

MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW AND SPHERE OF INFLUENCE UPDATE FOR



RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICTS IN STANISLAUS COUNTY

Prepared By:

**Stanislaus Local Agency Formation Commission
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Adopted: September 25, 2024

STANISLAUS

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Municipal Service Review and Sphere of Influence Update for the East Stanislaus and West Stanislaus Resource Conservation Districts

Introduction

The Cortese/Knox/Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 Act (CKH Act) requires the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) to update the spheres of influence (SOI) for all applicable jurisdictions in the County. A sphere of influence is defined by Government Code 56076 as "...a plan for the probable physical boundary and service area of a local agency, as determined by the Commission." The Act further requires that a municipal service review (MSR) be conducted prior to or, in conjunction with, the update of a sphere of influence (SOI).

The legislative authority for conducting a municipal service review is provided in Government Code Section 56430 of the CKH Act. The Act states, that "in order to prepare and to update spheres of influence in accordance with Section 56425, the commission shall conduct a service review of the municipal services provided in the county or other appropriate area..." MSRs must have written determinations that address the following factors in order to update a Sphere of Influence. These factors were recently amended to include identification of disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere of influence of an agency.

Municipal Service Review Factors to be Addressed

1. Growth and population projections for the affected area
2. The location and characteristics of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere of influence
3. Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies including needs or deficiencies related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, and structural fire protection in any disadvantaged, unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere of influence
4. Financial ability of agencies to provide services
5. Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities
6. Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies
7. Any other matter related to effective or efficient service delivery, as required by commission policy

State Guidelines and Commission policies encourage cooperation among a variety of stakeholders involved in the preparation of a municipal service review. This MSR will analyze both the East Stanislaus and West Stanislaus Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), and will also provide a basis for the Districts and LAFCO to evaluate, and if appropriate, make changes to the Sphere of Influence.

Sphere of Influence Update Process

A special district is a government agency that is required to have an adopted and updated sphere of influence. Section 56425(g) of the CKH Act calls for spheres of influence to be reviewed and updated every five years, as necessary. Stanislaus LAFCO processes municipal service reviews and sphere of influence updates concurrently to ensure efficient use of resources. For rural special districts, which do not have the typical municipal-level services to review, this document will be used to determine what type of services each district is expected to provide and the extent to which they are actually able to do so. For these special districts, the spheres will delineate the service capability and expansion capacity of the agency, if applicable.

The previous sphere of influence update for the East Stanislaus and West Stanislaus Resource Conservation Districts was adopted in 2019 and proposed no changes to the Districts' SOIs. The current update serves to comply with Government Code Section 56425 and will reaffirm the SOIs for each district.

Sphere of Influence Determinations

In determining a sphere of influence (SOI) of each local agency, the Commission shall consider and prepare determinations with respect to each of the following factors, pursuant to Government Code Section 56425:

1. The present and planned land uses in the area, including agricultural and open-space lands.
2. The present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area.
3. The present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services that the agency provides or is authorized to provide.
4. The existence of any social or economic communities of interest in the area if the commission determines that they are relevant to the agency.
5. For an update of a sphere of influence of a city or special district that provides public facilities or services related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, or structural fire protection, the present and probable need for those public facilities and services of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within the existing sphere of influence.

Authority

In California, RCDs are "single purpose special districts" organized under the State Public Resources Code, Division 9. Each district has a locally elected or appointed volunteer board of directors made up of landowners in that district. Under the Code, a resource conservation district may be formed for the control of runoff, the prevention or control of soil erosion, the development and distribution of water, and improvement of land capabilities, wildlife habitat restoration, forest fuel management, conservation education and much more.

Today's RCDs work in urban areas, as well as with farmers and ranchers on agricultural-related concerns. California's size and geographical diversity, along with an ever-growing population, make natural resources stewardship a great challenge in the Golden State.

Municipal Service Review – East Stanislaus RCD

Formation

In 1996, the East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District (RCD) was formed through the consolidation of the following RCDs: Salida, S.T. & J., and portions of the Ballico and La Paloma RCDs in Stanislaus County. The reorganization provided an increased level of service to the properties included within the East Stanislaus RCD and reduced the duplication of effort by the participating districts.

Location and Size

The District is approximately 63,000 acres in size and its boundary consists of those areas formerly within the Salida, S.T. & J., and portions of the Ballico and La Paloma RCDs. This consists of non-contiguous areas throughout the northcentral portion of the County along the Stanislaus River and along the southern boundary of the County in the East Keyes Road and Montpelier Road area. Previous hand-drawn maps of the East Stanislaus RCD boundary incorrectly labeled the entire easterly half of the County as being within the District's boundary and this was long assumed to be the case. Although the remainder of eastern Stanislaus County may benefit from the RCD's services, the area has not yet been annexed by the District

When the District was formed (LAFCO Resolution 96-04), the Sphere of Influence included all the unincorporated territory east of the San Joaquin River within Stanislaus County, excluding areas within city limits and a neighboring RCD. However, since this time, the Commission has recognized the entirety of Eastern Stanislaus County as representing the District's Sphere of Influence, in anticipation of future annexation (see Map 1 - East Stanislaus RCD Boundary and Sphere of Influence).

Sphere of Influence

The District's Sphere of Influence is approximately 577,000 acres.

Purpose

According to the District's website, "The East Stanislaus RCD supports Stanislaus County residents and farmers by providing education and resources to improve the overall health of our communities, our natural systems and agricultural legacy."

The District assists in the following:

- Works with farmers, ranchers and landowners, providing technical and financial assistance for conservation practices.
- Engages and educates the community about preserving natural resources.
- Works to keep water clean for all who use it
- Helps provide local wildlife an create environments where they can thrive.

Governance

Five District Trustees are appointed by the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors and represent the landowners within the District. Meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of every

month at 1:00pm, in the USDA Modesto Service Center Conference Room, located at 3800 Cornucopia Way, Suite E, Modesto, and are open to the public.

The Board of Directors volunteer their time to establish priority soil and water resource conservation projects and conduct the business of the District. The District has Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and State Natural Resources Conservation Service. These MOUs provide a framework for providing technical and financial assistance to the District.

Personnel

The East Stanislaus RCD employs an Executive Director who runs the day-to-day operations of the RCD. The Executive Director reports to the Board of Directors at the monthly board meetings. The District also employs additional personnel as needed such as an Agricultural Conservationist, Irrigation Specialist, Soil Health Coordinator, Conservation Outreach Coordinator, Education Outreach Coordinator, Watershed Coordinator as well as Administrative Assistance, Technicians, Project Managers, Project Assistants, and Interns as needed to support various grants and agreements and dependent on available funding. Additionally, the RCD has an established network of support agencies to accomplish its locally developed plans and priorities.

Support Agencies

The District provides and obtains services from many different entities. It maintains a positive collaborative relationship with numerous local, state and federal agencies including the following: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), State Natural Resources Conservation Service, Secretary of State California's Resources Agency, City and County of San Francisco, Friends of the Tuolumne, Tuolumne River Preservation Trust, water and irrigation districts, UC Cooperative Extension Service, Western United Dairymen, California Poultry Foundation, California State Resource Conservation District, and the West Stanislaus RCD.

Funding Sources

Funding sources for the District include a combination of in-kind services provided by the Board of Directors, volunteers, USDA and other agencies. Additional financial support includes grants from local, state and federal agencies and non-profit foundations, contracted administrative and technical services, fee-for-service programs, and service fees.

Only the former Ballico RCD portion of the consolidated East Stanislaus RCD has a small, but steady revenue source as it receives a portion of the property tax revenue collected. The other portions of the consolidated District rely on volunteers, in-kind staff services, donations and grants obtained from local, state, and federal agencies and non-profit foundations.

Services

The East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District provides the following services:

- Coordinates with local, state and federal agencies and non-governmental organizations to improve irrigation practices on agricultural lands within the Eastern Stanislaus RCD.

- Assists landowners with installation and management of water conservation and water quality practices to reduce soil erosion, sediment delivery and other non-point source pollution of the impaired lower Stanislaus River, lower Tuolumne River and the middle San Joaquin River in Stanislaus County.
- Seeks out financial and technical support for landowners to voluntarily reduce salt, boron, pesticides, sediment, nutrients and other constituents that contribute to low dissolved oxygen to the impaired San Joaquin River.
- Provides an Information and Education Program to enhance the awareness of its programs to the public, as well as assists local schools and other groups (such as 4-H) in conservation activities.
- The District also provides assistance for soil health to address compaction, water infiltration, carbon sequestration, soil stability and erosion, habitat to improve riparian corridors, pollinator habitat on public and private lands, anadromous fish habitat and threatened or endangered species.
- Maintains a website (www.eaststanrcd.org) with a description of the District, its programs, and current events.
- Continues to support conservation education activities by seeking volunteers or funding for RCD employees to coordinate with local groups, agencies and schools.
- Maintains relationships with the local news media by providing information and /or interviews as requested. Examples include publishing its Annual Report in local newspapers, as well as providing timely news articles on the District's conservation activities to the local news media.

Determinations – East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District

The following are determinations related to the seven factors required by Section 56430 for a Service Review for the East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District:

1. Growth and Population Projections for the Affected Area

The District serves areas in the eastern half of Stanislaus County, consisting of urban, rural, and agricultural uses. The majority of population growth is expected to occur within the existing cities and unincorporated communities of eastern Stanislaus County.

2. The Location and Characteristics of Any Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities Within or Contiguous to the Sphere of Influence

As the District's Sphere of Influence encompasses the entirety of the County located east of the San Joaquin River, it includes numerous areas that meet the criteria for a disadvantaged unincorporated community (DUC). These include the Riverdale Park Tract, West Modesto (inclusive of the Robertson Road Neighborhood), Empire, the remainder of the Shackelford area, and the Bret Harte, Airport, Rouse, and Parklawn Neighborhoods, all within the City of Modesto's Sphere of Influence. Other disadvantaged unincorporated communities include the Bystrum Neighborhood (within the Sphere of Influence of the City of Ceres), the Cowan Tract, the Monterey Park Tract, and Keyes.

No additional DUCs have been identified within or contiguous to the current District boundary as defined in Section 56033.5 of the CKH Act.

3. Present and Planned Capacity of Public Facilities and Adequacy of Public Services, Including Infrastructure Needs or Deficiencies Related to Sewers, Municipal Water and Industrial Water, and Structural Fire Protection in Any Disadvantaged, Unincorporated Communities Within or Contiguous to the Sphere of Influence

At the present time, the District has both the ability and the capacity to serve its service area. As the RCD does not provide water, sewer, or fire protection services, the District is not responsible for assuring that these services are adequately provided to communities within the District's boundaries.

4. Financial Ability of Agencies to Provide Services

The District appears to have adequate financial resources to deliver services. As the District is grant funded, the budget is planned based on grants and/or agreements currently in place or anticipated for the upcoming year and personnel is budgeted accordingly. The District has been successful in obtaining grant funding for its programs.

5. Status of, and Opportunities for, Shared Facilities

The District has a long history of developing partnerships with local, state and federal agencies to assist the RCD to accomplish locally developed plans and priorities.

6. Accountability for Community Service Needs, Including Governmental Structure and Operational Efficiencies

The District is governed by a five (5) member Board of Directors appointed by the Board of Supervisors. The District has an accessible website, and conforms to the provisions of the Brown Act requiring open meetings. No other relevant issues concerning this factor have been identified.

7. Any Other Matter Related to Effective or Efficient Service Delivery, as Required by Commission Policy

None.

SOI Update – East Stanislaus RCD

The following determinations for the East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District's Sphere of Influence update are made in conformance with Government Code Section 56425 and local Commission policy.

Determinations:

1. Present and Planned Land Uses in the Area, Including Agricultural and Open-Space Lands

The predominate land use is agriculture, as the District is agriculturally based. The District does not have the authority to make land use decisions, nor does it have authority over present or planned land uses within its boundaries. The responsibility for land use decisions within the District boundaries is retained by the County and individual cities.

2. Present and Probable Need for Public Facilities and Services in the Area

The East Stanislaus RCD performs a unique and vital service to eastern Stanislaus County. It was established to improve riparian habitats, reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, conserve irrigation water, improve water quality, and provide District growers in eastern Stanislaus County with necessary information on the proper management of their natural resource.

The East Stanislaus RCD is presently meeting the needs of the residents and growers within their boundaries. The District's Long-Range Plan includes specific actions to prepare for present and probable facility and service needs within the District and is prepared to meet the needs of their constituents in the years to come.

The present and future public service needs of the lands within the District are characteristic of agricultural areas. The District provides services that will enhance the use of the land for agricultural purposes. The levels of traditional types of urban (municipal) services do not apply to this agriculturally based district.

3. Present Capacity of Public Facilities and Adequacy of Public Services that the Agency Provides or is Authorized to Provide

The District provides and/or obtains services from many different entities. It maintains positive collaborative relationships with many entities such as: the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Farm Service Agency, State Natural Resources Conservation Service, State of California's Resources Agency, City and County of San Francisco, Friends of the Tuolumne, Tuolumne River Preservation Trust, Water and Irrigation Districts, UC Cooperative Extension Service, Western United Dairymen, California Poultry Foundation, California State Resource Conservation District, and West Stanislaus RCD.

The District has adopted a Long-Range Plan that addresses its commitment towards providing services and facilities (such as the Mobile Irrigation Lab), to conserve, improve, and sustain the natural resources in Eastern Stanislaus County.

4. The Existence of Any Social or Economic Communities of Interest in the Area if the Commission Determines That They are Relevant to the Agency

There are no social and economic communities of interest affecting the District's ability to provide services to the communities within the District boundaries.

5. For an Update of a Sphere of Influence of a City or Special District That Provides Public Facilities or Services Related to Sewers, Municipal and Industrial Water, or Structural Fire Protection, the Present and Probable Need for Those Public Facilities and Services of Any Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities Within the Existing Sphere of Influence

As the District does not provide services related to sewers, municipal and industrial water or structural fire protection, this factor is not applicable.

DISTRICT SUMMARY PROFILE

District: **EAST STANISLAUS RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

Office Location: 3800 Cornucopia Way, Suite E, Modesto, CA 95358

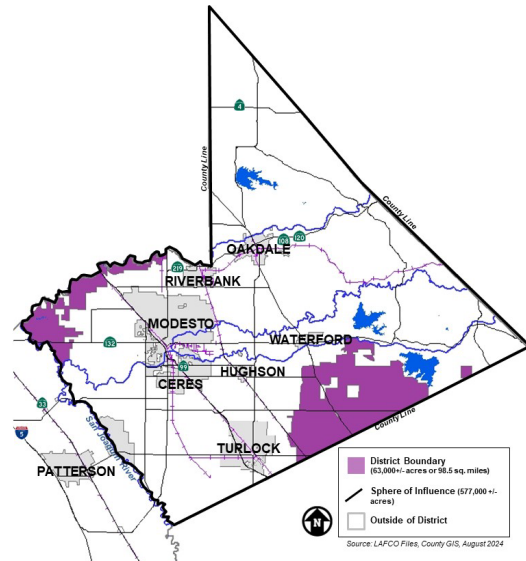
Service Area: 577,000± acres
(District Boundaries / SOI)

Square Miles: 901± square miles
(District Boundaries / SOI)

Land Use: Majority Agricultural, with urban and rural areas

Date of Formation: April 2, 1996

Enabling Act: California Public Resources Code, Division 9, Sections 9000-9978



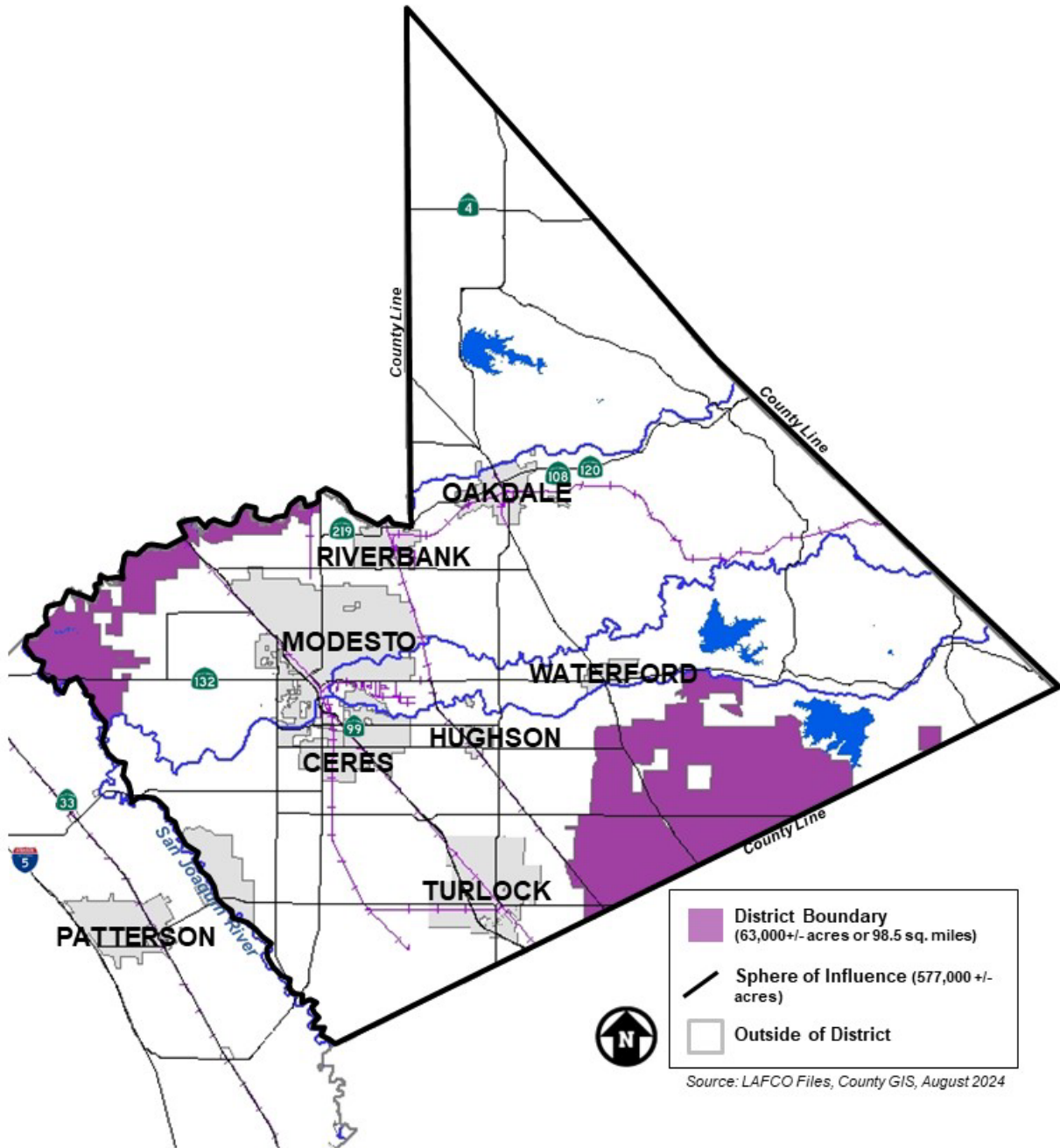
Governing Body: 5 District Trustees –
Must be Landowners within District Boundaries Appointed by the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors

Administration: The District is administered is by a paid Executive Director and Five (5) Trustees, appointed by the Board of Supervisors.

District Services: (Duties) Conservation management techniques of water and soil in concert with other public agencies

Sources: *East Stanislaus RCD, Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors, and Stanislaus LAFCO*

East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District Boundary & Sphere of Influence



Municipal Service Review – West Stanislaus RCD

Formation

The West Stanislaus Resource Conservation District (RCD) was formed through consolidation of the Orestimba (1952) and Patterson (1958) Soil Conservation Districts and through the annexation of adjacent lands in Stanislaus County, west of the San Joaquin River in 1980.

Location and Size

The West Stanislaus RCD includes the area west of the San Joaquin River to the Santa Clara County line and is bordered by San Joaquin County to the north and Merced County to the south. The West Stanislaus Resource Conservation District encompasses approximately 380,000 total acres (or roughly 594 square miles).

Sphere of Influence

The District's Sphere of Influence is approximately 380,000 acres and is coterminous with the District's boundary.

Governance

The District's governing board consists of seven (7) landowners within the District, who are appointed by the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors. The District holds regular open public meetings on the second Wednesday of each month in their office located at 301 South First Street, in Patterson.

Personnel

The District currently employs one part-time staff member: a District Manager.

Funding Sources

The District receives a limited amount of funds from Stanislaus County property tax revenues. Other funding sources for the District include a combination of in-kind services provided by the Board of Directors, volunteers, USDA and other agencies. Additional financial support includes grants from local, state and federal agencies and non-profit foundations and service fees.

Services

The following are the services provided by the West Stanislaus RCD:

- Provides assistance with installation and management of water conservation and water quality practices to reduce soil erosion, sediment delivery and other non-point source pollution of the San Joaquin River.
- Seeks out financial and technical support for District cooperators to voluntarily reduce salt, boron, selenium, pesticides, sediment and other constituents that contribute to low dissolved oxygen to the San Joaquin River.

- Assists cooperators and irrigation/water districts in implementing water conservation through irrigation and drain water management and systems efficiency evaluations.
- Assists growers to improve irrigation and drain water quality on the Westside, as dictated by federal, state, regulatory agencies and keeps District cooperators abreast of their progress in water quality improvements.
- Works with UC Cooperative staff to find a high school-aged student and fund the student's attendance of "Range Camp", a six day camp at Elkus Ranch where students learn about rangeland management strategy and conservation.
- Has a website that provides basic information on District services and programs (weststanrcd.org)
- Provides local support and facilitation for Patterson CIMIS Station. The District is working with the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to find an appropriate location for a new CIMIS Station on the west side. DWR is responsible for installation, maintenance, and data for the CIMIS Station.
- The District currently contracts with the East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District (ESRCD) for a Resource Technician and has partnered with the ESRCD to apply for grants that benefit countywide implementation.

Purpose

The West Stanislaus RCD was initially established to reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, conserve and preserve irrigation water, improve water quality, and provide District growers with information on the proper management of their natural resources. To meet these goals, the RCD acts as a focal point for landowners and growers to seek information, technical assistance, cost sharing, and administrative assistance on individual and community natural resource conservation concerns.

Determinations – West Stanislaus RCD

The following are determinations related to the seven factors required by Section 56430 for a Service Review for the West Stanislaus Resource Conservation District:

1. Growth and Population Projections for the Affected Area

The District serves the western half of Stanislaus County, consisting of urban, rural, and agricultural uses. The majority of population growth is expected to occur within the existing cities and unincorporated communities of eastern Stanislaus County.

2. The Location and Characteristics of Any Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities Within or Contiguous to the Sphere of Influence

The District includes a large area encompassing nearly the entire western half of the County, west of the San Joaquin River. This area includes the communities of Westley and Grayson, which are considered disadvantaged unincorporated communities.

3. Present and Planned Capacity of Public Facilities and Adequacy of Public Services, Including Infrastructure Needs or Deficiencies Related to Sewers, Municipal Water and Industrial Water, and Structural Fire Protection in Any Disadvantaged, Unincorporated Communities Within or Contiguous to the Sphere of Influence

At the present time, the District has both the ability and the capacity to serve its service area. As the RCD does not provide water, sewer, or fire protection services, the District is not responsible for assuring that these services are adequately provided to communities within the District's boundaries.

4. Financial Ability of Agencies to Provide Services

The District appears to have adequate financial resources to fund adequate levels of service within the District's boundaries.

5. Status of, and Opportunities for, Shared Facilities

The District has a long history of developing partnerships with local, state and federal agencies to assist the RCD to accomplish locally developed plans and priorities. The West Stanislaus RCD Board and Staff have worked with the East Stanislaus RCD to provide programs that cover the whole county. The District has worked with East Stanislaus RCD to apply funding for pollinator habitat on both public and private lands.

The District has partnered with the Coalition for Urban Rural Environmental Stewardship (CURES) to offer growers free distribution uniformity evaluations, where a technician takes water flow and pressure measurements to find irrigation system inefficiencies.

6. Accountability for Community Service Needs, Including Governmental Structure and Operational Efficiencies

The District is governed by seven (7) landowner "Directors" appointed to 4-year terms by the Board of Supervisors. The District has an accessible website, and conforms to the

provisions of the Brown Act requiring open meetings. The District employs a part-time Secretary who runs the day-to-day operations of the RCD. No other relevant issues concerning this factor have been identified.

7. Any Other Matter Related to Effective or Efficient Service Delivery, as Required by Commission Policy

None.

SOI Update - West Stanislaus RCD

The following determinations for the West Stanislaus Resource Conservation District's Sphere of Influence update are made in conformance with Government Code Section 56425 and local Commission policy.

Determinations:

1. Present and Planned Land Uses in the Area, Including Agricultural and Open-Space Lands

The predominant land use is agriculture, as the District is agriculturally based. The District does not have the authority to make land use decisions, nor does it have authority over present or planned land uses within their boundaries. The responsibility for land use decisions within the District boundaries is retained by the County and individual cities.

2. Present and Probable Need for Public Facilities and Services in the Area

The West Stanislaus Resource Conservation District performs a unique and vital service to western Stanislaus County. It was established to reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, conserve and preserve irrigation water, improve water quality, and provide the District growers in western Stanislaus County with necessary information on the proper management of their natural resource.

The West Stanislaus RCD is presently meeting the needs of the residents and growers within their boundaries. The territory is located in the unincorporated portion of western Stanislaus County and as such does not provide traditional urban type services.

The present and future public needs within the District are characteristic of agricultural areas. The District provides services that will enhance the use of the land for agricultural purposes. The levels of traditional types of urban (municipal) services does not apply to this agriculturally based district.

3. Present Capacity of Public Facilities and Adequacy of Public Services that the Agency Provides or is Authorized to Provide

The District provides and/or obtains services from many different entities. It maintains positive collaborative relationships with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), University of California Cooperative Education (UCCE), Irrigation/Water and Drainage Districts, private landowners, the cities/communities on the west side and the County Public Works Department.

4. The Existence of Any Social or Economic Communities of Interest in the Area if the Commission Determines That They are Relevant to the Agency

The District's territory and sphere of influence is within unincorporated agricultural areas of the County and therefore, there are no communities of interest in the area.

5. For an Update of a Sphere of Influence of a City or Special District That Provides Public Facilities or Services Related to Sewers, Municipal and Industrial Water, or Structural Fire Protection, the Present and Probable Need for Those Public Facilities and Services of Any Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities Within the Existing Sphere of Influence

As the District does not provide services related to sewers, municipal and industrial water or structural fire protection, this factor is not applicable.

DISTRICT SUMMARY PROFILE

District: **WEST STANISLAUS RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

Office Location: 301 South First Street, Patterson, CA 95363
(Mailing: P.O. Box 193, Patterson, CA 95363)

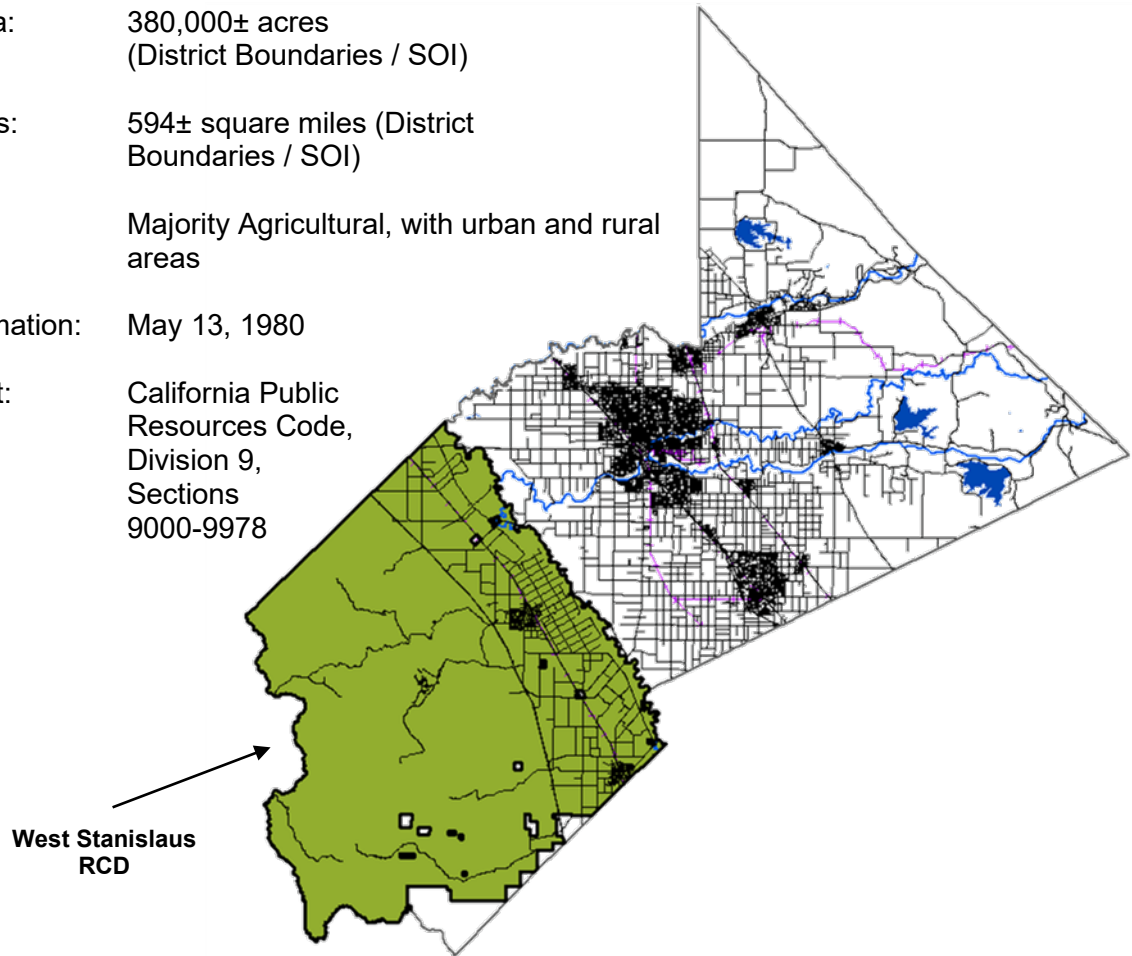
Service Area: 380,000± acres
(District Boundaries / SOI)

Square Miles: 594± square miles (District Boundaries / SOI)

Land Use: Majority Agricultural, with urban and rural areas

Date of Formation: May 13, 1980

Enabling Act: California Public Resources Code, Division 9, Sections 9000-9978



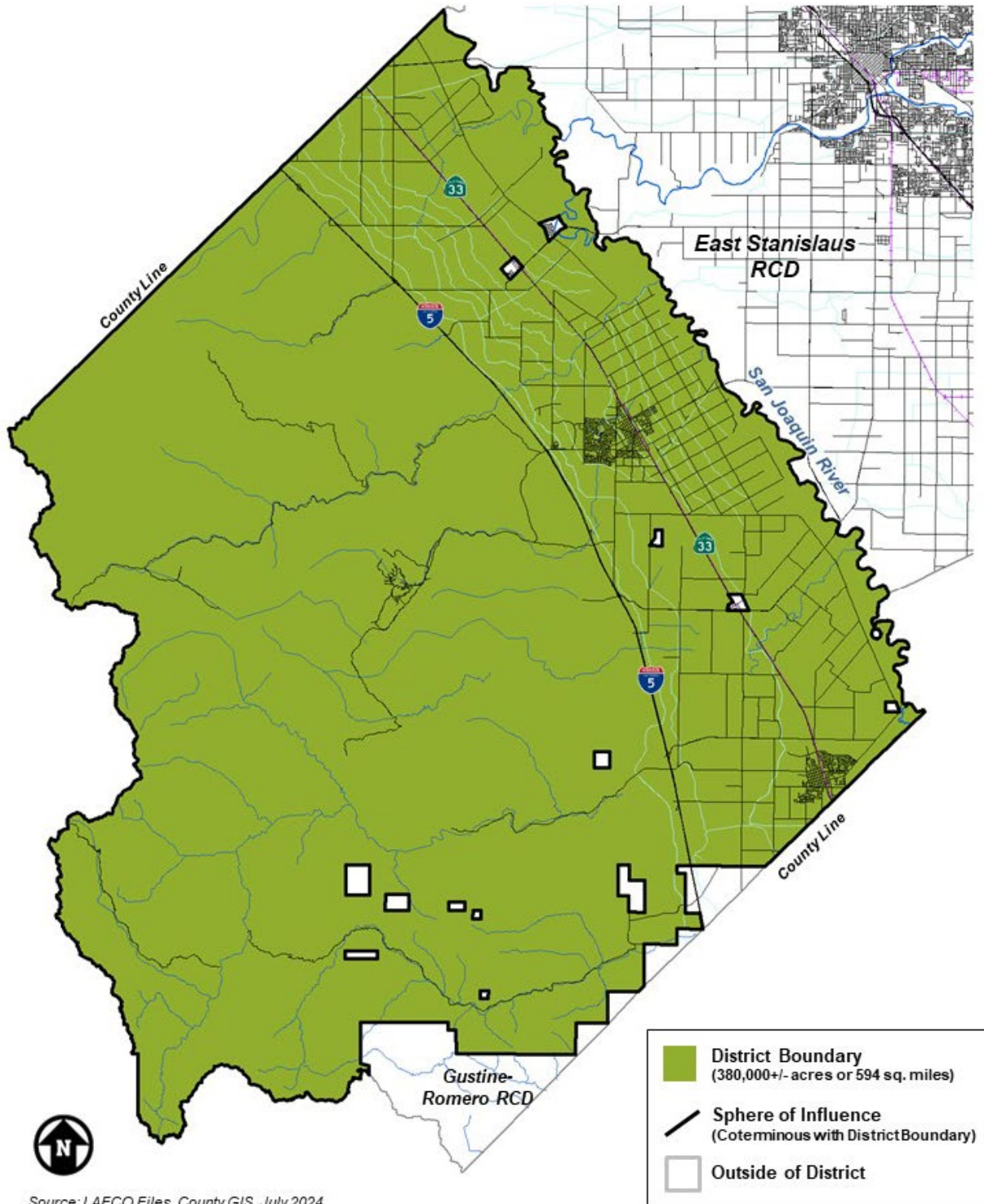
Governing Body: 7 Directors –
Must be Landowners within District Boundaries Appointed by the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors

Administration: 1 – Part time District Manager

District Services: Conservation management techniques of water and soil in concert with other public agencies
(Duties)

Sources: *West Stanislaus RCD, Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors, and Stanislaus LAFCO*

West Stanislaus Resource Conservation District Boundary & Sphere of Influence



Source: LAFCO Files, County GIS, July 2024

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