

# Conservation Action Plan Example Title Page and Introduction

(AACD Technical Reference #A-6)

E. Lamar Smith, PhD



*FIRST WRITTEN AUGUST 2021, REVISED JUNE 2022*

*COPYRIGHT © 2022*

*ARIZONA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS*

*ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. NO PORTION OF THIS ARTICLE MAY BE REPRODUCED IN ANY FORM WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM THE PUBLISHER, EXCEPT AS PERMITTED BY U.S. COPYRIGHT LAW.*

*FOR PERMISSIONS CONTACT THE ARIZONA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS AT:  
INFORMATION.AACD@GMAIL.COM*

This is an example of a title page and introduction for District Conservation Action Plans. Parts will need to be modified to fit individual Districts.

---

# (Insert Name) Natural Resource Conservation District Conservation Action Plan

## Introduction

### Purpose

The (Insert Name) Natural Resource Conservation District (hereafter referred to as “the District”) is one of 40 conservation districts in the State of Arizona. (Describe location of District) This conservation needs assessment and management plan is intended to facilitate the efforts of the District to identify resource concerns and needed practices, prioritize conservation projects, and obtain funds for carrying out those projects.

### *Mission and Authority of the District*

Arizona Conservation Districts (originally Soil and Water Conservation Districts – now Natural Resource Conservation Districts) were established in 1941 by state law (ARS Title 37, Chapter 6). This law states the mission of the Districts as:

*“to provide for the restoration and conservation of lands and soil resources of the state, the preservation of water rights and the control and prevention of soil erosion, and thereby to conserve natural resources, conserve wildlife, protect the tax base, protect public lands and protect and restore this state’s rivers and streams and associated riparian habitats, including fish and wildlife resources that are dependent on those habitats, and in such manner to protect and promote the public health safety and general welfare of the people.”*

Conservation Districts are entities of local government administered by the Arizona State Land Department and governed by a board of supervisors elected by the cooperating residents of a District. Districts cover the entire state of Arizona.

As stated in ARS Title 37, the mission of the Districts is very broad. Conservation Districts are authorized and charged with the responsibility to address natural resource concerns of all kinds and on all types of land ownership or administration (Tribal lands are covered by separate Districts with similar organization). Thus, the Districts are uniquely appropriate for developing comprehensive and coordinated resource management plans that address all kinds of resource concerns on all types of land tenure. The Districts are the only entities of federal, state, or local government with such a mandate.

The Districts carry out this mandate in several ways. The original impetus for formation of the District was to coordinate input from their cooperators to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in the provision of technical assistance and cost sharing for conservation on private, state, and some other lands. This function continues to be important. In addition, the District participates as a cooperating agency in the development of land use plans and programs related to conservation with federal agencies, other entities of state government, county governments, and other organizations. The District provides technical and educational information to its cooperators regarding all phases of conservation. Finally, the District is becoming increasingly involved in seeking funding for on-the-ground conservation practices from many sources including federal, state, and local government programs and grant opportunities as well as from other interest groups such as organizations of agricultural producers, environmentalists, hunters, fishermen, off-roaders, and other recreationists.

### *Need for the Assessment*

**Note: This section was written for the Big Sandy NRC. It may need to be modified for other Districts which may have different resources and resource concerns. This may especially apply to farming districts.**

Most of the District is arid to semi-arid rangeland, and thus water is a limiting factor to plant growth, animal production, and human needs. The past two decades have been characterized by frequent drought conditions which has focused attention on resource problems related to water supply. Springs, wells, and streams have dried up or experienced reduced flow due to dry conditions, but also to changes in vegetation and soil protection on the watersheds, increased water usage for residential and commercial purposes, increased ground water pumping for agriculture, and use for mining. The District recognizes that extensive rehabilitation\* of watersheds is needed to improve water yield, reduce erosion and sedimentation, reduce flooding, and encourage ground water recharge.

Vegetation changes on the watersheds since settlement due to land use and fire protection have not only impacted watershed hydrology, but also have involved spread of invasive plants, reduced wildlife habitat quality, reduced livestock forage, and increased danger from wildfires.

The complexity of land ownership within the District results in a need for a general assessment of conservation practices across all types of land. The District is a logical entity to take the lead in coordinating such efforts.

This assessment is based on available data obtained from various agencies, published and unpublished reports and studies, ecological site descriptions, personal observations of agency and academic personnel, resource consultants, and input from local ranchers. It represents the best available estimates of the type and extent of resource concerns, and the corrective practices needed. More extensive field work will be necessary to arrive at exact locations needing treatment practices and specific prescriptions of practices.

### *Goals*

- To identify local priorities and high-risk resource concerns based on local workgroup input
- To create and maintain vegetative conditions and resource management that will result in soil and water conservation and productive use of the land as well as reduced risk to human life and property by wildfire

- To coordinate these land management practices among the various landowners and jurisdictions within the District which is made necessary because of the complex pattern and interdependence of land ownerships in the area
- To assist District cooperators and others in obtaining financial assistance and technical assistance to support conservation efforts on all land ownerships
- To assist the District in understanding resource conditions and needs and to develop short-term action plans and long-term strategies to address the needs

This document consists of an introduction, 5 chapters, and appendices. Tables and figures are given a prefix of the chapter number appendix letter. Each table and figure within a chapter or appendix is then numbered in the order it appears in the document. (example: Table 2-1, Table 3-6, etc.). The information presented in tables and figures is derived partly from reports generated by the ConserveAZ. Portal and partly from other sources. Whenever information is derived from the Portal the date on which the information was downloaded should be recorded. (Example: Approximately 30% of the land in the District is private (Portal 3/22).). Some of the information in the Portal will be modified in the future, so it is important to know the access date in case this plan needs to be updated. To the extent possible all references to URLs that are the source of information should contain and access date, for the same reason.

***\*Note:** The term “rehabilitation” is used here as a general term referring to watershed function. Watershed function refers to hydrological processes (interception, infiltration, runoff, soil erosion, ground water recharge, streamflow, etc.). **Rehabilitation** is used in this document instead of **restoration** because the goals of the District are not to return to some “natural” condition that may or may not have existed in the past, but to manage watersheds to provide sustainable goods, services, and values for present and future generations of residents. It is also important to realize that many areas are not “degraded” in terms of ecosystem processes and the aim may be to prevent degradation from occurring.*