

AREA PLAN

FY 2011 - 2015

LOWER JAMES RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION, INC.

Lower James RC&D

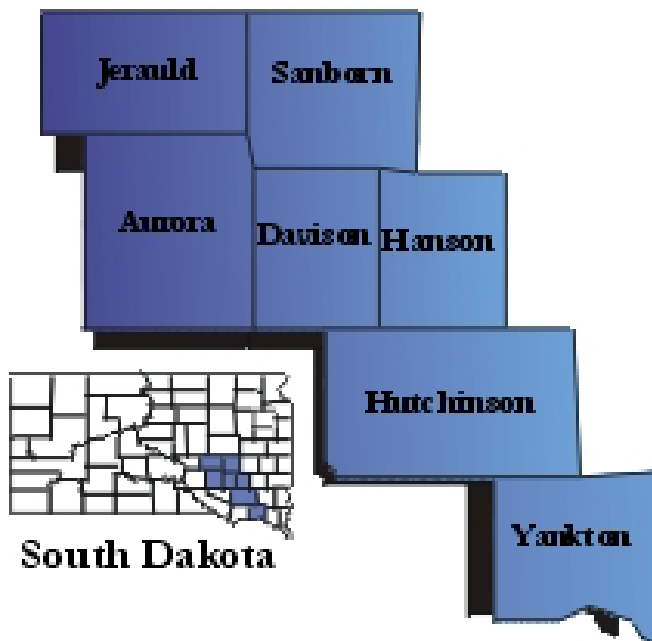


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INTRODUCTION

The Lower James Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Association, Inc. was established by 30 area sponsoring organizations in 1974, and became a 501©(3) non-profit regional organization in 1991. Lower James RC&D serves citizens in the seven South Dakota Counties of Aurora, Davison, Hanson, Hutchinson, Jerauld, Sanborn, and Yankton.

Members of the Lower James RC&D meet bi-monthly and function as a Council in adopting and completing Council approved projects under approved by-laws. The Lower James RC&D Association developed this 5 year area plan (2011-2015) to document priority needs in the seven county area, and establish goals that will guide the association's activities to meet the identified needs.

This document serves as the long-range Area Plan for the Lower James RC&D area. The purpose of the plan is to provide a strategic direction for the organization. The organization is stronger than ever before, yet more efforts are needed to ensure a strong sustainable organization that serves the communities in our area.

The Area Plan is updated every five years, after soliciting public input, in an effort to better know and serve the needs and concerns of the people served by the Council. This plan was developed both by soliciting public input through a survey of residents in the seven (7) county area served by Lower James RC&D, and by the consideration of ongoing projects and strategies previously adopted by the Council. Results from a regional survey conducted by Planning and Development District III, one of our partners, was also used in formulating this strategic plan. In addition to the survey results, local Council members were provided guidance by NRCS on the development of this plan.

Nationally RC&D Areas were first authorized when Congress passed the Food and Agriculture Act of 1962. The purpose of the Act was to expand opportunities for conservation districts, local units of government and individuals to improve their communities, taking a regional or multi-county approach. Today, 375 RC&D Areas are hard at work providing assistance enhancing the economic, environmental and social well being of communities throughout the United States. Roughly 80% of Americans presently live in an RC&D Area.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the national RC&D program. This Strategic Plan for the seven-county area mentioned above serves as an agreement between the NRCS and Lower James RC&D, and as a contract between Lower James RC&D and our communities.

The development and implementation of this plan enables the Natural Resources Conservation Service to provide assistance to the Lower James Resource Conservation & Development Assoc., Inc., and helps Lower James RC&D make our RC&D area a better place to live, work and play.

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

Mission

“Economic Development that is Natural Resource and Community Sustaining”.

Vision

“To be a regional grassroots team of local leaders recognized for quality support and services that empower area citizens to be successful and innovative in leadership, to shape the future of their communities”.

It is the goal and intent of the Lower James RC&D Council to work towards a vibrant seven county area with rural communities that are thriving, and that they be places where the youth desire to return and take leadership roles. It is also the goal of the Lower James RC&D Council to have a healthy natural resource base that sustains the economy of the area and improves the quality of the soil, water, and air for future generations.

BACKGROUND AND STRUCTURE OF THE COUNCIL

The Lower James RC&D was originally established by 30 area local governments and organizations in December of 1974. These were made up mostly of County Commissioners, Conservation District Board members, and representatives from the major towns in the area.

The governing body of Lower James RC&D is its membership. Today’s membership is made up of local government representatives and conservation district representatives.

The current thirty-three (33) Lower James RC&D sponsors are:

Conservation Districts

Aurora
Davison
Hanson
Hutchinson
Jerauld
Sanborn
Yankton

County Governments

Aurora County Commission
Davison County Commission
Hanson County Commission
Hutchinson County Commission
Jerauld County Commission
Sanborn County Commission
Yankton County Commission

Municipalities

City of Artesian
City of Emery
City of Ethan
City of Freeman
City of Letcher
City of Menno
City of Mitchell
City of Mount Vernon
City of Parkston
City of Plankinton
City of Stickney
City of Tripp
City of Wessington Springs
City of White Lake
City of Woonsocket
City of Yankton

James River Water Development District

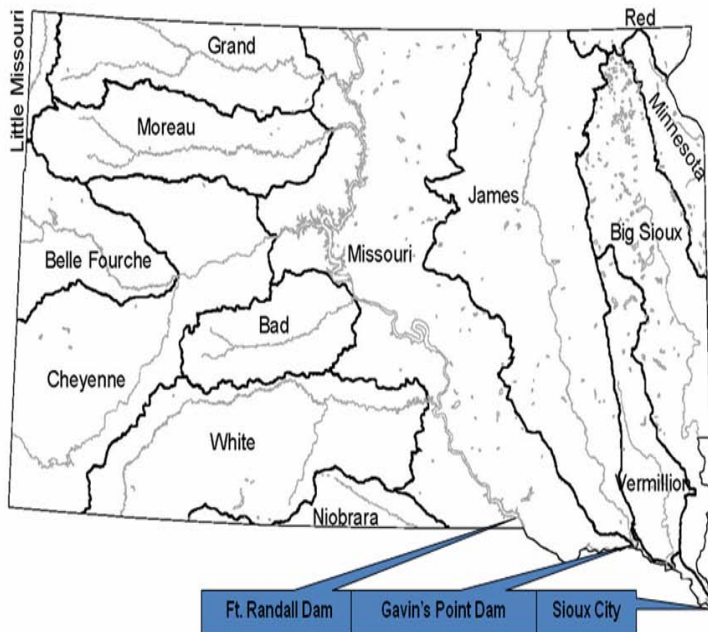
Representatives also include At-Large and Alternate Council Members

Lake Hanson Association
Midwest Assistance Program

OVERVIEW OF THE AREA

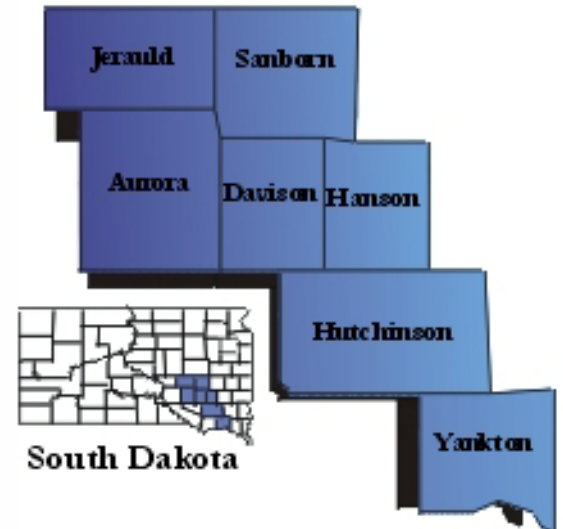
Location

Most of the Lower James RC&D Area is in the James River Watershed. The RC&D area's and Yankton County's southern border is the Missouri River, and Yankton County includes portions of the Vermillion River Watershed. The James River enters the area in northern Sanborn County and flows through the area, with the mouth of the James River in Yankton County, where it enters the Missouri River. The Missouri River forms the southern border of the RC&D Area, and Yankton County is the border between South Dakota and Nebraska. The Missouri River main stem reservoir, Lewis and Clark Lake, and Gavins Point Dam are on the southern border. Gavins Point Dam is the last main stem dam on the Missouri River, and the river below Gavins Point Dam is designated a National Recreation River.



MAJOR SOUTH DAKOTA WATERSHEDS

Lower James RC&D



Demographics

The seven county Lower James RC&D Area encompasses 2,576,640 acres, and had a 2000 population of 59,635 people. The population of the Lower James RC&D Area grew from 56,404 in 1990 to 59,635 in 2000. This increase in population was the first population increase since the 1930 US Census.

The Cities of Yankton and Mitchell account for 47% of the area's population (28,086), and accounted for 49% (1585) of the area's population increase, 1990 to 2000. The area's farm numbers decreased to 3574 in all seven counties (-2 to -8%) 1990 to 2000, and farm population also decreased to 6987- farm size increased. The rural non-farm population increased to 13,228 (1525 increase), accounting for 47% of the area's population increase, and was associated with the areas surrounding the two major trade centers. The 26 cities under 1,500 population (11,334 total population) in the area gained 121 people since 1990, accounting for 4% of the area's population increase. Fourteen of the small cities had a population increase, and 12 had a population decrease. Population increases in small cities were again associated with close proximity to the two major trade centers of Yankton and Mitchell.

Population projections by the SD State Data Center for the RC&D area are for increases in population in Davison, Hanson, and Yankton Counties (7482 total), and population decreases in Aurora, Jerauld, Sanborn, and Hutchinson Counties (3164 total). These projections again follow the pattern of population growth in and around the major trade centers of Yankton and Mitchell, with population declines in the rural areas over 30 miles from a trade center.

TABLE 1

Geographic Area	Total Population	Percent of Total Population					Median age (years)
		Under 18 Years	18 to 24 years	25 to 44 years	45 to 64 years	65 years and over	
South Dakota	754844	26.9	10.3	27.4	21.2	14.3	35.6

COUNTY

Aurora	3058	27.5	6.5	22.1	22.2	21.6	40.6
Davison	18741	25.4	12	27.8	20.4	16.2	36
Hanson	3139	29.5	7.8	26.1	21.8	14.9	36
Hutchinson	8075	24.8	5.6	22.1	21.2	26.2	43.1
Jerauld	2295	21.4	6.9	19.8	26.2	25.6	46.3
Sanborn	2675	25.7	7.8	23.7	23.5	19.5	40.8
Yankton	21652	25.7	8.7	29	21.9	14.6	37

Source: American FactFinder 2000 U.S. Census

TABLE 2: Lower James RC&D Area Population Data – 2000 US Census

Total Pop.	Urban Pop. > 10,000 Pop.	Farm Pop.	City < 1500 Pop.	Rural – Non Farm Pop.
59,635	28,086	6,987	11,334	13,228
Change 90-00	Increased	Decreased	Increased	Increased

TABLE 3**SOUTH DAKOTA**

Total Population by Race	Aurora County	Davison County	Hanson County	Hutchinson County	Jerauld County	Sanborn County	Yankton County
Total:	3058	18741	3139	8075	2295	2675	21652
White	2926	18034	3124	7980	2272	2645	20592
Black or African American	9	51	0	7	0	1	252
American Indian and Alaska Native	59	371	3	46	13	8	354
Asian	3	80	4	8	3	10	92
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	4	1	0	0	1	4
Some other race	44	56	1	5	0	3	160
Two or more races	17	145	6	29	7	7	198

Source: American FactFinder 2000 U.S. Census

Agriculture

COUNTY	Total Farmland Acres	Cropland Acres	Percentage	Rangeland Acres	Percentage
Aurora	364612	228775	62.7%	135837	37.3%
Davison	279524	214888	76.9%	64636	23.1%
Hanson	219023	174403	79.6%	44620	20.4%
Hutchinson	509775	394680	77.4%	115095	22.6%
Jerauld	328624	185566	56.5%	143058	43.5%
Sanborn	318254	175058	55.0%	143196	45.0%
Yankton	322242	249268	77.4%	72974	22.6%

County Farm Acres - 2010 USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, South Dakota Field Office

Agriculture and Land Use

Agriculture is the dominant land use. Land in farms, as of the 2010 National Agricultural Statistics Service, totals 2,342,054 acres; cropland totals 1,622,638 acres (69.3%) and rangeland totals 719,416 acres (30.7%).

Most of the land is privately owned. The publicly owned land is in rangeland, wildlife, and recreation uses. Wildlife use often co-exists with the cropland and rangeland. This area is the heart of South Dakota's pheasant range and is in the Missouri flyway of migratory waterfowl. Whitetail and mule deer, grouse, turkey, prairie chicken, and Hungarian partridge are also important game hunting species.

Vegetation and Crops

The crops produced are corn, grain sorghum, soybeans, wheat, oats, and sunflowers, with about one-third of the cropland producing alfalfa, and introduced pasture plants used for both hay and grazing by domestic animals and wildlife. The rangeland supports a mixture of mid-grass types such as western wheatgrass, green needlegrass, needle and thread, big bluestem and little bluestem.

The Missouri River breaks are located along the Missouri river, and up some of the larger creeks and rivers - including the James River, Big Sioux and Vermillion Rivers. This area is dominated by

woody draws of hardwoods such as oak, ash, hackberry and cottonwood. Cedar trees are also increasing in area. Much of the timber is harvestable/merchantable size, but is not being actively managed in most places. Rangeland also occurs in this area and are dominated by sideoats grama and little bluestem and big bluestem. Where grazing pressure is present in excessive amounts, grass types are mostly blue grama and Kentucky bluegrass, and assorted invading plants - curly cup gum weed, western ragweed, and other less palatable species.



Natural Resources

Water Resources

The Missouri River is the major water resource in the area. There are three mainstem dams and adjacent reservoirs. Lewis & Clark Lake is the lower reservoir on the Missouri system, and is the southern border of Yankton County. Gavins Point Dam and Lewis and Clark Lake at 33,000 surface acres is receiving major impacts from agriculture, tourism, recreation and natural and man caused sources of non-point source pollution and sedimentation. The James and Vermillion Rivers also receive heavy impacts from agricultural non-point sources of pollution.



Smaller lakes of importance are Lake Mitchell and Lake Hanson, Tripp Lake and numerous other smaller lakes. The three main rivers (Missouri, James and Vermillion Rivers) are the major sources of surface water for irrigation, recreation, and wildlife use. Smaller areas are important for recreation, livestock, and wildlife use. There are several Rural or Community Water Districts that bring Missouri River Water to most of the farms, ranches and communities in the Lower James RC&D area. These include the Randall Community Water District located in Lake Andes, the B-Y Water District out of Tabor, SD, the Aurora-Brule RWS Inc. headquartered in Kimball, SD, the Mid-Dakota, Davison and Hanson Rural Water Systems.

To serve the expanded needs of farm and ranch operations, plus rural economic development, water is needed on demand for both rural and urban residents. Missouri River water should be adequate to meet this need if the cost of delivery can be justified.

Soils

General Soil Maps show the soil associations in the Lower James RC&D Area and the seven general kinds of landscapes for broad interpretive purposes. (*Source: County Soil Surveys*). There are also detailed soil surveys for each county in the Lower James RC&D area. These are publications of the National Cooperative Soil Survey, a joint effort of many federal, state and local agencies, with leadership by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

A soil association is a landscape that has a distinctive proportional pattern of soils. It normally is named for the major soil in that association. For information on the soils and soils associations, refer to the Soil Survey for each county. Copies are available in the Natural Resources Conservation Service field office and Conservation District office serving the county.

Geology

The Geologic map¹ gives an overview of the geology of the Lower James RC&D Area.

Much of the area east of the Missouri River (Lake Francis Case) is covered with glacially deposited materials. Glacial drift is found throughout, except in stream valleys and where the drift has been removed by erosion.

The glacial drift consists of moderately slow or slowly permeable unstratified, silt, clay, sand, gravel, and boulder till and highly permeable sand and gravel outwash. Several outwash areas are near the surface. Others are buried at depths of more than 100 feet.

Underlying the glacial materials are Cretaceous Age sales, marls, sandstones, siltstones, and limestones of the Pierre, Niobrara and Carlile Formations.

Socioeconomic

Total personal income in the Lower James RC&D area in 2001 was \$1,541,000,000, of which 65% was from earnings and 35% was from rent, dividends, and transfer payments. Income from wages and salary was approximately \$800,000 million, with income from farming at \$72 million and non-farm proprietors earnings of \$119 million. The major industries by earnings were manufacturing, retail trade, farming, construction, and wholesale trade. Total available jobs in 2004 were 30,315, with a total labor force in 2003 of 29,745. This again shows the impact of the major trade centers on commuting to work from areas in and outside of the RC&D Area. The major industries by employment with near or over 3000 employees were: Health/education/social services (6659), Manufacturing (4333), Retail trade (3839), and Agriculture (2969).

The Lower James RC&D area is currently showing positive economic, social, and environmental growth and progress. The trade centers of Yankton and Mitchell are experiencing excellent growth, which is producing growth in the communities in their commuting areas. A declining population trend since the 1930's has been reversed in the past 10 years for the area, and includes population increases in 14 of 26 cities with less than 1500 population. Areas of concern remain the more isolated rural areas where population decreases continue and are projected to continue.

¹***South Dakota Geological Survey, Vermillion, SD; (www.sdgs.usd.edu/)***

RESOURCE NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES

The Lower James RC&D Priority Needs Survey was developed in the fall of 2009. Since then the survey has been distributed extensively. All seven Conservation District Board meetings were attended in 2010, and board members assisted the council by filling out a survey. In addition, many county commissioners and other local government officials filled out a survey, as did many members of the council and the general public.

The Area Plan consists of an analysis of the survey results and inputs from existing resource providers to address the four program elements of land management, land conservation, water management and community development. The Council formed an area plan development committee which did the bulk of the survey analysis, and the development and review of this plan.

The results of a 2008 Regional Survey conducted by Planning and Development District III (PDDIII) was also considered in the development of this Plan. The PDDIII survey was sent to county and municipal governments, along with organizations and businesses in the area. This survey included all seven Lower James RC&D Counties, plus eight other counties to the west. The results of these surveys and inputs were the basis for the goals, objectives and strategies developed by the Council.

LAND CONSERVATION

Tree planting and windbreak renovations ranked number 1 in the area plan development survey as the biggest concerns. People in the Lower James area know and appreciate the value of trees for a multitude of purposes. The current rise in the price of land and crop prices however, has stopped many people from planting trees. Farmstead shelterbelts and windbreaks, many planted in the 1940's, are past their prime and nearing their life expectancy. These trees are costly to replace as whole trees, and stumps have to be removed. Current programs do not provide adequate assistance and incentives for landowners to replace them, so benefits are being lost.

Soil erosion from both wind and water are significant natural resource concerns in the Lower James RC&D Area. Wind and water erosion are threats to long-term soil productivity, and water erosion transports sediment, nutrients, and bacteria, which impair area ground and surface water. Soil erosion has been reduced since 1990 on croplands and pasturelands; however, damage done by previous erosion and current levels is a major concern.

Land use in the area is approximately 50% cropland, 20% native range, 20% introduced pastureland, 7% state and federal, and 1% each woodland, urban areas and water areas. The area is in the transition zone between the corn belt and the western grasslands, with the southeastern portion of the RC&D area mostly dominantly cropland, and the northwestern area dominantly grasslands. Noxious weeds have become a concern in the northwest and southern part of the RC&D area, especially on pasture and rangelands. Very little educational or financial assistance currently exists for noxious weed control on lower value pasture and rangelands, and these weeds are spreading and becoming established in more areas.

Farm income is 32% from the sale of crops, 49% from the sale of livestock, and 19% from government payments. Most crops raised are fed to livestock. The major crops are corn (428,000 acres), soybeans

(475,000 acres), and hay (356,000 acres). The major livestock raised are cattle and calves, finishing cattle, and hogs. In 1997, there were 1939 farms with cattle and calves, 483 farms with fattened or finishing cattle, and 470 farms with hogs.

The Lower James RC&D Council will continue to seek opportunities to support landowners, conservation districts, and communities plan and implement economically sound conservation plans that call for implementing practices such as tree planting and other beneficial practices to increase profits, reduce erosion and protect, maintain, or improve soil quality and clean water.

WATER MANAGEMENT

Surface and groundwater quantity and quality are significant natural resource concerns in the Lower James RC&D area. The priority water management concerns from the 2010 public survey are:

- Watershed projects: Clean water protection, Project planning and grant writing assistance
- Restoration of existing public dams.
- Missouri River sediment management.
- Wetland restorations/creations/easements.

Improvement and/or Maintenance of Water Quality and Quantity:

With the completion of three major rural water systems' expansion since 2000, (Bon Homme/Yankton to serve Mitchell, Randall to serve southern Aurora, and Mid-Dakota serving parts of Sanborn and Jerauld), 85% of area citizens have access to high quality rural water for drinking and other domestic uses. The source of water for all the rural water systems is the Missouri River, particularly the Missouri River bordering Yankton County. Current challenges to rural water systems are increased demand, and the ability of their pipelines and treatment plants to allow for industrial and residential expansion. The lack of system capacity restricts growth in portions of the RC&D area.

Sedimentation, nutrient loading, and bacterial contamination are the three main water pollutants needing to be controlled in order to maintain or restore area water quality for all uses. Currently, a mix of water quality watershed assessments and watershed implementation projects are in progress in partnership with local organizations, and the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). These projects involve Lower James RC&D technical assistance, and reflect local needs to restore or improve water quality for drinking/domestic, recreation, and industrial uses and include:

1. Lake Mitchell/Firesteel Creek Restoration Project - An implementation project to restore Lake Mitchell for drinking water (serving 13,000), recreational use, wildlife and fisheries, and residential living.
2. Lake Hanson/Pierre Creek Restoration Project - An implementation project to restore Lake Hanson for recreation, wildlife and fisheries, and residential living.
3. Twin Lakes/Wilmarth Lake - An assessment project to determine sources of pollution in these watersheds and lakes that are used for recreational, wildlife and fisheries, and residential living.
4. Lewis and Clark Watershed - An Implementation Project on 2 million acres. Sediment loads to this reservoir will end the lake's life in 75-135 years if left unabated. The lake draws 1 million visitors a year, and is a major economic asset and residential area for the City of Yankton.

Lewis and Clark Lake and the Missouri River in the Yankton County area are the location of water intakes for rural water systems, which are also threatened by the sedimentation.

5. The Lower James River Watershed Project that includes most of the James River Watershed in the Lower James RC&D area.
6. The Vermillion Watershed Project started in 2007
7. The Lower Big Sioux Watershed Project started in 2007

Locally led water quality Watershed Implementation plans will need to be implemented to meet the established TMDL's. Federal and state watershed project funds will need to be applied for on a 2 year basis to carry on the watershed improvements. Lower James RC&D will be instrumental in assisting with these grants and helping to educate the public.

The Lower James RC&D area will make substantial progress towards needed water quality uses with the activities listed above; however, additional efforts will be needed for lakes, wetlands, groundwater, and creeks that are in need of maintenance or improvement and not listed by the state DENR as impaired. These include water quality efforts related to groundwater protection, improvements of water habitat for endangered species, wetland improvements, and lakes not sampled such as Menno Lake, Lake Fulton, Prior Lake, Ethan Lake, Tripp Lake, etc., as well as protection for high quality lakes such as Marindahl Lake.

The Reduction of Flood Damages on the James River Floodplain:

Major flood events along the James River in South Dakota are predominantly a result of heavy snows coupled with rapid spring thawing, and less frequently caused by heavy April and May rains. Floods of record on the James River occurred in 1881, 1888, 1897, 1920, 1922, 1942, 1952, 1962, 1969, 1984, 1986, 1993 through 1999, 2009 and 2010.

The tributaries to the James River average 6.5 feet of slope per mile, discharging floodwaters faster than the river can carry them away, and commonly causing reverse flows by the James River. Typical flooding on the James River is characterized by slow water rises maintained over a long period, and then slow recession of floodwaters resulting in flood durations of several months.

The James River Water Development District (JRWDD) provides leadership for efforts to mitigate flooding and restore the James River from previous flood damages. The Lower James RC&D, local organizations, and government partner with the Water Development District on these efforts. Currently, the JRWDD provides financial assistance for local restoration projects, and is partnering with the US Corps of Engineers to complete an Environmental Impact Statement for the James River. This will include the development of restoration alternatives that meet the river's multiple uses and needs.

Opportunities exist to implement actions on the James River based on the alternatives developed through the Environmental Impact Statement process, to restore the river from past flood damages and reduce future damages. The reduction of future flood damages will significantly involve the implementation of conservation practices in the watershed to reduce erosion, sediment transfer, nutrient pollution, and run-off volumes. The use of conservation practices such as reduced tillage, planned grazing systems, wetland protection and restoration, riparian buffers, riparian tree planting, nutrient management, floodplain land use planning, and riparian management will be key to reducing flood frequency and flood damages.

The Repair and Improvement of Reservoirs:

The Lower James RC&D area has numerous man-made reservoirs built for flood control, livestock water, and recreation. Most of these reservoirs were constructed primarily during the period 1930 to 1985. The largest reservoir is Lewis and Clark Lake on the Missouri River, which was constructed in the early 1950's under the Pick-Sloan Plan. This reservoir's life span is estimated at 75 to 135 years, due to sedimentation from the Niobrara River and other tributaries.

All major lakes in the Lower James RC&D area used for drinking water or recreation were man-made during the 1930's, as part of the Conservation Civilian Corps. These lakes are owned by the State of South Dakota and occasionally by local governments. The Lower James RC&D, in the period 1974 through 1985, provided financial and technical assistance to 10 erosion control dams. Most grazing land in the Lower James RC&D area has dugouts or dams as watering sources for livestock, and most of these were constructed prior to 1985.

The man-made reservoirs in the Lower James RC&D area need scheduled inspections and periodic structural work, along with water quality restoration and maintenance to maintain their uses for domestic water and recreation.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Lower James RC&D area experienced population growth for the first time since the 1930 US Census in the period 1990 to 2000. This growth was very positive and is a trend that needs to be continued to maintain the viability of the 28 rural communities, with 26 being less than 1500 in population.

The Lower James RC&D partners with and provides assistance to communities, regional and state organizations in a variety of efforts that target job creation in the area. These major opportunities and activities include:

- Create, retain, or expand businesses, especially alternative agriculture related businesses and jobs in small communities. Alternative agriculture business development ranked first in the 2010 public survey. An opportunity exists to assist the area with value-added products and expand tourism - especially heritage and agri-tourism. Tourism, hunting and fishing are a \$50 million industry with a revenue increase in all counties. The area's major tourism attractions are Lewis and Clark Lake Recreation area, Corn Palace, Shakespeare Garden & Anne Hathaway Cottage, Cabela's store, and pheasant hunting.
- Technical assistance to all businesses ranked second highest in need on the survey. Past activities and new opportunities exist to expand the existing enterprise facilitation program that helps new business start ups and expansions. Natural resource management activities and opportunities related to maintenance and/or improvements in existing resource quality and economic value. Past activities and new opportunities involve the use of land conservation practices to improve water quality, create and improve wildlife habitat, establish resource based tourism and recreation businesses, assist businesses meet environmental regulations, and reduce safety hazards.
- Community development activities to strengthen local financial and social capabilities to sustain communities. Opportunities exist to continue to work with local leadership to establish community foundations, fund and hire local development coordinators, assess

community needs, seek community input, consensus, new leadership, and plan and fund community improvements. Significant activity and opportunities exist for community beautification and enhancements to museums, parks, recreation facilities, and special events.

- Continue to add to the Lower James RC&D Council Endowment Fund, so in the future the Council will be able to operate its own funding program to assist in completing adopted projects.

The areas of major resource allocation to community development by the Lower James RC&D in community development will be to increase the:

- availability of business, especially agri-business, services to entrepreneurs
- value-added agricultural commodities
- capitalization of Community Foundations
- agri-tourism to include hunting and fishing, and
- community recreational opportunities and quality.

LAND MANAGEMENT

The development of value-added agriculture and renewable energy/energy efficiency projects ranked as the top two concerns on the Council's needs survey. Recycling and endangered species ranked next in order.

It is interesting to note that alternative energy awareness ranked as the concern with the most responses in the Planning District III survey. These items therefore represent the most important needed issues for the Council to concentrate its efforts on.

Land management issues in the Lower James RC&D area where opportunities for the RC&D Council to assist include assisting land owners meet environmental regulations. These regulations are related to livestock manure management, wetlands, and endangered species. Past activities and new opportunities exist to assist conservation districts and their partners provide information to landowners on regulations, technologies for meeting regulations, and funding to implement activities to meet regulations. Most farms in the Lower James RC&D area raise livestock, and to continue will need to address water pollution issues and regulations. The Topeka Shiner, Pallid Sturgeon, Piper Plover, and Least Tern are four endangered species that heavily impact land management in the area, and opportunities exist to assist landowners work to restore populations and meet existing regulations.

The river breaks of the Missouri and James Rivers are often wooded, and due to their natural beauty are sought for residential development, thus creating hazards to these homes of wildfires. Opportunities exist to assist landowners mitigate fire hazards, and utilize the wood as a commercial product.

Providing technical assistance, grant writing, educational opportunities, and information on value added agriculture, alternative crops, specialty crops, organic farming, farmers markets and community gardens, and agricultural energy development are taking center stage in this strategic plan.

PLAN GOALS (FY 2011 – 2015)

The Lower James RC&D council has been presented enormous challenges. Through the Strategic Plan development process and much citizen input, a “re-vision” has evolved. Goals and objectives have been conceptualized to meet the changing, long-term and short-term needs of the region, and to address several priorities concurrently to maximize resources and collaborative opportunities. The goals and objectives, together with the strategies, also respond to the need for expanded regionalism and cooperation in the ensuing five years in order to better utilize local and outside resources.

The plan is wholly new, is responsive to the needs identified and prioritized by Lower James RC&D residents, and integrates creativity, leadership, flexibility, innovation and volunteerism.

GOALS FOR THE LOWER JAMES RC&D COUNCIL

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| GOAL A:
(Land Conservation) | Through fiscal year 2015, maintain, restore and enhance the productive capability and best use of land and water resources by implementing ten conservation projects related to tree planting, erosion reduction, grassland improvement or weed management. |
| GOAL B:
(Water Management) | Protect water resources from non-point sources of pollution and from improper conversion to other uses by promoting water conservation education, and by assisting five conservation partners in securing non-point source pollution control funding grants by September 30, 2015 |
| GOAL C:
(Community Development) | Improve the economic strength of communities by promoting and assisting 25 newly forming or expanding small businesses with leadership development training, business planning and management information and education by September 30, 2015. |
| GOAL D:
(Land Management) | Promote and increase by 25%, the proper use of underutilized energy resources and value added agriculture enterprises; and implement two projects related to environmental protection or endangered species restoration by 2015. |

PROGRAM ELEMENTS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

This plan's goals and objectives broadly fit under four program elements that the Lower James RC&D Council addresses in this strategic plan. These elements are closely tied to the Council's mission, and over the last 45 years the Council has completed hundreds of projects that fall within these four elements. The four program elements are:

- **Land Conservation**, the purpose of which is to control erosion and sedimentation.
- **Water Management**, defined here as to provide for the conservation, use, and quality of water, including irrigation and rural water supplies; to provide for the mitigation of floods and high water tables; repair and improvement of reservoirs, the improvement of agricultural water management and the improvement of water quality.
- **Community Development**, the purpose of which is to develop resources-based industries and adequate water and waste disposal systems; improve the provision of adequate health and educational facilities; improve the quality of rural housing and recreation facilities and the protection of rural industries from natural resource hazards; the satisfaction of essential transportation and communication needs and the promotion of food security, economic development, and education.
- **Land Management**, the purpose of which is energy conservation, protection of agricultural land from conversion to other uses, farmland protection and the protection of fish and wildlife habitats.

Objectives and Strategies in this plan further define how the Council will accomplish the goals. Working with willing sponsors, individual **Projects** will be completed that will help in accomplishing the goals.

Plan Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Land Conservation	GOAL A	Through fiscal year 2015, maintain, restore and enhance the productive capability and best use of land and water resources by implementing ten conservation projects related to tree planting, erosion reduction, forest and grassland improvement or weed management.
OBJECTIVE A-1 (Land Conservation)	<i>Assist in reducing soil erosion, sedimentation and weeds on agricultural land by 15% through support to the agricultural industry to secure funds for producers to gain access to technical and financial assistance for natural resource management systems by September 30, 2015.</i>	
STRATEGY 1	-Provide assistance to at least four Conservation Districts in their efforts to secure funds for technical and financial assistance to operate a conservation tree planting and maintenance and windbreak renovation service to landowners by September 30, 2015.	
STRATEGY 2	-Maintain an informed conservation partnership and solicit input on how the Council can best help secure technical and financial assistance by attending at least 10 conservation partnership meetings annually through fiscal year 2015.	
STRATEGY 3	-Assist watershed project personnel, grassland managers and others in carrying out the information and education component of non-point source pollution control grants by September 30, 2015, by assisting with at least six educational tours, workshops and public meetings relating to cropland and grassland BMP's.	
STRATEGY 4	-Assist with meetings and work with the County Weed Supervisors and other land managers to find funds to implement their County or strategic Weed Management Area plans. Apply for one implementation grant by 2012 to control noxious weeds and increase weed management education.	

Plan Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Water Management	GOAL B	Protect water resources from non-point sources of pollution and from improper conversion to other uses by promoting water conservation education and by assisting five conservation partners in securing non-point source pollution control funding grants by September 30, 2015
OBJECTIVE B-1 (Water Management)	<i>Provide assistance to a minimum of five organizations to administer or secure funding for non-point source watershed protection work and to other groups as requested and approved by the Council through fiscal year 2015.</i>	
STRATEGY 1	-Continue to administer the Lower James RC&D Grassland Riparian Conservation Innovation Grant and search for new funding after grant completion in 2012 to accomplish livestock exclusion of high priority stream systems entering impacted rivers and lakes.	
STRATEGY 2	-By the fiscal end of 2015, assist partners with meetings, project administration and grant writing to secure continued implementation funding for the Lower Big Sioux, Lower James, Lake Hanson/Pierre Creek, Lake Mitchell/Firesteel Creek, and the Lewis and Clark Watershed project for water resource protection.	
STRATEGY 3	-Provide assistance to at least one Conservation District, Lake Association or similar group in securing funds for the repair or restoration of large dams or for other Council approved watershed or area-wide water resource projects by September 30, 2015.	
STRATEGY 4	-By 2015, work with partners and conduct at least 6 watershed educational events for landowners and 20 meetings with the conservation partnership to discuss watershed issues and new federal and state grant applications for continued watershed funding.	
OBJECTIVE B-2 (Water Management)	<i>Through FY-2015, promote a program for the maintenance and re-establishment of riparian buffers along major rivers and streams to help maintain a natural corridor that promotes ecotourism, connectivity of wildlife habitats, and provides a natural area for floodwaters.</i>	
STRATEGY 1	-Promote the use of Riparian Best Management Practices, with partner secured project funds, through news releases, meetings and landowner referrals, and complete 15 miles of riparian BMP's on private land to reduce sediment and improve water quality by the end of fiscal year 2015.	

Plan Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Community Development	GOAL C	Improve the economic strength of communities by promoting and assisting 25 newly forming or expanding small businesses with leadership development training, business planning, plus management information and education by September 30, 2015.
OBJECTIVE C-1 (Community Development)	<i>Provide planning, technical or financial assistance to non-profit entities, groups and individuals to complete at least four projects related to an increase in tourism, recreation, alternative agriculture or conservation education by September 30, 2015.</i>	
STRATEGY 1 (Community Development)	- Provide planning assistance, grant writing and technical assistance to at least three groups to secure funds or equipment primarily for recreation and tourism on federal, state, county, school district or private land.	
STRATEGY 2	-Promote four leadership development training opportunities by financially supporting council members and non-council members to attend such training by September 30, 2015.	
STRATEGY 3	-By September 30, 2015, assist in conducting two Specialty Crop Workshops or tours for landowners interested in growing specialty crops and starting specialty crop businesses.	
Objective C-2 (Community Development)	<i>Assist 4 businesses to benefit from new technology or alternative agricultural enterprises (Solar, Wind, Bio-mass, Specialty Crops, Water) by providing or facilitating leadership development, business development or financial development assistance by September 30, 2015.</i>	
STRATEGY 1	-Assist bio-digester Partners with at least one information and education activity to increase the public awareness of alternative beneficial utilization of agricultural waste for energy, fertilizer and bedding by September 30, 2015.	
STRATEGY 2	- Increase employment and reduce underemployment to create 50 jobs by 2015, by strengthening existing businesses, and assisting new business start-ups (production/processing/service) through increased access to business management support, and access to technical and financial support.	
STRATEGY 3	-Assist land and business owners with at least two specialty crop grant applications, grant administration, publicity and information and educational programs by September 30, 2015.	
STRATEGY 4	-Assist farmers market organizations and regional food distribution start up groups or businesses with planning and grant writing assistance to accomplish 2 farmers markets, community gardens or businesses by September 30, 2015.	
STRATEGY 5	Continue to manage the Lower James RC&D Council Endowment Fund to create a source of future funds for Council approved projects.	

Plan Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Land Management	GOAL D	Promote and increase by 25%, the proper use of underutilized energy resources and value added agriculture enterprises; and implement two projects related to environmental protection or endangered species restoration by 2015.
OBJECTIVE D-1 (Land Management)	<i>Implement four natural resource energy-related projects that educate at least 500 citizens on renewable energy and energy efficiency measures and opportunities by 2015.</i>	
STRATEGY 1	-Through the year 2015, attend all SD Agricultural Energy Committee meetings in person or by teleconference. Report on existing council activities that help accomplish the committee's goals, and assist in sponsoring and maintaining an agricultural energy web site.	
STRATEGY 2	-With assistance from the SD Ag Energy Committee, the SD RC&D Association and other partners, plan and implement at least four Ag Energy workshops by September 30, 2015.	
STRATEGY 3	-Enlist the assistance of collaborators, partners and the SD Agriculture Energy committee in coordinating and implementing two agricultural renewable energy and energy efficiency projects by 2015. These projects may be related to energy audits, solid waste recycling, or coordination of meetings or events with transmission line and other renewable energy development groups and organizations.	
OBJECTIVE D-2 (Land Management)	<i>Address landowners' resource issues with Forestry, Grazing, Wildlife and Endangered Species, through education by working with partners and by applying for at least two technical assistance, education or conservation practice implementation grants by September 30, 2015.</i>	
STRATEGY 1	-By 2013 work with partners and others to develop and submit one plan, budget and grant application to address a decline in forest and rangeland health, a lack of forest product utilization and markets, rare and declining wildlife species, and an unhealthy increase in invasive or encroaching species.	
STRATEGY 2	-Educate 100 people by holding at least one educational event by September 30, 2013 to bring attention to the unique problems and opportunities associated with the Missouri River Breaks in the Lower James RC&D Area.	
OBJECTIVE D-3 (Land Management)	<i>Through fiscal year 2015, improve the local knowledge and use of sustainable agricultural methods, including organic agriculture and natural or year round grazing techniques by educating 250 citizens, professionals and local governmental officials on sustainable agriculture.</i>	

Plan Goals, Objectives and Strategies	
STRATEGY 1 (Land Management)	-With partner assistance, conduct two awareness workshops on sustainable grazing techniques by the end of 2015.
STRATEGY 2	-Conduct two organic certification and/or sustainable agriculture awareness workshops, tours or events by September 30, 2015.

PARTNERSHIPS

The following are Federal and State government agencies--plus non-government organizations—Lower James RC&D traditionally partners with to make things happen.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Farm Service Agency (FSA); Rural Development (RD); Forest Service (USFS); Cooperative Research Education & Extension Services (CREES)

United States Department of Interior (USDI)

Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS); National Park Services (NPS); Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA); U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS)

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

Gavins Point Project - Yankton

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

EPA representatives together with the Department of Environment & Natural Resources occasionally tour the Watershed Projects the Council is involved in, and view installed conservation practices.

State of South Dakota

Department of Environment & Natural Resources (DENR); Game, Fish & Parks (SDGF&P); South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT); South Dakota Department of Ag - Resource Conservation & Forestry; Department of Social Services, Department of Tourism.

Other

South Dakota State University; University of South Dakota; SD Rural Development Council; Midwest Assistance Program (MAP); Rural Electric Cooperatives; SD Grasslands Coalition; SD Association of Conservation Districts; SD Association of RC&D Councils; Pheasants Forever; Local Cattlemen's Association; County Weed and Pest Boards; Conservation Districts; Community & County Historical Societies; Rural Office of Community Service; Chambers of Commerce; Economic Development Associations; Community Organizations; Landowners; Missouri River Futures; East River Electric Power Cooperative; SD Wind Energy Association, Windustry; SD Regional Development Association; the 25x'25 Alliance; SD Community Foundation

Planning Districts

Located in Yankton, SD, Planning & Development District III (PDDIII) services all Lower James counties plus eight additional counties to the west. PDDIII provides technical assistance to local units of government and organizations. PDDIII is the designated Economic Development Administration entity for this area. Small Business Development Center and Business Information Center are co-located with PDDIII in Yankton. PDDIII assists the Area-wide Business Council, which administers a revolving loan fund for business and industry development. PDDIII and the Lower James Council have some overlapping sponsors and board members.

Water Development Districts

The James River Water Development District (JRWDD) serves much of the Lower James RC&D Area, with the exception of Jerauld County and part of Aurora County. The JRWDD is responsible for assisting local people and entities with water development issues. JRWDD provides funding assistance for planning and implementing water quality; lake restoration; public water systems; and other water development.

LINKAGE TO THE NRCS STRATEGIC PLAN

Each of the projects the Lower James RC&D Council approves are designed to address at least one of the four program elements above. These elements are defined as Land Management, Land Conservation, Water Management, and Community Development. Currently the council is involved in working with partners in addressing issues such as invasive species, alternative farming practices, water quality and quantity, and river and lake improvements. Other partners and groups are addressing some of the same issues. To reduce duplication of efforts, the Lower James RC&D Council will work with others to prioritize work and projects that address needs that are not already being adequately addressed.

There is a very direct link between this plan's Elements and Goals and the NRCS Strategic Plan's Foundation Goals of High-Quality, Productive Soils; Clean and Abundant Water; and Healthy Plant and Animal Communities. There is also a direct link between the Venture Goals in the NRCS Plan and the Elements and Goals in this plan. The Venture Goals are Clean Air; An adequate Energy Supply; and Working Farm and Ranch Lands. Each of the Foundation and Venture Goals will be addressed under one of the four program elements and goals addressed in this Area Plan.

It is the goal and intent of the Lower James RC&D Council to work towards a vibrant seven county area with rural communities that are thriving, and that they be places where the youth desire to return and take leadership roles. It is also the goal of the Lower James RC&D Council to have a healthy natural resource base that sustains the economy of the area and improves the quality of the soil, water, and air for future generations.

ADOPTION OF THE RC&D AREA PLAN

The Lower James Resource Conservation and Development Council agrees that “the RC&D program will be conducted in compliance with the nondiscrimination provisions as contained in Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (Public Law 100-259) and other nondiscrimination statutes; namely, Section 504, of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and in accordance with the regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture (7CFR-15, Subparts A & B) which provide that no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial (or technical) assistance from the Department of Agriculture or any agency thereof.”

The Lower James RC&D Council agrees that the signing of this document constitutes agreement to comply with federal laws concerning restrictions on lobbying, a drug-free workplace, and responsibilities for nonprocurement, suspension, and disbarment, and state review.

The Lower James RC&D Council, Inc. has had this application reviewed by the state. Comments made through the state single point of contact have been considered prior to submission of the application and that all applicable procedures have been followed. An environmental impact statement will not be prepared during the development of the strategic plan, but an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement will be prepared concurrently with the development of each project, when applicable, in accordance with federal procedures.

LOWER JAMES RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, INC., STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA hereby adopts this RC&D Area Plan.

By: Linda Assmus Date: 8/9/10
President

This action authorized at an official meeting of the LJ RC&D Council on 7/19/10.

Attest: Jim Leki
Secretary

U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service

Approved By: Karen M Bronnen Date: 9/29/10
State Conservationist *Acting*

Appendix



Letter from the Council President

Lower James Resource Conservation and Development, authorized in 1974 by the United States Department of Agriculture, comprises seven counties in the heartland of southeast South Dakota.

Southeast South Dakota, with the exception of the Sioux Falls area, has experienced a decline in population during the past fifty years. The economy of the area is predominately agricultural, and the population decline is primarily the result of an evolving agriculture industry and changing lifestyles. Agriculture and agribusiness operations are larger in size and less labor intensive due to the utilization of ever improving technology.

Most of the region is experiencing out-migration of young adults, which seriously limits the availability of the labor force. An aging population also compounds the problem. More diversification of the economy is needed to provide more expanded job opportunities for the area. In addition, local governments are facing a fiscal crisis.

This five-year resource conservation and utilization plan, developed through a public participation process, offers tremendous opportunities to galvanize local citizens to improve the social, economic and environmental conditions of the area. The Lower James RC&D Council envisions extraordinary potential for the area and looks forward to working with the public, with non-governmental organizations, and with federal, state, county, city and tribal governments to develop the possibilities for the twenty-first century. It is only by working together will the area's greatest potential be realized.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Assmus". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Linda Assmus, President
Lower James RC&D

BUDGET-COST PROJECTIONS AND STAFFING

(Does not include NRCS reporting, administration, planning and training)

GOAL A (LAND CONSERVATION): Through fiscal year 2015, maintain, restore and enhance the productive capability and best use of land and water resources by implementing ten conservation projects related to tree planting, erosion reduction, forest and grassland improvement or weed management.		Staff	Hours	Budget
<i>Objective A -1 (LAND CONSERVATION): Assist in reducing soil erosion, sedimentation and weeds on agricultural land by 15% through support to the agricultural industry to secure funds for producers to gain access to technical and financial assistance for natural resource management systems by September 30, 2015.</i>				
Strategy 1	Provide assistance to four Conservation Districts to secure funds for technical and financial assistance to operate a conservation practice implementation service.	Coordinator & Staff	240	\$6,000
Strategy 2	Attend at least 10 conservation partnership meetings annually through fiscal year 2015.	Coordinator & Staff	240	\$6,000
Strategy 3	Assist with at least six educational tours, workshops and public meetings relating to cropland and grassland BMP's.	Coordinator & Staff	240	\$6,000
Strategy 4	Apply for one implementation grant by 2012 to control noxious weeds and increase weed management education.	Coordinator & Staff	240	\$6,000

BUDGET-COST PROJECTIONS AND STAFFING

GOAL B (WATER MANAGEMENT): Protect water resources from non-point sources of pollution and from improper conversion to other uses by promoting water conservation education and by assisting five conservation partners in securing non-point source pollution control funding grants by September 30, 2015	Staff	Hours	Budget
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OBJECTIVE B-1: (WATER MANAGEMENT): Provide assistance to a minimum of five organizations to administer or secure funding for non-point source watershed protection work and to other groups as requested and approved by the Council through fiscal year 2015.

Strategy 1	Until project completion in 2012, continue to administer the Lower James RC&D Grassland Riparian Conservation Innovation Grant to accomplish livestock exclusion of high priority stream systems entering impacted rivers and lakes.	Coordinator & Staff	200	\$5,000
Strategy 2	By the fiscal end of 2015, assist partners with meetings, project administration and grant writing to secure continued implementation funding for the Lower Big Sioux, Lower James, Lake Hanson/Pierre Creek, Lake Mitchell/Firesteel Creek, and the Lewis and Clark Watershed project for water resource protection.	Coordinator & Staff	800	\$20,000
Strategy 3	Provide assistance to at least one Conservation District, Lake Association or similar group in securing funds for the repair or restoration of large dams by September 30, 2015.	Coordinator & Staff	200	\$5,000
Strategy 4	By 2015 conduct at least 6 watershed educational events for landowners and 20 meetings with the conservation partnership.	Coordinator & Staff	400	\$10,000

Objective B-2 (WATER MANAGEMENT): Through FY-2015, promote a program for the maintenance and re-establishment of riparian buffers along major rivers and streams to help maintain a natural corridor that promotes ecotourism, connectivity of wildlife habitats and provides a natural area for floodwaters.

Strategy 1 (Water Mgt)	Complete 15 miles of riparian BMP's on private land to reduce sediment and improve water quality by the end of fiscal year 2015.	Coordinator & Staff	400	\$10,000
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BUDGET-COST PROJECTIONS AND STAFFING

		Staff	Hours	Budget
Goal C (COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT): Improve the economic strength of communities by promoting and assisting 25 newly forming or expanding small businesses with leadership development training, business planning and management information and education by September 30, 2015.				
<i>Objective C-1 (COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT): Provide planning, technical or financial assistance to non-profit entities, groups and individuals to complete at least four projects related to an increase in tourism, recreation, alternative agriculture or conservation education by September 30, 2015.</i>				
Strategy 1:	Provide planning assistance, grant writing and technical assistance to at least three groups to secure funds or equipment primarily for recreation and tourism on federal, state, county, school district or private land.	Coordinator & Staff	400	\$10,000
Strategy 2:	Promote four leadership development training opportunities by financially supporting council members and non-council members to attend such training by September 30, 2015.	Coordinator & Staff	20	\$500
Strategy 3:	By September 30, 2015, assist in conducting two Specialty Crop Workshops or tours for landowners interested in growing specialty crops and starting specialty crop businesses.	Coordinator & Staff	400	\$10,000
<i>Objective C-2 (COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT): Assist 4 Businesses to Benefit from New Technology or alternative agricultural enterprises (Solar, Wind, Bio-mass, Specialty Crops, Water) by providing or facilitating leadership development, business development or financial development assistance by September 30, 2015.</i>				
Strategy 1:	Assist bio-digester Partners with at least one information and education activity by September 30, 2015.	Coordinator & Staff	80	\$2,000
Strategy 2:	Increase employment and reduce underemployment to create 50 jobs by providing assistance to the Enterprise Facilitation project by 2015.	Coordinator & Staff	600	\$15,000
Strategy 3:	Assist land and business owners with at least two specialty crop grant applications, grant administration, etc., by September 30, 2015.	Coordinator & Staff	120	\$3,000
Strategy 4:	Assist farmer's market organizations and regional food distribution start up groups or businesses with planning and grant writing assistance to accomplish 3 farmers markets, community gardens or businesses by September 30, 2015.	Coordinator & Staff	200	\$5,000

BUDGET-COST PROJECTIONS AND STAFFING

		Staff	Hours	Budget
Goal D (LAND MANAGEMENT): Promote and increase by 25%, the proper use of underutilized energy resources and value added agriculture enterprises; and implement two projects related to environmental protection or endangered species restoration by 2015.				
<i>Objective D-1 (LAND MANAGEMENT): Implement four natural resource energy-related projects that educate at least 500 citizens on renewable energy and energy efficiency measures and opportunities by 2015.</i>				
Strategy 1	Through the year 2015, attend all SD Agricultural Energy Committee meetings in person or by teleconference and assist in sponsoring and maintaining an agricultural energy web site.	Coordinator & Staff	600	\$15,000
Strategy 2	Plan and implement at least four Ag Energy workshops by September 30, 2015.	Coordinator & Staff	240	\$6,000
Strategy 3	Coordinating and implementing two agricultural renewable energy and energy efficiency projects by 2015.	Coordinator & Staff	200	\$5,000
<i>Objective D-2 (LAND MANAGEMENT): Address Landowner's resource issues with Forestry, Grazing, Wildlife and Endangered Species, through education by applying for at least two technical assistance, education or conservation practice implementation grants by September 30, 2015.</i>				
Strategy 1	By 2013 work with partners and others to develop and submit one plan, budget and grant application.	Coordinator & Staff	200	\$5,000
Strategy 2	Educate 100 people by holding at least one Missouri River breaks educational event by September 30, 2013.	Coordinator & Staff	80	\$2,000
<i>Objective D-3 (LAND MANAGEMENT): Through fiscal year 2015, improve the local knowledge and use of sustainable agricultural methods, including organic agriculture and natural or year round grazing techniques by educating 250 citizens, professionals and local governmental officials on sustainable agriculture.</i>				
Strategy 1	With partner assistance conduct two awareness workshops on sustainable grazing techniques by the end of 2015.	Coordinator & Staff	200	\$5000
Strategy 2	Conduct two organic certification and/or sustainable agriculture awareness workshops, tours or events by September 30, 2015.	Coordinator & Staff	200	\$5000

Staffing Plan Lower James RC&D - FY 2011-2015

The Coordinator's time and the part time Program Support Assistant's time is paid by the NRCS.

Neither Council member volunteer time nor any time from other NRCS personnel that may assist with individual projects, with program oversight or supervision is included below.

Oct. 1 2010

Year 1:	Coordinator	40 hours/week
	Program Support Assistant	20 hours/week
Year 2:	Coordinator	40 hours/week
	Program Support Assistant	20 hours/week
Year 3:	Coordinator	40 hours/week
	Program Support Assistant	20 hours/week
Year 4:	Coordinator	40 hours/week
	Program Support Assistant	20 hours/week
Year 5:	Coordinator	40 hours/week
	Program Support Assistant	20 hours/week

Sept. 30, 2015

This plan will be accomplished through technical assistance to project partners in the RC&D area. Current technical assistance resources available to the Lower James RC&D Council are:

1. Council member volunteer time estimated at 300 hours per year.
2. Natural Resources Conservation Service staff support through the RC&D Program of 3120 hours per year.

The Lower James RC&D Council's technical assistance resources result in project partners securing funding to implement projects, which results in significant accomplishment of Goals and Objectives in this area plan.

Lower James RC&D
Area Plan Development Survey Compilation of Results

Below is the ranking of broad areas of concern that survey participants have said need Lower James RC&D priority assistance.

Land Management

- 1 – Value-added agriculture
- 2 – Agriculture renewable energy and energy efficiency
- 3 - Recycling
- 4 – Restoration of endangered species

Water Management

- 1 – Watershed projects; clean water protection
- 2 – Restoration of existing public dams
- 3 – Missouri River sediment management
- 4 – Wetland restorations/creations/easements

Community Development

- 1 – Alternative agricultural business
- 2 – Technical assistance to businesses
- 3 – Ag business mgt. info. and Ed.
- 4 – Lower James Endowment Fund

Land Conservation

- 1 – Tree planting and renovations
- 2 - Soil erosion reductions on cropland
- 3 – Grassland improvements through grazing systems, water developments
- 4 – Vegetation Management/Noxious weed control

Planning and Development District III 2008 Survey

RESPONSE OVERVIEW 2008 REGIONAL SURVEY DECEMBER 2008

INTRODUCTION

The following comments provide an overview of the 2008 Regional Survey. The survey is conducted every two years. It provides an opportunity for the District III membership to identify development and service priorities. It also gives the membership a chance to grade the District's performance.

SURVEY RESPONSE CHARACTERISTIC ANALYSIS

SECTOR	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	RESPONSE RATIO
County Government	25	22.7%
Municipal Government	70	63.6%
Organization	9	8.1%
Private Business	6	5.4%
No Response(s)	0	0.0%
Total	110	100%

- 110 persons responded, for a return rate of 22.6%.
- The majority of responses (63.6%) came from municipal officials. County representatives accounted for 22.7%. The balance of responses came from organizations (8.1%) or private businesses (5.4%).
- Three counties accounted for almost one-third (30.9%) of the responses (Aurora, Hutchinson and Yankton).
- There was no response from Buffalo County.

**LOCAL
CONDITIONS
ANALYSIS**

Water System	2.3	Senior Centers	2.4
Sewer System	2.5	Daycare Options	2.5
Road/Street Condition	2.9	Health Care Facilities	1.9
Drainage System	3.0	Main Street Appearance	2.8
Electric Service	1.7	Historic Property Preservation	2.5
Natural Gas/Propane Service	1.9	Existing Housing Conditions and Options	3.1
Internet Service	1.9	Housing Development Activity	2.9
Cell Phone Service	2.6	Local Support for Business Development	2.8
Public Safety or Emergency Vehicle	2.0	Industrial Park Land/Buildings	2.9
Airport Facilities	2.1	Community Website	2.5
Park & Recreation Facilities	2.2	Zoning or General Ordinances	2.6
Community Center/Meeting Facilities	2.3	School System	1.9
Overall Community Appearance	2.3		

Grading Scale: 1=A, 2=B, 3=C, 4=D, 5=F

The majority of infrastructure or local facility items were rated between a “C and a “B”, which indicated a need for improvements. Only 5 of 25 topics had scores of a “B” or slightly better. No items rated an “A” or “D” grade. The highest rated topic was electric service, with a 1.70. The lowest scores were given to drainage systems (3.0), road conditions (2.9) and existing housing conditions and options (3.1). These numbers are at a “C” or very close to it, which indicates immediate improvements are necessary.

One impression left by the responses is that of ongoing capacity concern. Maintaining infrastructure standards and basic community development expectations have always been challenging for this region. Few places have the budgetary reserves, tax base or economic diversity to overcome the reliance upon agricultural commodity production. Although these are variations in the scoring among infrastructure issues, the overall degree of difference is minimal.

SPECIAL QUESTION ANALYSIS

The following questions sought input on specific topics that appear to be growing in their significance across the region.

1. Is business succession a concern in your area?

Yes – 60.9%

No – 33.6%

No Response – 5.4%

Outmigration and a challenging business climate (credit availability, declining markets etc.) make it difficult to pass local businesses on to the next owner. Finding someone to assume or buy an existing business may be easier than trying to start a particular enterprise where it does not already exist.

2. Is keeping professional services (doctor, vet, dentist, accountant, etc.) a concern in your area?

Yes – 60.9%

No – 33.6%

No Response – 5.4%

The general aging of the population is affecting the ranks of professional service providers. Other related issues include a lack of back-up, modern facilities or supporting services. As with other businesses, the search for someone to assume an existing practice may be more productive than trying to entice a new professional without an identified clientele.

3. Is leadership education (getting people involved in development activities) a concern in your area?

Yes – 78.1%

No – 16.3%

No Response – 5.4%

There continues to be a definite interest in cultivating community leaders. Several programs currently exist to help citizens grow in leadership skills and issue confidence. These factors that motivate people to become involved in community affairs make it challenging to design a “one size fits all” approach to this issue. One factor that probably influences the overall interest in leadership is “involvement fatigue”. Active citizens want someone else to do some of the committee or local organizational work. Every community has a small group of people that can be counted on to take charge of whatever needs to be done. Many of these individuals would like a little time off from the extra responsibilities. In other words, communities may not have a lack of leaders as much as they have a need for additional, dependable civic “worker bees”.

SPECIAL QUESTION ANALYSIS - CONTINUED

4. Is alternative energy or “green” awareness (wind, energy conservation, recycling, etc.) a concern in your area?

Yes – 81.8%

No – 12.7%

No Response – 5.4%

The interest in alternative energy became more personal in 2008 as fuel prices peaked at or above \$4.00 per gallon. The visibility of wind energy projects increased as turbines were installed near Wessington Springs. The national focus on “green” technologies may contribute to new regional initiatives in the near future. An ongoing challenge will be moving energy ideas from technical feasibility to fiscal reality. Government subsidies will continue to be critical to financial packaging until market forces make local, private and public investments practical.

5. Is school district consolidation a concern in your area?

Yes – 48.1%

No – 46.3%

No Response – 5.4%

The transformation of school districts is ongoing within the region. State aid levels and No Child Left Behind obligations continue to impact the operations of all public schools. School systems will continue to be a cornerstone of community identity. It will continue to be a challenge for smaller districts to meet educational standards without the benefit of community cooperation and distance learning technology.

REGIONAL PRIORITY ANALYSIS

Building value added processing facilities (ethanol plants, etc.)	3.0	Creating innovative business financing options	3.8
Upgrading worker skills (job training classes, etc.)	3.4	Enhancing business counseling services (SBDC, etc.)	3.4
Keeping existing companies competitive (better equipment, etc.)	3.8	Improving housing opportunities	3.8
Promoting tourism attractions	3.7	Helping communities find uses for vacant main street buildings	4.0

**REGIONAL
PRIORITY
ANALYSIS**

		Assisting entrepreneurs in turning their ideas into reality	4.0
Finding qualified workers	3.7		
Better Missouri River management	3.5	Strengthening health care and/or social service systems	3.7
Cleaning up "eyesores"	3.9	Promoting alternative energy systems	4.0
Adding telecommunications capacity	3.3	Developing ways to build leadership skills for officials and citizens	3.7
Increasing cooperation among communities	3.8	Recruiting new companies from out of state	3.6

Ranking – 1 = low importance, 5 = extremely high importance

Survey respondents were consistent in rating virtually all of the identified issues as being important. Three topics ranked at the top of the priority list:

- ✓ Helping communities find uses for vacant main street buildings
- ✓ Assisting entrepreneurs in turning their ideas into reality; and
- ✓ Promoting alternative energy systems (wind generation, etc.)

When asked to identify one thing that the region should try to improve upon over the next five years, most respondents noted that the area needs to concentrate on economic development objectives that keep young people from leaving. The scope of proposed activities included workforce development, regional marketing and direct business support.

**DISTRICT III SERVICE
FOCUS ANALYSIS**

Business counseling	1.9
Business loans (ABC)	1.8
Housing development/habitation	1.8
Infrastructure and public project financing	1.5
Tourism development	2.0
Leadership development training	2.1
Recreation development	2.1
Regional marketing and promotion	1.8

Geographic Information System services	1.9
Mapping and illustration (rendering) services	2.1
Local government services (promoting efficiency and cooperation)	1.7
Local project or program administration support	1.7

1=High Priority, 2=Moderate Priority, 3=Low Priority, 4=Unfamiliar Service

The region continued to encourage the District to maintain its core services. The respondents noted that the primary services should involve:

- ✓ Infrastructure and public project financing;
- ✓ Local government service efficiency and cooperation; and
- ✓ Local project and program administrative support

The next tier of service priorities included:

- ✓ Business loans (Area-wide Business Council);
- ✓ Regional marketing and promotion; and
- ✓ Housing development and rehabilitation

Virtually all services rated a score that made them at least a “moderate priority”.

DISTRICT III GRADING ANALYSIS

Funding application writing	1.4
Planning and zoning support	1.6
Business support (ABC loans and business counseling)	1.9
Information sharing (website, special mailings, etc.)	1.9
Geographic Information System (GIS) and mapping services	1.8
Government management support (personnel manuals, etc.)	1.9
Project planning and financial packaging	1.6
Special research (surveys, etc.)	1.9
Marketing assistance (brochures, flyers, etc.)	2.0
Special illustrations (renderings, site plans, etc.)	1.9

Grading Scale: 1=A, 2=B, 3=C, 4=D, 5=F

A= Excellent, B=Good, C=Fair, D=Disappointing, F=Failure

All of the services listed in the survey were graded at between “Good and Excellent”. The best score was given to application writing (1.4). The lowest score went to marketing assistance (2.0). The grades leave the organization with room for improvement. Many services are not well known or utilized by all members. The scoring does indicate that the District is maintaining a basic standard of professionalism, regardless of the assistance provided.

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