

South Dakota Association of Conservation District Employees (SDACDE)

The South Dakota Association of Conservation District Employees (SDACDE) was formed in 1973. Its membership is individuals interested in the promotion of resource conservation in South Dakota. The Association was and is affiliated with the South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts (SDACD) and the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD).

The employee organization effort started with only a handful of full time district employees in the state at that time. The employees approached SDACD about allowing the employees to organize. A major concern raised was that the employees wanted to 'unionize' to allow the employees more pay and benefits. SDACD was assured that was not the intent; the employees wanted to establish better communication between districts to share ideas and to offer those who wanted help the assistance to become stronger employees creating a stronger conservation district. Eventually, the employees were allowed to organize as an affiliate of SDACD. The employees' organization would need to answer to SDACD if there were any concerns that surfaced. The employees agreed to that arrangement.

The newly formed SDACDE immediately started to work on an Employee Handbook to standardize the day to day work and responsibilities of district employees for the individual district boards to adopt and utilize. This original Employee Handbook included: Standardized Job Descriptions, Standardized Filing System, and the start of a Standardized Accounting System. In addition to the handbook, SDACDE encouraged district to be more involved in the annual speech and poster contests and Soil & Water Stewardship Week activities and to share information about successful projects they were using in their districts. Within a few years, some districts decided to hire full time employees to expand their services, which helped to make them more financially stable.

Shortly after establishment, SDACDE was approached by other state employee organizations to help organize a national employee organization. SDACDE did not pursue this effort because there were only a few states that had employee organizations at that time. SDACDE did accept requests from some states to share information about SDACDE. NACD recognized this interest and efforts to organize state employee organizations and decided to appoint employee advisors to NACD's Standing Committees. Jack Majeres of Moody County was the first employee advisor to NACD's District Operations Committee.

In 1973, SDACDE created their By-Laws of South Dakota Association of Conservation District Employees. The By-Laws included their Name and Affiliation, Purpose, Basic Policies, Activities, Membership, Executive Committee, Committees, and Amendments to By Laws. Many amendments have been made to the By-Laws, but the original By-Laws objectives and goals have remained basically the same.

In 1979, SDACDE received 501(c)(3) 'Tax Exempt Status' through the Internal Revenue Service.

In 1983, SDACDE established a Long Range Plan, as follows:

The Purpose of SDACDE: 1. To promote resource conservation in South Dakota and in local conservation districts. 2. To more adequately assist in the implementation of District programs and activities. 3. To establish and maintain a standard of quality for conservation district employees. 4. To carry on an education and improvement program for conservation district

employee. 5. To instill in conservation district employees a sense of pride and dedication in assisting their District Supervisors.

The Program Elements needing consideration: 1. Personnel Management Guidelines; this included Job Descriptions, Performance Evaluations, Employee Compensation, and a Training Plan. 2. Employee Training Program. 3. Analyze Conservation Needs. 4. Interagency Relations. 5. Public Awareness.

The Plan of Actions & Preferred Goals: 1. The SDACDE will assist districts in developing personnel management guidelines based on the 'Personnel Management Guidebook for Conservation District Officials' developed by NACD and the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) Personnel Management Guidelines. SDACDE will also maintain an open working relationship with SDACD in order to help supervisors utilize personnel management materials. These guidelines will include sections such as: Updated Job Descriptions, Programs for Employee Annual Performance Reviews, Schedules for Employee Compensation, and Programs for Developing Employee Training Plans. 2. SDACDE will continue to assist district in the training of their employees by promoting various employee training options which shall include: Employee Workshops, SCS Training workshops, State of South Dakota Training Courses, and any other programs which may become available. 3. SDACDE will assist district in analyzing their conservation needs in order to determine the levels of manpower which are required to answer those needs. This will be partially accomplished through the inclusion of appropriate educational programs during Employee Workshops and Supervisor Workshops. 4. SDACDE will promote continuing good relations between the District and SCS personnel. This will be partially accomplished through establishing a committee on Interagency Relations and Assisting employees in developing a better understanding of their job priorities in relation to the District and SCS. 5. SDACDE will assist in promoting a great public awareness of the conservation districts in South Dakota. This will be partially accomplished through: establishment of Conservation Scholarship Program, use of on-going conservation features in various agricultural and educational publications, and continued support of the SDACD Endowment Fund.

The State of South Dakota celebrated its centennial in 1989. One fundraiser included selling one square foot shares in a Centennial Acres located in Hughes. The South Dakota Association of Conservation District Employees supported the State's centennial by purchasing a 'Centennial Land Office Deed'. According to the deed, this grant and conveyance shall convey an undivided equitable interest in and to said Centennial Acre for the benefit of the people of the sovereign State of South Dakota.

Throughout the years SDACDE has had many fundraisers. To name a few: Membership Dues, Dances, 'Fowl Feces' Contest, Registration Fees, Nametag Sales, Individual Contributions, Fun Nights, Video Tape Sales, Mug Sales, Half and Half Sales and Raffle Tickets at Convention, Embroidery Sales through Stitch n' Time, and Cookbook Sales.

The first Executive Board of Directors consisted of Twyla Adams (Plankinton), Carlene Rosencranz (Spearfish), Rusty Leppert (Pierre), June Helgeson (Sisseton), Oral Svarvari (Milbank), Jack Majeres (Sioux Falls), Maurice Ahern (Huron), Irma Steder (Selby), Donna Fadgen (Huron), Roberta Manger (Chamberlain), Sylvia Sach (Onida), David Karst (Bowdle), and SDACD executive secretary Howard Geers (Pierre).

SDACDE is a strong organization with almost 100 members. SDACDE works hard to provide avenues for employees to become better employees and help their conservation districts with conservation activities and financial stability.