

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES:

- C** • The completion of a capital improvement plan.
- I** • The completion of 90% of capital improvement projects within 15% of projected costs.
- I** • The completion of 80% of capital improvement projects within 45 days of projected completion.

RATIONALE:

The Polk County Conservation Board is responsible for millions of dollars of infrastructure assets whether they be in the form of facilities, roads, cart paths, etc. The development of clearly defined plan to maintain the infrastructure is essential to the long term financial interests of the organization.

GOALS:

7a. A 5 year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) will be developed

C A Capital Improvements Plan was approved by PCC in 2006. The approved plan begins in FY 07/08, but a few of the items listed have been completed or are in progress. Each project is assigned a budget tracking "Code Number" so all purchases or contractor items can be easily tracked and monitored. We will also assign each project with an identifying project number for easy reference. This will also allow us to track projected timeline and actual versus projected costs per project.

Obviously not all projects each year will be funded so we will continue to roll projects forward to the next FY and so on. Criteria used will be safety, public demand, deterioration, and need etc...

7b. An annual maintenance plan will be developed and distributed by September 1 of each year

C The Annual Maintenance Plan is a more fluid on-going plan. Certain items, during fall budget preparation time, are planned and budgeted on the above listed criteria. Throughout the year, certain unexpected items will and do come up.

In order to stay on top of our infrastructure, several procedures are in place:

- Daily*: During the camping season all public facilities are checked, cleaned, and monitored as well as park trash cleaned-up.
- Weekly*: We have several waste water systems that are permitted through the state. Weekly, we draw a settle able solids sample as well as record a flow rate. We also send in a draw sample quarterly.
- Monthly*: All HVAC filter checks are done, as well as building security equipment.
- Semi-Annual*: All HVAC equipment is checked and a written report as to the status and potential concerns is listed in case we need to budget for upgrade or replacement. This was done on a contract basis but we now have the trained CST Techs. on staff which gives a better quality control.
- Semi-Annual*: All exhaust fans, overhead doors, and a shop or facility inspection and work is to be completed.

From this ongoing work and staff input, we can monitor most of our continuing maintenance needs in our system. With that said maintenance issues will, and do just appear unexpected. Several times each year if not more, the Construction Maintenance Manager visually inspects the entire system to maintain an ongoing knowledge as to the infrastructure status.

Tracking Sources:

CMO has developed two additional tracking sources.

-*Punch List*: This is an ongoing list of "you name it" items that come up. Any time CMO staff sees something in our system or someone on staff, or the public points out a maint. need or concern we have a shared document we e-mail and keep as a work in progress rather than it be forgotten. We can track the item, budget appropriately for if needed, and take care of the issue in a timely manner.

-*Infrastructure Inventory*: This document will likely be completed this fall if time allows. It is important for us to know exactly what we have. This will especially aid us in CIP planning, as well as on-going maintenance needs.

Recently we have added an additional Maint. Tech. in the South area of the county. With four parks in that area and especially the heavy use seen at Easter Lake Park and Fort Des Moines Park, this addition will help greatly.

JULY 2007 PROGRESS REPORT

The following icons can be found throughout this report showing an updated status of the strategic goals and measurable outcomes within each section.

.....

- C** = Completed
- I** = In Progress
- N** = No Progress

Leading you Outdoors

MISSION: to provide the citizens of Polk County with quality outdoor recreation, conservation education and long term protection of Polk County's natural heritage.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES :

- Stewardship of our natural resources is the responsibility of each of us.
- We will partner with government, non-profits, business and the public to fulfill our mission.
- We use sound data to drive decision-making.
- We are each ambassadors for conservation, education and outdoor recreation and for our organization.
- Our employees understand their respective roles and how they contribute to fulfilling our mission.
- We practice open, honest communication in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
- Our customers receive outstanding service in a safe and welcoming environment.

I Resource Enhancement

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES:

- C** • Increase Polk County Conservation's budget by a minimum of \$200,000 in non-tax revenue within the next three years.
- I** • Increase the 501C3 endowment/revenue to a minimum of \$100,000 within the next three years.



RATIONALE:

Polk County Conservation has largely been capped in its ability to increase staff and financial resources while at the same time, its responsibilities have grown dramatically, and continue to grow at a rapid pace in this urbanizing county.

GOALS:

1a. Reestablish 501C3 within the Des Moines Community Foundation

C The Great Outdoors Fund is established. It currently has a four-person board, including a PCCB liaison (with plans in the works to grow the board). Two successful fundraisers have been completed (netting \$28K and \$35K respectively) and a third one is in the works for November 2007. The Board has provided some funding to leverage dollars for the Jester Park Playscape, GreenWood, Oliver Plaza Conservation Landscaping, and Ask the Naturalist radio program. The board's focus projects include the Central Iowa Water Trails system, a "welcome package" for Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, and cabins in the parks.

1b. Streamline and increase grantsmanship activities

C The Community Outreach Unit (CO) has put together a Grants Committee that consists of one employee representative from each PCC unit. This Committee met initially to come up with an effective grant recordkeeping system, organization-wide communication procedure, and priority project list for future grant activity.

All grant work now gets funneled through the CO department for internal communication purposes. The CO Supervisor communicates frequently with the Director and Grantwriter. The Grantwriter works with the County Board of Supervisors and Director to coordinate writing authorization and payment terms.

Many new grant partnerships have formed over the past year due to the GreenWood project. PCC has submitted numerous grant proposals in conjunction with other project partners. Each department continues to nurture existing partnerships and cultivate new partnerships for the benefit of the project and audience.

5b. Opportunities for technology enhancements will be evaluated

C At the end of FY '04-05, the office started inputting their own cash receipt information into the county's JD Edwards System (county's accounting computer system). They worked with county treasurer's office to set personnel up to complete ACH transfers – electronic transferring of funds from PCC's Polk County Bank account to the County Treasurer. This has been very successful and has allowed for revenues to be deposited with the county more efficiently; therefore, providing a better up-to-date reporting of PCC revenues through the county's system.

Office began phasing out issuing of paper purchase orders during end of FY 04-05. Process was slow at first as staff was not that receptive to this change. However, toward the end of FY 05-06 things improved. Today, we do not have many issues with handling the purchase orders through the system. It has helped the office's workload to have down-town handling the payment of a majority of the PCC's expenditures.

We continue to review the payroll process. We have worked with the IT department to review existing programs used by other departments to complete payroll, but so far have not found anything that serves our needs. Last meeting with IT was to discuss IT developing a program for PCC to use to reduce duplicate entry of payroll data.

Board meeting information is now available on the PCC's website. With the help of the county's IT department, the layout of the packet information on the website is relatively user friendly. It is nice not to have to put together these packets the way they used to be done in the notebooks and then to have to take the time to have them delivered to each of the board members.

Pat Boddy's calendar on PCC's e-mail system (Groupwise) was set up to be available to staff wanting access. Instructions were provided to staff explaining to them what they needed to do to gain access to Pat's calendar.

The project of on-line reservations carries on. We have worked for probably 2 years with Iowa Interactive to discuss them working with PCC to provide on-line reservations. The last meeting of PCC staff about on-line reservations took the project in a different direction. Linn CC is also pursuing on-line reservations. Contact was made with Linn CC to discuss possibly working together on developing an on-line program that was designed for county conservation boards. Linn CC was very receptive to the idea of working with us. Linn CC is working with Informax (?) for on-line services and a conference call will be held the week of June 25 to discuss our joining forces with Linn CC. This is very exciting and hopefully will work out.

PCC is trying to go paperless. IT has been working with staff on a file management program that should take off more in FY 06-07 as this is when the funding for the system is available. Staff currently is making attempts to scan documents such as easements, contracts, correspondence, etc. into the computer as much as possible and files are organized on the computer to make it easy for all staff to locate information. This process has only begun for PCC staff.

5c. Teamwork and intra organizational cooperation and collaboration will be enhanced

I An internal guide was developed outlining the distribution of tasks to the different Teams created with the reorganization.

5d. Internal financial management and planning processes will be improved

C Staff received training from county budget staff first part of FY 05-06. In January 07, an Accounting Technician was hired and one of their jobs was budget. By July 1, 2006, the budget for FY 06-07 was set up so it was in line with the PCC's reorganization. The first year has gone pretty well. Some shortfalls have been identified in allocations which were adjusted in the FY 07-08 budget. Additional adjustments are expected, but for the most part this is going well.

The variety of grants is increasing making budget monitoring more important than ever for tracking purposes. The office keeps in regular contact with its county budget representative as well as with PCC staff on their budgets. All staff were given access to the JD Edwards system so they could access information on their budget and training was provided. PCC's budget has never been overseen to the level it is today.

All Teams have worked with Bruce Bernard to develop work plans. Work plans are to be reviewed quarterly by Team Leaders with their staff. In turn, Pat Boddy meets quarterly with Team Leaders to review their work plans.

Office staff is working with Equestrian Center staff on cash handling procedures. A list of things to be done to improve the process was put together and staff is presently working on making the things on the list happen.

2d. Expand role in conservation design movement

I We are working with MWA and others to build on an earlier SE Polk Green Infrastructure project and potentially develop greenspace set-aside along Spring, Mud, and Camp Creeks, possibly through conservation easements. We took a leadership role in significant streambank stabilization and erosion control project in Camp Creek at Thomas Mitchell Park. PCC staff led native landscape maintenance trainings for the City of Des Moines and continues to consult with city parks staff and provide consultation through the Urban Conservation Advisory Board. PCC was active on the county's Comprehensive Planning Committee and worked with partners to incorporate additional greenspace protections into the comprehensive plan. Currently working with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, State Revolving Fund, Army Corps of Engineers and potentially Metro Waste Authority to develop wetland mitigation strategies to fund park "fill-in" and buffering (particularly at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt) and improve water quality. More than 54 acres of wetland mitigation have been installed since the onset of this plan and 18 acres are on tap for development as of this writing.

2e. Increase available resources devoted to active land management

C The Natural Resources Unit has a list of recommended equipment to allow for active land management within the park system. Three large bat-wing mowers were purchased in 06-07 to facilitate mowing. A grapple attachment has been purchased to assist in flood cleanup, tree removal and invasive species. Two sprayers have been refurbished to improve control of invasive species.

We have also borrowed a tree-shear to assist in timber stand improvement and invasive specie control. A six-way dozer blade will be purchased with grant money to assist in maintenance of our equestrian trail system.

PCC has implemented a mowing reduction throughout the park system. Currently, approximately 5% of our mowed area has been taken out of the mowing cycle. Brochures were developed explaining the goals and projected outcomes of the program. The reduction in mowing has allowed staff to concentrate efforts in the non-mowed areas of our parks.

Although the specific plans for each park have yet to be completed, we have an unwritten policy that concentrates on managing and removing invasive species in our park system. Field studies are in process analyzing different methods and herbicides to determine the most efficient way to remove honeysuckle from our park.

There is no set fund to provide monies needed for the purchase of easements. The uncertainty of when or if monies would be required during any given budgetary period makes it difficult to project what funds will be needed. It will, most likely, need be done on a case by case basis as opportunities arise.

2f. Work to consolidate Polk County conservation easements

I PCC easements are identified on ArcView. The Board has been presented with a consistent format under which they would accept/not accept an easement.

2g. Develop plans for the management of the natural areas within each park

I All natural areas within each park have been identified and classified in ArcView. Broad classifications include woodland, wetland, grassland (either native, restored, other), ponds and riparian areas. As time allows, further delineation into specific communities will be done, especially in areas that require specialized techniques for professional ecological management. No plans are completed as yet but work is underway on Jester Park's action plan.



Public involvement, outreach, and external communications



MEASURABLE OUTCOMES:

- C** • Increase the number of active volunteers by 25% over the next three years.
460 in 2005; 984 in 2007 (114% increase)
- I** • Expand the public advisory system so that each major park, the golf course and the equestrian center has a routinely convening advisory body.
This out come was revised to one inclusive advisory board; recruitment in progress.
- I** • Increase the number of households receiving the Nature News by 20% over the next three years.
8,150 in 2005; 9,330 in 2007 (13.5% increase)
- I** • Increase park usage by 1-5% at each of the 2001 measured parks over the next three years.
10 areas increased by 1-5%; 3 areas did not increase by 1-5%

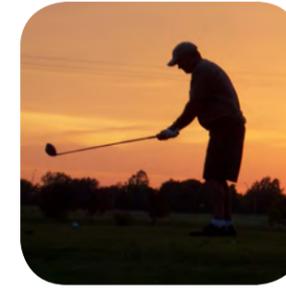
1c. Increase the promotion of tasteful, in memoriam and recognition programs within the park system

N A need does exist to increase in memoriam and recognition programs with the PCC system. Currently, we have a Commemorative Tree Program and have granted requests for a handful of bench placements in some parks. A request was sent to Iowa's other county conservation departments as to their current policies. No formal policies are in place.

At the next Park Board Summit meeting, this topic will be discussed as an agenda item. We hope to get a listing of local programs that are already in place.

1d. Establish a stable source of funding

N PCC has been supportive of statewide and local efforts. If these are unsuccessful, PCC will then pursue a leadership role.



II Preserving, protecting and managing Polk County natural resources

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES:

- I** • Increase the acreage of protected land resources by 600 acres over the next three years.
More than 433 acres of land has been protected by the end of "Year Two" with a total goal of 600 acres by the end of "Year Three".
- C** • Increase the acreage of PCC's actively managed native or restored lands by 500 acres annually over the next three years.
The goal of increasing PCC's actively managed native or restored lands by 500 acres has easily been met and now exceeds 1,393 acres, including an additional 800 acres of new burn areas.

RATIONALE:

Core mission and guiding principles.

GOALS:

2a. Identify all protected lands in Polk County

C Definition of protected lands- Land currently held under governmental ownership or protected by conservation easement, further defined as undeveloped or possessing natural landscape features with scenic, aesthetic, agricultural, or conservation value, including woodlands, grasslands and wetlands, intended to be preserved in their natural undeveloped state.

Criteria for protected lands- Lands are rated according to location, aesthetic value, ecological factors, cultural significance and special opportunities. A numeric value is attached based upon our "Open Space Rating Form".

All protected PCC lands have been identified including land(s) currently held with a conservation easement. PCC has this information collected in a GIS system. Other governmental agencies and non-profit organizations haven't been forthcoming with this information so a complete database of protected lands in Polk County may be unrealistic.

2b. Re-evaluate the "Save the Pieces" campaign

C The current status of the "Save the Pieces" Campaign is inactive. Although the data is approximately 8 years old, it is still being used and was included in the Polk County Comprehensive Plan identifying areas of special concern and used by Growing Green Communities in their planning.

The program's potential is limited unless additional resources (staff and money) are dedicated to the project and given the developmental trends in the County it may well be beyond our abilities to provide additional help in identification of remaining sites or funding to protect them before they are lost.

2c. Reestablish PCC's leadership role in greenways and trails

C PCC has partnered on SE Polk County initiatives, including renewed effort to protect lands in Mud Creek following WRA easement in the area. PCC has established, with the City of Des Moines, a Trails and Greenways (citizen) Advisory Committee to develop greenways in association with trails and resurrect Central Iowa Greenways Plan. Three regional park board summit meetings have been called thus far, but this approach needs renewed energy.

VI Recreation Enhancements

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES:

- I** • An increase of 3% in the use of the facilities and services available over the next three years.
Camping has increased
Environmental Education Programming has not
Shelters have not increased–this includes Lodge and Longhouse
- C** • An increase of 25 miles in the miles of recreational trails (dirt, paved, water) or greenways over the next three years.
- C** • Revenue increase of 3% over the next three years.
- I** • An increase of 3% in excellent ratings received from customer service surveys over the next three years.
Event Driven Revenues: While it is appropriate to measure event driven revenues against a standard, it must be measured over time against a trend line and it is inappropriate to measure growth over a two of three year period because timing issues in event driven revenues show large deviations over short periods. It is appropriate to say that the number of dollars received is increasing over time, PCC is more proactive in identifying, applying for and obtaining grants and contracts, and the trend line for this type of revenue is positive and will meet the intent of the strategic plan.

RATIONALE:

Recreation is core mission. Outdoor recreation provides the all-important entrée for many to the great outdoors and ultimately to our goals of community-wide natural resources stewardship. Progressive approaches to our recreational offerings are essential to the growth of involvement in our conservation system.

GOALS:

6a. Market services available at each park/recreational area

I Themes, logos, and taglines are currently being developed for PCC's larger parks (Jester, Yellow Banks, Thomas Mitchell, CBG, Easter Lake and Fort Des Moines). These will be used to better promote the parks, tie our areas together in a more uniform manner. Cross-promotional concepts are also being developed.

6b. Evaluate the impact of changing demographics and changing recreational trends on outdoor recreation

I Research has begun on the impact of changing demographics and changing recreational trends on outdoor recreation.

6c. Continue the development of the Central Iowa trail system

C PCC has played leadership role here, securing significant grants for the 4 Mile Creek Greenway Trail, Trestle-to-Trestle Trail, and playing a key role in Ankeny to Woodward Trail development, including participation in the A2W grantsmanship committee. A2W trail involves nine different jurisdictions. Took leadership role in development of trail amenities study for Central Iowa. This committee works with City of Des Moines in gaining feedback through Trails and Greenways Advisory Committee (note: this process could be improved, however). They also participate in MPO Bike-Ped Round-table, CIRTPA review, and Des Moines River Greenbelt Advisory Committee. We are attempting now to conduct preliminary design of Easter Lake Trail with a healthy public involvement component. We have offered support for the Raccoon River Trail and are working as partner on Des Moines River Trail (although federal restrictions on associated grant dollars have slowed this project).

RATIONALE:

Cannot keep up with the pace of urbanizing community without growth in public involvement and support. Promotion of parks systems/recreation opportunities provides introduction to the great outdoors and ultimately to stewardship education and practice.

GOALS:

3a. Enhance the advisory committee system

I Staff/Board determined that a Polk County Conservation Advisory Committee would be established during the summer of 2007 that consists of approx. 16 members who will provide feedback to PCC on various park planning and programming issues. Organization and recruitment is currently taking place.

An Easter Lake Task Force was formed in the fall of 2006 to begin providing guidance on the EL Master Plan improvements. They will continue to meet until master plan feedback is no longer needed.

The Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt Task Force will reconvene in 2007 to begin addressing details for the CBG Welcome Package.

The Deer Task Force, Golf Course Committee, and Trails/Greenways Committee continue to meet monthly.

3b. Pursue regional parks board summit initiatives

I PCC initiated Park Board Summit meetings in 2006 and will continue to plan meetings in conjunction with Des Moines Parks and Recreation. Discussion topics have included Project Destiny, Regional Planning (trails, dog parks, aquatics, etc.), joint marketing initiatives, and sub-committee formation.

3c. Create ongoing public involvement / planning system

I The Polk County REAP Committee will reconvene in August of 2007 under the leadership of PCC. The Committee will plan to meet two times per year with one of its first assignments being to create a cumulative 5-year plan.

3d. Enhance volunteer coordination system

C Attention to increased volunteer usage into the PCC system has been a priority since 2006. Efficient and detailed tracking of volunteer hours is now in place, along with an educational/information volunteer manual.

A new recognition system is currently being developed. Annually, a recruitment plan will be developed to address volunteer shortfalls in the organization.

3e. Grow public relations/marketing program

I PCC's 50th Anniversary campaign was concluded at the end of 2006. PCC was involved in the planning for 10 special events during the year, along with numerous marketing initiatives.

A PCC marketing plan was developed and board approved in October of 2006. Many aspects of the marketing plan are being executed, which includes nurturing media contacts.

The grant is currently at the mid-way point. Students to date have planted trees along the Great Western Trail, removed woody vegetation from Carney Marsh and Yellow Banks Park and participated in litter removal at Easter Lake and several other locations. An evaluation is being done with the students and teachers. Those results will be completed and tabulated by March of 2008 and will be shared at that time.

4b. Develop and deliver programs for strategic adult audiences—those most likely to change behavior or lead behavioral change

C A list of strategic adult audiences has been developed. A letter was developed this past winter and mailed/e-mailed to community organizations and area large businesses (more than 300) describing our programs. Many programs were presented due to this direct mailing with new audiences being reached such as Breakfast Clubs like Johnston Kiwanis, First Friday Breakfast Club, West Des Moines Breakfast Club, Special interest groups like School for the Blind Lunch and Learn such as - Pioneer. Additional work will always need to continue as contacts change.

4c. Enhance the visibility of the conservation education program

C The "Ask the Naturalist" newspaper column was created in 2004. The article works in a Q&A format. The Ask the Naturalist column appears in five different papers and is distributed to over 19,000 subscribers in 14 communities. To further increase visibility, an "Ask the Naturalist" radio segment began airing in April of this year. These segments air every Saturday morning on 92.5 KJYY. The current radio segments are being funded by The Great Outdoors Fund. In turn, KJYY has been allowing us to plug some of our upcoming events.

We recently wrote a REAP/CEP grant to develop podcasts. Podcasts are professional or homemade audio broadcasts available on the internet. Podcasts can be downloaded and listened to anytime at the discretion of the listener either from a home computer or downloaded to personal audio devices such as ipods and MP3 players. This is a new way for people to get information. Our goal was to produce 18 nature podcasts in both English and Spanish. The grant did not get funded but we plan to re-submit again the fall.

4d. Assess the potential for an outdoor discovery center facility

C A Greenwood business plan has been completed, with a feasibility study in progress, for development of the old science center building as a conservation and arts education-conference center (i.e., the "outdoor discovery center facility" described in strategic plan). We have secured more than \$70K in cash support for the project at this stage with an additional \$80K in in-kind services provided by PCC partners for this initiative. Background research continues. Community involvement has included: public brainstorming/information session with conservation and arts communities (75 in attendance), two small by-invitation-only leadership initiatives in Nov/Dec of 06, Earth Day activity to build community awareness (approx 600 in attendance), and Metro Arts Alliance networking session (30 in attendance). As of this writing, the community appears to hold this project (known as Greenwood) in high regard and has consistently exhibited enthusiasm and support for it. The formal feasibility study will hopefully be wrapped up by fall of this year.

4e. Develop a method to measure the short and long-term impact of environmental education programs on participant's behavior

I Several meetings were held with Jean Eells who is Doctoral Candidate in Agricultural Education specializing in evaluation systems at Iowa State University. As this is a new area for us, we needed some guidance on how to get started with the project. We first developed outcomes for every school and public program we provide. This gave us a base line for what we are trying to achieve. We then developed three surveys, one for the public, elementary teachers and middle and high school students. We then asked volunteers to call participants of our public programs and conduct the survey. We have gathered a significant amount of data but have not yet begun to analyze it. We will begin looking at the data this summer and will have some results by the fall.

IV Conservation Education

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES:

- C** • A method to measure the short and long-term impact of the environmental education programs on participant behavior will be developed by July 1, 2006.
- I** • A program specifically targeted for strategic adult audiences will be in place by July 1, 2007. (in progress, see 4b)

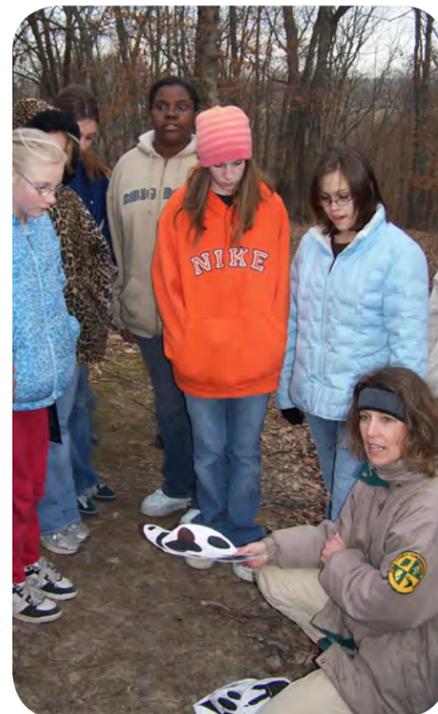
RATIONALE:

Changed behavior requires message reinforcement, recruitment of early adopters, and pursuit of key decision makers / community role models.

GOALS:

4a. Pursue service learning initiatives through middle and high schools for teachers and students

I A REAP/CEP grant was received in December of 2006 for \$31,253. This three part program targets middle and high school students involved in after school programs. The students first learn how to use GPS unit. They then use those skills while doing a service learning project and learning an outdoor skill.



V Organization Development

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES:

- C** • A positive return on investment (ROI) for the conversion of manual to automated systems.
- N** • An increase in employee satisfaction based upon earlier employee survey.
- C** • Completion of a 5 year technology plan with projected costs per year. Incorporated in County Administrative overall IT plan

RATIONALE:

To provide effective services with the resources available management systems, resources and practices as well as the organizational structure must be aligned properly. Growth and development opportunities must be provided to staff to enhance their ability to deliver services. Inefficient manual systems will be automated or abandoned.

GOALS:

5a. Human resources will be aligned in accordance with organizational priorities

C Reorganization of PCC occurred during FY 05-06. Job descriptions affected by the reorganization were complete prior to June 30, 2006, with salary adjustments in place by July 1, 2006.