

## **UPPER YAMPA WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **Mission Statement**

*To lead water resource management within the District's boundaries by responsibly conserving, protecting, developing, providing and enhancing the water resources of the Upper Yampa River Basin for the benefit of the Basin.*

### **Vision Statement**

*An Upper Yampa River Basin with safe, secure water storage and supply for its customers that benefits all uses in the Basin.*

This Plan will be regularly reviewed and updated as appropriate by the Board of Directors. As such, it should be considered a living document.

The Board of Directors believes the District's mission is reflected in the following statements. Some reflect the District's responsibilities and core mission, while others reflect values and opportunities for the District in carrying out its mission. The statements and goals below are not currently listed in order of priority.

The District's mission and goals are also informed by the legislative declaration of the Colorado Water Conservancy Act (the "Act") under which the District was created, in Colo. Rev. Stat. Ann. §37-45-102, as well as relevant recent federal and state mandates, statutes, policies, and regulations.

### **Policy Statements**

1. The District will be financially sustainable and able to meet its stated goals.
2. The District relies on healthy functioning reservoirs, rivers, and streams in the Upper Yampa Basin for its agricultural, environmental, municipal, commercial, industrial, domestic and recreational cultures, and thus, its economic future.
3. The District is committed to serving the public in agricultural, municipal, commercial, domestic and industrial uses, and identifying opportunities to support water-based environmental and recreational values.
4. Climate change will be considered in planning.
5. The District is committed to maintaining the structural and functional integrity and protecting the water rights of the District's Yamcolo and Stagecoach reservoirs.
6. Collaboration in watershed management is important to advancing the District's mission.
7. The District recognizes the critical economic, socio-cultural values, aesthetic, and environmental contributions that ranching and agriculture provide to the Basin.

8. Direct flow and storage water requirements of prudent industrial uses, such as energy development and production, will be considered in planning for the economic welfare of the District.
9. The District recognizes the importance of a long-term municipal water supply in creating a vibrant, diverse, and resilient local economy.
10. The District recognizes that water-based outdoor recreational activities are critical to a thriving and resilient local economy.
11. The District's ability to manage and develop water resources within its boundaries are crucial to safeguarding the Basin's water supply and depend largely upon local land use policies and practices.
12. The District recognizes the importance of science-based water quality programs in maintaining the chemical, physical, biological, and aesthetic integrity of the Basin's reservoirs, rivers, and streams.
13. The District will participate in local and statewide deliberative processes to address climate, environmental, agricultural, social, political, legal, and economic challenges as they affect water resources.
14. The District opposes any new transfers of stream flow or storage water from the Upper Yampa River Basin and its tributaries to other basins.
15. The District will evaluate future water works that may be important to the District's long-term success.
16. As a taxpayer-supported public entity, the District will promote a two-way exchange of ideas and information with our community and constituents regarding the District's programs and priorities.

## **District Goals**

*The goals below collectively represent the District's vision for the future, consistent with the policy statements above. These goals supplement the evolving regulatory compliance activities that form the core of much of the District's work.*

### **Goal 1 Protect Upper Yampa Basin water resources and local water uses from trans-basin diversions and Colorado River administration that would adversely impact those uses.**

#### **Objectives**

- 1) Develop District understanding and policies to address Colorado River issues.

- 2) Prevent out-of-District transfers of water that could have adverse impacts for the District and its constituents.

**Goal 2 Ensure the District's infrastructure is safe, maintained, and improved to serve the needs of the District.**

**Objectives**

- 1) Ensure sufficient funds to maintain and/or improve District infrastructure.
- 2) Initiate or support efforts to address algae and other water quality issues in Stagecoach Reservoir.
- 3) Ensure integrity and safety of dams.
- 4) Ensure safe work environment for dam operators, employees and visitors.
- 5) Regularly update long-term capital plans for maintaining District infrastructure.
- 6) Maintain Stagecoach Reservoir as a public recreation facility.

**Goal 3 Ensure the District is financially sustainable and able to meet its stated goals.**

**Objectives**

- 1) Develop short- and long-term financial planning to support District goals.
- 2) Clarify District's business model, including how tax revenues will be used.

**Goal 4 Protect all in-Basin beneficial vested water uses in the District, consistent with the policy statements above.**

**Objectives**

- 1) Formalize and consider expanding District's grant program.
- 2) Promote District's existing augmentation plans on Yampa and Elk Rivers.
- 3) Explore potential expansion or creation of augmentation plans that aid in protecting the beneficial uses of junior priority water rights not currently within boundaries of the existing augmentation plans.
- 4) Protect productive agricultural water uses in the District.
- 5) Effectively communicate with local municipalities regarding long-term water supplies.
- 6) Enter into appropriate and financially prudent water allotment contracts for District water from Stagecoach Reservoir and/or Yamcolo Reservoir for environmental and recreational beneficial uses.
- 7) Increase flexibility of District's water rights portfolio in order to provide water for environmental and recreational purposes.
- 8) Clarify District policy and role regarding the use of District water to support non-consumptive water uses.

**Goal 5 Represent Upper Yampa Basin water interests at the local, regional and statewide levels on relevant policy, legislative, administrative, regulatory, and judicial matters.**

**Objectives**

- 1) Ensure representation of District interests in local and state matters, including, but not limited to the Interbasin Compact Committee, Basin Roundtable, Colorado Water Conservation Board and Colorado River District.
- 2) Increase District collaboration with Roundtable members to advocate for Upper Yampa Basin interests.

**Goal 6 Provide adequate water supplies within the District in light of changing climate conditions, population shifts, and other changes.**

**Objectives**

- 1) Maintain and improve District's Colorado Decision Support System hydrology/water rights administration model.
- 2) Increase District's understanding of relevant effects of climate change, population growth, and demographics for District planning.
- 3) Increase engagement with District constituents and other Upper Yampa Basin water interests in planning for long-term Yampa Basin water supply and use.
- 4) Expand Board's understanding of relevant issues and trends for District decision-making.

**Goal 7 Promote healthy reservoirs, streams, and watersheds within the District in support of the policy statements above.**

**Objectives**

- 1) Support water quality efforts in the District and respond to regulatory actions.
- 2) Define the District's role and responsibilities in water quality efforts.
- 3) Support efforts in the District to improve watershed management and forest and rangeland health.
- 4) Explore alternative solutions outside of current legislation to meet this goal.

**Goal 8 Increase public understanding of water issues in the Upper Yampa Basin and the District's role in addressing them.**

**Objectives**

- 1) Increase public's understanding of water issues in the Upper Yampa Basin.
- 2) Educate the public on the District's role and activities.

- 3) Improve Board collaboration, participation and representation with other organizations doing water-related work in the Upper Yampa Basin.
- 4) Improve two-way exchange among constituents, stakeholders, Board and staff regarding District priorities and activities.

### **Goal 9 Maintain a robust water rights portfolio for the District.**

#### **Objectives**

- 1) Maintain and, where appropriate, perfect District's water rights.
- 2) Enhance District involvement/advocacy on water administration matters.
- 3) Evaluate potential and conditional water rights.
- 4) Explore small tributary storage projects within the Upper Yampa Basin.
- 5) Pursue water projects that utilize/perfect Districts water rights and provide water supply for consumptive and non-consumptive purposes.
- 6) Explore increasing flexibility of use for District's stored water rights.

### **Goal 10 Ensure robust staff, legal, and administrative resources to enhance District's viability and capacity to effectively serve its constituents.**

#### **Objectives**

- 1) Begin succession planning where appropriate.
- 2) Regularly review and update Board goals and objectives.
- 3) Clarify District governance structure that promotes interaction, transparency, trust, and *esprit de corps* between Board, General Manager, and staff.
- 4) Improve District organizational structure to maximize effectiveness, collaboration and teamwork.
- 5) Encourage opportunities for professional development.
- 6) Ensure District continues to be represented by competent legal staff.
- 7) Support an engaged and educated Board of Directors.
- 8) Demonstrate commitment to and capacity for public service and engagement with constituents.
- 9) Create an Upper Yampa Basin records and archive repository to catalogue and preserve historic water resources records.