Commissioners with laptops to use at Board meetings ▪ Propose legislation, promulgate rules, and issue guidance as necessary ▪ To promote increased access and efficiency, conduct video and teleconference (vs. in person) for Board meetings as feasible



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GOALS	OBJECTIVES	OVERALL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	FY 2016 WORK PLAN DELIVERABLES
	4.3 Planning & Reporting	Short and long term planning maximizes potential for success and efficacy, findings reported to stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop annual budget, blueprint ▪ Review existing and develop new policies ▪ Develop annually updated Strategic and Work Plans ▪ Deliver annual Performance Measures Report to Governor & Legislature ▪ Make annual reports to Senate and House Agricultural Affairs Committees, other germane committees as appropriate ▪ Inventory staff workload to quantify available resources for services and programs