



## **Mosca-Hooper Conservation District 3-Year Plan (2025 to 2027)**

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### **BACKGROUND**

#### **Organization of Mosca-Hooper Conservation District**

Mosca-Hooper Conservation District (MHCD) organized under the Colorado Soil Conservation Act of 1937 (Colorado Revised Statutes Title 35 Article 70). The District was established by a referendum of landowners on June 7, 1943. All incorporated municipalities and areas devoted exclusively to commercial or industrial uses, as they existed at the time the original District was formed, are excluded from the District. Area within the district is 462,000 acres, of which 317,000 acres are private and 145,000 acres are public lands.

#### **Mission of Mosca-Hooper Conservation District**

The mission of Mosca-Hooper Conservation District is to provide leadership in natural resource management for the betterment of all present and future residents of the district through education and example.

#### **Function of the Mosca-Hooper Conservation District**

MHCD coordinates technical, financial and educational resources so that they meet the needs of the local land manager for conservation of soil, water and related natural and human resources.

#### **Land Use and Natural Resources in Mosca-Hooper Conservation District**

Lands within MHCD total approximately 722 square miles in Alamosa County, Colorado. Most of this land is level, at an approximate elevation of 7,500 feet, except for the eastern part of the District which rises to woodlands and alpine areas of the western Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Aeolian and alluvial deposits form the basis of the soils in the District. Arid conditions, with annual precipitation averaging 7 inches, and cold temperatures with an annual average temperature of 41 degrees, create distinct challenges for agricultural production. Irrigated cropping, pasturing, and livestock production are the dominant land uses in the District. Water for irrigation is sourced from wells drawing from the region's system of aquifers, and from snowmelt delivered from reservoirs, rivers and streams to an extensive system of mostly unlined earthen ditches.

## NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION CHALLENGES

- Soil affected by wind erosion, alkalinity, salinity, and hydrologic drought, challenging management towards soil health
- Lack of soil health awareness
- Extensive drainage of historic wetlands
- Historic and current overgrazing
- Over-tilling and bare soil fall-to-spring
- Depletion of ground water for irrigation
- Decreasing quantity and quality of surface water for irrigation
- Inefficient water delivery systems and aging irrigation infrastructure
- Limited on-farm aquifer recharge facilities
- Degraded air quality due to wind-borne soils
- Lack of conservation awareness in the general population
- Lack of funding for resource conservation
- Fewer family farms; more corporate farms which may not be a conservation-minded
- Declining economic, physical, and mental health within the farming community

## PRORITIZED NATURAL RESOURCE PLANNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES\*

**I. Soil Health** - Across the District are soils that are not high-functioning, productive or fertile. MHCD works to make its soils more functional at producing healthy crops, resisting erosion, cycling nutrients, supporting livestock production, and storing water.

**Goals** - Within the term of this long-range plan, there will be: increased participation by land managers in district-sponsored soil health workshops and trainings, wider adoption of basic soil health principles, decreased wind erosion and increased soil carbon.

**Objectives** – The District will sponsor soil health workshops, tours and trainings to educate local land managers and livestock producers about the potential for improving soil function and productivity, and reducing the erodibility of their lands through use of basic soil health practices. The District will offer support for initiatives that link soil health and human health, and support farmers and ranchers in their efforts to revegetate lands with retiring water rights.

**II. Water Conservation** - Within this arid District, irrigation is required for crop production, but progressive limitations of irrigation water is forcing farmers to reduce active cropping.

**Goal** - Sustained agricultural use of the bulk of irrigated lands in the District aided by implementation of soil health practices, irrigation system efficiency upgrades, and improved water utilization.

**Objectives** - Improve communication among land managers who are making improvements in water conservation by expanding a peer-to-peer learning network and hosting workshops, seminars and field days; improve irrigation water utilization by promoting the use of soil moisture sensors and other low-cost technologies; enable compost applications; encourage use of programs (such as NRCS EQIP) to reduce the costs of major irrigation efficiency projects.

\*See pages 4-6 for details of the goals and objectives for long range natural resource planning (2025-2027).

**III. Agricultural Community Health-** Residents of the District are a vital natural resource. People that work on, own and/or operate farms and ranches face an increased risk of serious mental health problems that can have destructive consequences for individuals and families. Multigeneration farms/ranches are frequently lost from the family because of financial insolvency or lack of interest by the younger generation in continuing to own and manage the family operation.

**Goal** – With qualified partners, sponsor and participate in a variety of rural mental health initiatives

**Objectives** – Continue participation in Coffee Break Project for stress reduction and suicide prevention among rural residents. Host COMET trainings. Promote and normalize mental health education in the agriculture community. Encourage succession planning. Explore connections with the “Food as Medicine” movement.

## **YOUTH EDUCATION GOALS**

**Supporting natural resource education for youth is a priority for MHCD.**

**Goals** - On a continuing basis, MHCD will fund scholarships for youths to attend conservation camps, provide direct funding to the Rio Grande Watershed Education and Conservation Initiative (RGWCEI) for a variety of school-based conservation educational programs, support annual FFA range judging, and sponsor awards for conservation related projects at the San Luis Valley Regional Science Fair.

## **DISTRICT OPERATIONS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES \***

### **Sustaining District Operations and Staffing**

**Goals** - Within the term of this long-range plan, the District will continue to employ a district manager and a district conservation technician (DCT), and add a district conservation assistant to help the DCT with field work. The District will develop capacity building opportunities via various funding sources. The District will also maintain a five-member Board of Supervisors.

**Objectives** - Seek multiple revenue streams for long-term funding of District employee positions. Support on-the-job training to improve District staff competence and performance. Adjust, as necessary, staff members’ hours and hourly compensation to promote recruitment and retention.

### **Mosca-Hooper Conservation District Staff Employees**

Marta Petermann, District Manager  
Wayne Schwab, District Conservation Technician

### **Mosca-Hooper Conservation District Supervisors**

Bill Brinton, President  
Trudi Kretsinger, Treasurer  
Patrick O'Neill, Supervisor  
Matt Martinez, Supervisor  
Derek Heersink, Supervisor

\*See page 7 for details of the goals and objectives for long range operations and staffing planning (2025-2027).

**MOSCA-HOOPER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
**Goals & Objectives for Long Range Plan 2025-2027**  
**Natural Resource Priority I: Soil Health**

**Why is this a concern:** Most soils in the District are highly erodible, on low-functioning, input-dependent irrigated agricultural lands.

**Three Year Goals:** Increase the number of landowners and land managers implementing soil health practices within the District. Increase District-to-Farmer/Rancher partnerships to continue baseline data collection related to soil function, soil carbon content, and erodibility of lands across the area of the District. Promote revegetation of unirrigated farmland.

PROGRAM YEAR	MEASURABLE ANNUAL OBJECTIVES	COOPERATING AGENCY	TIME AND FUNDING NEEDED	SOURCE OF FUNDING
<b>2025</b>	A. Expand the soil health learning network of land managers via the Bringing Farmers Together small group learning project. B. Continue with the Colorado Soil Health Program (CSHP). C. Promote use of compost/compost extract among land managers. D. Communicate the activities of regional soil health efforts via field days, workshops, and other coordinated activities. E. Promote NRCS technical services and program opportunities. F. Review agreement/contract with Fungal Link LLC G. Continue to participate in ad hoc revegetation group H. Provide staffing for the National Wind Erosion Research Network (NWERN) site I. Complete the survey of Senate Bill 28-2022 participants to determine their revegetation needs. J. Encourage land managers to reduce wind erosion of soil by modifying tillage techniques, use of cover crops and windbreaks. K. Obtain funding for serial soil testing and soil moisture meter use by farmers and ranchers. Document benefits of these practices.	Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Colorado Soil Health Program Fungal Link LLC Soil Carbon Coalition Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative (RGWCEI) Print press CSU Extension Service NWERN Rio Grande Water Conservation District (RGWCD) Colorado State Conservation Board (CSCB) Colorado State Forest Service Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD)	Per annual budget	Fungal Link LLC compost sales Compost extractor rentals NCAT CSHP CSCB CACD NWERN District Funds
<b>2026</b>	A. Continue the soil health/water conservation learning network. B. Continue as in year 2025, except F. and H. which are completed.	Same as 2025	Same as 2025	Same as 2025
<b>2027</b>	Same as 2026	Same as 2026	Same as 2026	Same as 2026

Use of acronyms - **spell out each acronym the first time it is used followed by the acronym. From that point on, use only the acronym.**

**MOSCA-HOOPER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
**Goals & Objectives for Long Range Plan**  
**2025-2027**  
**Natural Resource Priority II: Water Conservation**

**Why this is a concern:** Irrigation water sources are limited and declining in our arid District. Conservation measures addressing this issue are of critical importance to the sustained productivity of our lands and the livelihoods of farm and ranch workers, landowners and land managers.

**Three Year Goals:** Promote drought resilience and the recovery of aquifers in the region by encouraging landowners and managers to: improve irrigation efficiency, optimize recharge, use water efficient crops including cover crops, and enhance soil moisture retention. In the coming three-year period. The measurable outcomes of these efforts will be: minimizing loss of farm/ranch acreage under irrigation, increasing aquifer levels, landowner use of incentive programs to optimize irrigation water usage, increasing use of cover crops, increasing use of soil moisture meters, and increasing application of compost products within the District.

PROGRAM YEAR	MEASURABLE ANNUAL OBJECTIVES	COOPERATING AGENCY/GROUP	TIME AND FUNDING NEEDED	SOURCE OF FUNDING
2025	A. Expand the water conservation learning network of land managers via the Bringing Farmers Together small group learning project. B. Enhance communication with land managers and ditch companies to promote drought planning and awareness of cost-share and incentive programs to improve irrigation infrastructure and efficiency. C. Facilitate installations and use of soil moisture sensors to promote irrigation efficiency. D. Coordinate with technical support providers to make best use of soil moisture sensor technology. E. Grow the use of fungal-rich compost products. F. Promote Master Irrigators Program.	Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Colorado Drought Advisors Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project (RGHRP) Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) Colorado State University (CSU) CSU Extension Service Soil Carbon Coalition Fungal Link LLC Land Managers Ditch Companies		District Funds NRCS EQIP et al CSCB CWCB CACD Fungal Link LLC Compost extractor rentals
2026-2027	A. Continue the soil health/water conservation learning network B. Continue other objectives the same as in year 2025	Same as 2025	Same as 2025	Same as 2025

**MOSCA-HOOPER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
**Goals & Objectives for Long Range Plan 2025-2027**  
**Natural Resource Priority III: Agricultural Community Health**

**Why this is a concern:** People that own, operate and work on farms and ranches face an increased risk of serious mental health problems that can have destructive consequences for individuals and families. Multigeneration farms/ranches are frequently lost from the family because of financial insolvency or lack of interest by the younger generation in continuing to own and manage the family operation.

**Three Year Goal:** With qualified partners, sponsor and participate in a suite of initiatives to promote and normalize mental health interventions in the San Luis Valley.

PROGRAM YEARS	MEASURABLE ANNUAL OBJECTIVES	COOPERATING AGENCY/GROUP	TIME AND FUNDING NEEDED	SOURCE OF FUNDING
2025-2027	A. MHCD will continue as a Coffee Break Project “investor” for the purposes of stress reduction and suicide prevention among the San Luis Valley residents. B. Evaluate prospects for Coffee Break Project storefronts in the San Luis Valley. C. Sponsor social gatherings to alleviate rural isolation. D. Host and promote COMET* trainings, E. Promote succession planning. F. Learn about “Food as Medicine” and explore its potential connections with local agricultural community health.	Valley Wide Health Systems (VWHS) Center and Rio Grande Conservation Districts CSU Extension Service Colorado Dept. of Agriculture (CDA) Center for Food as Medicine Community members including: farmers, ranchers, bankers, Ag business leaders Rocky Mountain Farmers Union (RMFU) Farm Bureau		VWHS Conservation Districts CSU Extension Others To be determined

\*COMET™ (Changing Our Mental and Emotional Trajectory) is a two-hour training program that teaches people how to support friends, neighbors, and colleagues who are struggling with mental health. COMET™ was developed by the [High Plains Research Network \(HPRN\)](#) Community Advisory Council.

**MOSCA-HOOPER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
**Goals & Objectives for Long Range Plan 2025-2027**  
**Maintaining District Staffing and Operations**

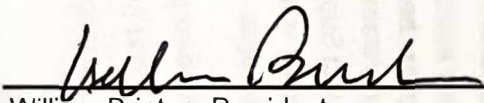
**Why this is a concern:** There must be funding for District operations to be sustainable. A top priority is adequate staffing to implement operations.

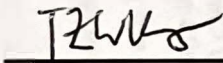
**Three Year Goal:** The District must maintain funding and capacity through product sales, grants, private donations and partnerships.

PROGRAM YEAR	MEASURABLE ANNUAL OBJECTIVES	COOPERATING AGENCY/GROUP	TIME AND FUNDING NEEDED	SOURCE OF FUNDING
2025-2027	<p>A. The District Manager must be proficient at running the business of the Conservation District, including: fundraising; grant writing; report writing; retail sales; community outreach; employee recruitment and supervision; annual report preparation; timely statutory filing requirements; functioning as the district election officer; planning events and meetings; budgeting; assisting with bookkeeping; implementing projects, and other duties as described in the employment agreement.</p> <p>B. The District Conservation Technician (DCT) performs field work required by the Colorado Soil Health Program (CSHP), such as soil sampling, soil moisture meter installation and onsite consultation with CSHP farmers/ranchers. The DCT also performs wind erosion sample collections, vegetation surveys, and routine maintenance at the NWERN (weather station) site.</p> <p>C. The DCT assistant will be a new position starting in 2025, for helping the DCT with field work, especially at the NWERN site.</p> <p>D. Board members will receive education on conservation-related topics and conservation district supervision.</p> <p>E. The District will renew an annual conservation award.</p> <p>F. In early 2025, update the address list for District residents.</p> <p>G. The District must secure long-term funding for staffing, plan for cost-of-living increases, consider adding employee benefits to promote recruitment and retention, and increase capacity to meet the demands of future projects</p>	<p>District Board RGWCEI Rio Grande Watershed Association of Conservation Districts (RGWACD) CACD Colorado Conservation District Employee's Association (CCDEA) CSCB Alamosa County Clerk NWERN</p>	<p>Up to 60 hours/mo. for District Manager @ \$25/hr Up to 40 hours/mo. for DCT @ \$22/hr. Up to 9 hours/mo. for DCT assistant @ \$20/hr.  Approx. two hours/week for District Supervisors (unpaid volunteers)</p>	<p>Compost sales Compost extractor rentals NWERN CSHP (this may expire in 2027!) CACD CSCB</p>

**MOSCA-HOOPER CONSERVATION DISTRICT LONG RANGE PLAN (2025-2027)****RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION**

THEREFORE, Be It Resolved that this Long Range Plan of the Mosca-Hooper Conservation District be adopted as the official program of the District as of this 9th day of December, 2024.

  
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William Brinton, President

  
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Trudi Kretsinger, Supervisor

  
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Patrick O'Neill, Supervisor

  
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Matthew Martinez, Supervisor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Derek Heesink, Supervisor

Reviewed by the Colorado State Conservation Board

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Colorado State Conservation Board, President

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CSCB, Program Manager

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Date