

COLUSA COUNTY



RESOURCE  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

# Colusa Basin Watershed *Management Plan*



December, 2012

**Prepared by The Colusa County Resource Conservation District**

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# Colusa Basin Watershed *Management Plan*

Counties of Colusa, Glenn and Yolo  
State of California

December, 2012

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Colusa County Resource Conservation District,  
in cooperation with stakeholders of the Colusa Basin Watershed

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The Colusa County Resource Conservation District is grateful for the time and expertise provided by all who shared their valuable input during the creation of this document.

Of special note are our partners at the Glenn County Resource Conservation District, the Yolo County Resource Conservation District and the Colusa County Natural Resources Conservation Service.

We are especially thankful for the insight provided by local stakeholders who generously shared their knowledge and insight regarding the history and function of the various landscapes in the Colusa Basin Watershed.



*Photo above: Jack Alderson*

**Photos on front cover:**

*Aerial photo of watershed landscape: Jack Alderson*

*Field rows: Jack Alderson*

*Sunflower field: Mary Fahey*

*Irrigation ditch: Jack Alderson*

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## Executive Summary

The Colusa Basin Watershed is located in Northern California and lies mainly in Colusa County, with portions of the watershed spanning areas of Glenn and Yolo Counties. The watershed extends from the Stony Creek Watershed in the north to the Cache Creek Watershed in the south and from the Sacramento River westward to the ridge crest of the Inner Coast Range foothills. The watershed covers approximately 1,045,445 acres (1,634 square miles) and drains into the Sacramento River at Knights Landing via the Colusa Basin Drain. The landscape is dominated by agricultural and rangeland activities, with less than 1% of the land being urbanized.

The Colusa County Resource Conservation District's (CCRCD) Watershed Coordinator, working under a Watershed Coordinator grant from the California Department of Conservation, has prepared this Colusa Basin Watershed Management Plan (Plan) as part of an ongoing effort by the CCRCD to address natural resource concerns in the Colusa Basin Watershed. Although the CCRCD has always worked hard to protect, conserve and restore natural resources in the watershed, there has never been a plan in place to address these issues in an organized and comprehensive manner. This Plan will eliminate the "random acts of conservation" that have occurred in the past and provide a framework to promote projects that serve multiple benefits throughout the watershed. This Plan is a non-regulatory, community-driven guide which addresses the concerns of a variety of stakeholders. This Plan is meant to be a user-friendly, living document with a clear set of management goals, objectives and achievable programs and projects to sustain and enhance watershed functions.

The CCRCD chose to take an integrated approach to management planning for the Colusa Basin Watershed, coordinating our efforts with other planning activities in and around the watershed so as not to duplicate planning efforts. Collaboration among a variety of agencies, organizations, and landowners was key to the development of this Plan.

CCRCD took the following steps in creating this Plan:

1. Identified and formed partnerships with stakeholders, including those identified in the *Colusa Basin Watershed Assessment*, and new interested parties (see appendix 5)
2. Characterized the watershed utilizing information from the *Colusa Basin Watershed Assessment* and other existing reports
3. Identified the major issues of concern in the watershed by referencing the *Colusa Basin Watershed Assessment* as a foundation, and updating those issues based on current stakeholder concerns
4. Set realistic goals and identified potential solutions, to meet current needs as identified through stakeholder and Technical Advisory Committee meetings, personal interviews and email feedback
5. Developed an implementation guide with action items that address the goals and objectives of this Plan

*The Colusa Basin Watershed Assessment* (Assessment) referenced above was completed in December, 2008 for the CCRCD by H.T. Harvey and Associates in collaboration with G. Mathias Kondolf, Geomorph and Blankinship & Associates. The Assessment served as an excellent foundation for identifying stakeholders and characterizing the watershed. Consultants utilized stakeholder input, historical records and current studies to create the Assessment. Following completion of the Assessment, the *Colusa Basin Watershed Limited Streambank Analysis* was prepared for the CCRCD by Geomorph with assistance from H.T. Harvey and Associates and G. Mathias Kondolf. This document contains detailed studies and mapping of 32 foothill streams in the Colusa Basin Watershed. The streams were mapped for erosion potential, invasive species, and riparian habitat, providing information to help identify future restoration projects, and address data gaps as identified in the Assessment.

While the Assessment and Streambank Analysis served as excellent references for this Plan, the Colusa Basin Watershed Coordinator was also able to gain valuable input from multiple sources through a series of stakeholder meetings, personal interviews and email correspondences throughout the planning process. Stakeholder participation was essential in creating the most comprehensive and locally-led Plan possible for the Colusa Basin Watershed. Major issues of concern were identified and the goals and objectives of this Plan were developed through this collaborative effort between the CCRCD, landowners, water experts, Tribal representatives and agencies.

This Plan focuses on the following eight goals as identified by stakeholders and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC):

- 1. Protect, maintain and improve water quality**
- 2. Promote activities to ensure a dependable water supply for current and future needs**
- 3. Preserve agricultural land and open space**
- 4. Manage and reduce invasive plant populations**
- 5. Reduce destructive flooding**
- 6. Enhance soil quality and reduce erosion**
- 7. Preserve and enhance native habitat**
- 8. Address unknown future effects of climate change**

Based on these goals and their associated objectives, the Colusa Basin Watershed Coordinator has developed the Colusa Basin Watershed Management Plan as a guide for future watershed management. This Plan is considered a living document, to be updated as projects are completed and as changing conditions in the watershed require.



## Colusa Basin Watershed Planning Timeline and Activities

December, 2008 .....	Colusa Basin Watershed (CBW) Assessment Completed
February, 2010 .....	CBW Limited Streambank Analysis Completed
April 27, 2010.....	CBW Management Plan community kick-off meeting: introduction to the Plan and planning process; received feedback on resource issues of concern
June 8, 2010.....	Stakeholder meeting #2 to determine Mission, Vision, Goals and Objectives
June, 2010 .....	Mission, Vision defined
July, 2010.....	Goals, Objectives defined
October, 2010 .....	Outline completed
August, 2010 - August, 2011 ...	Stakeholder interviews conducted
June, 2011 – June, 2012 .....	Defining Actions and writing Plan

### **Draft Sections of the Plan sent to stakeholders for review:**

April, 2011 .....	Introduction
August, 2011 .....	Goal #4 Invasive Species
September, 2011.....	Goal #7: Habitat
October, 2011 .....	Goal #3 Agriculture & Open Space
November, 2011.....	Goal #5: Flooding
November, 2011.....	Goal #6: Soil
January, 2012 .....	Goal #8 Climate Change
February, 2012 .....	Goal #1 Water Quality
April, 2012 .....	Goal #2 Water Supply
June, 2012 .....	First draft of CBW Management Plan sent to TAC and Stakeholders for review
July-October, 2012.....	Stakeholder comments from first draft review incorporated into draft
October, 2012 .....	Second draft of CBW Management Plan sent to TAC and Stakeholders for review
October - November, 2012.....	Stakeholder comments from second draft review incorporated into draft.
December, 2012 .....	Final Colusa Basin Watershed Management Plan completed!
December, 2012 .....	Colusa Basin Watershed Management Plan presented to the public at a Community meeting

The Vision Statement and Mission Statement for the Colusa Basin Watershed Management Plan are as follows:

### **Vision**

The vision of the Colusa Basin Watershed stakeholders is to promote a productive, healthy and sustainable watershed that balances human and natural resource needs.

### **Mission**

To provide a practical, locally-led road map which will address the environmental, economic and social concerns of stakeholders in the Colusa Basin Watershed and provide stewardship guidance through well-planned, cooperative natural resource protection, conservation and restoration projects.



Figure 1: Map of the Colusa Basin Watershed

