

North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District

An independent special district of the State of California

To: NSCRCD Board of Directors
From: Stephanie Moreno, Executive Director/District Clerk
Subject: Staff Report for Regular Agenda Item 6.2: *Operational Update Implementation Plan*
Meeting Date: October 7, 2025

Proposed Action:

Receive status report from the Executive Director on the implementation plan for operational issues identified in the SWOT analysis.

Summary:

At the February 5, 2025 District Board meeting, the Board reviewed the results of the SWOT Analysis prepared by an outside consultant and authorized the Executive Director to develop an implementation plan to address operational recommendations that fell outside the scope of the long-range plan. The specific recommendations to be addressed are:

#	SWOT Recommendation
1	Document and implement succession plan to preserve institutional knowledge
3	Document systematized grant pursuit processes
4	Explore additional funding mechanisms including fee for service and bond measure possibilities
5	Document project selection criteria to balance opportunities with capacity.
8	Design systematic approach to enhance visibility and communications
9	Clarify environmental justice policy success metrics in the context of recent Executive Orders

Because the SWOT analysis was based on individual respondents' knowledge and understanding of the District, some of the recommendations may have been based on assumptions that are not reflective of a comprehensive understanding of District operations and existing systems already in place. To provide additional context, I have included background in order for the Board to consider the recommendations in alignment with current gaps and opportunities.

Update:

SWOT Recommendation 1: Document and implement succession plan to preserve institutional knowledge.

Objective: Ensure continuity of leadership and minimization of knowledge loss to ensure successful transition between old and new Directors and executive staff.

Status: Previous Boards have taken various steps to document information and processes to ensure transfer of knowledge, but insufficient attention has been given to executive staff succession planning. Traditionally, tenured Directors provided historical perspective and program guidance to new Directors, and long-time Associate Directors – some of whom were previous Directors themselves – also helped provide historical perspective and context. Additionally, the District has been represented by the same legal counsel at least since the mid 1990's, and that has significantly contributed to successful transitions. However, there has now been a complete turnover in the

Board and this has helped contribute to a deficit when it comes to historical knowledge and operational understanding of the District. Because of this, it is important that any succession plan address Board and executive staff succession as shared priorities.

Over the last several years, various procedures have been documented and shared with District Counsel staff as time permitted. A procedure template initially developed in 2022 was recently revised to provide more content and standardization, and will be used for documentation of procedures going forward. The Board meeting minutes index was developed in 2024 to serve as an additional resource, but has not been updated due to lack of bandwidth. In-service training regarding District policies, procedures, plans, and forms is included during staff meetings. Currently, District Counsel provides back-up coverage if the ED is absent due to an emergency or planned absence.

A draft *Succession Policy and Emergency Coverage Plan* will be brought to the Board for review at its February 2026 Board meeting. In the meantime, the ED will continue to document key District processes using the updated procedure template, and completed documents will be compiled in a shared employee/consultant drive.

SWOT Recommendation 3: Document systematized grant pursuit processes.

Objective: Demonstrate efficiency and consistency in securing and administering grant funding.

Status: The District has had a professional grant administrator on contract since January 2022. She provides grant writing technical assistance to eligible community-based organizations and Tribes under the District's Community Grant Program and provides support to the Executive Director in identifying grant opportunities, drafting grant applications, managing grant reporting and invoicing, and closing out grants. She has strong internal systems in place to manage her assigned workflow, and we have been working to develop and document a similar workflow process for those grants managed by District staff. A comprehensive staff report for grant application agenda items was implemented in June 2025, and a grant evaluation rubric and scoring sheet was developed in September 2025; future staff reports on grant applications will include the scoring sheet in the packet. Grant updates are currently provided to the Board orally; the ED will instead begin providing written quarterly grant reports on the status of applications and awards, starting with the January 2026 meeting.

SWOT Recommendation 4: Explore additional funding mechanisms including fee for service and bond measure possibilities.

Objective: Reduce reliance on grants; diversify sustainable revenue streams.

Status: The District has not had the staff capacity to offer a paid services program, instead delivering only those services that can be subsidized with grant funding or property tax revenues. With addition of two new conservation program coordinator positions in 2023, and their subsequent professional development in various areas of natural resource conservation, offering fee for service may soon be a reasonable option to consider. Additionally, the habitat mitigation consulting services we provided to the City of Palo Alto last fiscal year resulted in a positive outcome for their code enforcement case, and there may be an opportunity to offer similar services to other jurisdictions operating within our District. During this year's budget discussion, the Board indicated an interest to fund a cost allocation plan, a recommended preliminary step before establishing a fee-for-service, and that proposal will be brought back to the Board for discussion at the January 2026 meeting.

The Board has not previously discussed bonds, but if Directors are interested in investigating that as an option, a presentation with a financial consultant who has experience with the bond process can be scheduled.

SWOT Recommendation 5: Document project selection criteria to balance opportunities with capacity.

Objective: Ensure balance between capacity and mission alignment.

Status: Currently this balance is successfully maintained through discussions and adoption of the long range plan, the annual work plans, and the annual budgets. Adequate guardrails are currently in place to ensure balance between capacity and mission alignment, but should future concerns arise, adjustments can be made to the review process to address specific issues.

SWOT Recommendation 8: Design systematic approach to enhance visibility and communications.

Objective: Strengthen visibility with stakeholders and the public.

Status: The District is well known among agency partners and stakeholders, but less visible within various communities of constituents it serves. It was anticipated that the name change and resulting branding effort would strengthen visibility, but there has not been sufficient staff bandwidth to implement branding and marketing recommendations. Additionally, recent efforts to update the District's logo were put on hold until the long range plan is completed.

Community engagement plans are developed for individual programs, and typically solicit post-event feedback to inform future events. A series of at least ten community presentations highlighting the results of the Resilient and Equitable Stream Corridors Research Project will soon be launched, and will present an opportunity for a more systematic, district-wide approach. Opportunities for Director participation in outreach events will continue to be shared.

SWOT Recommendation 9: Clarify environmental justice policy success metrics in the context of recent Executive Orders

Objective: Embed equity in program delivery through targeted outreach, project prioritization in underserved areas, and transparent outcome tracking that addresses disparities (e.g. access, infrastructure, pollution burden) and provides fair access, environmental remediation, and justice.

Status: This will be addressed as part of the long range plan development.