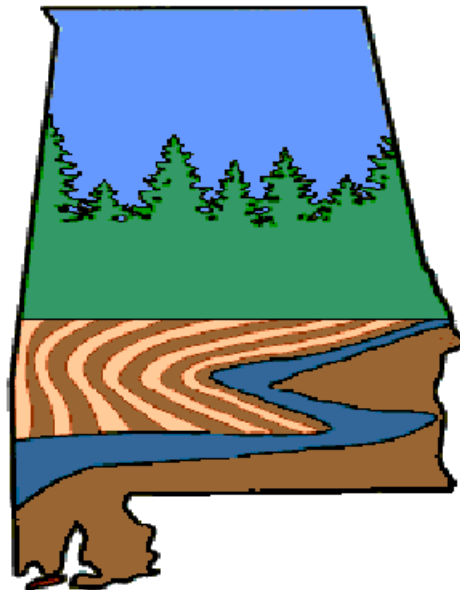


Orientation Manual for Soil Conservation District Supervisors



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WHAT IS A SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT?

A soil conservation district is a governmental subdivision of the state of Alabama and a public body, corporate and politic, organized according to the Soil Conservation District Law, and operates within the powers set forth in the law.

Conservation districts are local governments at work and their specific responsibility is management of soil and water resources. The idea behind their formation is to keep decision-making on soil and water conservation matters at the local level. Each district is governed by a board of five Supervisors who serve without pay. Each of these Supervisors are recommended to the State Soil & Water Conservation Committee for appointment/reappointment by the district to their board.

Its purpose, which is not all inclusive, may include -

- control and prevention of soil erosion, prevention of damage from flood water and sediment, utilization and disposal of water, wise guidance in present and future use of state's land resources;
- maintenance of active roles in water management for irrigation, drainage, flood control, recreation, pollution abatement and fish and wildlife development;
- soil surveys, erosion control practices, soil fertility and condition, needs to preserve agricultural land;
- land and water management, landscape beautification, education and involvement of citizens in conservation programs.

Districts work in a cooperative approach, using many sources for technical knowledge, financial resources and broad-based educational programs for natural resource conservation and management. They are a bridge between federal, state and local resource management agencies and local land users, performing a variety of functions and activities in coordinating and implementing national and state resource programs. District activities fall into three general categories:

- cooperation in implementing federal resource programs;
- cooperation in implementing state and local government resource programs; and
- carrying out independent resource management programs.

A Soil and Water Conservation District is the only local unit of government charged with the responsibility of conserving our natural resources. As stated previously, Soil and Water Conservation Districts are independent subdivisions of state government, just as are the

counties and school districts. Soil and Water Conservation Districts represent "grass roots" democracy. They are local people organized under state law to deal with local problems. That has been the case in Alabama since 1939, when the Legislature passed the law creating their formation and they were voted on by landowners in a referendum.

POWERS OF DISTRICTS AND SUPERVISORS

Article 2 Section 9-8-25 Alabama Code 1975

A Soil and Water Conservation District organized under the provisions of this article shall have the following powers, in addition to others granted in other sections of this article.

1. To carry out preventive and control measures including engineering operations, methods of cultivation, the growing of vegetation, changes in use of land, and other erosion control measures.
2. To conduct surveys, investigations and research relating to the character of soil erosion and the preventive and control measures needed, to publish the results of such surveys, investigations or research and to disseminate information concerning such preventive and control measures.
3. To conduct demonstrational projects within the districts to show by examples, the means, methods and measures by which soil and soil resources may be conserved and soil erosion may be prevented and controlled.
4. To cooperate or enter into agreement with to furnish financial or other aid to any agency or any owner or occupier of lands within the district in the carrying on of erosion control and prevention operations within the district, subject to such conditions as the supervisors may deem necessary.
5. To obtain options upon and to acquire by purchase, exchange, lease, gift, grant, bequest, devise or otherwise, any property, real or personal, or rights or interests therein; to maintain, administer and improve any properties acquired, to receive income from such properties and to expand such income; and to sell, lease or otherwise dispose of any of its property or interests therein.
6. To make available to landowners within the district agricultural and engineering machinery and equipment, fertilizer, seeds and seedlings and such other material or equipment as will assist such landowners to carry on operations upon their lands for the conservation of soil resources and for the prevention and control of soil erosion.
7. To construct, improve and maintain such structures as may be necessary or convenient for the performance of any of the operations authorized including plants and equipment appropriate for the processing of materials necessary for conditioning the land.
8. To develop comprehensive plans for the conservation of soil resources and for the control and prevention of soil erosion within the district.

9. To take over by purchase, lease or otherwise and to administer any soil conservation, erosion control or erosion prevention project within its boundaries.
10. To manage any soil conservation, erosion control or erosion prevention project within its boundaries.
11. To act as agent for the United States or any of its agencies or for this state or any of its agencies in connection with the acquisition, construction, operation or administration of any soil conservation, erosion control or erosion prevention project within its boundaries.
12. To accept donations, gifts and contributions in money, services, materials or otherwise and to use or expend such moneys, services, materials or other contributions in carrying out its operations.
13. To sue and be sued in the name of the district.
14. To have a seal, which seal shall be judicially noticed.
15. To have perpetual succession unless terminated.
16. To make and execute contracts and other instruments necessary to exercise its powers and to make, amend and repeal rules and regulations to carry out the district's purposes and powers.

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION

Each District is governed by a board of five Supervisors, who are appointed/reappointed by the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee based on recommendations made by local people (District Board). District Supervisors serve three-year terms. Vacancies on the board shall be filled for the unexpired term, unless he/she is filling the unexpired term of a previous supervisor. If that is the case at the time of reappointment and with the approval recommendation of the District Board, he/she must go through the reappointment process.

Districts may also have Associate Supervisors or Advisors, who are appointed by the board as advisors/representatives. These individuals cannot vote on board decisions, but add to the board's knowledge and experience and assist with conservation district programs.

Officers for the board should be elected annually and shall consist of a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary-Treasurer.

Your Responsibilities As A Supervisor

The major duty and responsibility of District Supervisors is to plan and direct the program of the district to meet local needs with the help and cooperation of other groups and agencies.

The plans are to be carried out by local people and state and federal agencies working together. Supervisors serve without compensation, but are reimbursed for per diem and mileage, when attending to district business.

You are the key to the success of your local district. The task of coordinating the efforts of all agencies, organizations and individuals with responsibilities in conservation is under your direction. How well you conduct the affairs of your district will be reflected in the accomplishments of the district.

You are a public official responsible only to the people of your district. Your challenge is to:

1. Give attention to the problems and opportunities of their district through regular board meetings.
2. Call on others for assistance. The following groups may help.
 - (a) Agricultural agency representatives
 - (b) Farm organization leaders
 - (c) Local development groups
 - (d) Civic and business leaders
 - (e) Representatives of other federal, state and local organizations
 - (f) Leading farmers
 - (g) Boards of Supervisors
 - (h) School Boards of Education

The Alabama Legislature has given Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors broad powers to develop and carry out soil and water conservation programs, some of which are:

1. Maintain an up-to-date long range soil and water conservation program.
2. Participate in developing and carrying out the annual plan of operation.
3. Prepare for, conduct and participate in board of supervisors meetings and attend AACD state and area meetings.
4. Provide for the keeping of a full and accurate record (minutes) of all proceedings and of all resolutions, regulations, and orders issued or adopted.
5. Prepare and distribute or publish an annual report.
6. Secure needed funds for adequate district operations and oversee proper dispersal and/or expenditure of public of funds according to state law.

7. Prepare an annual budget and maintain an adequate bookkeeping system that reflects all income and expenditures.
8. Employ personnel and determine their qualifications, duties and compensation. Keep abreast of performance and provide administrative supervisor.
9. Solicit and utilize all available resources to assist in developing and carrying out the district's soil and water conservation program; coordinate the inputs of these resources.
10. Serve as "up-front" person for district by presiding at public functions sponsored by the district and representing the district at functions that are related to soil and water conservation work.
11. Assist with appointment and reappointment of District Supervisors.
12. Annually designate a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary-Treasurer.
13. Execute surety bonds for employees and officers who are entrusted with funds or property.
14. Purchase, manage, and maintain district equipment.
15. Furnish to State Soil and Water Conservation Committee, upon request, copies of such ordinances, rules, regulations, orders, forms, and other documents as they shall adopt or employ, and such other information concerning their activities as it may require in the performance of its duties.
16. Establish district policies.
17. Establish priority of work.
18. Sponsor and actively participate in educational activities to inform the people about the soil and water conservation program and enlist their support.
19. Enter into working agreements or memorandums of understanding for assistance and cooperation in carrying out the soil and water conservation program.
20. Approve and cancel district cooperative agreements.
21. Pay state and national dues.
22. Establish and maintain minimum communications with the leaders in the district who can support the district's program.
23. Make decisions in response to all proposals presented to the board.

State Soil and Water Conservation Committee

In 1939, the Alabama Legislature enacted the Soil and Water Conservation Districts Law, which created the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee and made provisions whereby each county could organize a Soil and Water Conservation District. The Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee is a state agency.

Its mission is primarily to carry out the administrative functions for the operation of the 67 Soil and Water Conservation Districts and district programs, providing assistance to the districts and their 335 Supervisors statewide in carrying out the powers and duties of the districts. To accomplish its mission, the State Committee is charged with many varied duties and responsibilities.

Membership of the Committee

The Committee is composed of nine members. Three of these are Statutory Members (ex-officio): the Director of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the Director of the State Agricultural Experiment Station, and the Supervisor of Vocational Education. The other six members are private land-owning citizens, who are also Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors. They are appointed by the Governor from a list of names (not less than three) nominated by their respective areas and submitted to the Governor by the State Committee. From this list, the Governor appoints one member to the State Committee from each of the 6 geographical areas in the state.

The Committee may employ an administrative officer (Executive Director). The Executive Director reports to the State Committee in matters relating to policy and financial assistance. Currently, staff of the Committee consists of the Executive Director, Executive Assistant, Administrative Assistant, Staff Accountant, and Account Clerk.

Responsibilities of the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee

1. The Committee shall keep records of its official actions, shall adopt seal, and may perform such acts, hold such public hearings and promulgate such rules and regulations as may be necessary for the execution of its functions.
2. The committee may employ an administrative officer (Executive Director) and such other agents and employees (permanent and temporary), as it may require and shall determine their qualifications, duties, and compensation. Compensation of the administrative officer shall be fixed by the committee.
3. The committee may call upon the Attorney General of the state for such legal services as it may require or may employ its own counsel and legal staff.
4. It shall have authority to delegate to its Chairman, to one or more of its members or to one or more agents or employees such powers and duties as it may deem proper.

5. The committee may request any state agency or state institution of learning to make special reports, surveys or studies for the purpose of carrying out any of the committee's functions.
6. The committee shall designate its chairman and may from time to time, change such designation.
7. A majority of the committee shall constitute a quorum, and the concurrence of a majority in any matter within their duties shall be required for its determination.
8. The chairman and members of the committee shall receive no compensation for their services on the committee, but shall be entitled to expenses, including traveling expenses, necessarily incurred in the discharge of their duties on the committee.
9. The committee shall provide for the execution of surety bonds for all employees and officers, shall provide for the keeping of a full and accurate record of all proceedings and of all resolutions, regulations and orders issued or adopted and shall provide for an annual audit of the accounts of receipts and disbursements.

In addition to the above, the committee shall have the following duties and powers:

1. To offer assistance to the supervisors of the soil and water conservation districts in the carrying out of any of their powers and programs.
2. To keep the supervisors of each of the several districts informed of the activities and experience of all other districts and to facilitate an interchange of advice and experience between such districts and cooperation between them.
3. To coordinate the program of the soil and water conservation districts by advice and consultation.
4. To secure the cooperation and assistance of the United States and any of its agencies of this state in the work of the districts.
5. To disseminate information through the state concerning the activities and programs of the soil and water conservation districts and to encourage the formation of such districts in areas where their organization is desirable.

Alabama Association of Conservation Districts

The Alabama Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. (AACD) was organized in August, 1943. AACD is an association, a non-profit organization which is composed of the 67 individual Soil & Water Conservation Districts in the state.

The mission of AACD is to serve as a vehicle for unified action by districts, exchange of information, and discussion of issues. The Association also acts as a combined voice for districts on legislative issues of concern to the districts as they relate to soil and water

conservation in Alabama. Further, the mission of AACD is to represent, promote and support Soil & Water Conservation Districts in their efforts to assist Alabamians in the protection and wise use of natural resources. This is accomplished by working closely with public and private groups and by seeking public participation and concern in the conservation, development and wise use of land and water resources.

AACD is governed by a 13-member Board of Directors, as follows:

1. Board of Directors:

- President
- 1st Vice-President
- 2nd Vice-President
- Secretary-Treasurer
- 6 Area Vice-Presidents
- Immediate Past 2 Presidents
- NACD Board Member

The President, 1st Vice-President, 2nd Vice-President and Secretary-Treasurer are elected at the annual meeting by the voting delegates of the districts in attendance for one-year terms. The 1st and 2nd Vice-President shall come from a different area of the state. Each may serve a total of two, consecutive one year terms, if elected by the Association membership and will be eligible again after each five year period. The Secretary-Treasurer and National Councilman shall be elected by the membership at the Annual Meeting and shall serve one-year terms and be eligible to succeed themselves. The President, 1st Vice-President, 2nd Vice-President and NACD Board Member shall take office at the beginning of the last business session of the Annual Meeting.

2. Area Vice-Presidents:

One vice-president from each of the 6 administrative areas of the state. The administrative areas will be the same major geographical areas of the state as designated by the Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts on January 1, 1972, for the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee's geographical areas.

The area vice-presidents will be elected at the Annual Area Supervisor's meeting by the membership. They shall hold office for a term of three years, and the terms will be staggered with Areas I and II serving 1 year initially; Areas III and IV serving 2 years initially; and Areas V and VI serving 3 years, and thereafter, successors will serve the three-year term on a staggered basis. All area officers shall take office concurrently with the president of the Association.

3. Executive Committee:

The Executive Committee shall consist of the corporation's President, 1st Vice-President, Secretary-Treasurer, Immediate Past President, and the NACD Board Member. The Executive Committee shall transact the business of the corporation between meetings of the Board of Directors and meetings shall be called by the President. Actions by the Executive Committee is subject to review by the Board of Directors.

4. Standing Committees:

In addition to such other committees as the President and Executive Committee may from time to time authorize or appoint, there shall be the following standing committees:

Conservation Practices & Research
District Operations & Outlook
Finance
Forestry & Wildlife
Legislative
Resolutions
Resource Conservation and Development
Urban Conservation
Water Resources

Responsibilities of Standing Committees:

- Analyze conservation programs and policy issues that have a direct impact on districts and district programs.
- Promote conservation activities—Legislative Breakfast, Soil and Water Stewardship Week, and Awards Program.
- Co-sponsor the annual TREASURE Forest Landowners Conference and the FFA Land Judging Contest.
- During the annual meeting, set policy on conservation issues.
- Standing Committees may hold mid-year meetings, if deemed appropriate, with appropriate notification to its members by the respective chairman.

5. Membership:

Voting Membership – Each conservation district, shall for the purpose of financing the business of this Association, pay annual dues to the AACD. These dues shall be established by the Board of Directors. Payment of dues by each district shall entitle the supervisor of said district to all rights and privileges of the Association including, but not restricted to, voting and holding office.

Associate & Corporate Membership – All persons, including former supervisors, and entities, whether an individual, corporation, club, public agency, or other organization, who are interested in the Association's purposes and activities, may contribute to the Association's financial needs, and each contributor shall be entitled to take part in all activities of the Association, with all rights and privileges as Association members, but shall not be considered a member for purposes of voting on Association matters or holding offices. Contributors shall be divided into two classes, affiliate contributors and associate contributors, and the Board of Directors shall determine the distinction between the two.

National Association of Conservation Districts

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) is a voluntary, non-governmental organization representing nearly 3,000 local conservation districts and their state associations in 50 states, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Northern Mariana Islands,

Guam, and the Virgin Islands. Its primary purposes are the conservation, orderly development, and judicious use of the nation's land, water, timber, and related natural resources through the maximum exercise of local initiative, decisions, and self-government.

Each conservation district and state association is a member of NACD. NACD is financed by the contributions of its membership and donors and from grants. The role of NACD is to enable districts to pool their financial and influential resources to collectively accomplish what they cannot accomplish individually.

Services of NACD

1. Obtain information in ways that are not possible for the individual.
2. Inform members about current and emerging natural resource issues.
3. Educate decision makers in Congress, state legislators and county governments about programs and initiatives that need their support.
4. Promulgate ideas that receive natural resource issues and prevent future environmental problems.
5. Mobilize public opinion to ensure grassroots leadership and decision making at the community level.
6. Provide services that benefit NACD members and society.

Cooperating with Districts

The key to success of the district program is "cooperation". The district team is made up of many agencies, organizations and individuals. Without the cooperation and assistance of a number of groups, the district program would be most ineffective.

Some of the public agencies with specific responsibilities are in better position to carry out certain district objectives with cooperating farmers than are District Supervisors. The cooperation of such agencies should be secured. Most farmers are busy people and need assistance, particularly in the field of technical assistance, education, credit, and cost-sharing. Close cooperation between the agencies and districts will be helpful to all concerned. Shown below are some of the cooperating groups:

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Alabama Cooperative Extension System
USDA Rural Development Agency
USDA Farm Services Agency
Alabama Agricultural & Conservation Development Commission
Vocational Agriculture
Alabama Forestry Commission
National Association of Conservation District

Other Agencies – There are other agencies, public and private, cooperating with and assisting supervisors in planning and promoting the district program, and failure to list them is certainly not intended to minimize the importance of their contribution. These may include the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, Federal Emergency Water Management Administration, U S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey, Office of Surface Mining, etc.

STATE COMMITTEE & ALABAMA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS AREA MAP

