



2025-2027 Strategic Plan

District Overview

The District was established in 1951 by the California Legislature at the request of the Yolo County Board of Supervisors. The primary purpose of this new independent special district was to monitor and report on groundwater supplies, to seek new surface water sources, and to implement an effective conjunctive management program.

The District's boundaries cover more than 200,000 acres in Yolo County, including the cities of Woodland, Davis, and Winters, and the towns of Capay, Esparto, Madison and other small communities throughout the Capay Valley. To be within the District's service area means a variety of things to the communities that the District serves. At its core, the District is an irrigation water supplier that provides water for farmers, but there is so much more to the story and mission. Residents within the service area benefit from the District's ongoing groundwater recharge and monitoring activities, the focus on effective conjunctive management of surface and groundwater supplies, and advocacy for increasing water supply and protecting water quality. The District plays a role in flood protection in the upper Cache Creek watershed, handles myriad regulatory compliance duties, and collaborates with other partners to advocate for water sustainability on a regional level.

District Purpose

Vision

The vision of the District is to provide water supply reliability, strive for operational and administrative excellence, exemplify environmental stewardship, and promote economic vitality.

Mission

The District's mission is to plan, develop, and manage the conjunctive use of the District's surface and groundwater resources to provide a safe and reliable water supply at a reasonable cost, and to sustain the socioeconomic and environmental well-being of Yolo County.

2025-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN: STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

To align with the District's vision and mission and to achieve long-term success, the District is strategically setting measurable goals and objectives for the next three years. The District wants to ensure forward progress towards integrated, sustainable water resources management. The District desires to model innovation by investing in automated enhancements in the delivery system to meet customer needs for an on-demand irrigation district. The District desires to improve customer service by improving the mechanism for capturing customer feedback and as a result, increasing water sales. The District desires to advance watershed stewardship within the Yolo Subbasin to preserve groundwater supplies for the future. The ultimate objective is to build on the legacy as a customer-oriented, environmentally thoughtful, conjunctive use district to support the County's vision for sustainable agriculture and environmental stewardship.

Over the next three years, a major emphasis of the District's work will be in two areas:

- 1) protecting the District's water rights and securing long-term water supply reliability, and
- 2) ensuring groundwater sustainability.

Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program

Optimizing the use of available surface water is incredibly important to ensure long-term water supply reliability. The District intends to prioritize capital investments on strategic projects that will ensure reliable water deliveries and expand the availability of surface water supplies. The District is aligned with the state's water and climate goals and objectives and is currently working on an alternative pathway for complying with the state's Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan in the *Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program*. The District has proposed a creative solution for optimizing conjunctive use to meet multiple benefits in the Cache Creek and Putah Creek watersheds.

Yolo Subbasin Groundwater Agency

The District is an active member of the Yolo Subbasin Groundwater Agency (YSGA) and serves as the administrative and technical lead to sustainably manage water resources and plan for an uncertain future. Additionally, the District is a leader in groundwater recharge and plans to increase winter recharge activities in working with farmers in the Yolo Subbasin, and in working with partner agencies to streamline the state's permitting process to capture and store more water underground. The District desires to continue serving a convening role in water resources planning and management in the future.

This Strategic Plan calls for building capacity to meet District needs in these two areas and across the four strategic priorities discussed below.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

To advance the vision and mission, the District will focus on the following strategic priorities over the next three years:



Water Supply Reliability

Water supply reliability will depend on the ability to conjunctively manage surface water and groundwater. The District is committed to enhancing water supply reliability through strategic infrastructure investments, expanded surface water use, and improved groundwater recharge. By modernizing the delivery system and prioritizing capital improvements, the District will strengthen operational efficiency and ensure long-term water availability, especially in response to climate variability and drought. Efforts will also focus on dual-source access and grower incentives to reduce groundwater dependence.



Highest Quality Customer Service

Building trust and responsiveness with customers is central to the District's mission. This priority focuses on improving communication, increasing transparency, and actively engaging with water users to better understand their needs. Through quarterly meetings, timely updates, and a refreshed brand and website, the District will strengthen customer relationships and foster two-way communication that supports shared success. The District's institutional knowledge and technical and administrative staff also serve and benefit the larger groundwater community.



Operational Excellence

The District recognizes that its long-term success depends on a skilled, adaptable, and driven workforce. This priority focuses on attracting, developing, and retaining high-performing employees by fostering a culture of shared purpose, open communication, teamwork, and operational excellence. Through succession planning, cross-training, and performance tracking, the District will ensure continuity of service, institutional knowledge retention, and a workplace environment that supports both the District and the YSGA's success.



Watershed Stewardship

As a regional leader in integrated water management, the District will advance multi-benefit projects that protect ecosystems, improve groundwater sustainability, and enhance watershed resilience. Collaborations with local, tribal, and regional partners will drive efforts in habitat restoration, flood mitigation, and climate-adaptive recharge. The District is committed to aligning its work with broader environmental goals while meeting agricultural and community needs. The District's involvement in the implementation of the Yolo Subbasin GSP will also benefit the environmental vitality of the community.

Goals, Objectives, and Supporting Activities

A goal is assigned to each strategic priority, and goals will be achieved by completing activities and meeting defined objectives.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY: WATER SUPPLY RELIABILITY

Goal 1. The District will expand and modernize its gray and green infrastructure to increase the use of surface water in wet years and increase groundwater recharge to ensure adequate supplies for drought resilience.

Objective 1. Develop a Capital Implementation Progress and Improvement Plan (CIPIP) to plan, prioritize, execute, track, and implement capital projects.

Activities:

- Document the system for planning, prioritizing, and implementing capital projects
- Incorporate prioritized projects into the annual budget planning process
- Capture the status of capital assets annually and create a transparent process for communicating the status of project implementation to customers
- Develop and adopt a financing strategy to support capital improvement projects

Objective 2. Increase surface water deliveries by enhancing capacity, increasing system reliability, and identifying potential conveyance opportunities.

Activities:

- Plan for and prioritize capital improvements that increase capacity in the conveyance system and reduce bottlenecks and waiting lists
- Install automated trash screens at optimal locations and increase native vegetation in the canals to reduce aquatic weeds and stabilize the banks
- Install automated gates to ensure consistent and reliable water deliveries
- Expand the conveyance system to increase acreage with dual water sources
- Plan for and explore ways to engage growers and consider surface water incentives
- Collect and analyze surface water quality data and compare groundwater quality

Objective 3. Implement groundwater recharge strategies and projects to advance the goals of groundwater sustainability, increase drought reserves, and alleviate flooding.

Activities:

- Plan for and prioritize off-season capital projects to optimize canal conveyance opportunities and days of winter water recharge in the canal system
- Plan for and prioritize the development of recharge projects by conducting investigations to identify suitable recharge basin sites to alleviate flooding, increase recharge capacity, and fully utilize the District's future long-term winter water right
- Plan for and incentivize on-farm recharge opportunities by entering into landowner agreements and developing a comprehensive water delivery and monitoring plan
- Continue to investigate implementation of the *Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Initiative*



STRATEGIC PRIORITY: HIGHEST QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Goal 2. The District will strive to understand and meet the needs and expectations of its customers.

Objective 1. Increase transparency to ensure the District is adapting to changing conditions and customer needs.

Activities:

- Frequently engage with customers to improve operations and to understand what customers are doing to improve operations (at Farmers Council meetings and related partner forums)
- Host quarterly Farmers' Council meetings, receive feedback from customers, and integrate quarterly Ambassador Reports in monthly Board meetings
- Post frequent summary reports to the website on the status of District finances, capital projects, and staff changes
- Publish quarterly GM Newsletters with updates on water conditions, capital jobs, and financial status of the District

Objective 2. Mature customer engagement and feedback mechanisms.

Activities:

- Clearly articulate the District's strategies and activities and roles and responsibilities in the County, including those of the YSGA
- Document and showcase leading edge innovations or infrastructure improvement/management practices among customers
- Integrate new communication tools and constantly strive to improve customer service and ensure robust communication on progress towards strategic priorities and goals



STRATEGIC PRIORITY: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Goal 3. The District will pursue operational excellence, adaptation, and continuity by developing and retaining a highly competent and engaged workforce.

Objective 1. Develop employees to build organizational capacity.

Activities

- Create a culture of employee empowerment that results in ownership, accountability, and constant improvement
- Facilitate meetings/workshops requesting staff feedback for ways to enhance efficiency
- Improve organizational structure and modify skillset and compensation structure
- Assess staff professional development needs and interests and invest in training and support as needed
- Consider the long-term administrative and technical needs of the YSGA

Objective 2. Develop and implement a continuity plan to ensure reliable service.

Activities

- Identify staff with critical responsibilities and institutional knowledge that are planning retirement in the next three years
- Define hiring timeline to allow overlap and training with key staff and ensure a seamless transition
- Crosstrain staff for redundancy
- Develop SOPs

Objective 3. Develop ways to measure operational effectiveness and communicate findings/metrics to customers.

Activities

- Explore existing models for tracking metrics for operational effectiveness
- Build performance metrics for the District and communicate to customers

STAFF VALUES

Staff defined these values to drive their support of the District and to provide excellent customer service.

- Accountability
- Confidentiality
- Dependability
- Professionalism
- Engagement
- Flexibility
- Initiative
- Productivity
- Safety Minded
- Teamwork



STRATEGIC PRIORITY: WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP

Goal 4. The District will serve as a steward leader of integrated watershed management to advance the economic, social, and environmental goals of Yolo County.

Objective 1. Coordinate strategic planning and project implementation with the YSGA to implement the GSP and ensure sustainable groundwater management.

Activities:

- Explore annual Board-level discussion of priorities and challenges
- Serve a convening role to engage the community in broader water resources management initiatives

Objective 2. Work with partner agencies and the community to find multi-benefit solutions to habitat enhancement, flood mitigation, and groundwater recharge.

Activities:

- Partner with the County to build on the Willow Slough Watershed Management Plan and complete an integrated drainage analysis (Hydrologic and Hydraulics Study) for optimizing conveyance of drainage flows in the canals and sloughs and enhancing groundwater recharge
- Partner with Yolo RCD and Cache Creek Conservancy for habitat improvement
- Partner with landowners and NRCS for continuing to promote in-lieu recharge

Objective 3. Be prepared and committed to responding to challenges with multiple agencies to solve water-related issues.

Activities:

- Serve as the leader for conjunctive management in the western part of Yolo County
- Build and maintain strong relationships and engage with key partners while continuing to participate in regional forums and town hall meetings
- Partner with the County OES to assist with dry well inspections and confirmation for water deliveries (if financial reciprocity)
- Collaborate and coordinate with other surface water providers to strategically consider viable surface water conveyance to groundwater-dependent regions
- Partner with Yolo County, YSGA, SCWA, Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, and UCD to implement Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Initiative

APPENDIX

Strategic Planning Methodology

Why the District is developing a Strategic Plan: the District desires to sustain the agricultural community and environmental well-being of Yolo County by optimizing conjunctive use.

The District engaged the services of Morrison & Co. to facilitate the District's first strategic planning process in 2024. In partnership with the Strategic Planning Committee, Board of Directors, and District staff, Morrison & Co. reviewed the District's vision and mission and completed customer interviews, partner agency surveys, a staff workshop, and a Board workshop.

Morrison & Co. interviewed 12 District customers to solicit feedback on the District's strengths and weaknesses, the biggest challenges or opportunities, and ways in which the District can best support its customers and Yolo County agriculture. Additionally, agency partners were requested to complete a survey identifying the District's challenges, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities, and ways in which the District can best support the agency partners and Yolo County agriculture. Customer interviews and partner surveys provided insights into recent District improvements and areas where further progress is needed to strengthen credibility and demonstrate success.

Morrison & Co. facilitated a staff workshop to request feedback from all District staff on how the District and management can better support staff and encourage personal growth and fulfillment. Additionally, staff provided feedback on the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of the District, along with their thoughts on where the District should be focused over the next four years. District management is committed to empowering staff to achieve operational and administrative excellence.

Lastly, Morrison & Co. facilitated a Board workshop with the Board of Directors and executive staff to review the District's mission and vision, and the major themes that resulted from the interviews, surveys, and staff workshop. During the workshop there was an opportunity for brainstorming priorities and sequencing priorities into the future to allow the District to move from "short-term stable with long-term challenges" towards something better by working on the two primary objectives:

- 1) Creating and executing a sustainable financial strategy to ensure long-term system dependability for customers.
- 2) Strategically allocating resources to infrastructure projects to guarantee a reliable water supply.