

2005-2006 ANNUAL REPORT and 2005 STAKEHOLDER SURVEY SUMMARY





2005-2006 ANNUAL REPORT & 2005 Stakeholder Survey Results

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President's Message

The Butte County Resource Conservation District (BCRCD) continues to grow into its fourth year as a leader in developing local solutions to local resource conservation issues. The resource conservation challenges in Butte County are numerous and complex. Many of our resource issues can be difficult due to competing local interests and sometimes even intervening state and federal legislation, regulations and programs. The BCRCD Board of Directors is learning how their target programs must move, morph and mature on almost a daily basis.

The Board of Director's 2005-2006 main focus is nurturing the organizational capacity of the BCRCD. Program development through stakeholder survey input and program funding has progressed at lightning speed. Currently, \$2,874,200 in grants and/or contracts is under consideration for funding through a variety of state and federal programs. Our vital partnership with the Natural Resource Conservation Service has expanded to support the USDA Farm Bill programs that assist our local farmers and producers with technical and financial assistance, bolstering the Butte County economy.

A major milestone of the past fiscal year was our first annual financial audit conducted by Davis Hammon & Co. The very positive audit report confirmed to the organization that we are on the right road in terms of our fiscal management, reporting and documentation of not only our grants and contracts but also our documentation of public board meetings and full compliance with the Open Meeting Laws of the State of California.

The BCRCD Board of Directors wants to take this special opportunity to highlight and thank our cooperators, funding agencies, watershed groups, private donors and volunteers who work with us to complete projects, on time and within budget.

The BCRCD's experience as a team and family is growing; we hope to excel in our role of guiding Butte County conservation needs. Our projects and educational outreach would not be possible without your commitment and support. Thank you all for helping the BCRCD record a great year in 2005-2006.



DC Jones, President
BCRCD Board of Directors

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Introduction

Butte County Resource Conservation District (BCRCD), a subdivision of the State of California, is responsible for collaborating with private landowners and agencies to implement natural resource conservation projects throughout the unincorporated areas in Butte County. The District is funded entirely by grants, donations, and contracts. The District receives no general tax revenues.

Protecting soil and water throughout the District is the primary goal of BCRCD. This is accomplished by implementing conservation projects in cooperation with willing landowners and agencies, as well as restoration of the function and health of watersheds in the district. Landowners who practice good land stewardship are recognized by the District Board. The District achieves these objectives by sponsoring education workshops, arranging meetings on resource issues, providing technical assistance to landowners, sponsoring Coordinated Resource Management Groups, Watershed Groups and Conservancies, and contracting with other agencies to carry out conservation projects. BCRCD works hand-in-hand with local landowners, other government agencies, businesses and civic groups.

The Purpose of Resource Conservation Districts

“The Legislature hereby declares that resource conservation is of fundamental importance to the prosperity and welfare of the people of this state.”

In 1938, the California Legislature authorized the formation of special conservation districts. Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code defines the basic framework for the organization, operation, and roles and responsibilities of Resource Conservation Districts (RCD), as well as the selection of directors that govern them. California has 104 independent Resource Conservation Districts, which cover approximately 95% of the state. In the United States, there are over 3,000 RCDs. The RCD structure remains the most effective state and national blueprint for addressing priority soil and water conservation problems.



There are two associations working to improve RCD capacity and effectiveness, the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) and the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD). Technical assistance to the districts and its cooperators is provided by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Today, RCDs are also challenged with greater diversity as the management of whole watersheds assumes a higher level of priority in resource conservation goals. RCD's work is in coordination with other local, state and federal agencies to apply a broad range of solutions to resource problems.

Butte County Resource Conservation District

Motto

Cooperation, not regulation.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Butte County Resource Conservation District is to conserve the resources of Butte County for the benefit of its citizens, its environment, and its economy.

History of Butte County Resource Conservation District

On an already baking-hot Wednesday morning at the end of May 2003, a diverse group of Butte County citizens gathered under the cooling shade of majestic oaks surrounding Honey Run Covered Bridge to celebrate two events that many thought they would never see: The formation of a conservation district in Butte County and the signing of an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formalizing the relationship between the district and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The Department of Conservation (DOC) and California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) are also signatories of this MOU.

The district was formed after passage of a county-wide ballot measure in March 2002, the measure passed by a very slim margin—only 156 votes. Misconceptions about the intent of a conservation district, including fears that cities might gain control of its funding and authority, thwarted its formation in the past. Two previous attempts to form a district in the county failed to win support from farmers and large land interests and never came before voters.

“The same reason we weren’t able to form a district for years is the same reason we finally did,” said Butte County Supervisor Jane Dolan. “We are a diverse county. The people want to know. They want information. And, they want to have input.”

Sharing in the celebration were representatives from UC Cooperative Extension, Butte County Water Commission, Department of Water & Resource Conservation, Agricultural Commissioner, League of Women Voters, LAFCO, Assemblyman Rick Keene’s office, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Cherokee Watershed Alliance, California Women for Agriculture, Butte County Fire Safe Council, and neighboring RCDs from Tehama and Glenn counties. Among the speakers were NRCS State Conservationist Chuck Bell, DOC Assistant Director Eric Vink, Tom Wehri of CARCD, Butte County Farm Bureau President Tod Kimmelshue, and Ed Chombeau of the Butte County RCD.



Hue Dang, District Conservationist at the new NRCS office in Oroville, was there as well. Dang and Sevelius set up the ceremony and both worked hard to get the district up and running.

The benefit of cooperation among the various interests was a recurring theme during the presentations. “We must all work together towards common goals to save rural California,” said Kimmelshue, who offered the farmers’ perspective on the MOU.

The picturesque bridge, built in 1894 at the confluence of Big Butte and Little Butte Creeks and one of only 12 remaining covered bridges remaining in California, served as the ideal backdrop to the joyful event. Black cliffs formed by ancient Cascade Range lava flows towering above the bridge only added to the grandeur.

“The RCD is in a position to build bridges between rural Butte County and urban Butte County,” said Bell emphasizing the symbolic setting.

It was a fine beginning.



Natural Resource Conservation Service

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Butte County RCD work together through Stakeholder Meetings and Local Work Groups to garner input from landowners to develop local resource priorities. The Stakeholder Survey, summarized in this Annual Report, was a new approach to determining 2005 landowner concerns. NRCS provides District landowners needed technical and financial tools to plan and fund conservation practices and projects to protect the natural resources. In 2005, thirty-two Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contracts, valued at approximately \$641,000, and 116 Conservation Security Program (CSP) contracts, valued at approximately \$2,300,000, were signed and implemented.

Working for the Future BCRCD Priorities 2005-2006

CAPACITY BUILDING = Strategic Plan Priority #1:

Goals:

1. Offer Programs of Merit to Landowners
2. Continue to Strengthen Partnerships with NRCS, Other Conservation Groups & Agencies
3. Hire Qualified Employees

Accomplishments:

- BCRCD First Annual Audit Report
Audit services done by: Davis Hammon & Co., Certified Public Accountants, Oroville, CA.
- Experience Works Program (US Department of Labor)
Bobbi Miller was assigned through this program for developing work skills for our seasoned citizens.



Bobbi Miller, experienced in the office and in the field

Water Quality & Quantity = Strategic Plan Priority #2

Goals:

1. Develop Landowner Driven Water Quality Education
2. Development of Landowner Driven Stream Teams

Accomplishments:

- Program funding currently under consideration with DWR Watershed Program for Watershed Assessment for the Lower Feather River/ Honcut Creek Watershed, including Stream Teams and Educational funding.



Education & Outreach = Strategic Plan Priority #3

Goals:

1. Plan and Present Public Education Workshops, Presentations, Field Trips & Tours
2. Develop RCD Programs for K-12

Accomplishments:

- Agency Partnerships including NRCS, UC Cooperative Extension, DWR, State Water Resources Control Board, Butte Sutter Yuba Water Quality Coalition, Butte County Agricultural Commissioner's office among others.
- NRCS Conservation Security Program Workshops
Local growers learned about wildlife enhancements from Hue Dang, NRCS District Conservationist. CSP is an entitlement program for stewardship practices implemented by producers.



116 NRCS Conservation Security Program Contracts were signed in the Lower Butte Creek Watershed in 2005.

- Oak Woodlands Conservation Workshop at Butte Community College
Cooperative venture with NRCS and Butte Community College. Landowners participated in classroom studies and outdoor instruction at the Butte Community College campus on the proper care of their valuable oak woodlands.



Landowners participate in classroom studies & outdoor instruction on the proper care of their valuable oak woodlands.

Lower Feather River/Honcut Creek Watershed Group
The newest watershed group in Butte County was formed with the support of an NRCS Contribution Agreement. The focus of the group is to meet the resource needs of the local landowners, mainly rangeland and oak woodlands.



Honcut Rapid Transit System

- Paradise High School Environmental Sciences ROP class attended RCD meeting chaired by DC Jones, BCRC President.
Robert Kuintzle, ROP Environmental Sciences Instructor, brought his students to see a conservation organization at work. Presentations were given by Jeff Mott, Little Chico Creek Watershed Group Watershed Coordinator & Manager of the CSU, Chico Ecological Reserve; and Glenn Nader, University of California Cooperative Extension, Livestock, Range & Natural Resources Specialist for Butte, Yuba and Sutter Counties.
- The Student and Landowner Education and Watershed Stewardship Program (SLEWS)
Paradise High School and Las Plumas High School students were involved with planting native plants on the Sunset Ranch.



The Student and Landowner Education and Watershed Stewardship Program (SLEWS)

Fuel & Fire Safe Education = Strategic Plan Priority #4

Goals:

1. Partner to Enhance Forest Fuel Management & Fire Wise Education



Butte County RCD Grant and Funding Status

1. Butte County Water & Resource Conservation Department
~ \$6,000 contract awarded annually for administrative support
2. Department of Water Resources Watershed Program Concept Proposal for the Lower Feather River/Honcut Creek Watershed Assessment
~ \$93,000 submitted for consideration
3. Sacramento River Watershed Program Website Assistance Grant
~ Website is up and running.
4. CARCD Limited Resource Grower Outreach
~ \$9,200 awarded
5. CALFED Ecosystem Restoration Program
Concept Proposal – Threatened & Endangered
Species Research.
~ \$655,000 submitted for consideration
6. Consolidated Grant Proposal - Rural Roads
Concept Proposal
~ \$2,000,000 - not invited back for full proposal
7. NRCS Contribution Agreement
~ \$30,000 awarded – Lower Feather Data Summary, Water Quality & District Survey
8. Department of Water Resources Contract Amendment
~ \$80,000 awarded for district capacity building
9. 4-H Wood Shop Club & RCD Bat & Bird Boxes
~ Donations currently accepted
10. Cash Match for Tehama Mobile Irrigation Lab
~ \$3,000 cash match provided for services within Butte County
11. Butte Fire Safe Council Grant Proposal Partner
~ \$1,000 cash match offered for outreach partner
12. Sub-contract with Butte County Agriculture Commissioner for Irrigated Lands Outreach
~ \$20,000 contract pending for Butte County grower outreach



BCRCD Stakeholder Survey

Executive Summary

This report provides a summary snapshot of Butte County landowner characteristics, interests, and needs as assessed in 2005. The data presented in the report represent responses to a 37-item survey mailed to over 3000 Butte County landowners by the Butte County Resource Conservation District. A total of 230 landowners returned completed surveys for a response rate of approximately 7.5%. The survey was conducted to:



- identify characteristics of landowners;
- assess current interests, concerns, priorities, and/or needs around natural resource issues and agricultural production, practices, and experiences;
- introduce the Butte County Resource Conservation District (BCRCD) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to landowners; and
- elicit landowner input for development of annual and long-term work plans and priorities for NRCS Farm Bill programs.

Landowner Characteristics Survey findings indicate that most survey respondents are between 56 and 70 years of age, and most report annual household incomes of more than \$100,000. Most respondents report households of 1-2 people, property ownership for more than 30 years, and less than 10 acres of property. Most report post-graduate levels of education, and most indicate full-time employment. Nearly 80% reside on their Butte County property. Twenty-five percent of respondents report no experience with agricultural production, while 29% report agricultural production as a hobby. An additional 24% report extensive agricultural experience.

More than 50% of respondents identify one of the three following land use categories to describe their properties: 1. My property is mainly my home and the open space around it; 2. I like my natural surroundings and rural area and don't want to see a lot of development; 3. I like my property just the way it is and don't plan to change much.

BCRCD and NRCS The majority of survey respondents indicate no awareness of the NRCS or its services, while a substantial number express an interest in learning more about NRCS programs that provide financial assistance and technical information. And, although the majority of respondents report no awareness of the function, activities, and responsibilities of the BCRCD, most indicate that providing technical assistance to landowners is the most important role BCRCD should play in the community. Most indicate mail, local newspapers, and the internet as their preferred means of receiving information.

Priorities, Issues, and Concerns Survey respondents rank water quality, water quantity, air quality, preservation of open space, and forest health as Butte County's most important resource categories, while they rank water, trees and water, fire, water availability, and forest/tree health as their top five natural resource concerns for their own properties. They also rank the following eight activities as their highest priorities: 1. monitoring water quality; 2. wildfire fuel reduction and fire safety; 3. water conservation; 4. compliance with agricultural discharge requirements; 5. emissions reduction and air quality issues; 6. improving streamside habitat and controlling stream bank erosion; 7. weed management; and 8. oak woodlands maintenance and conservation.

Nearly 60% of respondents report concerns about a decrease in agricultural production with the loss of open space, change in the area's rural character, potential competition for water, loss of wildlife habitat, and potential water quality issues as their top five concerns related to a decrease in agricultural production.

Purpose for Stakeholder Survey

In the spring of 2005, the Butte County Resource Conservation District (BCRCD) distributed a 37-item survey to over 3,000 local landowners to assess their interests, concerns, priorities, and/or needs around natural resource issues; agricultural production, practices, and experience; and their awareness regarding resources and technical assistance available through the Butte County Resource Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The survey was designed to introduce the Butte County Resource Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to the community and to use the results to inform long-term and annual work plans and priorities for NRCS Farm Bill programs.

Survey Methods

The BCRCD staff developed the survey form and distributed it to 3,125 landowners through the U.S. mail in three waves in the spring and summer of 2005. In the first, 500 landowner names were chosen randomly from each of Butte County's five supervisorial districts for distribution of a total of 2,500 surveys. In the second wave, surveys were sent to 100 of the largest landowners in each of five supervisorial districts for a total of 500 surveys. In the third wave, surveys were distributed to 125 recipients of Conservation Security Program funding.

By October 2005, approximately 230 landowners had responded and returned their completed surveys to the BCRCD for review and analysis.

Results

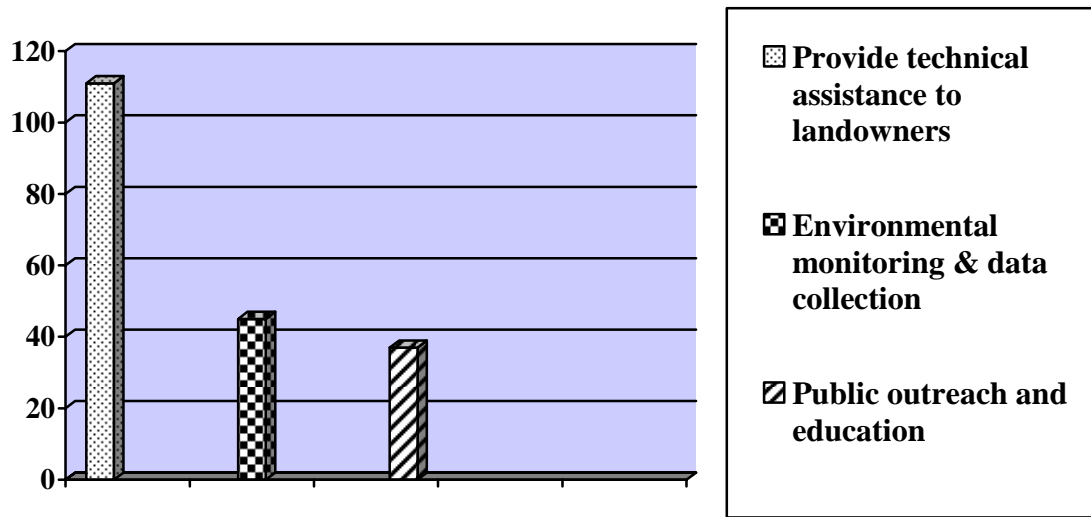
Resource Categories by Rank

1. Water Quality
2. Water Quantity
3. Air Quality
4. Preservation of Open Space
5. Forest/Tree Health

Resource Activities by Rank

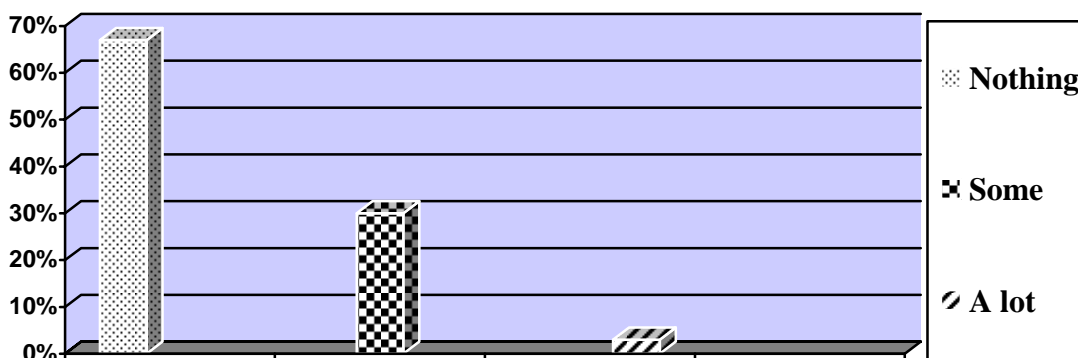
1. Water Quality Monitoring
2. Wildfire Fuel Reduction
3. Water Conservation
4. Ag Discharge Compliance
5. Emissions Reduction
6. Improving Riparian Habitat & Controlling Stream Bank Erosion
7. Weed Management
8. Oak Woodlands Conservation

Question 1 *What is the most important role BCRC D should play in our community?*



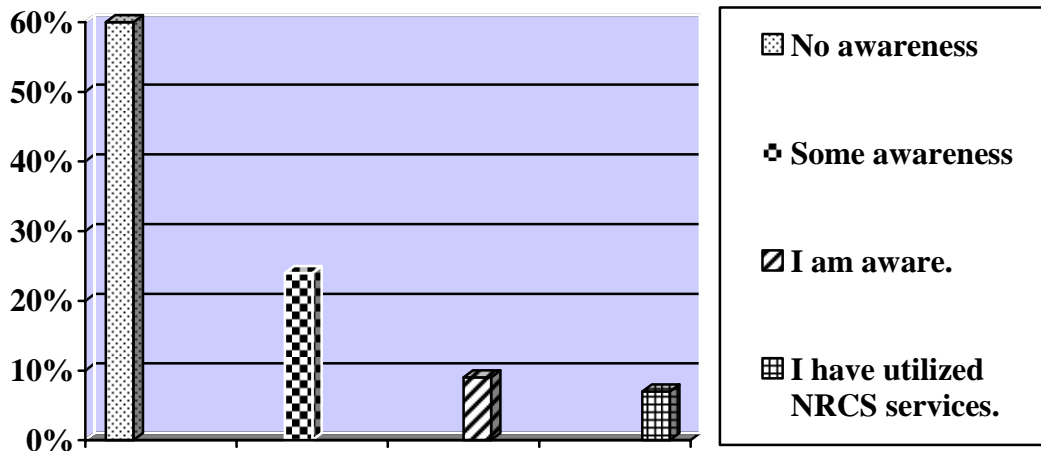
Of the survey respondents, 111 reported “Provide technical assistance to landowners” as the most important role; 45 reported “Environmental monitoring and data collection” as the most important role; and 37 reported “Provide public outreach and education for agricultural and natural resource issues” as the most important role.

Question 2 *How much do you know about the function, activities, and responsibilities of BCRC D?*



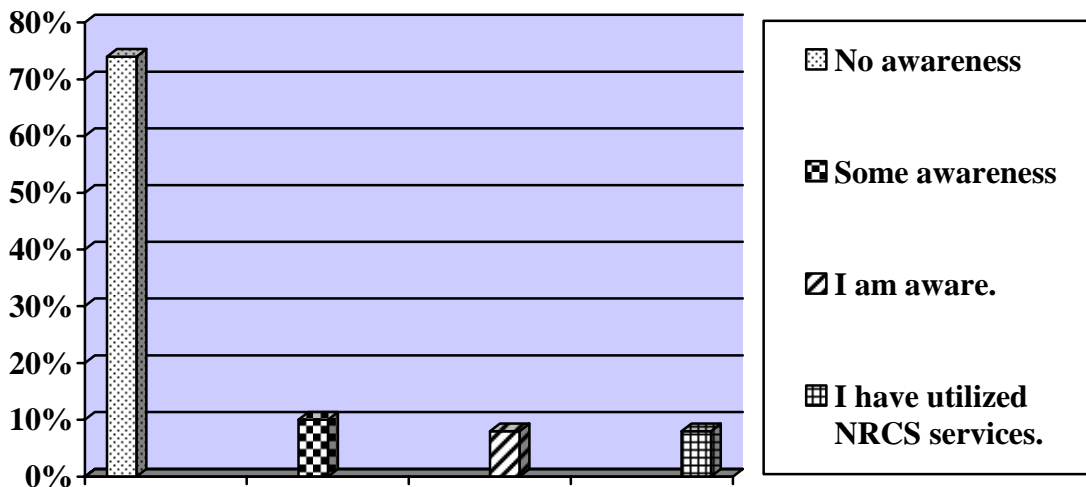
Of survey respondents, 67% reported “Nothing;” 30% reported “Some;” and 3% reported “A lot.”

Question 3 *Overall, are you aware of NRCS and the services we provide?*



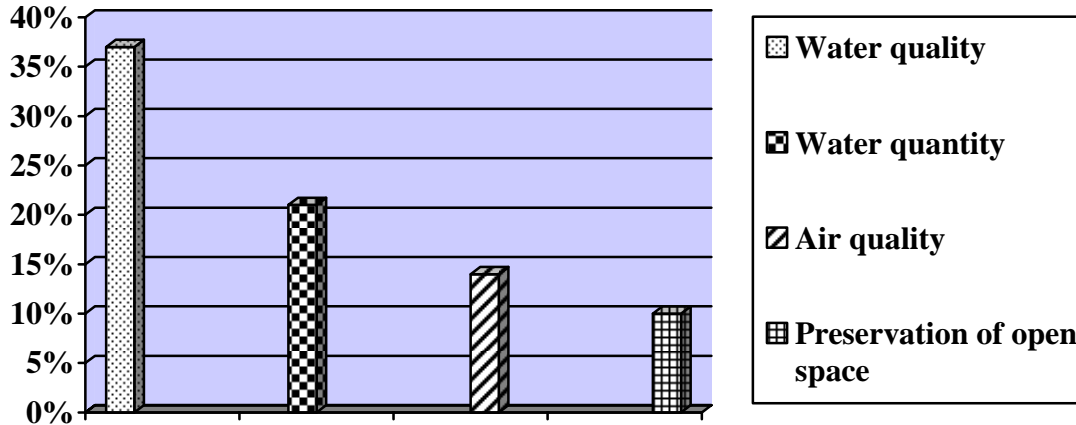
Of the survey respondents, 60% reported “No awareness” of NRCS and its services; 24% reported “Some awareness;” 9% indicated “I am aware;” and 7% indicated “I have utilized NRCS services.”

Question 5 *Are you aware of NRCS programs that provide financial assistance to install conservation practices?*



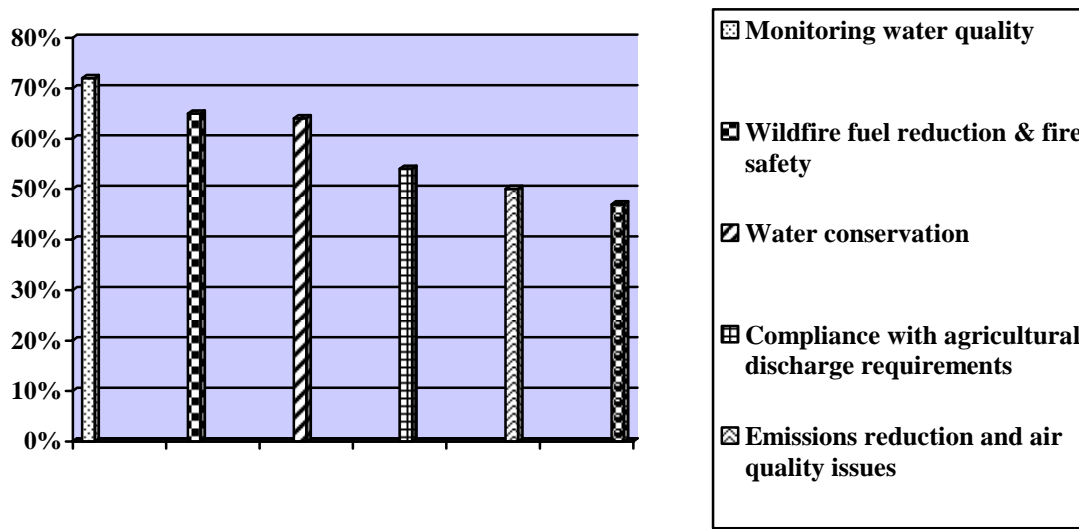
Of survey respondents, 74% indicated “No awareness” of NRCS programs providing financial assistance; 10% reported “Some awareness;” 8% indicated “I am aware;” and 8% indicated “I have utilized NRCS services.”

Question 8 *Please rank the following major resource categories in order of importance in Butte County.”*



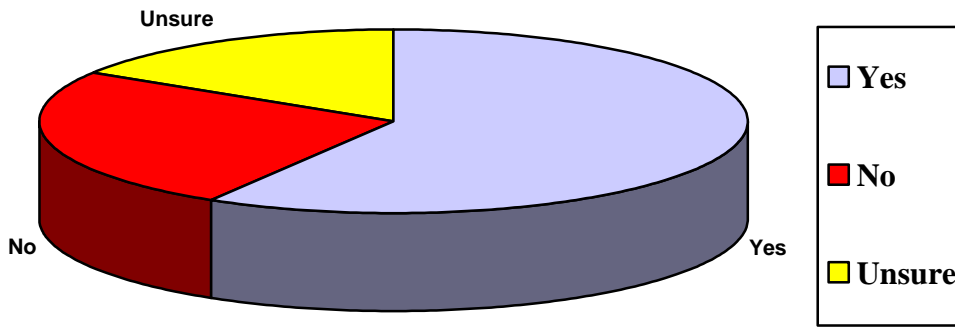
The percentage of survey respondents who identified the following resource categories as their top priority is as follows: 37% Water quality, 21% Water quantity; and 14% Air quality; and 10% Preservation of open space.

Question 9 *Please indicate the priority level: high, medium, or low that you believe should be assigned to each of the following activities*



The percentage of survey respondents who identified the following activities as their highest priority is as follows: 72% Monitoring water quality; 65% Wildfire fuel reduction and fire safety; 64% Water conservation; 54% Compliance with agricultural discharge requirements; 50% Emissions reduction and air quality issues; and 47% Improving streamside habitat and controlling stream bank erosion.

Question 22 Do you have concerns about a decrease in agricultural production in your community?



Of 285 survey respondents, 58% indicated “Yes;” 25% indicated “No;” and 16% indicated that they were “Unsure.”

2006 Potential Projects

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Board Capacity Building | Complete Voluntary Oak Woodlands Conservation Resolution |
| K-12 Watershed Education Program | Develop Funding Source Opportunity |
| Groundwater Protection Education | Watershed Monitoring |
| Hire Staff Employees | Conservation Easements |



SPECIAL THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS TO OUR PARTNERS AND FUNDING AGENCIES

(in alphabetical order)

FEDERAL AGENCIES

Bureau of Land Management
Lassen National Forest

Natural Resources Conservation Service
US Department Fish & Wildlife

TRIBAL PARTNERS

Berry Creek Rancheria
Chico Rancheria

Enterprise Rancheria
Mooretown Rancheria

STATE AGENCIES

Colusa County Resource Conservation District
Department of Conservation
Department of Fish & Game\ Department of Forestry
and Fire Protection
Department of Water Resources
Glenn County Resource Conservation District

State Water Resources Control Board
Sutter County Resource Conservation District
Tehama County Resource Conservation District
UC Davis Cooperative Extension
Yuba County Resource Conservation District

LOCAL AGENCIES

Butte County 4-H
Butte County Agricultural Commissioner's Office
Butte County Assessor's Office
Butte County Counsel's Office
Butte County Department of Water and Resource
Conservation
Butte County Public Works

California Association of Resource Conservation
Districts
Central Valley Resource Conservation and
Development Council
City of Yuba
Durham Parks & Recreation District
Sacramento Valley Region of RCDs
Western Canal Irrigation District

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Big Chico Creek Watershed Alliance
Butte County Cattlemen's Association
Butte County Farm Bureau
Butte County Fire Safe Council
Butte Creek Watershed Conservancy
Butte Sutter Yuba Water Quality Coalition
California Sheep Grower's Association
California Women for Agriculture

Center for Land Based Learning (SLEWS)
Cherokee Watershed Alliance
Little Chico Creek Watershed Group
Lower Feather River/Honcut Creek Watershed Group
Northern California Land Trust
River Partners
Sacramento River Watershed Program
The Nature Conservancy

LOCAL BUSINESSES AND EDUCATION

Butte Community College
Cerus Consulting
CSU, Chico
Gore Lands
GunnHill Farms, LLC.
Hennigan Farms
Loafer Creek, Inc.
Lundberg Family Farms

M & T Ranch
Mill Street Farms
Rancho Esquon
Rancho Llano Seco
Sierra Farms
Sierra Pacific Industries
UC Davis

