

Orientation Manual for
Members of the
Board of Supervisors
of South Dakota's
Conservation Districts

January 2005

Orientation Manual for South Dakota’s Conservation Districts Boards of Supervisors

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Chapter One - Organization

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History of South Dakota's Conservation Districts

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, a severe drought hit most of North America. A prolonged period of no rainfall prevented the growth of sufficient cover to protect fields from wind and water erosion. Many years of cropping and overgrazing reduced the organic matter in the soil, making it even more susceptible to wind and water erosion. Then the winds came, again and again, blowing hard across the vulnerable soils. Clouds of dust rose from the west, rolling over the eastern cities and out to sea, where they sometimes engulfed ocean liners.

Disastrous erosion occurred over North America, including the entire state of South Dakota, and that brought economic disaster. Many farmers lost their farms and moved from the land in search of employment. Business in towns and cities suffered.

Hugh Hammond Bennett, a career soil scientist in the USDA, became convinced soil erosion was a national menace and that its solution lay in tailoring conservation practices to fit the capability of the land and the desires of landowners. Simple solutions for all situations would be fruitless. The crops, the land, and the climate were so diverse that specialists in agronomy, forestry, soil science, biology, engineering, and social sciences contributed to conservation methods. They worked with farmers to find solutions that benefited the land and fulfilled the landowners' aspirations.

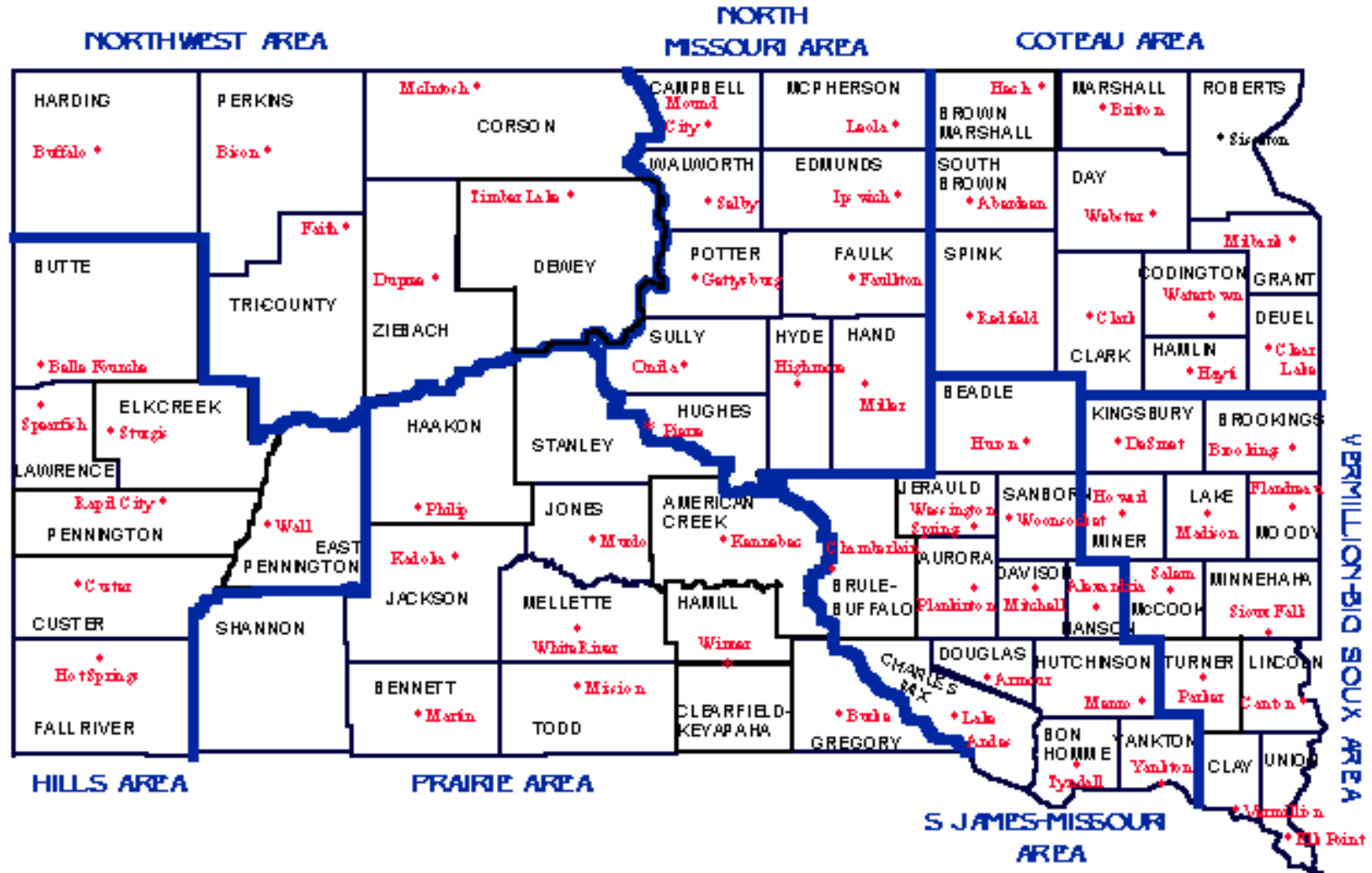
In 1933, the Soil Erosion Service, predecessor to the Soil Conservation Service and NRCS, began working with farmers in the Coon Creek watershed of southwestern Wisconsin to transform the square, eroding fields into what one sees today - a conservation showplace of contouring, strip cropping, terracing, and wise land use that benefits the soil, air, water, as well as the plant, animal, and human life of the whole watershed. Wolsey-Shue Creek and Winner-Dixon became the first erosion control demonstration projects established in South Dakota..

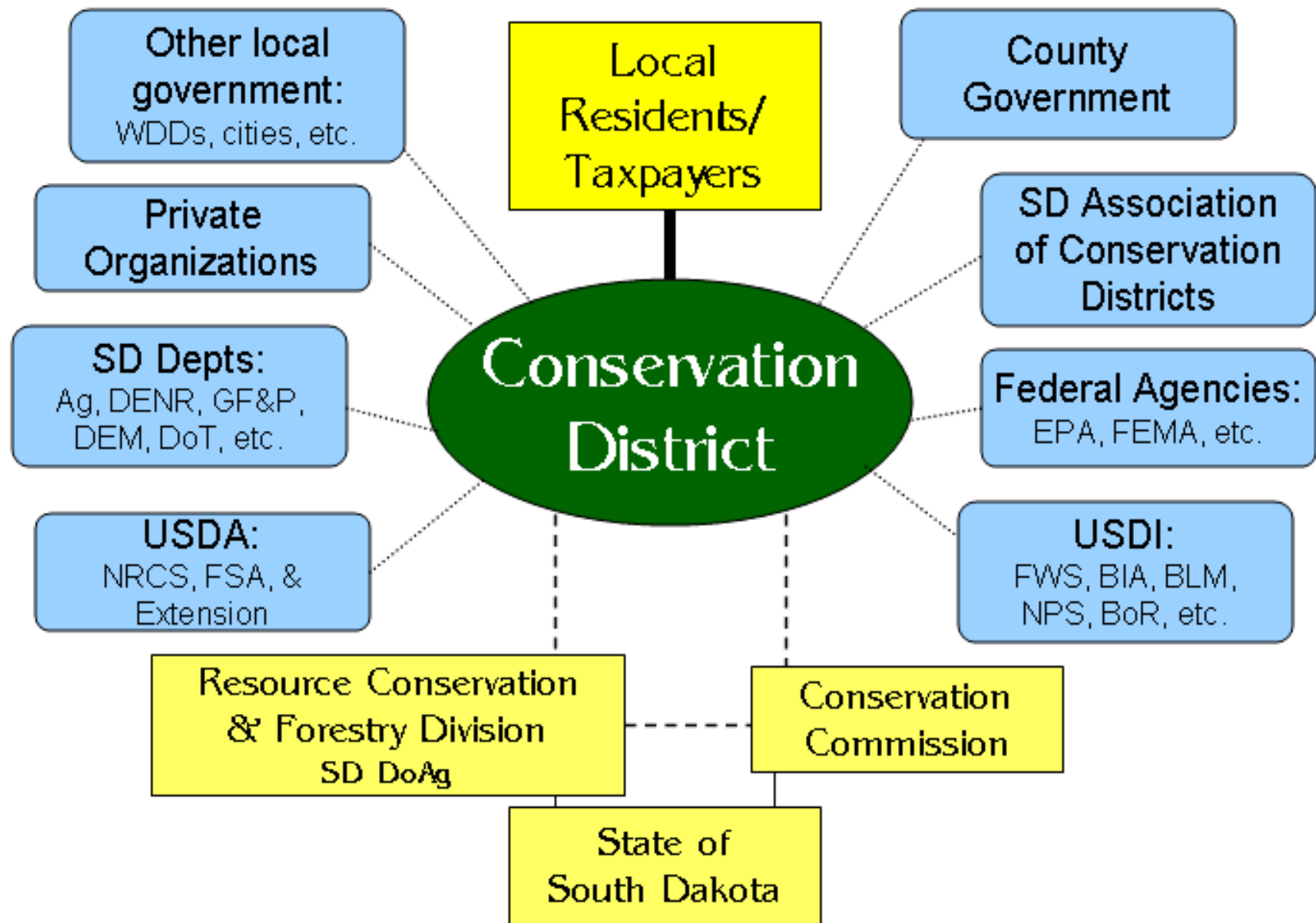
The carpeting of the land with soil conservation works nationwide was hastened with Congress' passage of the Soil Conservation District Model Law Act in 1936. The South Dakota legislature passed their Soil Conservation District Law in 1937. By September, two districts started to organize; Tri-County and Brown-Marshall completed their organization by the end of the 1937. By 1968, most of the state had organized into conservation districts. In 1982, the legislature officially included all towns within conservation district boundaries, thereby covering the entire state.

Conservation districts originally developed as "Soil Conservation Districts" and later expanded to "Soil & Water Conservation Districts," but the name changed in 1968 to "Conservation Districts" to represent the wide range of responsibilities of the districts.

History of _____ Conservation District

Insert your district's history here.





The Role of the Conservation District Board of Supervisors

Role of the Supervisor

Conservation district supervisors are elected by the people to represent their interest in natural resources conservation. Supervisors are leaders, using their own operations to set a good conservation example to others and demonstrate conservation benefits.

You and your fellow board members are responsible for the whole conservation district and all that happens in it. That is both a legal and practical way of looking at your job on this board. Your responsibility encompasses manager, staff, building, finance, assets, success and failure of the conservation district. Even though the board delegates a major portion of the job to professional paid staff, the board never gives up ultimate bottom-line responsibility for the conservation district.

When the people of the conservation district elect a supervisor, they delegate the responsibility of directing the conservation of the district's natural resources. The following statements define the responsibilities of a good supervisor:

- Be a leader, by being aware of the different resource conservation needs within the district and actively seeking input for solutions.
- Be an example of conservation management by practicing applicable conservation methods.
- Promote the ethic of good resource stewardship among all residents, encouraging them to become active cooperators.
- Be familiar with the laws, policies, and program concepts of importance to the district.
- Keep informed on the activities and functions of the Conservation Commission, the South Dakota and National Association of Conservation Districts, and other organizations important to the district.
- Be a responsible supervisor by regularly attending district meetings and functions, taking an active role in overseeing your employees' activities, and generally make conservation district business a priority.

Responsibilities of a Supervisor

The district supervisors are elected to carry out the business of the conservation district. Their responsibilities include:

- schedule and hold regular monthly meetings with a definite planned agenda
- develop, implement, and monitor a long-range program designed to meet the total resource needs of the district
- develop an annual work plan which provides for meeting the goals of the long range program;
- provide guidance to assisting agencies on district priorities
- set up committees to carry out projects and activities; assign areas of responsibility to each board member and arrange for co-sponsors of district activities as appropriate
- develop and implement a realistic budget, including a plan for raising of funds to complete identified projects

- prepare annual financial statements and progress reports to be submitted to the Division of Resource Conservation & Forestry and other interested entities
- conduct supervisor elections according to state law
- support programs of the state and national associations and auxiliaries
- hire and supervise sufficient staff to support district operations
- carry out comprehensive public information programs
- support special activities designed to increase the awareness of conservation practices
- assure supervisors are protected with surety bonds and insurance for officers and employees as allowed by law
- establish and maintain cooperative arrangements with neighboring districts and other local entities of government
- collaborate with appropriate federal agencies on all required programs.

The Board Sets Policy

A board of supervisors has neither the time nor ability to manage a government as complex as the conservation district. Placing themselves into a governance or policy-making position is the easiest way for board members to handle the heavy responsibility.

A policy is a direction or course of action that a body will take. The board is a policy-making body that sets the direction and course of action the conservation district will take within the mission of the district.

The board establishes policies that outline the board's parameters for how the conservation district will operate to accomplish its mission. Then the board functions as observer, interpreter, and evaluator of those policies. The board also modifies existing policies and creates new policies as they see the need to keep the conservation district meeting its mission.

The Board Hires a Manager to Manage the Conservation District

Conservation districts came about because people saw a problem - degradation of our natural resources. In the early stages of conservation districts, the board members managed the district. Then the job became more complex and boards hired managers to take over the management of the conservation district. When managers are hired, board members take on a new role as governors of the conservation district. With someone else covering the management, the board members can be planners and advocates for the conservation district movement.

Even though this all probably happened long before you were elected to the board of supervisors, the task of hiring a manager for the conservation district is still something about which you will be concerned. Every board has the task of reconfirming the hiring of the manager every year at contract renewal time. Each year it should be equally as important as the first time the board hired a manager. The board places a tremendous amount of trust and authority with the manager and the manager must continue to prove to the board that he/she is the right person for the job. Every year board members must formally evaluate the manager and make a decision about rehiring that manager for another year or looking for someone else to fill that position who could do the job better.

Boardmanship is a delicate balance of leading and delegating trust to someone else to lead.

Some board responsibilities cannot be delegated to others. However, a great deal of the work of the board must be delegated to a professional manager who has the skills and abilities to do the job. Keeping in mind that the board is responsible for everything in the conservation district, and looking at this delegation by the board in the purest terms, it can be said that the manager's job can be defined as:

The manager's only job is to do the board members' job for them.

That sweeping delegation of management authority from board to paid manager to manage the conservation district and doing nothing to interfere with that management except to monitor, is one of the most difficult things you will do while serving on the conservation district board of supervisors. This confusing issue of how much the board does and how much the board delegates to someone else to do is the greatest cause of conflict on any board. The reason for that is the impossibility of clearly defining what the board should do and what they should delegate to the manager.

There are several ways you can deal with this confusion and keep things in perspective:

- Do not look at this as a turf battle between the board and the manager. The board and staff must always function as a team and each team member has assignments. This is an issue of determining who does what best and then allowing that segment of the board team to do the job without interference from the other parts of the board team.
- The board member's duties can be defined loosely as dealing with issues that affect the whole conservation district. The board sets parameters on how the district will operate.
- The manager's duties may be defined as developing and carrying out the functions of the conservation district within the parameters set by the board team.
- There are very few activities of the board team in which every segment of the board team isn't involved somehow. For example, it is the board's job to establish an annual budget for the conservation district. However, the budget is most often prepared by the manager and recommended to the board for approval. So the manager does have an important role in the budget process even though it is strictly defined as a board responsibility.
- Communication is the best prevention of confusion and conflict. Board members and manager must feel free to discuss any issue. All parts of the board team must feel free to express concern about who does what job.
- Board members never give up their bottom-line responsibility for the conservation district even though they must delegate much of the work.

Examples of defining who does what on the board team:

- The board delegates staff management to the manager, but the board approves staff contracts.
- The board hires the auditor to audit the financial records, but the manager seeks audit bids and makes recommendations to the board for their final decision.
- The board creates policies for management of the finances of the conservation district, but the manager actually invests funds and makes sure the bills are paid.

- The board approves proposals for major purchases, but the manager recommends the proposal to be accepted and actually makes the purchase.
- The board is responsible for making a long-range plan for the conservation district, but the manager will make recommendations and act as resource through the planning process.
- The board approves a budgeted amount for conservation activities and staff salaries, but the manager actually determines the activities that will be carried out and the allocation of money to the line staff.
- The board approves a budget amount for staff, but the manager determines the level of staffing necessary and what those staff members will actually do.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

The Board...

- 1) Hires the manager and delegates management
- 2) Plans for the future of the conservation district
- 3) Monitors/evaluates
- 4) Advocates and volunteers special skills.

So I'm an Officer, Now What?

Each year, the board of supervisors elects officers to lead their district.

The chairperson takes the overall leadership of the conservation district:

- presides at all meetings and calls special meetings when needed
- plans and writes the agenda, opens the meeting promptly, and closes it when the business has been accomplished
- monitors the district work plan and assures activities are completed
- appoints and monitors all committees
- assures proper review of all information before board action is taken
- delegates certain activities to be carried out.

The vice-chairperson has an active responsibility to assist the chairperson to carry out district work:

- in the absence of the chairperson, takes all leadership duties
- assists the chairperson in selection and monitoring of all committees
- assists the chairperson to monitor implementation of the work plan.

The secretary is not required to be a member of the board. However, it is the responsibility of the board that the secretary and treasurer duties are carried out.

- maintains a complete copy of all records of the meeting including correspondence relating to all board actions
- keeps a roster of all members and others present and absent at all meetings.

The treasurer safeguards the district's assets and provides a complete accounting of its financial status. However, the board is ultimately responsible for the financial well-being and condition of the district.

- assists in developing and monitoring the annual budget
- maintains complete and accurate records suitable for audit
- gives financial report at board meetings.

Advisors

Advisors (formerly known as assistant supervisors) are appointed for several reasons which may include the following:

- to help elected supervisors who are donating their time to a very large undertaking
- to obtain a broader base of public input to district activities
- to train new people for the position of elected district supervisor.

Advisors cannot make motions or vote; these functions of elected supervisors cannot be delegated. Advisors can participate in all other activities as assigned by the elected supervisors.

An advisor should:

- thoroughly understand the conservation district laws and regulations
- be knowledgeable of the district's long range plan and annual work plans, goals and policies
- attend board meetings and participate in discussions and activities, offer opinions and advice
- assist district supervisors in providing leadership to the district
- actively promote district programs among friends and neighbors
- set a good example of natural resources stewardship
- consider him/herself a potential candidate for supervisor election.

Serving as an advisor can prepare an individual for service as an elected supervisor. Many elected supervisors view the advisor's position as a good way to recruit and train potential elected supervisors.

Endowment Fund

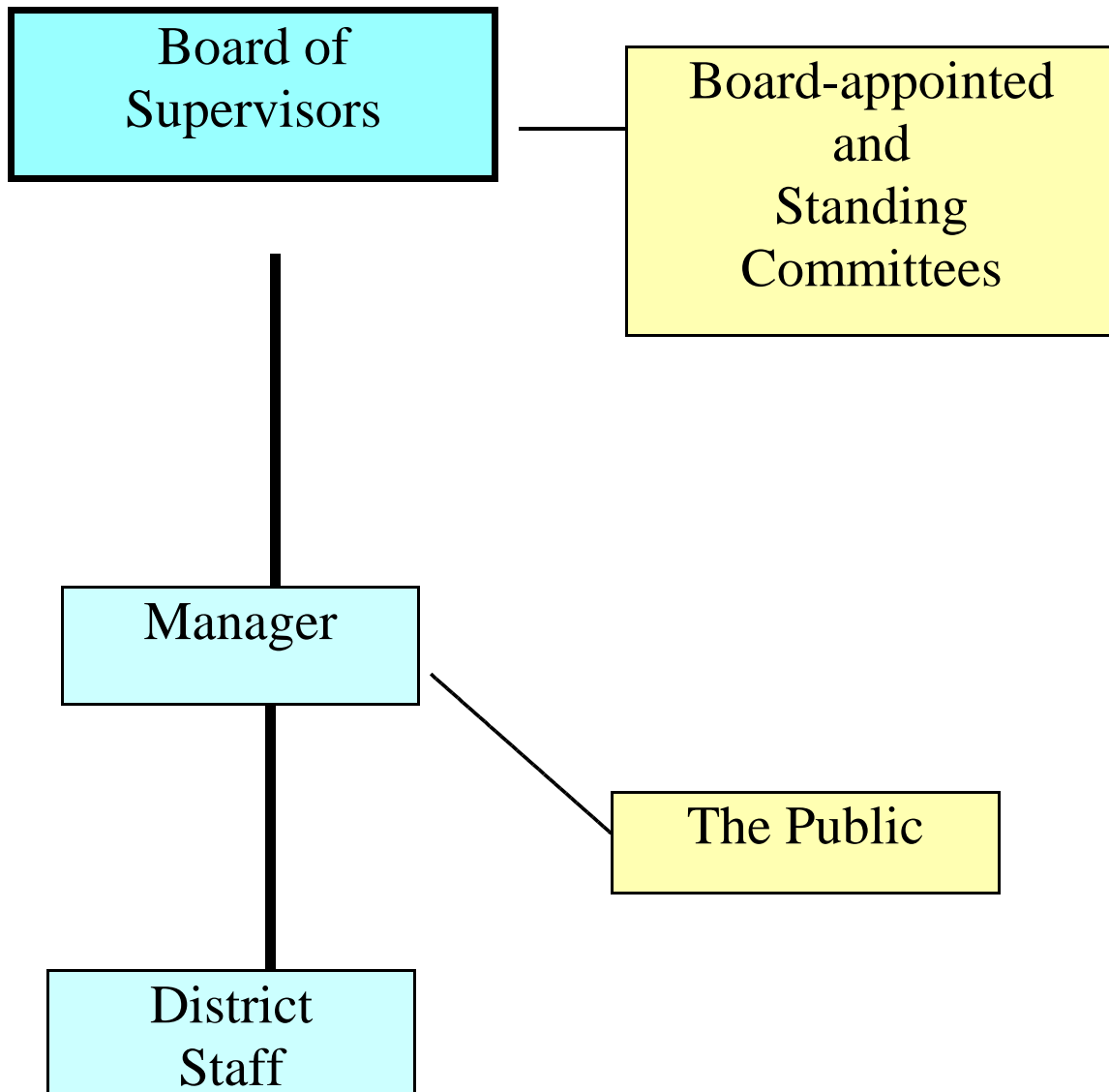
South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts

The Endowment Fund provides a foundation of support for natural resource conservation in South Dakota. Contributions to the fund are held in trust and invested in government-backed securities. The interest from the investments is utilized by the Association of Conservation Districts to further the goals and mission of South Dakota's conservation districts-sensible, voluntary, self-governed conservation management and development of South Dakota's natural resources for ourselves and our posterity.

Contributions to the Endowment Fund can be made in honor or recognition of an individual or organization. Conservation districts and others use the Fund to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to the conservation district movement. Recognitions for contributions to the Endowment Fund occur on three levels: the Governor's Award, the President's Club and the Century Club. The Governor's Award is presented when \$2,000 is contributed by or in a person's or non-district organization's honor. The President's Club is presented for contributions of \$1,000. Conservation districts achieving additional levels of \$1,000 receive special medallions that may be affixed to the plaques they have previously won. The Century Club is awarded for contributions of \$100.

Chain of Command

_____ Conservation District



Employer/Employee Management

Conservation district management, to be effective, requires a strong bond between the leadership of district supervisors and the work of paid staff hired to carry out the work of the district. Conservation district management is unique because it requires a board of supervisors to work together in defining the role of employees, managing the work of the conservation district manager and his/her staff, and evaluating the performance of the district manager and his/her staff on a regular basis.

Employees of the conservation district look to the district supervisors for leadership. It is critical that the district supervisors send a single consistent message to the district manager. The district supervisors must allow the district manager to manage the staff of the conservation district in getting the day-to-day work of the district done.

The First Role of the Supervisors

The roles of the conservation district board of supervisors, district manager, and staff must be clearly defined. All groups must agree to the plan of action for the district management in order for the work of the conservation district to flow smoothly and efficiently.

The first and most effective tool the board of supervisors can provide for the district manager is a well-organized plan of action for the work of the conservation district. The plan of action should spell out the expected activities of the district manager and staff and should include time lines and expectations of the quality of the work expected. The plan of action is a detailed work plan taken directly from the district's long range plan. It is usually prepared one year in advance and includes:

- a list of key goals
- activities to be completed under each goal
- a listing of the person/persons responsible to carry out the activity
- a time line for completion
- expectations of the quality of the work.

The Second Role of the Supervisors

The second role of the board of supervisors in assuring good employer/employee relations is to communicate a clear message to the district manager and the district staff regarding the chain of command. Supervisors have a very full and important role to fulfill in leading the activities of the conservation district. They must establish a sense of trust in their district manager and authorize him/her to supervise the staff, make staff work assignments, and evaluate the work of the staff.

In authorizing a conservation district manager to supervise and direct the work of the staff, supervisors must agree, as a team, how the management will be carried out. Individual supervisors must then be willing to step away from the day-to-day conflicts that may occur and always follow the chain of command that they themselves have set.

The Third Role of the Supervisors

The third role of the board of supervisors is to provide clear, timely, specific feedback on the performance of the district manager. They also assure that the district manager is providing clear, timely, specific feedback to the conservation district staff.

As leaders of the district's operations, the board of supervisors must provide clear feedback to the district manager. It is the district manager's responsibility to provide feedback on performance to conservation district employees.

Problem in employer/employee relations occur when:

- the district supervisors don't act together, but give individual messages to the conservation district manager and/or staff of the district
- individual district supervisors don't follow the established chain of command in assigning work duties
- conservation district supervisors don't send clear messages about work priorities and expectations of performance to the district manager
- district supervisors fail to follow their adopted long range plan.

Long Range Planning is Key to District Success

Problems between employers and employees most commonly occur because of the lack of clear roles and expectations. Employees must understand their role and the role of the board of supervisors in order to do their best work for the conservation district. The best way for roles and expectations to be made clear is the completion of a well-defined conservation district Long Range Plan.

Establishing the roles and responsibilities of the district manager and staff in the Long Range Plan is only half the task. It is very important to clearly spell out the roles of the board of supervisors. The board of supervisors must send a clear message to the conservation district manager and staff outlining the role they wish to play in the decision making and planning process of the district.

By clearly defining leadership, management, and staff roles and responsibilities, all members of the district team will work effectively to meet the commonly identified goals and objectives of the conservation district.

Getting the "Best" From Employees

District supervisors must

- be well prepared
- have planned meeting agendas and stick to them
- encourage input from staff
- be fair in providing the district manager and staff clear signals about what you expect and when you expect completion

- follow up on issues presented by the staff, providing additional information to the staff quickly.

District managers must:

- actively listen and respond to your staff's needs
- be an active partner in the group planning process with your staff
- don't "blame" decisions on the board supervisors – instead try to help staff understand why the board of supervisors has taken a planned course of action
- encourage supervisors and staff to always follow the chain of command – if they are asked to complete tasks directly by an individual supervisor outside their planned work, ask that they encourage the supervisor to assign the new work through the district manager
- give feedback clearly and often – give credit to your staff at every opportunity.

Is It a Policy or Management Responsibility?

Directions: A team functions best when everyone on it understands who does what. To see how well you understand roles, read the following statements and check A for administrator or B for board.

- ___ 1. Write a grant proposal.
- ___ 2. Oversee production of a brochure on the conservation district.
- ___ 3. Approve the date and time of the regular board meeting.
- ___ 4. Establish a total ban on smoking at conservation district functions.
- ___ 5. Send a staff member to a time-management seminar in another city at the conservation district's expense.
- ___ 6. Promote a line staffer to a supervisory position.
- ___ 7. Make the decision to eliminate a longtime program, at the recommendation of the administrator.
- ___ 8. Decide to share facilities with another entity.
- ___ 9. Approve the annual budget for the conservation district.
- ___ 10. Replace merit raises for staffers with across-the-board raises.
- ___ 11. Choose a firm to perform the conservation district's annual financial review.
- ___ 12. Using budgeted funds, replace an antiquated copy machine.
- ___ 13. Give recognition awards to community members for their outstanding contributions to the conservation district.
- ___ 14. Lay off several staffers in the wake of government funding cuts.
- ___ 15. Hire an administrative assistant as a replacement for a retiring staffer.
- ___ 16. Write new guidelines for staffers' annual performance evaluations.
- ___ 17. Order immediate repair of a hail-damaged roof.
- ___ 18. Investigate a joint-purchasing arrangement with three other area entities.
- ___ 19. Change the method of evaluating the administrator.
- ___ 20. Call a closed session of the board and administrator.
- ___ 21. Choose a printer to print the conservation district's annual report.
- ___ 22. Hire an outside consultant to address staffers on new federal regulations affecting the conservation district.
- ___ 23. Implement a new program.
- ___ 24. Transfer a staffer to another department.

Answers: 1. A, 2. A, 3. B, 4. B, 5. A, 6. A, 7. B, 8. B, 9. B, 10. B, 11. A, 12. A, 13. B, 14. A, 15. A, 16. A, 17. A, 18. A, 19. B, 20. B, 21. A, 22. A, 23. A, 24. A

Organizational Management

The management of a conservation district requires a clear set of organizational management principles, policies and procedures. However, if organizational management becomes heavily layered, progress will become bogged down, limiting or even destroying the effectiveness of the organization.

The most common structures of organizational management used by business, government, and industry in the United States come from the rise of industry over 75 years ago. That system of organizational structure encouraged the development of multi-leveled review and approval processes; some organizations now have literally dozens of review processes before decisions can be implemented.

In today's world, this generally accepted system actually impedes success and forward movement. The most effective organizational management structure for a conservation district will limit the layers of decision-making to no more than three levels.

What is Organizational Management?

Organizational management is the system used by a conservation district to carry out the business of the district. Policies, procedures, forms, systems of approval, and organizational charts are tools of the organizational management system of the district.

The more layers of authority on the organizational chart, the thicker the policy and procedure manual, and the more complex the approval process indicates the steepness of the organizational pyramid. Throughout industry, government, and business, organizational leaders are attempting to flatten out the organizational pyramid.

Analyze and “Flatten” Your Organizational Management System

To be effective, a conservation district should not have more than three layers of management decision-making:

- To analyze your current system of organizational management, take a common decision-making planning activity and count the number of layers that must be addressed before a change in policy can occur or an action plan can be implemented.
- Write the listing of layers that must be addressed before your sample decision can be implemented or change in policy can occur.
- Critically review how your organization can lessen the number of steps to getting changes made. Cut out those steps that are not completely essential.

Take a critical look at your policy and procedure. Cut away any policy that is not essential to meeting state rules and/or statute.

- Analyze each policy and procedure of your organizational structure.
- Determine if the policy, procedure, form, or practice is truly necessary to assure successful work in the district.

- Cut or modify any policy or procedure that cannot be directly attached to important oversight by the district or state rules and/or statutes.

Your organizational chart should encourage as many people as possible to be actively and directly involved in the action work of the district.

- Analyze the responsibilities of supervisors, the district manager, and the staff
- Cut away any activities that are repetitious among layers of organization
- Limit the number of organizational layers to three, if at all possible.

Leaner is Better

A leaner organizational structure benefits a conservation district in five distinct ways:

- A leaner, “flatter” organizational structure allows needed organizational change to happen faster and benefits of change can be seen sooner.
- A leaner organizational management structure allows more action and energy to be devoted directly to the goals, objectives, and activities of the strategic plan.
- A leaner organizational management keeps leaders (supervisors) “closer to the action” of the conservation district.
- Leaner systems encourage the conservation district manager and his/her staff to get answers they need faster so they can, in turn, get faster results.
- Leaner systems save money.

Revenue Chart

Directions: Use this chart to explain to new board members where your district's revenues come from, how they're used and the relationship they have with other programs or matching funds.

Revenue source	Purpose	Allocation

Profit and Loss and Cash Flow Statements

Insert your district's profit and loss and cash flow statements from last fiscal year.

Writing Effective Proposals

Grants have the potential to provide a significant part of a conservation district's budget. Writing effective proposals greatly enhances the likelihood of accessing these funds. Writing effective proposals is also a measure of the effectiveness of the leadership training, planning processes, and conservation practices of a conservation district.

Planning to Write Effective Proposals

Why does a conservation district prepare a proposal for grant funding? Because they have the opportunity to access funds to achieve one or more goals defined in their strategic and long-range plans. A request for proposals (RFP) should "fit" the goals described in the conservation district plans. Conservation districts who have their Strategic Plan, Long Range Plan, and Hydrologic Unit Plans in place and understand those plans are ready to write effective proposals; their hardest work is already done.

Conservation districts without well-defined and well-understood plans are at a great disadvantage in developing effective proposals. They are unable to show how receiving grant funds for a particular project will affect other projects or the conservation district as a whole.

There may be times when a request for proposals does not "fit" the well-defined goals of the conservation district. As hard as it may be to do, it is better to stick to the goals and not apply for the funds. If your conservation district goals are valid, other RFP's will come along which will "fit". Don't cloud your conservation district's mission: getting funding for projects that aren't part of the district plans could actually make the conservation district less effective.

Key Elements of an Effective Proposal

A conservation district may have access to several grant funding sources, each of which has their own proposal format and requirements. However, an effective proposal will always be able to address these five areas:

- Abstract – a short description of who you are, the problem you wish to address, your solution, and the benefit of implementing the proposal.
- Budget – how much will each line item in the proposed budget cost and what exactly will the money be used for?
- Need Statement/Description of the Problem – What problem is this proposal going to address? Why is it important that it be approved?
- Description of Key Activities, Timeline, and Responsible Person – What is the project going to do to address the problem? When will each activity be performed? Who will perform each activity?
- Evaluation – How will you demonstrate that each activity has been completed? How will you demonstrate that the problem has been successfully addressed?

Who Should Prepare Proposals?

Preparing effective proposals is a combination of a collaborative team process and a one-person leadership writing job. Both elements are important to a proposal's success.

Proposals should be prepared by a team made up of the leadership of the conservation district, in consultation with people who will be directly affected by the implementation of the proposal and the person writing the proposal. All the "key players" should agree on the goals and activities of the proposal, and commit themselves to support the success of the proposal. An independent facilitator is sometimes helpful in this process.

Once the elements of the proposal have been agreed to, one person should assume leadership in the process of writing the proposal. This may be any person approved by the team. After writing the proposal, the team should have the opportunity to review it and agree on changes.

If Your Proposal is Not Approved

- Remember that most requests for proposals are very competitive. Not all proposals can be funded, and sometimes even a very good proposal can't be funded.
- Often, there are specific reasons why other proposals succeeded and yours didn't. Find out why your proposal wasn't funded. Use this information to strengthen your planning process and proposal writing skills.
- Plan to re-submit your proposal, if possible. The lessons learned from being turned down will assist in being approved next time. Some organizations also establish a preference for approving proposals from applicants who haven't had a proposal approved in the past.

Conservation Commission

www.state.sd.us/doa/forestry

The State Conservation Commission is composed of nine members appointed by the Governor. Four are farmer members, one represents urban interests, one represents water development districts, two represent the forest industry, and one is appointed at-large. The farmer members must be or have been conservation district supervisors. The Commission is attached to the Division of Resource Conservation and Forestry for administrative purposes. It meets on a regular basis to conduct its business.

Duties:

- review and make recommendations on all natural resource development programs proposed or planned by local, state, and federal agencies and subdivisions.
- act regarding the organization, dissolution, boundary, or name changes for conservation districts or watershed districts.
- appoint the board of supervisors for a new conservation district. These supervisors remain in office until the next general election.
- act to remove conservation district supervisors from office for neglect of duty or malfeasance in office.
- allocate grants from the Coordinated Soil & Water Conservation Grant Fund to conservation districts and has rule-making authority for the grant fund.
- approve loans to conservation districts from the Conservation District Revolving Loan Fund.
- recommend approval of conservation district loans made from the Rural Development Loan Fund in the SD Department of Agriculture.
- require, jointly with the Division of Resource Conservation and Forestry, the conservation districts to prepare proper financial records and reports. The Commission has approved a standard fiscal year for all conservation districts, from January 1 through December 31.
- review and recommend any changes the Commission deems necessary to the success of the conservation district program.
- keep a record of supervisors elected in each conservation district, appointments to fill vacancies, and the expiration date of each supervisor's term of office.
- allocate and distribute to participating conservation districts any funds, grants, supplies, or staff assistance which are available for that purpose, consistent with any restrictions.
- provide newly elected supervisors with an oath of office form.

South Dakota Department of Agriculture Division of Resource Conservation & Forestry

www.state.sd.us/doa/forestry

Service Forestry

The Division's service forestry programs are designed to provide direct technical assistance and advice to private landowners concerning their forests and trees. They work with farmers, ranchers, rural homeowners and urban dwellers to resolve problems with trees and to provide a better and safe habitat for all citizens.

Service foresters are located in several cities around the state. They are available to visit producer's property if they need forestry advice, a forest stewardship plan, tree planting assistance, or assistance in determining forest pest problems. Staff is also available to help with the diagnosis and treatment of forest insect or disease problems.

State Conservation Mission

The mission of the state conservation program is to:

- Provide for the conservation of the soil and soil resources
- Control and prevent soil erosion
- Prevent flood water and sediment damages
- Further the conservation development, utilization and disposal of water
- Preserve natural resources, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, assist in maintaining the navigability of rivers and harbors, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of this state.

The Division is the direct link between conservation districts and state government. By law, the principal duties of the Division are:

- represent the state's conservation districts
- develop and implement state policy for land conservation and development
- coordinate the programs of the various conservation districts by advice and consultation
- secure the cooperation and assistance of state and federal agencies for the districts
- provide assistance to district supervisors in carrying out their responsibilities and developing their programs
- keep district supervisors informed of the activities and experiences of all other districts and to facilitate an interchange of information between them
- keep districts informed of changes in the law, operational policies and procedures and other matters of importance to the districts
- provide funds, grants, supplies and staff assistance to conservation districts as appropriations allow
- require proper accounting and financial procedures by conservation districts.

South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources

www.state.sd.us/denr

The mission of the SD Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is to protect public health and the environment by providing natural resources assessment, financial assistance, and regulation in a manner that promotes a good business climate and exceeds the expectations of our customers. The Department has two divisions.

The mission of the Division of Financial and Technical Assistance is to evaluate the natural resources of the state and to provide technical and financial assistance in a customer service oriented manner for the protection, restoration, and development of those resources.

The following programs are under the Division of Financial and Technical Assistance:

Fiscal Management	Information Services
SD Geological Survey	Water Resources Assistance Program
Water and Waste Funding	Watershed Protection

The mission of the Division of Environmental Services is to provide environmental services in a customer-oriented manner that promotes economic development, conserves natural resources, helps municipalities, industry, and citizens comply with regulations, and protects public health and the environment.

The following regulatory programs fall under the Division of Environmental Services:

Air Quality	Drinking Water
Ground Water Quality	Minerals and Mining
Plans and Specifications	Surface Water Quality
Waste Management	Water Rights

South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks

www.state.sd.us/gfp

The mission of the Department of Game, Fish and Parks is to perpetuate, conserve, manage, protect, and enhance South Dakota's wildlife resources, parks, and outdoor recreational opportunities for the use, benefit, and enjoyment of the people of this state and its visitors, and to give the highest priority to the welfare of this state's wildlife and parks, and their environment, in planning and decisions.

The Division of Wildlife manages South Dakota's wildlife and fisheries resources and their associated habitats for their sustained and equitable use, and for the benefit, welfare and enjoyment of the citizens of this state and its visitors.

The Division of Parks and Recreation is committed to providing diverse outdoor recreational opportunities, acting as a catalyst for a growing tourism economy and preserving the resources with which they are entrusted. They accomplish this through efficient, responsive and environmentally sensitive management, and constructive communication with those they serve.

The Custer State Park manages and protects the park's natural, cultural, and geological resources; provides for public use of the park in a manner that is consistent with current standards and compatible with the perpetuation of the park's resources; develops and promotes the park to its potential as a tourism destination for South Dakota; and provides an adequate funding base to enable continued park operations.

South Dakota Department of Revenue

www.state.sd.us/drr2/revenue.html

The Department of Revenue and Regulation is comprised of nine divisions: Administrative Services, Audits, Business Tax, Financial Services, Insurance, Legal, Lottery and Gaming, Motor Vehicles, Professional and Occupational Boards, and Property and Special Taxes. The Department administers the sales tax collections. Conservation districts must collect sales tax when appropriate, such as the sales of trees for hand planting.

South Dakota Department of Transportation

www.state.sd.us/dot

The Department of Transportation administers state highways. It cooperates with the US Department of Transportation and local road building agencies. The conservation districts work with these agencies when resource issues involve roadways.

South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts

www.sdconservation.org

When was this Association founded? What conditions or factors influenced its creation? Conservation districts began forming in South Dakota in 1937 following the passage of the conservation district enabling law. By 1941, twelve conservation districts had been formed - Tri-County, Brown-Marshall, Brule-Buffalo, Clearfield-Keyapaha, American Creek, Silver Creek (now Sanborn), Emanuel Chateau Creek (now BonHomme), Clay, Sioux Brule (now Union), Pennington, Custer, and Haakon. The original twelve conservation districts met February 1941 in Mitchell to form an organization which would identify ways and means to obtain better cooperation between agencies and to assist the local conservation districts in carrying out their programs. A meeting February 1942 in Pierre with all conservation district supervisors present resulted in the permanent formation of the Association.

The Association became a member of the National Association of Conservation Districts in 1946 and sent its first delegate in 1948. The Association has been, since 1948, represented at national meetings by one or more delegates.

Who founded this Association? The original twelve conservation districts (see list above). The Association's first governing officers were E. B. Dwight of Springfield and Horace Wagner of Reliance. The first board of directors were chair E. B. Dwight, vice-chair Horace Wagner, secretary Ralph Hansen, treasurer Joe Heimer, Frank Feser, Henry Abild, Clyde Sargent, and J. J. Cowan.

Why was it founded? To facilitate discussion among the conservation districts and to provide one voice for the conservation districts.

When did major growth take place (new programs, expansions, building projects)? Major growth occurred in 1990 as the Association moved into an extensive grant sponsorship mode. Since 1990, the Association has sponsored on behalf of one, some or all conservation district(s) 42 grants to facilitate natural resource conservation.

How does this Association function now? The Association's mission is to assist, lead and coordinate conservation districts in their efforts to promote sensible, voluntary self-governed conservation management and development of South Dakota's natural resources for ourselves and our posterity.

Our vision is that the Association needs to remain in the forefront of conservation and to be regarded as a "leader" in the field. Areas of concern include wind and water erosion, water quality and quantity including the preservation of the Missouri mainstem dams, air quality, forestry, rangeland, wildlife and recreation.

The Association employs the executive director and several staff members. Only the executive director is funded through the general fund; all other employees are hired as part of grant funding. Programs providing services include tree research, education, soil & moisture clinic, natural resource management technical assistance, building district capacity, and wetlands conservation.

South Dakota Association of Conservation District Employees

The South Dakota Association of Conservation District Employees (SDACDE) was organized October 8, 1973, with the approval of the district supervisors attending the business session of the SDACD annual meeting. By-laws were approved and directors elected that same day. The by-laws are included in the Handbook for Conservation District Employees and list the purpose, policies, activities and membership requirements for the organization. A copy of the handbook is available in each conservation district in the state.

The SDACDE was formed to encourage more efficient, better informed and motivated district employees. To do so, it sponsors annual training workshops, leadership conferences, informational materials, and improved communications between districts. It coordinates its activities with training provided by partner agencies. The organization selects members to serve in advisory positions on SDACD's standing committees. It assists other state associations, when requested, in establishing similar employee organizations.

SDACDE strives to be an effective building force for the employees in promotion and education of conservation. The Association sponsors two Dave Karst Memorial Scholarships named in honor of one of the founders of the Association who passed away preparing to attend an SDACDE meeting. SDACDE also publishes a regular newsletter, "Contour Lines," for its members. The SDACDE has officers and a board of directors who meet regularly to conduct the business of the Association.

South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts Auxiliary

The SDACD Auxiliary was organized in 1952. Its members are spouses of conservation district supervisors and staff. The Auxiliary promotes the principles and democratic methods of the conservation districts.

Their top priority is conservation education for youth. They recognize that a child who understands our natural resources will want to use them carefully as an adult.

The Auxiliary works with the state's schools, providing materials such as books, pamphlets, and Arbor Day packets. It helped develop and distribute materials under the Ag in the Classroom program. They also developed the Sammy Soil Saver mascot and puppet kits, then gained national prominence with the promotion of these through the NACD. The Auxiliary works with the US Fish & Wildlife Service to promote the state's conservation speech contest.

National Association of Conservation Districts

www.nacdnet.org

The National Association of Conservation Districts' (NACD) first and foremost goal is to provide support to the 3,000 conservation districts in the U.S. and its territories. The services NACD provides include leadership and capacity building training, meetings, legislative influence, technical information, printing, promotional products and publications, among others.

NACD involves its grassroots membership in all areas of decision making to ensure that local leadership and self-government remain the focus of conservation districts. Its eight national policy committees develop policies with input from the local, state and national leaders that make up each committee.

National Conservation District Employees Association

www.ncdea.org

District employees are responsible for much of the implementation of local district programs, at the direction of their boards. District employees represent their boards as the first line of contact with: the public they serve; agencies they work with and the programs they offer; and the local,

state and federal legislators with whom they interact. As such, district employees offer a unique interactive perspective on programs, policies and relationships affecting districts.

Vision: A professional accepted and integrated work force dedicated to the cause of conservation.

Mission: To strengthen and promote the conservation district programs by providing assistance, information, and representation and by supporting the professionalism of conservation district employees.

Objectives:

- to strengthen the conservation district programs of the United States and its territories
- to provide assistance, information and support to conservation districts, employees, and their governing boards
- to promote the professional development of conservation districts and their employees
- to assist any agency, association, organization, municipality, group, or individual who supports the conservation organization. Its function will be to develop, strengthen, and promote conservation district programs within the United States.

National Association of State Conservation Agencies

www.nascanet.org

The National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA) is a voluntary, nonpartisan organization of state executive agencies responsible for the administration of soil, water and related natural resource programs.

There are 55 NASCA agencies nationwide responsible for one or more of the following activities:

- Land management
- Parks and natural areas
- Urban erosion and sediment control programs
- Agricultural nonpoint source control
- Technical, administrative, and financial assistance to local soil and water conservation districts
- Many operate state-funded ag cost-share programs
- Many are involved in some way with state regulatory programs for water quality.

NASCA agencies are not water quality agencies, but their land management activities serve to improve the quality of both surface and groundwater.

National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils

www.rcdnet.org

The National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils (NARC&DC) provides a collective voice for more than 300 local Resource Conservation and Development Councils nationwide. The NARC&DC serves as an advocate and assists local councils to identify and take action on issues and opportunities to improve the quality of life and environment in their communities. Local RC&D Councils are grass-roots community leaders working collectively on behalf of conservation and sustainable development.

MISSION: The mission of the South Dakota Association of RC&D Councils is:
Serving the people of South Dakota by the transfer of information and communicating the identity of Resource Conservation and Development Councils.

VISION: The vision of the South Dakota Association of RC&D Councils, Inc. is to be a self-governing organization that promotes RC&Ds, shares information by networking, increases community involvement, and provides assistance to councils.

South Dakota State University

www3.sdstate.edu

South Dakota Cooperative Extension Service

www.sdces.sdstate.edu

Extension is the major educational outreach arm of South Dakota State University, serving the people of South Dakota by helping them apply unbiased, scientific knowledge to improve their lives. Continuing partnerships with county, state, and federal governments are made possible by the land-grant mandate that empowers Extension to offer educational information, programs, and services in response to local issues and needs.

Agricultural Experiment Station

www.sdaes.sdstate.edu

Created in 1887 through the Hatch Act as part of South Dakota's land-grant institution, SD Agricultural Experiment Station (SDAES) has a mission to conduct research to enhance quality of life in South Dakota through the beneficial use and development of human, economic, and natural resources.

With an enduring mission of practical research that's responsive to changing needs, SDAES's current research priorities are based on six themes relevant to the state:

- biostress
- agricultural production
- natural resources and their conservation
- people
- biotechnology
- bio-based energy and industry.

Research programs in SDAES directly support the teaching programs offered in the College of Agriculture & Biological Sciences and Family & Consumer Sciences and the educational programs delivered by the South Dakota Cooperative Extension Service.

United States Department of Agriculture

www.usda.gov

South Dakota Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

www.sd.nrcs.usda.gov

NRCS puts nearly 70 years of experience to work in assisting owners of America's private land with conserving their soil, water, and other natural resources. Local, state and federal agencies and policymakers also rely on their expertise. They deliver technical assistance based on sound science and suited to a customer's specific needs. Cost shares and financial incentives are available in some cases. Most work is done with local partners. Their partnership with local conservation districts serves almost every county in the nation, the Caribbean and Pacific Basin. Participation in their programs is voluntary.

Mission: The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

Vision: Harmony between people and the land.

The following principles are NRCS's heritage and continue to guide its work:

- Assess the resources on the land, the conservation problems and opportunities.
- Draw on various sciences and disciplines and integrate all their contributions into a plan for the whole property.
- Work closely with land users so that the plans for conservation mesh with their objectives.
- Through implementing conservation on individual properties, contribute to the overall quality of the life in the watershed or region.

South Dakota Farm Services Agency (FSA)

www.fsa.usda.gov/sd/sd/htm

Mission: Help American producers provide the safest, most abundant, reasonably priced food and fiber to the nation and the world by stabilizing farm income, helping farmers conserve land and water resources, providing credit to new or disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, and helping farm operations recover from the effects of disaster.

Vision: A customer-driven agency with a diverse and multi-talented work force, dedicated to achieving an economically and environmentally sound future for American agriculture.

FSA was set up when the Department was reorganized in 1994, incorporating programs from several agencies, including the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (now a separate Risk Management Agency), and the Farmers Home Administration. Though its name has changed over the years, the Agency's relationship with farmers goes back to the 1930s.

At that time, Congress set up a unique system under which Federal farm programs are administered locally. Farmers who are eligible to participate in these programs elect a three- to five-person county committee, which reviews county office operations and makes decisions on how to apply the programs. This grassroots approach gives farmers a much-needed say in how Federal actions affect their communities and their individual operations. After more than 60 years, it remains a cornerstone of FSA's efforts to preserve and promote American agriculture.

What Do They Do?

- FSA offices maintain a database of ALL agricultural land in each county. This database consists of owners, operators and field acreage for farms, both participating and non-participating in USDA programs. All records are updated annually.
- The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) protects fragile farmland by encouraging farmers and ranchers to return highly erodible and environmentally sensitive acreage to grasslands. The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) helps farmers and ranchers improve their property to protect the environment and to conserve soil and water resources. The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) provides financial assistance to farmers and ranchers for restoration measures after natural disasters.

South Dakota Rural Development Agency

www.rurdev.usda.gov

The overall mission of USDA Rural Development is to improve the quality of life of rural South Dakotans. To accomplish this, they coordinate specific federal assistance programs in rural areas of the state.

It is USDA Rural Development's intention to ensure that rural citizens can participate fully in the global economy. By providing technical assistance and programs to rural Americans, they believe a stronger economy will emerge as they work to improve the quality of life for citizens.

Forest Service

www.fs.fed.us

Established in 1905, the Forest Service manages public lands in national forests and grasslands. The Forest Service is also the largest forestry research organization in the world, and provides technical and financial assistance to state and private forestry agencies. Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the Forest Service, summed up the purpose of the Forest Service -- "to provide the greatest amount of good for the greatest amount of people in the long run."

National forests and grasslands encompass 193 million acres of land, which is an area equivalent to the size of Texas. In South Dakota, the Forest Service manages the Black Hills National Forest, Custer National Forest, Buffalo Gap National Grasslands, Fort Pierre National Grasslands, and Dakota Prairie National Grasslands.

Motto: Caring for the Land and Serving People

Mission: sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

As set forth in law, the mission is to achieve quality land management under the sustainable multiple-use management concept to meet the diverse needs of people. It includes:

- advocating a conservation ethic in promoting the health, productivity, diversity, and beauty of forests and associated lands.
- listening to people and responding to their diverse needs in making decisions.
- protecting and managing the National Forests and Grasslands so they best demonstrate the sustainable multiple-use management concept.
- providing technical and financial assistance to state and private forest landowners, encouraging them to practice good stewardship and quality land management in meeting their specific objectives.
- providing technical and financial assistance to cities and communities to improve their natural environment by planting trees and caring for their forests.
- providing international technical assistance and scientific exchanges to sustain and enhance global resources and to encourage quality land management.
- helping states and communities to wisely use the forests to promote rural economic development and a quality rural environment.
- developing and providing scientific and technical knowledge aimed at improving their capability to protect, manage, and use forests and rangelands.
- providing work, training, and education to the unemployed, underemployed, elderly, youth, and disadvantaged in pursuit of their mission.

USDI-Fish & Wildlife Service

www.mountain-prairie.fws.gov/sd.html

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is responsible for carrying out federal laws and programs that conserve fish and wildlife and their habitats. The Service's major responsibilities are for migratory birds, endangered species, some marine mammals, and freshwater and anadromous fish. The Service manages the National Wildlife Refuge System and operates National Fish Hatcheries. The Service also administers the Federal Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Programs, which distribute excise tax revenues from sales of hunting and fishing equipment and motorboat fuels to states for fish and wildlife restoration.

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program in South Dakota uses a "no rules" philosophy to develop partnerships and programs that simultaneously promote wildlife conservation and sustainable agriculture.

The South Dakota Partners Program has utilized this philosophy to voluntarily restore, enhance, and develop tens of thousands of acres of grassland and wetland habitats throughout the state, all with full landowner support and encouragement. A common thread through every South Dakota

Partners project is the ability to be flexible and responsive enough to accommodate the site-specific needs and concerns of landowners. Since 1991, this approach has resulted in over 3,600 South Dakota landowners becoming valued Partners for Fish and Wildlife partners and the number of new landowner requests for assistance continues to accelerate.

The five primary restoration and enhancement activities in the South Dakota Partners Program include wetland establishment, wetland restoration, managed grazing systems, grassland seeding, and riparian enhancement.

- Wetland establishments typically consist of constructing small impoundments (6 to 8 feet deep and averaging 2 to 3 surface acres) on small drainages (less than 1,000 acres). Wetland establishments generally are constructed in grassland dominated landscapes utilized for livestock grazing.
- Wetland restorations primarily consist of plugging surface ditches with earthen plugs. Wetland restorations conducted through the South Dakota Partners Program are most often associated with US Fish and Wildlife Service conservation easements or the Conservation Reserve Program.
- Managed grazing system are predominately conducted in areas of high wetland densities (greater than 40 square miles) and native grassland. “Four cell twice over” grazing systems are the most popular systems used. In these systems, grazing units are split into four pastures and each pasture is grazed twice through the course of the grazing season.
- Grassland seedings primarily involve seeding of cropland back to a mixture of native grasses and forbs. Typically five to seven species of grasses are used.
- Riparian enhancement projects involve the fencing of streams or riparian areas to exclude livestock. These riparian areas usually are utilized for livestock watering, and therefore alternate livestock watering facilities are often created in conjunction with the riparian exclusions. Watering facilities consist of wetland establishments, dugouts, or pipe lines.

USDI-Bureau of Indian Affairs

www.bia.gov

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) responsibility is the administration and management of 55.7 million acres of land held in trust by the United States for American Indians, Indian tribes, and Alaska Natives. There are 562 federally recognized tribal governments in the United States. Developing forestlands, leasing assets on these lands, directing agricultural programs, protecting water and land rights, developing and maintaining infrastructure and economic development are all part of the agency's responsibility. In addition, the Bureau of Indian Affairs provides education services to approximately 48,000 Native American students

USDI-Bureau of Reclamation

www.usbr.gov

Established in 1902, the Bureau of Reclamation is best known for the dams, powerplants, and canals it constructed in 17 western states. These water projects led to homesteading and

promoted the economic development of the West. Reclamation has constructed more than 600 dams and reservoirs including Hoover Dam on the Colorado River and Grand Coulee on the Columbia River.

Today, they are the largest wholesaler of water in the country. They bring water to more than 31 million people and provide one out of five Western farmers (140,000) with irrigation water for 10 million acres of farmland that produce 60 percent of the nation's vegetables and 25 percent of its fruits and nuts.

Reclamation is also the second largest producer of hydroelectric power in the western United States. Their 58 powerplants annually provide more than 40 billion kilowatt hours generating nearly a billion dollars in power revenues and produce enough electricity to serve 6 million homes.

Today, Reclamation is a contemporary water management agency with a Strategic Plan outlining numerous programs, initiatives and activities that will help the Western States, Native American Tribes and others meet new water needs and balance the multitude of competing uses of water in the West. Their mission is to assist in meeting the increasing water demands of the West while protecting the environment and the public's investment in these structures. They place great emphasis on fulfilling water delivery obligations, water conservation, water recycling and reuse, and developing partnerships with their customers, states, and Indian Tribes, and in finding ways to bring together the variety of interests to address the competing needs for limited water resources.

USDI-Bureau of Land Management

www.mt.blm.gov/sdfo/

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), an agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior, administers 261 million surface acres of America's public lands, located primarily in 12 western states. The BLM sustains the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Environmental Protection Agency

www.epa.gov

Mission: The mission of the Environmental Protection Agency is to protect human health and the environment. Since 1970, EPA has been working for a cleaner, healthier environment for the American people. EPA leads the nation's environmental science, research, education and assessment efforts.

Duties:

- Develop and enforce regulations that implement environmental laws enacted by Congress: EPA is responsible for researching and setting national standards for a variety of environmental programs, and delegates to states and tribes the responsibility for issuing permits and for monitoring and enforcing compliance. Where national standards are not met, EPA can issue sanctions and take other steps to assist the states and tribes in reaching the desired levels of environmental quality.

- Offer financial assistance: Between 40 and 50 percent of EPA's enacted budgets provide direct support through grants to state environmental programs. EPA grants to states, non-profits and educational institutions support high-quality research that will improve the scientific basis for decisions on national environmental issues and help EPA achieve its goals. EPA also provides other financial assistance through programs as the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, and the Brownfields program. The Agency also offers information for state and local governments and small businesses on financing environmental services and projects.
- Provide research grants and graduate fellowships
- Perform environmental research to assess environmental conditions and to identify, understand, and solve current and future environmental problems; integrate the work of scientific partners; and provide leadership in addressing emerging environmental issues and in advancing the science and technology of risk assessment and risk management.
- Sponsor over 40 voluntary partnerships and programs on voluntary pollution prevention programs and energy conservation efforts.
- Support environmental education projects that enhance the public's awareness, knowledge, and skills to make informed decisions that affect environmental quality.
- Further environmental education efforts to develop an environmentally conscious and responsible public and to inspire personal responsibility in caring for the environment.

USDoD-Corps of Engineers

www.usace.army.mil

The US Army Corps of Engineers maintains navigation channels, much like road crews maintain highways, and builds breakwaters or jetties to protect homes and businesses from streambank erosion. Improvements include deepening and widening water bodies so commercial ships and other watercraft can move safely and easily. Dredged material often becomes habitat areas, including wetlands and protected offshore islands.

The Corps builds and maintains dams and reservoirs that hold excess water upstream, releasing the water gradually to prevent or reduce downstream flooding. These structures provide recreation as well as safety. Boating, swimming, fishing and camping come courtesy of Corps reservoirs. Many people get electricity for their homes and businesses from hydroelectric power dams managed by the Corps. Reservoirs provide irrigation for farms, water supply storage for communities and protected ecosystems for fish and wildlife. In cities near waterways, floodwalls, levees and diversion channels all work to keep storm water out of homes, schools and businesses. The Corps also helps reduce flood damage by preventing additional construction in areas most prone to floods. Along coastlines, the Corps erects barriers, builds breakwaters and reinforces dunes and beaches.

Section 404 of the Clean Water Act requires approval from the Corps of Engineers before placing dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, including wetlands.

Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 requires authorization from the Secretary of the Army, acting through the Corps of Engineers, for the construction of any structure in or over any navigable water of the United States. In granting or denying permits to developers, the Corps

strives to prevent environmental damage. Evaluating public interest, regulatory experts balance the need of economic development with environmental considerations. The Corps forms numerous partnerships with other agencies, state and federal governments, environmental groups and private citizens to help solve ecological problems.

When requested, the Corps provides engineering expertise to other agencies, state and local governments, academia, and foreign nations. The work ranges from constructing wastewater treatment plants and space launch facilities, to other complex engineering tasks. Engineering professionals help remove toxic wastes, and help other nations with the damages caused by disasters and war.

Big Sioux Nursery bsninc@dailypost.com

Big Sioux Nursery, located northwest of Watertown, was originally established in 1957 as a state conifer seedling nursery. In 1978, deciduous stock was added to the inventory that was being produced and sold to South Dakota conservation districts. The state of South Dakota sold the nursery to the non-profit corporation of Big Sioux Nursery, Inc. in 1996. The South Dakota Conservation Districts were able to purchase the nursery with grant money provided through the Conservation Commission. Sixty-three out of sixty-eight conservation districts have become members.

Each conservation district that has become a member of Big Sioux Nursery, Inc. elects a voting member to represent their interest in the corporation. A seven-member board of directors, elected from the membership manages the corporation. Each Big Sioux Nursery, Inc. director must be a voting member of the corporation and serves a two-year term from his or her respective area. The areas are divided into the same geographical regions that the SDACD uses throughout the state.

Their mission is to promote conservation through the use of tree and shrub seedlings grown from adaptable seed sources. They also provide educational opportunities for members to increase their knowledge in the areas of marketing, planting, and care of the seedlings being provided.

Big Sioux Nursery, Inc. grows over 80 different varieties of trees and shrubs. The nursery produces conifers and deciduous stock both in bareroot and potted forms, is engaged in tree improvement activities, and has several seed orchards that have genetically improved trees.

Reimbursement Form

Insert your district's reimbursement form here.

Frequent Contacts

My Conservation District:

Office Phone _____
Fax _____

Address _____
Cell Phone _____
E-mail _____

Name _____
Home Phone _____
Office Phone _____
Fax _____

Address _____
Cell Phone _____
E-mail _____

Name _____
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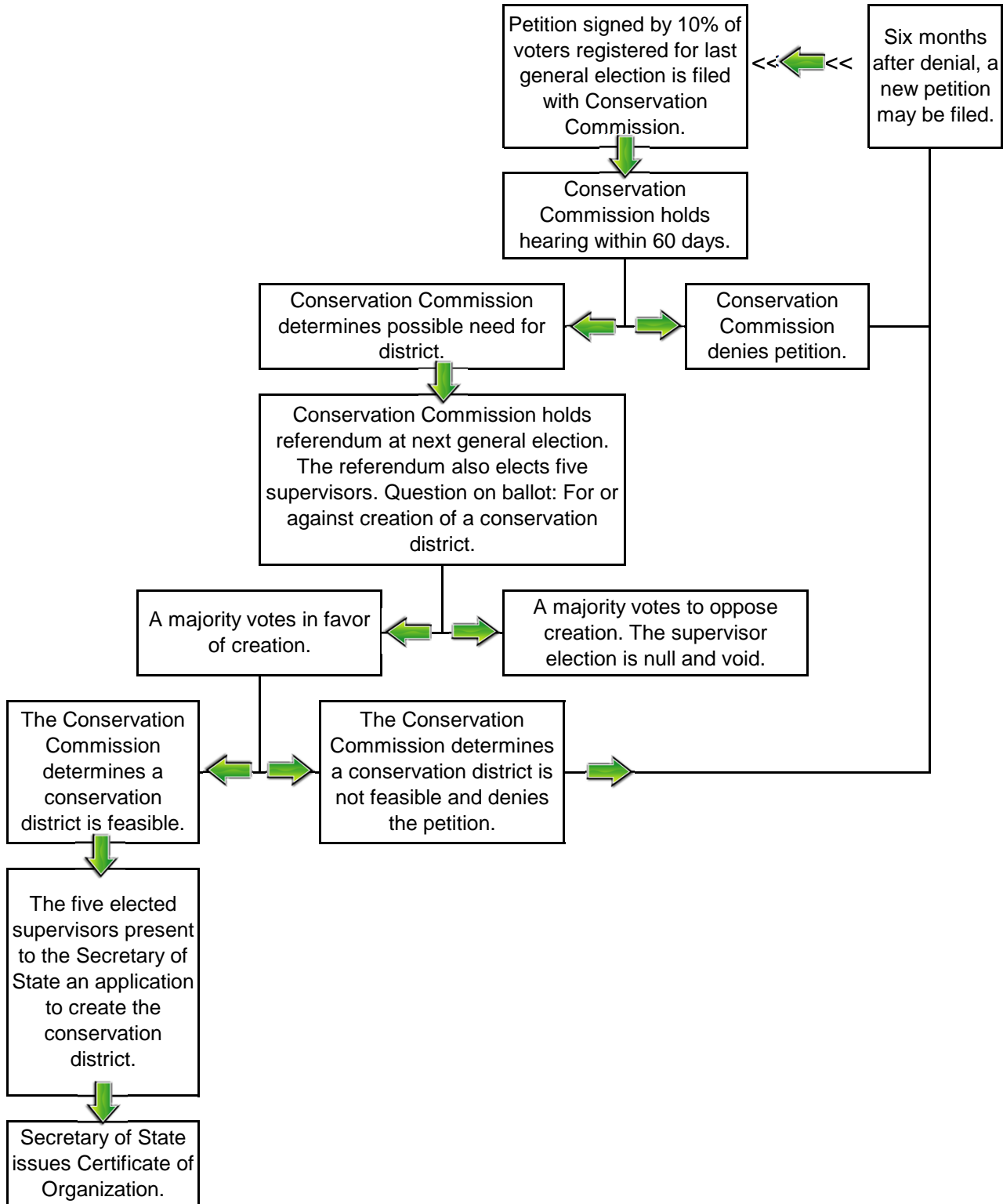
**Orientation Manual for
South Dakota's Conservation Districts
Boards of Supervisors**

Chapter Two - Legal

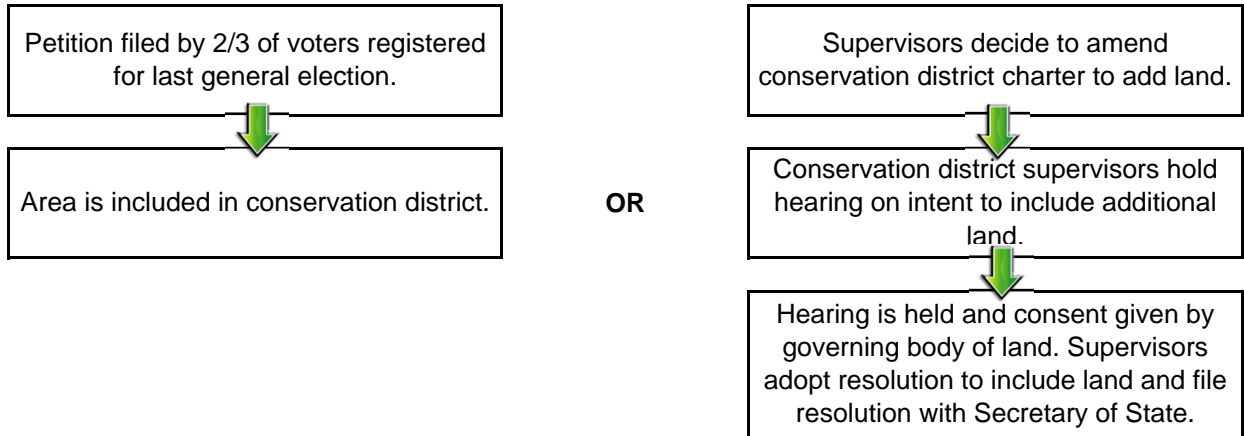
January 2005

*Developed by the SD Association of Conservation Districts District Capacity Committee in cooperation
with the SD Conservation Commission and SD Division of Resource Conservation & Forestry*

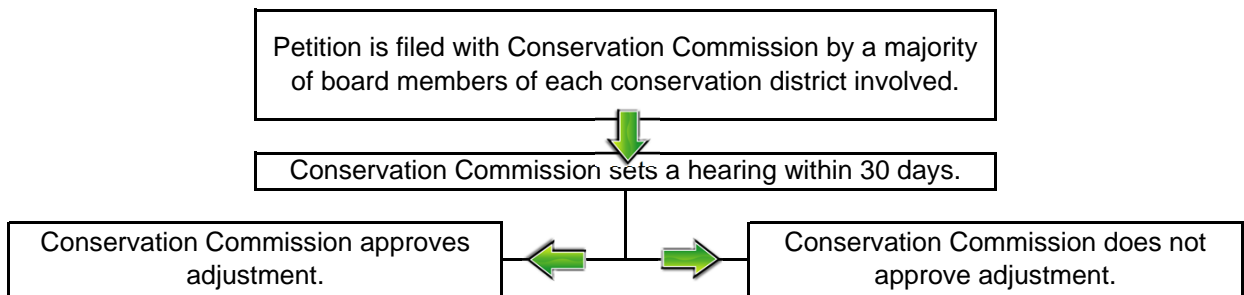
Organizing a Conservation District



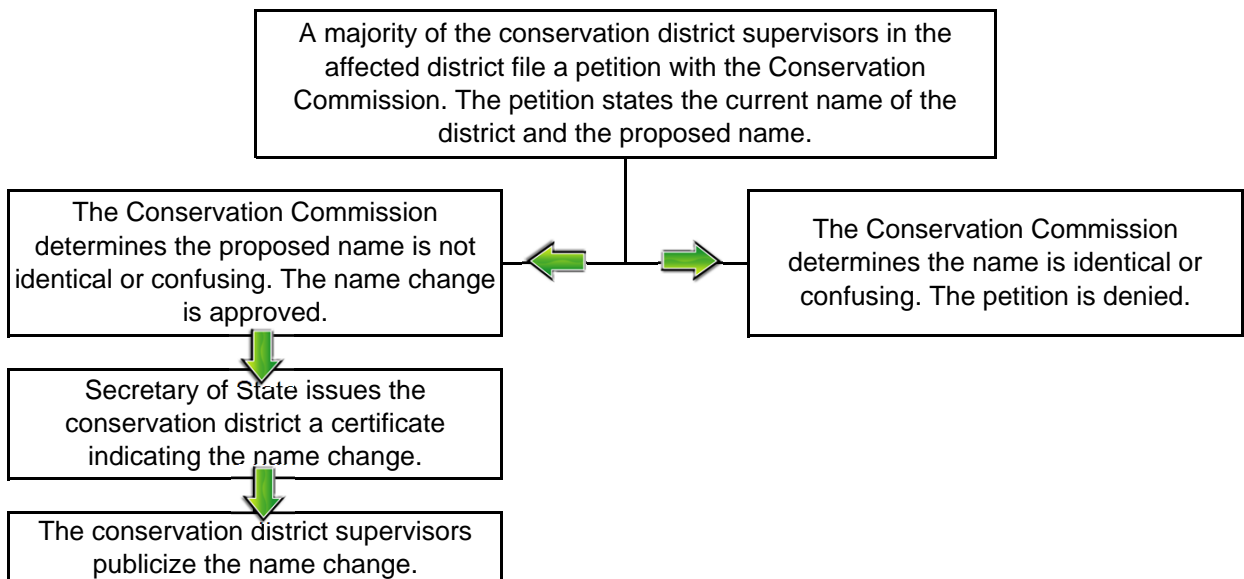
Including Additional Land in a Conservation District



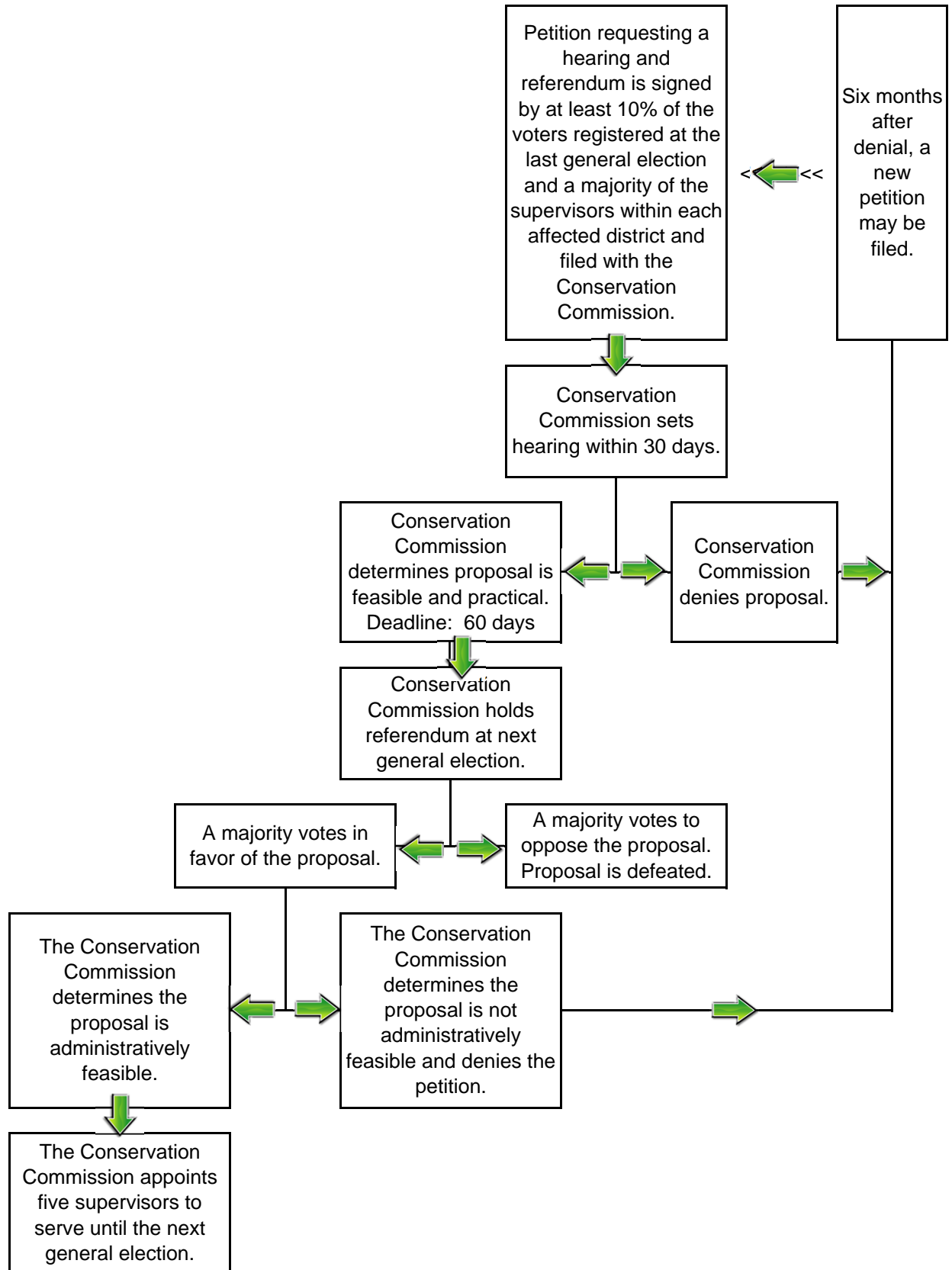
Boundary Adjustments Between Conservation Districts



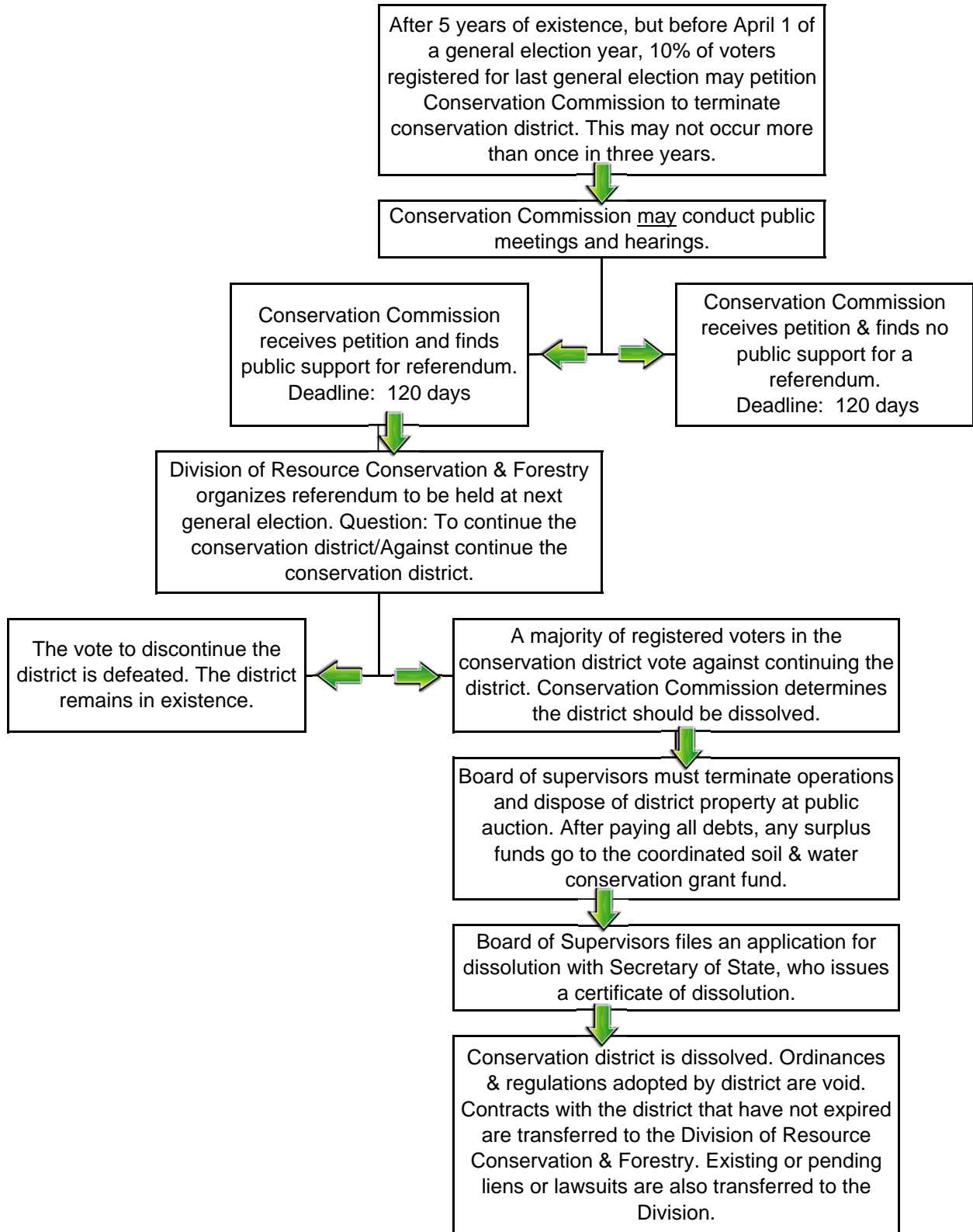
Conservation District Name Change



Combining or Dividing a Conservation District



Dissolving a Conservation District



District Supervisor Elections and Appointments

SDCL (South Dakota Codified Law) 38-8-39 through 38-8-44 control the election and appointment of district supervisors. The law requires that supervisors represent certain segments of the public: three supervisors shall be rural landowners or occupiers, one supervisor shall be a resident of an urban area, and one supervisor shall be a taxpayer of real property. These five supervisors must reside within the conservation district boundaries and are to be elected at-large on a nonpolitical ballot at the general election. All voters eligible to vote in the general election are eligible to vote for all supervisor positions on the ballot.

“Urban area” is not defined by statute but the Conservation Commission adopted Rule 12:03:01:05.01 to define “urban area.” It states, “For the purpose of district supervisor election, ‘urban area’ means any municipality as defined in SDCL 9-2-1 and any unincorporated municipality that is not prohibited from incorporating by SDCL 9-3-1.” This means that an “urban area” must have at least 100 legal residents or 30 voters, but it is not necessary for the area to be incorporated as a municipality or be within the city limits of a municipality.

Supervisors normally serve four year terms, beginning on January 1st following the election. However, if a supervisor position becomes vacant during the first two years of a four year term, the board of supervisors appoint someone to fill the position until the next general election, at which time a supervisor is elected for a two year term. If a vacancy occurs during the last two years of a four year term, the vacancy is filled by appointment until the general election, at which time a supervisor is elected to a four year term.

Once elected to a supervisor position, the supervisor holds that position until a successor “is elected and qualified” (Attorney General Opinion No. 70-39) and until the term of the new supervisor begins on January 1. Exceptions are forfeiting the office by virtue of death, resignation or removal. The Attorney General’s Opinion further states, “the failure of an elected candidate...to petition for re-election does not of itself automatically cause such office to be vacated. The responsibility to circulate petitions and timely file the same consistent with SDCL 38-8-39 rests with any individual desiring to seek such public office. An incumbent in such office who does not circulate and file a petition for such office runs a risk of finding another citizen has circulated and filed a petition and is eligible as a successor in office. However, in the absence of the circulation and timely filing of such petition by any person, the incumbent will remain in office until his successor is elected and qualified at the next general election.”

SDCL 38-8-39 requires conservation districts to publish legal notice of all positions for which nominations may be filed. The last publication must be accomplished between June 10 and June 15 of the election year. Completed petitions must be filed either with the county auditor or the Secretary of State (if a district is multi-county) by July 1.

Any person who duly files a valid nominating petition for a supervisor’s position and is unopposed by other candidates is automatically elected and certified to fill the office.

An appointed supervisor cannot be automatically carried over. To continue to serve without official election, the appointed supervisor must be re-appointed by the board. SDCL 38-8-43 provides that a supervisor may be removed by the State Conservation Commission for “neglect of duty or malfeasance in office, but for no other reason.” In order to do so, the Commission must serve official notice on the supervisor and hold an official hearing to determine if removal is warranted. The Commission would not normally begin this procedure without receiving a written complaint. To date, no supervisor has been removed by the Commission, although some have voluntarily resigned during the process.

Conservation District Oath of Office Sample

(TO BE COMPLETED IN LOCAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT OFFICE)

OATH OF OFFICE

I, _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of South Dakota, and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of Supervisor of the _____ Conservation District upon which I am about to enter.

(Supervisor's signature)

Subscribed and sworn to before me this ____ day of _____, _____.

NOTARY PUBLIC

(Seal)

My Commission expires: _____

Open Meetings

Laws requiring public bodies, such as conservation districts, to allow the public to watch and listen to the board of supervisors work protect against abuse of public power. It's not always easy deliberating tough or sensitive issues with the public or news media watching or listening but the public has a right to know what your district is doing.

SDCL (South Dakota Codified Law) 38-8-45.1 states, "Except as otherwise provided by law, all meetings and hearings of the [conservation district] board of supervisors shall be open to the public and publicized as may be determined by the board."

SDCL1-25 is known as South Dakota's Open Meeting Law. It states, "Except as otherwise provided by law, the official meetings of the state *and the political subdivisions thereof* [emphasis added], including all related boards, commissions and other agencies, and the official meetings of boards, commissions and agencies created by statute or which are nontaxpaying and derive a source of revenue directly from public funds, shall be open to the public, except as provided in this chapter. Meetings, including executive or closed meetings may be conducted by teleconference. Members shall be deemed present if they answer present to the roll call taken by teleconference. Any vote at a meeting held by teleconference shall be taken by roll call. Except for executive or closed meetings held by teleconference, there shall be provided one or more places at which the public may listen to and participate in the proceeding. Except for executive or closed meetings held by teleconference of related boards and commissions of the state, there shall be provided two or more places at which the public may listen to and participate in the proceeding. Except for the Rural Development Telecommunications Network, no teleconference may be used in conducting hearings or taking final disposition pursuant to §§ 1-26-4. Teleconference meetings are subject to the notice provisions of chapter 1-25." A violation of this section is a Class 2 misdemeanor.

According to SDCL 1-25-1.1, all public bodies (including conservation districts) shall post a copy of their proposed meeting agenda

- at least twenty-four hours prior to any meeting
- where it is visible to the public at the district's office
- this applies to regular, special, or rescheduled meetings

If the local news media have requested notice of the district's meetings, the agenda must be delivered, in person, by mail or by telephone to them. A violation of this section is also a Class 2 misdemeanor.

Supervisors often find it difficult to speak candidly with the public or media present. Some often feel they must be overly responsive to those listening and the result is often speeches aimed at the audience more than deliberation. Other supervisors may be so intimidated that they don't speak at all and all sides of the issue are not considered.

Your board of supervisors can function well if you control the situation. Keep in mind that you have been elected by the people to do this job. The people who show up at a board meeting usually represent a very small percentage of those who elected you and should not unduly influence your actions.

One option is to have a “public forum” section on your meeting’s agenda. Such a forum should be short and follow strict rules for those who speak to the board. Your policy should state that the board will listen, but will not respond, to those who speak during the open forum. This is a time for listening, not uncontrolled debate. If the board needs to respond, it can come later after the board has had time to deliberate the issue or seek more information.

What about executive session?

SDCL 1-25-2 provides that executive or closed meetings may be held for the sole purposes of:

- discussing the qualifications, competence, performance, character, or fitness of any public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee. The term "employee" does not include any independent contractor
- discussing the expulsion, suspension, discipline, assignment of, or the educational program of a student
- consulting with legal counsel or reviewing communications from legal counsel about proposed or pending litigation or contractual matters
- preparing for contract negotiations or negotiating with employees or employee representatives
- discussing marketing or pricing strategies by a board or commission of a business owned by the state or any of its political subdivisions, when public discussion may be harmful to the competitive position of the business.

If your issue does not fall under one of these exceptions, you cannot close the meeting to discuss it - it must be done in the open. Discussion during the closed meeting is restricted to the purpose specified in the closure motion. No official action may be taken in an executive or closed meeting; all motions must be made during an open official meeting. Again, a violation of this section is a Class 2 misdemeanor.

Executive session procedure

- A supervisor moves that “we enter executive session for the purposes of [state the purpose - one of those listed above].
- Another supervisor seconds the motion.
- The board votes on the motion.
- Assuming the vote is affirmative, the board is in executive session. No minutes or notes are taken during executive session - this session is meant to be confidential.
- Once the issue has been discussed (remember, you can only discuss the issue the meeting was closed for), the chair declares the meeting out of executive session.
- The meeting is now open again; the minutes should reflect the time the meeting entered executive session and the time the meeting was open again.
- Any official action needed as a result of the discussion held during executive session should now occur.

The maximum punishment provided for a Class 2 misdemeanor is thirty days imprisonment in a county jail or two hundred dollars fine, or both.

Quorum

SDCL 38-8-45 defines a quorum for a conservation district board of supervisors. It states, “A majority of the supervisors shall constitute a quorum and the concurrence of a majority in any matter within their duties shall be required for its determination.”

So what does that mean? The Attorney General says that it means at least three supervisors must be present to qualify as a quorum (a board is five supervisors so a majority would be one more than one-half or three). One or two supervisors is not a quorum. Without a quorum, it is not an official meeting and no official business may be conducted.

Voting

SDCL 38-8-45 also defines when a motion is passed. It states, “ ... the concurrence of a majority in any matter within their duties shall be required for its determination.”

What does “the concurrence of a majority” mean? The same logic applies as does in defining a quorum. A majority is three or more for a conservation district board of supervisors. Therefore, at least three supervisors must vote the same for an issue to be decided. If, for example, three supervisors are present at a board meeting and the vote on an issue is 2-1, the issue is not decided (no position received at least three votes).

Can the chair vote? Yes, the chair votes. He/she is an elected member of the board of supervisors and his/her vote is recorded. For example, when a county commission votes, all of the commissioners vote for the same reason that all of the supervisors vote.

Legal Responsibilities of Supervisors

Historical and Legal Precedents

In 1935, Congress approved the establishment of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). The Act required the states receiving its benefits to enact legislation providing for the prevention of soil erosion. The U.S. Department of Agriculture consequently prepared a standard Conservation District Act for the states to consider. Thus, the idea of conservation districts was born.

The Soil Conservation District Law was passed in South Dakota in 1937 as a response to federal action to promote conservation of the land. It was not until 1982 that all areas of the state were covered by conservation districts allowed under the 1937 law. Conservation districts were originally developed as “Soil Conservation Districts” and later expanded to “Soil & Water Conservation Districts”, but the name was changed in 1968 to “Conservation Districts” to represent the wide range of responsibilities of the districts.

South Dakota Codified Law (SDCL) Chapter 38-8: Conservation Districts

Conservation District Powers

SDCL 38-8-49 A conservation district organized under the provisions of this chapter shall constitute a governmental subdivision of this state, and a public body, corporate and politic, exercising public powers, and such district, and the supervisors, thereof, shall have the following powers, in addition to others granted in other sections of this chapter:

1. To sue and be sued in the name of the district
2. To have a seal, which seal shall be judicially noticed
3. To have perpetual succession unless terminated as hereinafter provided
4. To make and execute contracts and other instruments, necessary or convenient to the exercise of its powers.

Other powers outlined in chapter:

- develop comprehensive district-wide plans
- cooperate with other districts and agencies
- solicit legal assistance from the state’s attorney to carry out activities of the district.
- develop and enforce a sediment and erosion control program
- carry out measures on public and private lands
- carry out the provision of the highway damage act
- acquire and administer projects
- construct and maintain structures
- impose conditions for furnishing assistance
- acquire, receive income from and/or dispose of property
- borrow money

- receive money from private sources and from local, state and federal governments
- protect the board of supervisors through surety bonds and insurance

Districts are governmental subdivisions and operate under state law. They are required to keep records, hold public meetings, and carry out duties consistent with applicable state operation and meeting laws—even if their funds are self generated.

Conservation District Duties (SDCL 38-7-1)

- Conserve soil and water
- Control floods and sediment
- Further use, development, and disposal of water
- Preserve natural resources
- Protect water supply
- Control pollution
- Preserve wildlife
- Control erosion
- Protect tax base
- Protect public lands
- Promote health and safety and general welfare of the people

Minutes of the Meeting

At each meeting you will be asked to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. This is a portion of the meeting you will not want to take lightly.

The meeting minutes, when approved by a formal vote or consensus of the board are the official legal record of what happened at the board meeting.

The minutes are also an important communication between the board of supervisors and the public. If you are a new supervisor, you should examine the minutes of the board meetings for at least the past year. This will give you a good perspective on the issues the board has faced and how the board handled these issues.

Any supervisor has the right to ask the board to correct errors in the minutes before the board accepts the minutes as a record of the previous meeting.

Supervisors do not have a right to demand that their reasons for voting a certain way or their detailed views about an issue be recorded in the minutes. Every supervisor should have full opportunity to express a viewpoint prior to the vote on any issue, so there's no good reason to extend the debate into the voting process. Your "yes" or "no" vote will represent your views on the issue.

According to Robert's Rules of Order, in ordinary meetings of boards, there is no need to provide a full transcript of debates. The minutes' main purpose then is to record what is "done" by the membership, not what is said by the members. Unless there is a rule to the contrary, the minutes record the motions, whether they are adopted or rejected, and who voted yea or nay. If there are reports presented, the minutes should include a brief summary of the report, except when the report contains resolutions, in which case the resolution is recorded in full as adopted by the board. Minutes should contain full sentences and follow accepted grammar and spelling conventions.

Financial Planning and Preparing a Budget

To be successful, a conservation district must have a process for determining financial priorities and allocating resources to meet those priorities. The best plans, unless adequately funded, will never come to pass. Money, unless properly allocated and budgeted, will sit idle or be spent without regard to the results or to the goals of the conservation district.

The financial planning process allows the conservation district staff and supervisors to attach dollar amounts to the goals in their district's Long Range Plan and Strategic Plans. The board can then approach fulfilling the goals of the Plans based on the resources available to the district. Establishing a sound budget will help ensure that the goals of the conservation district are met and will demonstrate the commitment of the board to the effective running of the conservation district.

Elements of a Sound Financial Plan

- Identify all revenue sources for the planning period (government appropriations, fees, grants, interest etc.)
- Identify all expense categories for the planning period (regular expenses, incidental or occasional expenses, emergencies, etc.)
- Establish a budget including all identified income and expense. Budgets may be drawn up for any period of time, but are usually done yearly.
- Establish a Statement of Cash Flows for the budget Period. A Statement of Cash Flows details each income and expense item and shows exactly what the amounts will be for each budget period (usually a month). This allows for forecasting of unusual expenses and erratic income. For example, insurance expense is \$1200 a year, or \$100 a month. However, insurance premiums are paid only twice a year, so you need to set aside \$600 in January and \$600 in July to pay the bill. A budget won't show you when the money is needed; a cash flow statement will.

Budgeting Approaches

WAG (Wild Assumed Guess)-- "Budget by gut instinct". Assign budget amounts for all items without analysis of needs, impact on services, or outcomes. This is almost always the least accurate approach to budgeting.

Advantages:

- Quick & dirty
- Occasionally brilliant
- Appealing to those unwilling to deal with sophisticated systems

Disadvantages:

- No bias for decision if budget is wrong
- No standard for calculating error
- Difficult or impossible to defend
- Easy to cut

Incremental Budgeting- planning process using last year's budget as a basis for additional funding. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) or Wholesale Price Index (WPI) often act as the basis for the percentage of increase. Note: use the same index from year to year; don't shift around.

Advantages:

- Saves time
- Treats all programs the same way
- Simple to administer

Disadvantages:

- Long-range programming is minimized; all budgeting is "year-to-year"
- Not all budget items need the same

- CPI or WPI produces immediate, powerful rationale for budget change
- Easy to understand
- increase or decrease
- Emphasis placed on inputs, not outcomes.
- Concept of value (“What do we get for our money”) is not addressed.
- Easy to cut
- Assumes history repeats itself; no budget items ever need added or deleted

Zero-Based Budgeting – “start from scratch” budget process. All programs and activities are evaluated. Choices are made on basis of funds available and value (“bang for the buck”). Each activity must be successfully defended in order to remain in budget.

Advantages:

- Each budget item examined; nothing is “off limits”
- Possible to eliminate previously funded activities
- Changes in priorities make new programs/spending possible

Disadvantages:

- Easier to cut necessary but unpopular programs
- Requires effort to examine and defend priorities
- Long-range programming is minimized; all budgeting is “year-to-year”

Defending the Conservation District Budget

All conservation districts have to defend their budgets to their county commission, the residents of the county, and others. Your budget will be easier to explain and defend if your budgeting strategy is sound.

Foundations of Sound Budgeting

- Sound planning
- Careful forecasting
- Workable strategy
- Salesmanship
- Politics
- An ability to deliver results: “Do a good job, do a good job, do a good job, and tell people about it.”

If your budget and/or programs are sound and they still come under attack, remember to keep your perspective and put first things first:

- Defend the base; keep your budget at current levels. then look at
- Increasing the base; get more money to do what you’re already doing. Only then look at
- Expanding the base; secure funding for new programs and activities.

Your conservation district (it is hoped) administers good programming and follows sound budgeting principles. If your county commission is in a budget cutting mood, don’t pursue program funding until your present activities are approved and secure. There is always a risk of losing your current activity funding to get something else funded.

Finally,. . . Produce! There’s no substitute for doing good work!!!

Labor Laws Affecting Conservation Districts

Three basic principles of employee management exist:

- everyone wants to make a positive difference at work
- people want to be treated with dignity and respect
- people will respond in kind

On average, 98% of employees will be satisfied with their employment and not experience employee relations problems; 2% will cause 98% of the problems. What sources of employee relations problems occur? Employees may perceive lack of communication with their supervisors and peers or perceive lack of recognition or appreciation for their efforts.

Why should you be concerned about personnel? Previously, employers were generally liable only for negligent and intentional employee acts during the course of and within the scope of their employment. Times have changed and so have courts. Today, injured third parties can sue employers even if the employee commits the act outside work; failure to take action can also subject an employer to exposure for legal action.

Key Employment Laws You Should Be Aware Of:

- Federal & state wage and hour laws - requires employers to pay a minimum wage, defines eligibility for overtime and other wage benefits
- Child labor laws - restrictions apply on hours and type of work minors can do
- Equal Pay Act of 1963 - requires persons performing the same work to be paid the same wage
- Title VII Civil Rights Act of 1964 - sweeping non-discrimination act that prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, or national origin
- Occupational Safety & Health Administration - regulates safe working conditions
- Immigration Reform & Control Act - requires employers to document nationality of employees
- Unemployment insurance - provides limited payments to employees who are involuntarily dismissed
- Family and Medical Leave Act - requires government entities and some private employers to provide leave to employees under certain conditions
- COBRA - requires employers to allow employees to continue certain benefits (at the employee's expense) for up to 18 months after the employee leaves employment
- Health Insurance Portability and Privacy Act (HIPAA) - restricts the use of or availability of certain employee information
- Sexual harassment prohibitions - prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace and provides for remedies or damages if it occurs
- Drug-Free Workplace Act - requires employers receiving federal benefits to maintain a drug-free workplace
- Americans with Disabilities Act - prohibits employment discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities in the private sector, and in state and local governments
- Age Discrimination in Employment Act - protects individuals who are 40 years of age or older

- Uniformed Services Employment & Re-employment Rights Act - protects those called to military service and forced to leave their normal work
- Posting & notice requirements - requires employers to post in the workplace informational notices about certain labor laws

Diversity continues to be an expanding issue. Forty years ago, this nation was predominantly Caucasian of European descent. This year, ethnic populations will account for 47% of the nation's population and, thereby, an ever increasing portion of the workforce and your customer base. When planning how best to serve your constituents, consider such issues as gender, ethnicity, immigrant status, religion, race, sexual orientation, age, language facility and military/veteran status. Realize a "cookie cutter" approach may not be the best and that approaches to each of these diversity dimensions may need to be customized as well as attitudes adjusted.

How do we know we have an employment relationship? Are they an employee or an independent contractor? This is important to know, because your responsibilities to employees are different than those to independent contractors. You cannot just decide someone is an independent contractor because it is easier for your district. The Internal Revenue Service has developed two tests to help you make this decision - one is a three point "ABC" test; the other is 20 point test with such questions as "Do you set their hours of work?" These tests are available in your district office. Just remember, though, the IRS makes the final decision and there are significant penalties for non-compliance.

What types of benefits and/or taxes are employers responsible for? Employers are required to pay employment taxes such as withholding, social security, Medicare, and unemployment insurance. Employers are not required to provide certain benefits; for example, retirement programs are voluntary enrollment as are holiday, vacation or sick leave. Overtime benefits are mandatory for non-exempt employees. Some benefits may be subject to employment taxes. For example, if an employer pays employee health insurance premiums to the insurance company, the benefits are not considered part of the wages subject to tax; however, if the employer pays the employee who pays the insurance company, then the premiums are considered wages subject to tax. If a conservation district offers retirement benefits, they must be provided under the South Dakota Retirement System; state law prohibits all local governments from participating in any other retirement system. If a district offers benefits to one employee, they must offer the same benefits to all employees in that same class, i.e. all full-time employees receive the same holidays but part-time employees do not receive holidays.

With the passage of various anti-discrimination and harassment laws, about 70% of the workforce are members of at least one protected group. Therefore, supervisors should be aware of these laws and what may constitute discrimination. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the nation's first major anti-discrimination law and serves as the basis for many of the succeeding legislation. Discrimination may fall under five types:

- disparate treatment - occurs when one employee treated differently than another when both do the same basic job such as a male employee is paid more than a female because he's a guy and he has a family to support

- adverse impact - occurs when an employment practice appears to be neutral but affects members of a particular protected group such as requiring all employees to have valid driver's licenses when driving is not part of the job's requirements
- perpetuating discrimination - occurs when behavior or certain actions continue because "that's the way it's always been"
- statistical imbalance - occurs when employers, whether on purpose or not, create imbalances in their work forces such as all Hispanics are dishwashers and all Caucasians are managers in a restaurant
- reasonable accommodations - occurs when employers refuse to make certain adjustments to help an employee perform their job such as refusing to install a ramp to allow a wheelchair bound employee to enter the office

Workplace Safety

Employers have a general duty to provide a workplace free from "recognized hazards" likely to cause death or severe physical harm. Would you want to work in an unsafe area? A safe workplace should be of particular concern to supervisors because it could be a business and personal liability for the board of supervisors. South Dakota is not an "OSHA state" but insurance companies can and do inspect for liability protection. Take their recommendations seriously. Failure to do so could cancel your insurance or increase your risk of lawsuit. With the increase in producer services by conservation districts, hazardous chemicals are becoming a larger and often over-looked concern. Does your district have the proper MSDS (manufacturers safety and disposal standards) for each chemical you use (including office cleaning products)?

Discipline and/or Discharge

While South Dakota is a "right to work" state, also known as "at will employment," there are exceptions:

- employee is protected by specific state/federal law
- employee is protected by public policy
- employee is protected by whistle-blower laws
- employee is covered by implied contract or good faith

Of these, only the implied contract or good faith exception is controlled by the district supervisor. The employer must clearly communicate the employment at will relationship in employment applications, offer letters, employee handbooks, annual freestanding at-will reminders. Employers should also be careful when they define "probation" or develop job classifications. For example, a six-month probationary period implies the new employee is guaranteed employment for six months.

The standard course for disciplinary action is a verbal warning first, followed by a written warning, followed by a final written warning. When implementing corrective discipline of employees, certain rules apply:

- the employee needs to know what the problem is
- the employee needs to know specifically what he/she needs to do to fix the problem

- the employee needs a reasonable amount time to fix the problem
- the employee needs to understand the consequences of his/her inaction.

What actions are regularly considered legitimate causes for termination?

- policy and procedure violations, especially those that threaten the safety of others
- behavior and conduct infractions
- performance transgressions
- absenteeism or tardiness problems

When disciplining employees, employers most commonly make three errors: failure to document, failure to document and failure to document! Memories fail, what you said may not be what I heard, and actions don't always speak louder than words. What would you prefer to rely on if you were in court - written, well documented files or he said/she said/they said?

The preceding information is general in nature and is not intended as a substitute for legal advice. Please contact your legal counsel when analyzing any specific legal matter.

Coordinated Soil & Water Conservation Grant Fund

Grants from the Coordinated Soil & Water Conservation Grant Fund are available for projects that show a natural resource conservation benefit to the state. Any organized conservation district within the state may make an application to the State Conservation Commission. These grants are competitive in nature and there is limited funding for these grants.

This application must be on an approved application form, or follow the format of the approved form. Grants are awarded two times during a calendar year -- May and November. The Resource Conservation & Forestry Division of the SD Department of Agriculture must receive the applications no later than April 1 for the May awards or October 1 for the November awards.

For a copy of the application or assistance in completing the form, contact the Resource Conservation & Forestry Division at (605) 773-3623 or 1-800-228-5254 (South Dakota only) or www.sd.doa/forestry.

The following projects have received funding under this grant program. However, this is not a complete list of past or currently funded projects, nor is it intended to stifle the creativity of natural resource managers in identifying alternative measures to protect the states' natural resources.

- windbreak tree planting establishment and renovations including windbreaks for wildlife habitat, field erosion control, and farmstead and livestock protection.
- water development to provide for livestock water needs away from the riparian area to promote healthy regeneration of those areas for erosion control benefits.
- waterway construction and seeding.
- rangeland/pastureland improvement projects including seeding, cross fencing, and rotational grazing, etc.
- water quality improvement projects including some of the above practices as well as overall assessment of the condition of the watershed and to identify sources of water quality impairments.
- no-till cropping system incentives.
- biological weed control in areas where conventional control techniques may cause resource damage such as on highly erodible land or in areas inaccessible to conventional equipment.

Most, if not all, of the above grant projects include an information/education element.

Revolving Loan Fund

The Conservation District Special Revenue Fund (Revolving Loan Fund) was established by the South Dakota Legislature in 1949. Loans can be made to conservation districts for securing, by purchase or otherwise, necessary equipment, trees and other plant materials, and supplies needed to further their programs.

This loan fund is administered by the Conservation Commission with expenditures approved by the Commission. Only loans are authorized, no other type of financial assistance. Conservation districts may use their loan to make loans themselves for the purpose of the fund.

Loan Application:

All requests for funds shall be submitted to the Division of Resource Conservation & Forestry, Foss Building, 523 East Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501-3182. They will be on forms approved by the State Conservation Commission. The Division will make the loan investigation and present the loan application to the Conservation Commission for their approval or disapproval.

The application will show:

- the purpose of the loan and how it will be used.
- the length of time the funds are needed by the district to provide sufficient revenue for their repayment.
- a statement of the financial condition of the district.
- a signature of the district chairman or a majority of the district board.
- the action of the board as recorded in the official minutes of the board meeting will be certified by the district secretary.

After approval of a loan by the Commission, a promissory note, a security agreement and a Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) financing statement will be prepared.

Repayment of Loan:

- Repayment of the loan will be scheduled in accordance with the anticipated earnings of the district and may be made annually or more frequently in amounts of not less than two hundred fifty dollars (\$250.00) per year. However, the loan may be paid in full at any time. Three percent interest is charged on these loans.
- The repayment schedule approved by the Commission will not exceed five years, unless the Commission approves a loan extension upon proper request by the district.
- The amount of funds available and current requests for loans will influence the actions of the Commission.
- A loan from the revolving fund will be in default upon the failure of a district to make an annual payment by 90 days after the due date. A loan in default is immediately due in full.

Insurance:: A district must carry public liability and property damage insurance on each piece of equipment for which a loan is made.

Required Report: Upon acceptance of a loan, a district agrees to submit a statement of usage with each payment. It shall describe "the current status of the loan and, if the loan was used to purchase equipment, the use and operation of that equipment during the year."

Inspection of Records: Any district securing a loan from the conservation district revolving fund must maintain records acceptable to the State Conservation Commission and will have its books available at all times for inspection.

Watershed Districts

To the extent that funds are available, loans from the conservation district revolving fund shall be made to the watershed districts for the purpose of procuring options, easements, and rights-of-way for watershed development.

Ag Development Loan Fund

The South Dakota Department of Agriculture has made another form of loan available to the conservation districts which is separate from the conservation district revolving loan fund. Its limited purpose is to make loans to districts for the purchase of conservation equipment. This equipment is to be made available on a rental basis or to provide a service to conservation district cooperators. The loans will be made available for up to 80 percent of the purchase price with a maximum loan of \$15,000.

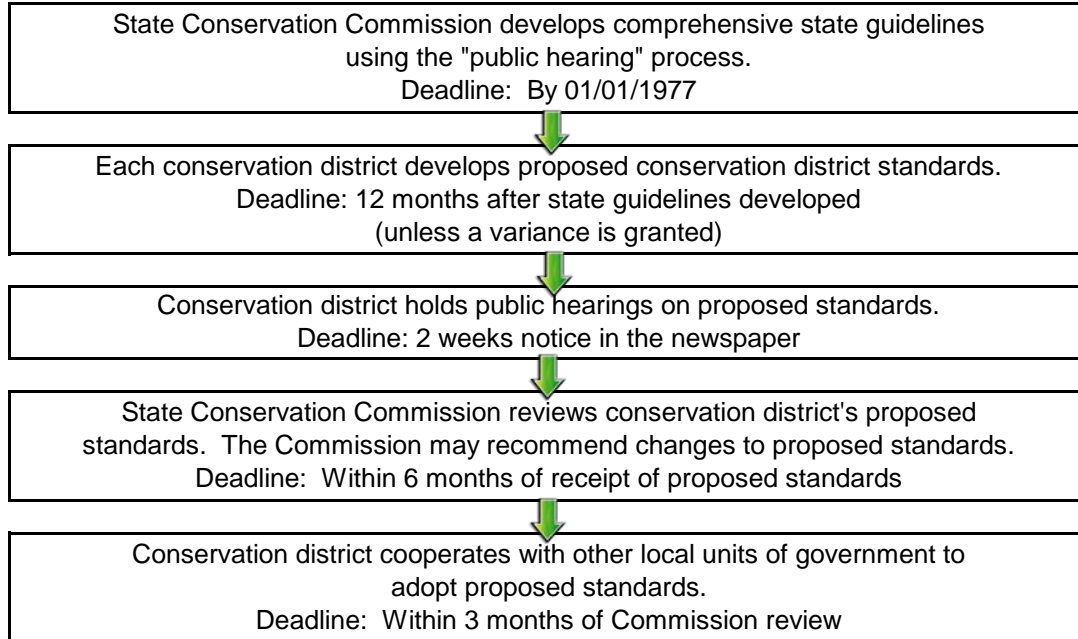
Loans under this program are made at a rate of interest as set by the Secretary of Agriculture.

Applications are to be made on approved forms available from:

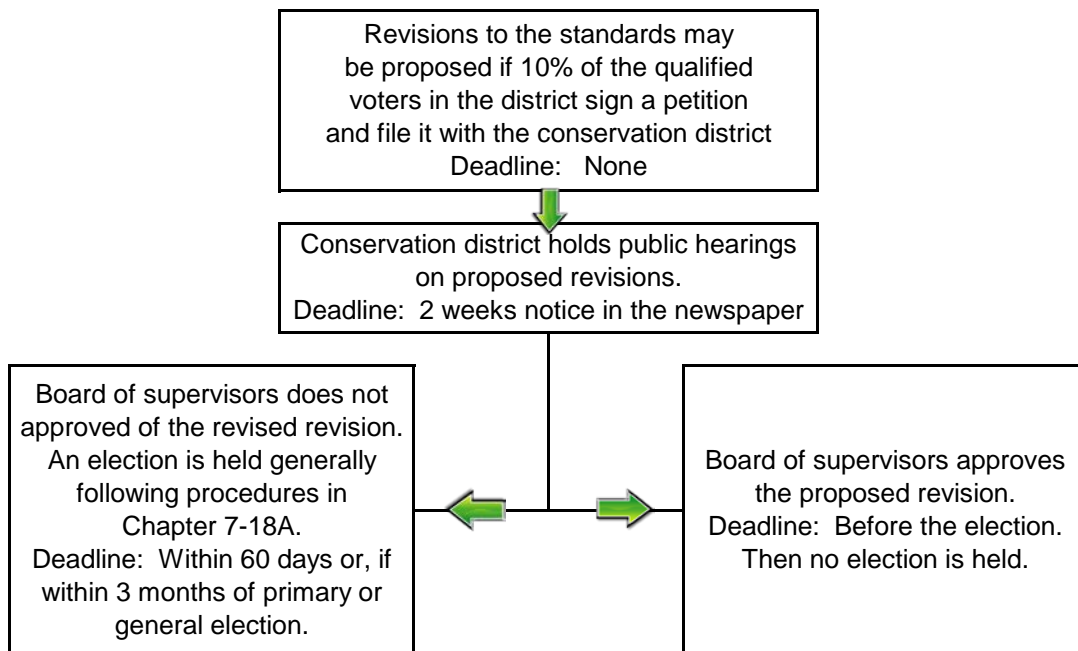
Ag Development Office
SD Department of Agriculture
Foss Building
523 E Capitol Avenue
Pierre SD 57501-3182

An application for this type of loan is submitted to the Conservation Commission for its recommendation. After gaining their recommendation for approval, it is forwarded to the Secretary of Agriculture for final approval. With that, the loan will receive final processing.

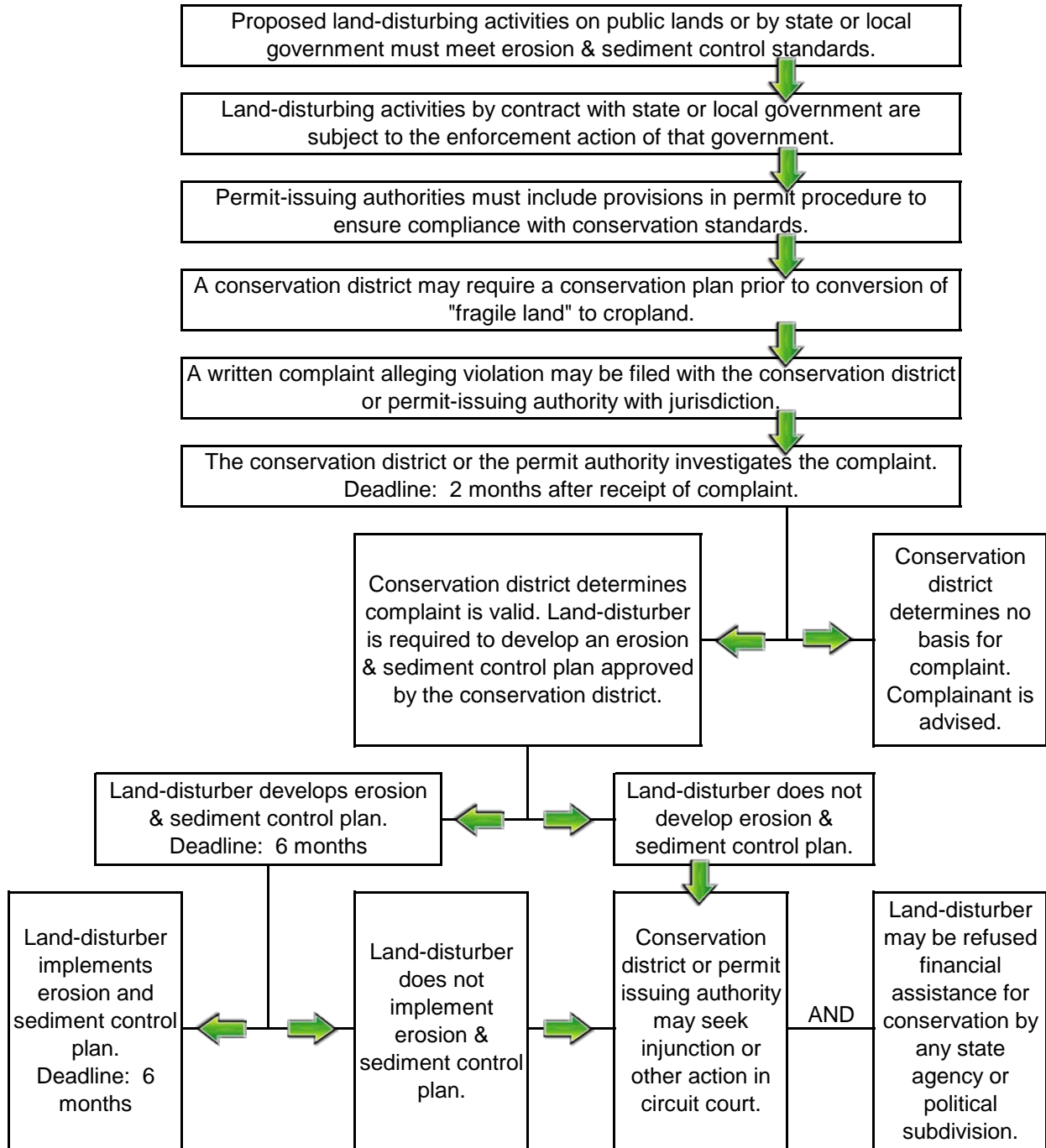
Developing Erosion and Sediment Control Standards (38-8A-3 - 38-8A-12)



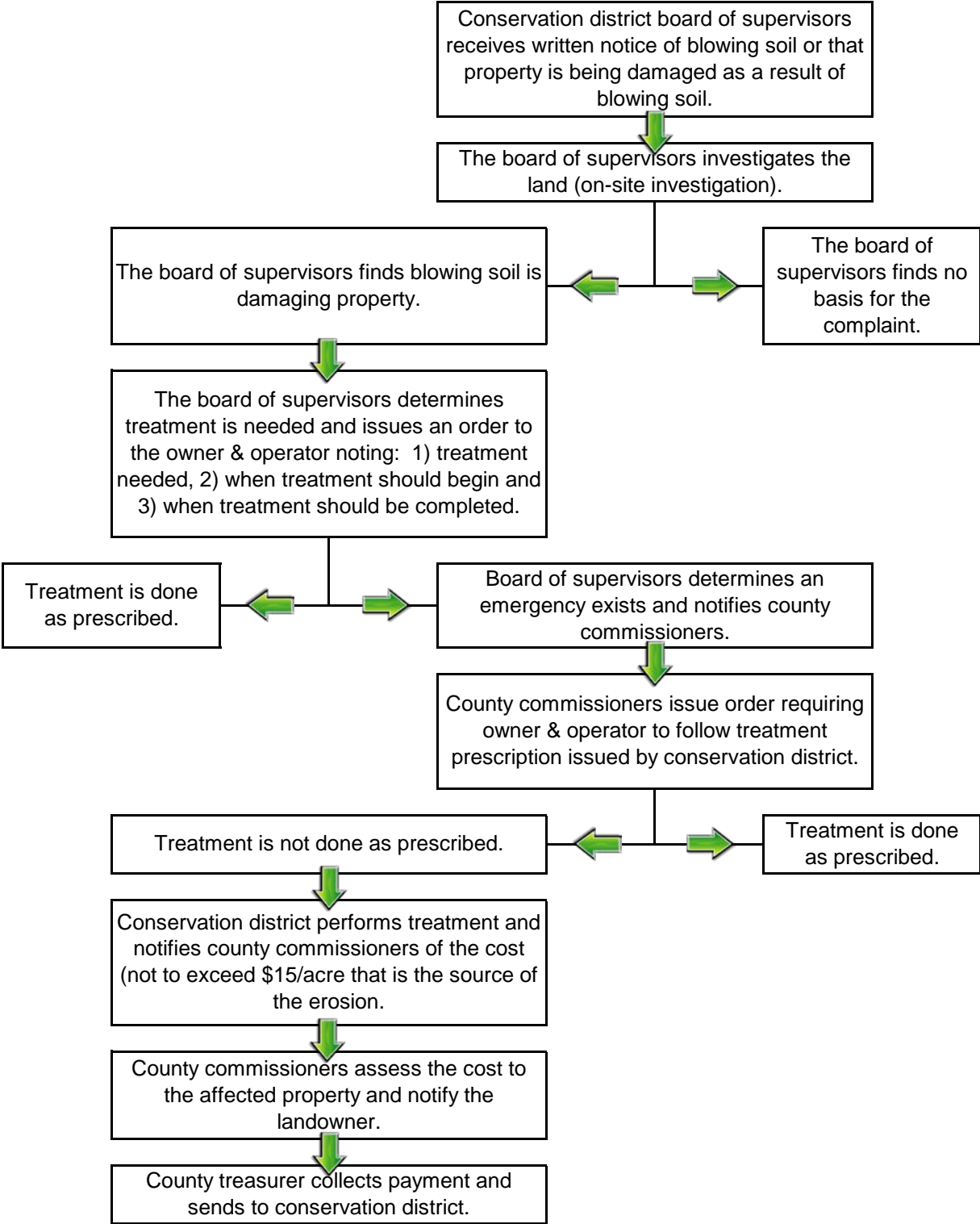
Revision



Erosion & Sediment Control Enforcement (38-8A - 38-8A-21)



Implementing the Blowing Dust Act (38-8A-22 - 38-8A-27)



**Complaint of Activities on Agricultural Land
{Rushmore County} Conservation District**

I, _____, of _____ do hereby allege that the
agricultural activity of _____ of _____,
{Rushmore}
County, is causing damage to property.

Brief description of damage: _____

Location of damage (legal description): _____

Signed

Complainant

Date

Copy to be provided to: Complainant
Alleged violator

**Investigation Report for Complaint Involving Agricultural Activities
{Rushmore County} Conservation District**

Complainant: _____

Alleged Violator: _____

Location of Alleged Damage: _____

Damage Report

Damage (has) (has not) occurred. _____

Representative
{Rushmore County} Conservation District

Technical Representative
Agency:

Erosion Report

Erosion on alleged violator's land (has) (has not) exceeded adopted soil loss limits of the
{Rushmore County} Conservation District. _____

Calculated Soil Loss: _____ Tons/acre/year

Soil Loss Limit: _____ Tons/acre/year

Blowing Dust

_____ A blowing dust emergency exists. Treatment required to prevent or lessen blowing: _____

Representative
{Rushmore County} Conservation District

Technical Representative
Agency:

Copy to be provided to: Complainant
Alleged violator

Date

Name

Address 1

Address 2

Dear []:

The {Rushmore County} Conservation District has received a written complain stating that erosion on your property is causing off-site damage. As required under South Dakota Codified Law 38-8A, the District visited the site on [DATE] to investigate the complaint. As the result of this investigation, the Board of Supervisors has determined the District erosion standards are being violated and the person who signed the complaint is being adversely affected.

The law provides you, as the land disturber, with up to six months (from the date of this letter) to develop a sediment and erosion control plan. You will then have up to six months (after approval of your plan by the Board of Supervisors) to implement this plan. If your plan involves practices which cannot be installed in six months (for example, a complex system of terraces and waterways), the District has the authority to grant a variance to the six month implementation requirement. Noncompliance with the provisions of SDCL 38-8A can be addressed by the District through the injunction process. You should also be aware that the District does not have the authority to assess fines or damages; however, the person(s) “adversely affected” by the erosion on your property has the right to file a civil suit against you seeking damages.

The {Rushmore County} Conservation District is here to assist its land operators. We would much rather serve you under our regular operations than to process erosion damage complaints. However, a valid complaint has been filed; therefore, we would like to offer you our assistance in developing the sediment and erosion control plan for your property. Please call our office and discuss your options with further with our staff.

Sincerely,

[], Chairman
{Rushmore County} Conservation District

Complaint of Activities on Non-Agricultural Land
{Governing Board Having Jurisdiction Over Activity}

I, _____ of _____

do hereby allege that the land disturbing activity

of _____ of _____

{Rushmore} County, is causing damage to property.

Brief description of damage:

Location of damage (legal description):

Signed

Complainant

Date

Copy to be provided to:

Complainant

Alleged Violator

{Rushmore County} Conservation District

Investigation Report for Complaint Involving Non-Agriculture
Land Disturbing Activities in {Rushmore} County

Complainant: _____

Alleged Violator: _____

Location of Alleged Damage: _____

Damage Report

Damage _____ has _____ has not occurred. _____

Erosion Report

Erosion on alleged violator's land _____ has _____ has not exceeded the adopted soil loss
limits in {Rushmore} County. _____

Calculated Soil Loss: _____ Tons/acre/year

Soil Loss Limit: _____ Tons/acre/year

Agency Representative

Copy provided to: Complainant
Alleged Violator
{Rushmore County} Conservation District

Date

Name

Address1

Address2

Dear []:

The {Rushmore County} Conservation District has received a written erosion complaint concerning soil blowing off the land you own/operated located in Section _____. The field(s) identified as Tract _____, field(s) _____ are subject to the complaint.

According to South Dakota statute 38-8A-23, the {Rushmore County} Conservation District is required to inspect the land and has determined soil is blowing in excess of local conservation district standards to the point it is injurious to other land and other property. The board of supervisors have declared that an emergency exists and have notified the {Rushmore} County Commissioners as required by South Dakota statute 38-8A-24.

It has also been determined by the board that the blowing can be prevented or lessened by treatment of the soil. The board is required by statute to issue an order stating the treatment required. You are hereby ordered to correct soil blowing from the field(s) listed above by roughing the surface of the soil through the use of a ripper or in a manner such that blowing will cease. This action is to be performed and completed by (date).

The board reserves the right to determine if the treatment performed will effectively control the soil blowing. If it is determined that the treatment is not performed in the manner and to the extent specified, or if you notify the board prior to (date), that you cannot or do not intend to accomplish the work, the board will perform the necessary land treatment measures.

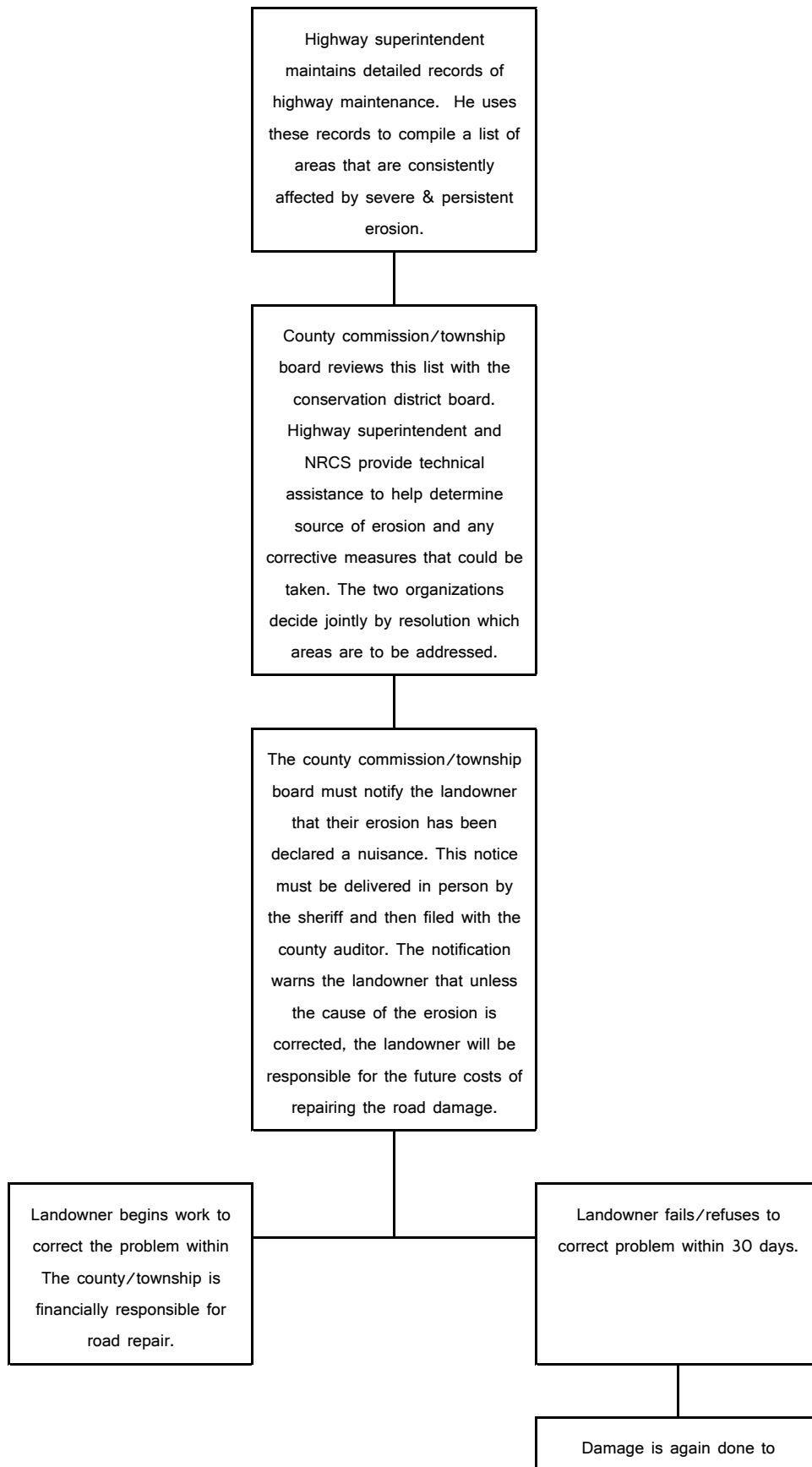
Upon completion of the treatment performed, the board of supervisors shall determine the land so benefited and notify the county commissioners who will assess against the land the cost of treatment not to exceed fifteen dollars per acre or the actual cost of treatment, whichever is less.

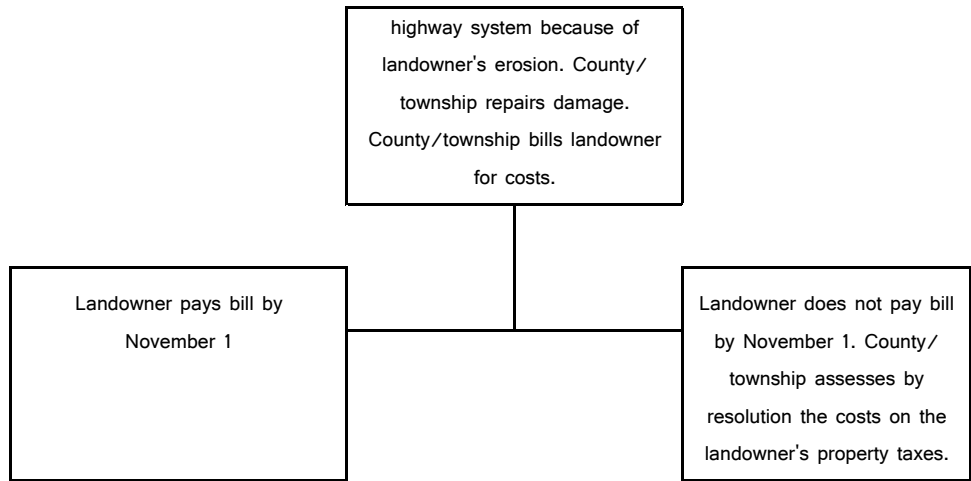
Sincerely,

{Name}, Chairman

{Rushmore} County Conservation District

Highway Damage Caused by Erosion - 31-12-44&45 and 31-13-57&58





Sample County Erosion Complaint Form

[Rushmore] County Erosion Damage Report

Location _____

Date of Damage _____

Describe the property damage or loss, how it occurred, and what actions you have taken: _____

Itemized Estimated Cost _____

Landowners Involved:

_____ Address _____

_____ Address _____

_____ Address _____

_____ Address _____

_____ First occurrence of erosion damage at this site

_____ This site has been damaged before

_____ Potential persistent & severe _____ Unlikely persistent & severe

_____ The conservation district has been notified on (date) _____

_____ Formal complaint _____ Informal discussion

[Rushmore] County Highway Superintendent

Attach photos and additional documentation

Joint Powers Agreements

The following information is general in nature and is not an official legal opinion of the Office of Attorney General or the SD Department of Agriculture as to any particular circumstance. For that reason, please refer to your legal counsel when analyzing any specific legal matter.

A joint powers agreement is an agreement between governmental entities. It can be used for: (not an all-inclusive list)

- hiring employees
- purchasing equipment
- setting up a new project to be governed by a joint or separate board

Who can participate?

- any political subdivision of the state
- conservation district
- county
- municipality
- school district
- Indian Tribe
- state government agency
- federal agency

A joint powers agreement is limited to governmental agencies and provides for sharing of some types of governmental authority. A MOU among governmental entities is legally a joint powers agreement.

Specific language required:

- duration
- nature of any separate entity to carry out the project
- purpose
- financial structure
- termination
- other necessary and proper matters

Each governing body involved must pass a resolution for the agreement. The agreement is then filed with the SD Attorney General and the SD Legislative Research Council within 14 days after the Agreement is signed.

Because these agreements can be used in a wide range of situations, there is no established format. For example:

- three conservation districts purchase a piece of equipment
- multiple-county enterprise that would operate independently, such as joint operation of a landfill.

There is no statutory requirement to have a lawyer involved. However, attorneys have special skills in drafting agreements and it would be advisable to consult them regarding the type of enterprise that should be created, whether there are any liability concerns, and whether there are any legal issues that should be addressed.

Today and Tomorrow: A Vision to Conserve South Dakota's Natural Resources

Every man, woman and child in South Dakota enjoys the benefits of our natural resources. We drink clean water, eat safe food, breathe clean air, and enjoy abundant wildlife; in general, we live in a healthy environment. Many of us take this for granted and assume it will always be this way. We often forget that, as we enjoy the benefits of nature, we are also responsible for seeing that our children and grandchildren have the same opportunities.

It is easy to say we are responsible, but how do we carry out that responsibility? What can we as individuals do? "*Today and Tomorrow: A Vision to Conserve South Dakota's Natural Resources*" creates a framework of opportunity that encourages all South Dakotans to voluntarily participate in caring for our natural resources. This document purposely includes broad goals that promote local flexibility to address natural resource priorities and objectives. Everyone can help to accomplish the goals through their own actions.

When we implement "*Today and Tomorrow: A Vision to Conserve South Dakota's Natural Resources*," we demonstrate our commitment and leadership to making South Dakota a better place. We continue South Dakota's tradition of working together to solve challenges and create opportunities.

"*Today and Tomorrow: A Vision to Conserve South Dakota's Natural Resources*" takes a common sense approach to natural resource management, seeking to ensure their sustainability for home, for industry, for agriculture, for recreation, and for other uses. It will lead to a cleaner environment and a better quality of life for all citizens.

As South Dakotans, our mission is to conserve, develop and enhance South Dakota's natural resources for the benefit of all.

Goal: Improve the environmental, social, and economic values of the Missouri River and its watersheds in South Dakota.

Everyone lives in a watershed. The watershed can be as small as the area that drains into a tiny creek. That tiny creek then drains into the larger river watershed which then, in most of South Dakota, drains into the Missouri River watershed. Only the Red River and Little Minnesota River watersheds in northeastern South Dakota are not part of the Missouri River watershed. The Red River flows north into the Hudson Bay. The Little Minnesota becomes part of the Mississippi River watershed. The Mississippi River is part of the Gulf of Mexico. It is all a matter of degrees.

The Missouri River is a lifeblood for South Dakota. But, trying to address its issues all at once is more than we can handle. We can solve the puzzle, though, one piece at a time. A comprehensive planning process would develop a plan for addressing the smaller watersheds that comprise the Missouri River watershed in South Dakota. We can build our knowledge base while addressing the needs. We all have a stake in this and we all need to be part of the solution.

Goal: Protect and/or improve the waters to provide sufficient quantities of quality water for beneficial uses.

Water has many uses ranging from drinking to fishing to swimming to irrigation to wildlife habitat to livestock watering. Not only must the water be good enough to meet these purposes, but there must also be enough of it. Our choices affect our water quality. We must choose to use best management practices that enhance our water. These practices could include, but are not limited to, grazing systems, conservation tillage, streambank stabilization, grassed waterways, tree plantings, terraces, strip cropping, nutrient management systems, etc.

Goal: Improve the productive quality of our soil.

Soil provides a foundation for not only our agriculture economy, but also road and home building, tourism, and industry. It is a dynamic natural resource that is biologically active because it contains millions of living organisms.

Soils, like people, are most productive when they are healthy and fit. The health of a soil affects its ability to support plant and animal life, maintain or enhance water and air quality, and support human health and survival.

Goal: Improve air quality.

Statewide, the air quality is relatively good but there is room for improvement. Our air quality in various areas of the state could be, on any given day, affected by blowing dust, road dust, unpleasant odors, industrial output or natural events occurring halfway across the world.

Airborne pollutants are measurable solids, liquids, or gases that can negatively impact our environment. Odor is a subjective consideration. What is offensive to one can be of no consequence to another.

Our dependence on carbon-based fuels affects our economy and our environment. Our increased use of alternative energy sources could not only improve our local economies, but also our global air quality.

Goal: Enhance recreation opportunities and wildlife habitats.

South Dakotans treasure their wildlife and recreation. We invest a lot of time and energy discussing how to achieve the optimal balances.

When all interests “come to the table,” we have a chance to listen to each other and learn to appreciate all viewpoints. Then we can potentially come to a consensus. The key to success is participation, whether it is as a private individual, a business or governmental agency.

“Great achievements are not born from a single vision, but from the combination of many distinctive viewpoints. Diversity challenges assumptions, opens minds, and unlocks our potential to solve any problem we may face.”

Goal: Increase public awareness of the benefits of natural resource management.

It is hard to support that which you don’t understand. Before we can ask the public to support natural resource issues, the public needs more than a vague understanding of the benefits of natural resource management. The public needs to know the specific benefits. Then we can talk about the issues and how to best address them. We also need to integrate the economics of ecology. Conservation pays and we need to show how.

Goal: Increase financial opportunities for natural resource management.

Given current funding levels, we cannot meet the record demand for assistance for natural resources. The National Governors Association estimates that at least \$5 billion is needed annually in government assistance to significantly improve the natural resources management system in the US. Increased investment in this system will make the world better for our children and grandchildren.

Is our state and local investment adequate? Consider this: the three state agencies responsible for natural resources management in South Dakota (Agriculture; Environment & Natural Resources; and Game, Fish & Parks) comprise 1.5 percent of the State's annual budget. The South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts estimates an additional 112 technical staff and \$7 million annually are needed to help put conservation "on-the ground" in the state.

Increased state and federal funding are not the only answer and may not provide long-term solutions. Local initiatives to address local issues as part of a regional cooperative effort will provide the most effective long-term opportunities for natural resource management.

Some call this the "Age of Philanthropy." Not only have private individuals and organizations opened their pocketbooks at record levels, but they have also volunteered their time and expertise, thereby leveraging further dollars. Creating more opportunities for giving toward natural resource issues is critical.

Under the leadership of the Conservation Commission and the South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts, Inc., seven public meetings were held in 2000 to gather input from as many interests as possible. Representatives of each meeting volunteered to serve as a working group to compile data and identify issues of concern. Local conservation district supervisors prioritized the identified issues in 2001. The Conservation Commission and the South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. drafted this document outlining seven goals for South Dakota. More than 230 groups and individuals were invited to review and comment. These groups included local, state and federal agencies; tribal governments; state and federal legislators; commodity groups; environmental organizations; business groups; and interested individuals.

South Dakota's Coordinated Plan for Natural Resources Conservation (revised)

Organization: State of South Dakota and the conservation districts in South Dakota

Function: To take available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land manager with conservation of soil, water and related natural resources.

We serve: every man, woman and child in the state of South Dakota

Why: our commitment and leadership to making South Dakota a better place and continuing South Dakota's tradition of working together to solve challenges and create opportunities.

Mission Statement: As South Dakotans, our mission is to conserve, develop and enhance South Dakota's natural resources for the benefit of all.

Critical Natural Resource Issues: Identified by the seven goals of Today and Tomorrow: A Vision to Conserve South Dakota's Natural Resources@ (see below).

Critical Geographic areas (attach map): State of South Dakota

Statements of Intent (Outcome) for each of the natural resource issues.

(Format B by <date> the <natural resource> will <outcome>. Success will be measured by <performance measure>.)

Goal: Improve the environmental, social and economic values of the Missouri River and its watersheds in South Dakota.

Outcome: Reduce sediment loads and improve water quality in the Missouri

River and its tributaries

Performance measure: Districts will assist the state with five TMDL watershed assessments per year

Performance measure: Districts will assist producers in implementing best management practices identified in the TMDL assessments

Goal: Protect and/or improve the waters to provide sufficient quantities of quality water for beneficial uses.

Outcome: Improve livestock water quality and quantity.

Performance measure: By 2008, 1.5 million acres have increased benefits from water development.

Performance measure: By 2008, increase buffer strips by 200 miles.

Outcome: Assist in development of nutrient management plans to assist producers with their animal waste management systems.

Performance measure: Develop and design 60 animal waste management systems per year.

Performance measure: Develop and plan 60 animal waste management plans per year.

Goal: Improve the productive quality of our soil.

Outcome: Maintain or improve the soil loss tolerance to "T" or less.

Performance measure: By 2008, increase no-till/minimum-till acreage by 10%.

Performance measure: By 2008, increase the conversion of marginal cropland to permanent vegetation by 250,000 acres.

Goal: Improve air quality.

Outcome: Educate all districts to help with producer education on the latest air quality issues and technology.

Performance measures: Access to university research

Outcome: Assist in development of comprehensive nutrient management plans to assist producers with their animal waste management plans.

Performance measure: Develop and plan 60 systems per year.

Goal: Enhance recreation opportunities and wildlife habitats.

Outcome: Be coordinators to provide wildlife management possibilities to producers

Performance measures: Renovate 50 shelterbelts per year; dense nesting cover; plant trees for wildlife habitat; food plots; water developments; improve

range conditions

Outcome: Increase funding level and/or additional funding sources for shelterbelt renovation

Performance measures: Identify one additional funding source and obtain grants to augment current funding sources

Goal: Increase public awareness of the benefits of natural resource management

Outcome: Implement the media campaign and plan as identified by the SDACD Public Relations Committee

Performance measures: Challenge each district to increase their information/education program through schools, district web pages, county activities, etc.; increase public awareness of conservation districts

Outcome: Improve forest management on public lands.

Performance measures: Provide input to US Forest Service and SD resource management agencies on forest management issues during public comment periods.

Goal: Increase financial opportunities for natural resource management

Outcome: Obtain permanent funding for conservation districts base operations by the year 2006.

Performance measure: Passage of legislation authorizing permanent funding for conservation districts

Outcome: Increase supplemental funding for district programs and operations through grants, county assessments, or cooperative agreements

Performance measure: Each district shall obtain at least one additional funding source annually, other than permanent funding.

Priority Actions for the next 12 months:

- Obtain and secure funding sources
- Inform and educate the public

Staffing Needs:

- Fundraising specialist
- Grant writer
- Communication specialist

Annual Budget Needs:

Salaries & Benefits: _____
Equipment: _____

Office Supplies: _____
Programs & Cost Share: _____
Rent & Utilities: _____
Other: _____

Total Annual Budget: \$225,000.00

Key Individuals to Reach for Program Success:

- Governor Rounds
- Senator Johnson
- Senator Thune
- Representative Herseth
- State political party leaders

**Orientation Manual for
South Dakota's Conservation Districts
Boards of Supervisors**

Chapter Three - Leadership

January 2005

*Developed by the SD Association of Conservation Districts District Capacity Committee in cooperation
with the SD Conservation Commission and SD Division of Resource Conservation & Forestry*

Effective Leadership

Why should conservation districts be concerned with leadership?

- The legal purpose and role of conservation districts has always been to provide leadership in conservation practices and conservation education in their communities.
- Conservation district supervisors are elected by the people to represent their interest and goals– to lead the way.
- In many conservation districts, there are relatively few opportunities to develop their most important resource – their people – and to practice leadership skills.
- Without good leadership, a conservation district cannot be successful and effective.

Principles of Leadership

- Have a bias for action. It is preferable to do something – anything– rather than delay and reconsider and postpone.
- Remember who you're working for and what their needs are.
- Be innovative and creative.
- Know your mission and stick to it. Don't allow yourself or your conservation district to be distracted by side issues.
- Be tolerant of new ideas and different viewpoints. Enable others to do their best for the district and the community.
- Keep it simple. Follow the mission statement so others can easily see the goals and effects of what you are doing.

Ineffective leadership (or no leadership) can be identified in several ways:

- Conservation districts which do not accomplish stated goals.
- Supervisors and staff who can't explain what their role is or why they're doing what they're doing.
- Meetings with out results; no sense of resolving issues and moving on.
- Supervisors and staff who don't participate and/or don't seem to care.
- Gossip or personalities are more important than getting the job done.
- One person (or a small group) dominate the rest and don't allow all people and viewpoints to be considered.
- The same people are always doing the work; no one else helps. There is no "new blood" recruited and developed.

Conservation districts can practice leadership

- Be pro-active– don't just react to problems and emergencies. Identify dangers and opportunities, and act on them.
- Be informed and prepared.
- Solicit opinions and solutions from others.
- Develop leadership skills in others whenever possible – committee assignments, setting task for completion, etc.
- Think "win/win" when dealing with others – negotiate; cooperate – don't bully people and try to force them to follow you.
- Set a good example for others. Be the kind of person others look to for help and guidance.

Being a District Leader

Leaders exhibit different styles than those who are content with *managing* a group or activity. The styles of leaders are shaped by each person's life experience and the values they have adopted over the years. In today's rapidly changing world, and with the changing needs of people, it is important for those "in charge" to re-evaluate and modify their styles on a regular basis.

To complete complex conservation goals, local conservation leaders must move beyond "group management" to "team centered leadership." True leaders shape the outcomes of group planning, projects, and activities through a strong commitment to a team effort. True leaders facilitate completion of team centered goals without managing a group of people toward a goal they, themselves, have set.

To be a leader in conservation, each person must evaluate their personal leadership style and make adjustments to achieve a true sense of team in each and every project. True leaders lead teams to outcomes desired by every member of the team.

Characteristics of a True "Leader"

It has been said that true leaders are born; they cannot be created. It is true that some people have a natural style for leadership. In evaluating the skills of these natural leaders, several characteristics emerge:

- True leaders encourage others to openly express their own opinions and views
- True leaders understand that conflict is an important part of the team process and problem solving
- True leaders believe that every member of the team is a valuable asset to getting the work of the conservation district done and that every member has a right to be part of the planning and implementation if new ideas
- True leaders see every member of the team as an equal partner in the completion of the work of the district
- True leaders facilitate the completion of project activities without forcing or imposing their own values or priorities on the team
- True leaders give continuous feedback to team members to assure the goals of the team are being accomplished – without pushing the team to make premature decisions
- True leaders are accessible to team members and are active, willing listeners to divergent points of view
- True leaders provide a sense of vision for the team by encouraging team members to explore all conceivable possibilities
- True leaders challenge those members of the team who attempt to harm other members of the team by assuring that all team members adopt and comply with rules of courtesy and respect for fellow team members

A Manager Versus a Leader

Conservation district supervisors, staff, and volunteers are often overworked and don't receive

the support they need. Frustrations are common and sometimes it seems easier to “manage” than to “lead” in getting important work done. Managing may get short term results, but it is leadership that gets long term goals accomplished. Some of the differences include:

- A manager is willing to involve people to some extent, within limits. A leader looks for people who have potential, recruits them, and encourages them to excel.
- A manager sees the group process as a series of hoops to be jumped through to get to the goal he/she has established. A leader considers problem solving as the responsibility of the team and believes that the team process will truly result in the best possible outcome.
- A manager modifies team agreements to suit personal convenience. A leader keeps the commitments of the team decision making process and expects the same in return from other members of the team.

Taking Steps to Leadership

To present yourself as a leader, follow these simple steps:

- Make sure your team has a clear understanding of the task(s) assigned.
- Don't hold anything back; make sure every member of the team has all the information you have about your project/activity.
- Facilitate open communication among the team members. If necessary, have the team prepare a set of communication rules to be posted to assure everyone has a fair chance to speak and then lead in the effort to assure everyone has their say.
- Facilitate the setting of team goals and action plans to get the task completed. Make sure everyone on the team agrees to and supports the shared goals.
- Delegate leadership tasks to team members to the greatest extent possible. Remember that a true leader “works themselves out of a job – and into bigger jobs.”
- Give feedback and rewards – and give them promptly.

Measuring your Leadership Performance

How do you know if you're a strong and effective leader? Some ways to measure your leadership performance are:

- Count the number of times you hear “we” versus the number of times you hear “I” or “you”. When a leader has been effective, every team member will talk in terms of “we”.
- Things are getting done. If the teams efforts under your leadership are actively and consistently moving your district toward its identified goals, you can assume your leadership style is making a difference.
- Is there an absence of sabotage among your team members? If team members are actively and consistently supporting the decisions of the team under your leadership, it means your leadership style is working.
- Are new leaders emerging among team members? A true leader measures the effectiveness of his/her leadership by counting the number of people they have encouraged and supported toward active leadership.

Building a District Team

Essential Team Elements:

- To be a team, a group of individuals must share an overriding mission or reason for working together.
- To be a team, members must share a sense of “interdependence.” Members must recognize that they need each other in order to realize their common goals.
- To be a team, all members must share a sense of commitment. Members must believe that a team approach to problem solving is better than individuals working alone.
- To be a team, members have a sense of accountability in their community. Members share a common commitment that everyone is responsible for success and everyone must share in failure if goals are not met.
- To be a team, a group of individuals must have a leader. This person can be appointed, elected, or can emerge for the group. The group must be able to count on this person to steer it toward its goals.

The Benefits of Teamwork:

- Functioning teams make better decisions than individuals working in isolation.
- The needs of the community drive the work of the team. If teams work successfully together, the community and all its individuals will benefit.
- The members of the team benefit through successful team activities. Input from a variety of sources enables members to test their assumptions and subject them to review before making decisions that effect the community.
- Effective team decision-making ensures that all members have participated in, are satisfied with, and are committed to the decisions made. Team members will believe in the results and “sell” plans made by the team.

Assessing Your Individual Skills as a Team Member

When the people of a conservation district identify team members, they delegate the responsibility of directing the conservation of the district’s basic resources. This team of people is selected because they have varied skills and experiences. Answer the following questions to rate your characteristics as a good conservation district team member:

- Do you practice positive attitudes?
- Do you really listen?
- Do you let the team know in a positive way if you don’t understand what is being discussed?
- Do you contribute substance and facts to the discussion.....not just opinion?
- Do you speak in terms that all members can understand?
- Do you keep informed on the activities and functions of the State Conservation Commission, the South Dakota and National Associations of Conservation Districts, and other organizations important to the district?
- Do you seek the opinions and comments of fellow team members to assure everyone is heard?
- Do you regularly attend meetings, read information ahead of the meeting, and take notes during the meeting to keep yourself up to date on events?

Assessing How Your Conservation Team Functions

Now that you have assessed your own skills as a team member, take a look at the teams within your conservation district. Answer the following questions to rate your characteristics as a good conservation district team member:

- Do individual team members generally contribute constructively to the group process and is there a feeling among the group that all individual contributions are valued?
- Is the team's mission clear and is there a high level of cooperation toward achieving common goals?
- Are there clearly understood and shared procedural and behavioral standards that govern most of your team's activities?

Board of Supervisors Commitment Pledge

Directions: Read this commitment pledge, sign both copies and return one copy to the District's manager. If you have any questions about the responsibilities you'll be assuming, discuss them with the manager.

I will exercise the duties and responsibilities of this office with integrity, camaraderie and care.

I pledge:

1. To establish as a high priority my attendance at all meetings of the board, committees and task forces on which I serve.
2. To come prepared to discuss the issues and business to be addressed at scheduled meetings, having read the agenda and relevant background material.
3. To work with and respect the opinions of my peers who serve this board, and to leave my personal prejudices out of all board discussions.
4. To always act for the good of the District.
5. To represent this District in a positive and supportive manner at all times and in all places.
6. To observe the parliamentary procedures, and display courteous conduct in all board, committee and task force meetings.
7. To refrain from intruding on administrative issues that are the responsibility of management, except to monitor the results and prohibit methods that conflict with board policy.
8. To avoid conflicts of interest between my position as a supervisor and my personal life. If such a conflict does arise, I will declare that conflict before the board and refrain from voting on matters in which I have conflict.
9. To support in a positive manner all actions taken by the Board of Supervisors even when I am in a minority position on such actions.
10. To agree to serve on at least one committee or task force, attend all meetings, and participate in the accomplishment of its objectives. If I chair the board, a committee or a task force, I will:
 - a) call meetings as necessary until objectives are met
 - b) ensure that the agenda and support materials are mailed to all members in advance of the meetings
 - c) conduct the meetings in an orderly, fair, open and efficient manner

- d) make committee progress reports/minutes to the board at its scheduled meetings, using the adopted format

11. To participate in:

- (1) the annual strategic planning retreat
- (2) board self-evaluation programs
- (3) board development workshops, seminars, and other educational events which enhance my skills as a board member.
- (4) ensuring the District has adequate funding for its programs

My personal goals to improve my service as a supervisor are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

If, for any reason, I find myself unable to carry out the above duties to the best of my abilities, I agree to resign my position as a supervisor.

Supervisor's signature

Date

Board Confidentiality Policy

Directions: Read this policy, then sign at the bottom acknowledging you read, understand and agree to follow it.

No member of the board of supervisors at this district shall knowingly disclose confidential information gained by reason of information shared at a board meeting. This includes details about:

- property
- operations
- personnel
- policies
- affairs of the District

Board members shall not use information to advance any personal interest, financial or otherwise.

The district shall maintain confidentiality of employee and client records, and no board member shall accept employment or engage in any business or professional activity that might be expected to induce him or her to disclose confidential information acquired by reason of serving this board.

A breach of this policy will be reviewed by the board of supervisors and may result in a request for resignation.

Supervisor's signature

Date

Board of Supervisors Code of Ethics

Directions: Review the following statement, then sign this code of ethics to solidify your commitment to board service in the best interests of this District.

As a member of the board of supervisors for the _____ District, I will:

- Represent the interests of all people served by this District and not favor special interests inside or outside the District.
- Not use the District or my service on this board for my own personal advantage or for the advantage of my friends, relatives or supporters.
- Keep confidential information confidential.
- Respect and support majority decisions of the board.
- Approach all board issues with an open mind, prepared to make the best decisions for everyone involved.
- Do nothing to violate the trust of those who elected or appointed me to the board, or of those we serve.
- Focus my efforts on the mission of this District and not on my personal goals.
- Never exercise authority as a board member except when acting in a meeting with the full board or as I am delegated by the board.
- Consider myself a "trustee" of this District and do my best to ensure that it is well-maintained, financially secure, growing and always operating in the best interests of those we serve.

I have read, understand and agree to abide by this Code of Ethics.

Supervisor's signature

Date

Board Attendance Policy

Directions: Read this attendance policy, then sign and return it to the manager. By signing it, you acknowledge that you will follow the attendance standards expected by this district.

Your participation on this district's board is essential. That's why it's important that you attend and be active on this board. You are asked to attend:

- All regularly scheduled and special board meetings
- Special events of the district
- All regular and special meetings of committees on which you serve
- Other meetings and events as deemed appropriate by the chairperson of the board

If you cannot attend a board or committee meeting:

- Notify the manager and explain the reason you'll be absent
- Arrange to meet with the manager at your earliest convenience for a review of the meeting you missed

You may be requested to resign from the board if:

- You miss three meetings in a one-year period without contacting the manager prior to the absences. Once this occurs, you will be notified by the manager or board chairperson that you will be requested to resign from the board
- You are unable to attend board meetings or participate on committees

You may be removed from the board :

- by the State Conservation Commission upon notice and hearing, for neglect of duty or malfeasance in office, but for no other reason.

I have read, understood and agree to follow this attendance policy.

Board member's signature

Date

Do's and Don'ts for Board of Supervisor Members

To be a good board member...

Do this:

Attend meetings and contribute your knowledge and experience

Read the materials that will help you understand the District

Make a commitment to serve, raise funds, and offer your expertise and time to help this board and District grow

Discuss complaints from staff or the public with the manager

Support the board's decisions, even if you disagree

Help the board to establish policies for this District

Help establish a long-range plan and vision for the future of the District

Don't do this:

Take the board position even though you cannot accept the responsibilities

Disregard the information that will help you make educated decisions

Make a commitment and not follow through with your promise

Try to handle the complaint or bring it to the board without talking to the manager

Bad-mouth the board's decisions to your friends, associates or the media

Get involved in daily management decisions

Expect staff to answer to the board when they carry out the long-range plan

Suggested Order of Business for District Meetings

1. Meeting called to order by the chair
2. Roll call of members by the secretary
3. Introduction of visitors
4. Reading of the minutes of the previous meeting by the secretary
5. Approval of minutes (any supervisor may move a correction or addition)
6. Report of officers and committees including
 - a. treasurer report
 - b. communications received
 - c. report of permanent and temporary committees
7. Consideration of bills to paid
8. Old or unfinished business including
 - a. business carried over from the previous meeting
 - b. district annual plan of work, long range program, budget and policies which should be reviewed frequently
9. New business
10. Report from Natural Resources Conservation Service and other partners
11. Approve applications and agreements
12. Establish priorities as needed
13. Plans for next meeting
14. Adjournment

NOTE: Most supervisors like to socialize with fellow supervisors. That's one reason they accepted the position in the first place, to be able to socialize with other community leaders. That socialization helps build the team spirit. But the socialization needs to be done before and after the meeting and kept to a minimum during the meeting. The meeting should have a friendly businesslike tone always focused on the agenda item at hand.

Proper Meeting Conduct

Directions: These are some tips you can follow to make sure you conduct yourself properly at this district's board meetings.

Board members:

1. Make an effort to prepare for meetings by reading the agenda and support materials.
2. Demonstrate respect for fellow board members, the public and your official position by arriving on time so that the meeting begins promptly at the scheduled time.
3. Take part in all discussions on issues that come before the board for action.
4. Keep discussions focused on the issue at hand and limit comments to a reasonable amount of time.
5. Understand the basics of parliamentary procedure.
6. Get along with other board members by being flexible and practicing the art of compromise. Above all, be polite.
7. Listen to the comments of other board members.
8. Work toward consensus on issues.
9. Focus on the ultimate mission of the district and the needs of those whom it serves, rather than those of any special interest group or personal agenda.

Board meetings don't need these kind of supervisors:

- The grandstanding supervisor who uses the board meeting as a soapbox to advance a personal agenda or gain personal recognition.
- The silent supervisor who fails to represent anybody or anything by his silence.
- The NO!!! supervisor who is against anything any other supervisor is for.
- The purse watching supervisor whose only concern is that the board spends less money, regardless of the effect on services to constituents.
- The single-minded supervisor who came to the board with one issue to fight for and continues to burden the board with that issue at every meeting.

Questions for Making Sound Decisions

Directions: Ask yourself these questions when you're faced with a tough board decision. This list will help you think through your decision and the reasons for it.

1. How will the decision affect this District?
2. How does this decision relate to our mission statement?
3. What's the potential for legal problems if I vote yes? What if I vote no?
4. Does this decision affect:
 - The people we serve? How?
 - The District's employees? How?
 - The community? How?
 - The board of supervisors? How?

Is the impact on any of these groups negative? If it is, will the decision benefit significantly more people than it will harm?

5. Have we voted on this matter before?

If yes, why are we considering it again? How have conditions changed?

6. Do I have all the information I need to make a sound decision?

What questions should I ask before making this decision?

7. If someone asked me to justify why I made this decision, can I explain my decision?

Parliamentary Procedure Review

Directions: Use this as a quick reference tool when you need to refresh your parliamentary procedure knowledge. Keep it handy if you're unsure about procedures. You can refer to it when you're prepared to make a motion or participate in discussion at board meetings.

To do this:	Say this:	Interrupt speaker?	Second required?	Is motion debatable?	Is motion amendable?	What vote required?
Adjourn meeting before business is completed	"I move that we adjourn."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Recess the meeting	"I move that we recess until.."	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Suspend further consideration of an issue	"I move that we table it."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
End debate	"I move the previous question."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Two-thirds
Study an issue further	"I move we refer this matter to a committee."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Introduce business (primary motion)	"I move that..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend a motion	"I move that this motion be amended by..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Object to procedure or a personal affront	"Point of order."	Yes	No	No	No	No vote, chair decides
Take up a previously tabled matter	"I move we take from the table..."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Consider an issue out of its scheduled order	"I move we suspend the rules and consider..."	No	Yes	No	No	Two-thirds

Meeting Facilitation

What is Meeting Facilitation?

Meeting facilitation is the process by which a group of people can meet and achieve their goals (be productive) in a safe, comfortable environment with the minimum interruption and distraction possible. The meeting facilitator works with the members of the group to assure that all relevant issues are dealt with fairly, that all members have equal opportunity to participate in the business of the meeting, and that any disputes are addressed in a professional manner. Drafting of agendas, handling of meeting notices, and other preparations for the meeting's business are part of the meeting facilitation. Meeting facilitation also includes the environment in which a meeting is held: the setup of the room, availability of seating, equipment, refreshments, and other resources.

Who is the Meeting Facilitator?

The meeting facilitator at a conservation district meeting is usually the regular meeting leader: the chairman or someone asked by him/her to lead the meeting. Sometimes it is appropriate to bring in a third party to facilitate a meeting. Some example of appropriate time include:

- Meetings where controversial issues are to be discussed. A neutral third party facilitating the meeting assures all sides that no one has an advantage in the debate process
- Planning meetings, staff retreats, and other special meetings. A trained outside facilitator can work to be sure everyone participates in the meeting and the group achieves their desired goal. The facilitator's presence makes it possible for all the participants, regardless of job title or status, to function as equals in the meeting.

Elements of Meeting Facilitation

Prior to the meeting:

- Notify all participants of date and time of the meeting (both the starting time and anticipated ending time), prepare agendas, distribute materials to be discussed at the meeting, disclose all proposed action items (items requiring a vote).
- Secure appropriate meeting facilities and assure that necessary equipment, seating, refreshments, etc., are available.
- If appropriate, send out a press release and/or advertise the upcoming meeting. Personally invite individuals with a special interest in the meeting and people whose interests are most directly affected by decisions made at the meeting.

During the meetings:

- The facilitator should be sure all participants agree on the agenda for the meeting. When appropriate, appoint a parliamentarian to see that meeting rules are followed. When appropriate, identify a person to keep accurate minutes of the meeting.
- The facilitator allows discussion on each agenda topic to flow naturally, only interrupting when necessary. The facilitator should work to maintain order, to encourage all participants to speak and be heard, and keep the group focused on the matter at hand.

- At the end of the meeting, the facilitator is responsible for seeing that all participants have a clear understanding of any action taken at the meeting. Each participant should understand any assignments or tasks that will be performed after the meeting. If there is to be another meeting, it should be scheduled at this time.

After the meeting:

- When appropriate, minutes of the meeting and other materials should be distributed to all participants as soon as possible after the meeting and be kept on permanent file.
- If press releases, news articles, or interviews are to be taken, be sure that all information is accurate and represents the actions of the group at the meeting. Do not discuss individual opinions, disagreements, or details of issues not agreed upon at the meeting. If there are questions, refer to the meeting minutes.

Follow up on any action items assigned during the meeting. Be sure that all decisions made at the meeting are carried out in a timely manner as agreed.

Dealing with Conflict at a Meeting

Discussion and disagreement during a meeting are healthy products of an open, issue-oriented agenda. However, it is essential that the meeting facilitator maximize positive communication and dialogue during a meeting. Following the general rules of good meeting facilitation will help avoid destructive conflict. If there is danger of destructive conflict, remember:

- The facilitator should always be the calmest person in the room.
- Identify trouble early and deal with it gently; preserve the purpose of the meeting and the dignity of all the participants.
- Steer the participants back to the central question being discussed.
- Remind all participants of the benefits of proper meeting etiquette
- It may be advisable to call a recess and allow participants to calm down. Talk to the “troublemakers” during the break and emphasize the need for cooperation in moving the agenda forward.

Other Elements of Meeting Facilitation

A good meeting facilitator pays attention to the environment in which a meeting is held. The physical surroundings should contribute to the goals of the meeting. Participants and guests should be made to feel welcome – that their needs were taken into account. Good meetings are held at convenient times and places. Is the room physically appropriate for the meeting? Are there enough chairs/desks? Can everyone –participants and guest– see and hear what is going on? Is the placement of seating appropriate? For example, if public testimony is being taken, where will the witness stand or sit? How will refreshments and breaks be provided (if at all?) How many handouts should be prepared? Are there any participants or guests with special needs? Whatever decisions the facilitator may make should be consistent with the goals of the meeting and the reasonable expectations of the participants and guest. Consideration of these issues affect the comfort and demeanor of everyone involved in the meeting.

Planning

The Board Plans for the Future of the Conservation District

By delegating management responsibility to the paid staff, the board leaves itself enough time for the important task of planning for the future of the conservation district. Planning is not a frill, but one of the most important trusts that constituents give to the conservation district board of supervisors. If there's one thing boards don't do enough of, it's planning.

Planning, in an age when dramatic changes come almost faster than we can comprehend, seems like an exercise in futility. But the very fact that change is so rapid is even more reason that every organization must have a plan to cope with that rapid change and the effects that change could have on the organization. Failure to plan is planning to fail. Board members must be the visionaries for the conservation district. South Dakota law requires that they plan at least ten years ahead.

Planning processes for the conservation district are done at three levels. It is important to address where long range planning fits in the scheme of planning for the district:

- Long range planning - is the broadest level of planning. It includes vision statements describing what the world of conservation will look like ten years from the present and describes overall general goals for the future. Long range plans are written every five to ten years and are updated at least every two years.
- Strategic planning - provides clear goals and objectives to be attained within a five year time frame. The goals and objectives of the strategic plan are taken from the overall general goals of the long range plan.
- Annual work planning - is the annual work plan for the conservation district. This plan provides specific activities, time lines and evaluation expectations. This plan carefully describes the responsible person and/or persons to complete the work outlined in the plan. The content of the annual work plan comes directly from the strategic plan.

Monitoring and Evaluating - Another Major Board Responsibility

As a board member, you are really a "trustee" of the conservation district. Your constituents put their trust in you to make sure the conservation district is accomplishing what they want it to. It's your job to keep an eye on the progress of the conservation district for your constituents.

Of course, you can't watch every detail and every activity that takes place in the district, because that would be a full-time job. Board members monitor and evaluate bottom-line results. For example, you cannot and should not be in the conservation district office every day monitoring the work that employees are doing. But you can measure the results of their activities each month or each year. That's bottom-line evidence of the work staff is doing in each area.

You will monitor and evaluate many things as a member of the conservation district board of supervisors, but there are a few major ones - finance, administrator effectiveness, progress toward the mission and long-range plan.

Long Range Planning

Long range planning provides the foundation of overall conservation district operations. Sometimes referred to as “Vision Setting”, long range planning is generally a ten year future planning process to broadly define the vision for the future. It does not generally include specific planning objectives; however, long range plans define the broad goals of the conservation district for the future.

Long range planning is a process used by a conservation district to create a vision for the future (usually at least five years and no longer than ten years), document those plans, and adopt a plan of action allowing planned movement to more concrete strategic plans that include evaluation of success.

Long range plans focus on a vision for the future, contain broad goals and outcomes, and provide clear philosophy statements that create the foundation of all strategic and annual planning processes.

Long range planning, in and of itself, cannot address all the planning needs of a conservation district. Long range planning is one key component of the planning process each conservation district must complete in order to operate efficiently and effectively.

A Plan for Planning

Long range planning must be much more than an informal discussion about what the conservation district ought to be doing in the years ahead. Good planning has to follow a very orderly and formal process.

You should expect to be involved in at least one significant long-range planning meeting per year. This meeting will write a long-range plan or modify a previously established plan and develop an annual plan of work from the long-range plan.

You should be ready to merge personal goals for the conservation district with the personal goals of the rest of the board team. You should also be ready to work for a consensus with the rest of the planning team about the goals that you will set for the conservation district. An organization must have one set of long-range goals to shoot for.

Who Should be Involved in the Long Range Planning Process?

To be effective, conservation districts should involve a broad spectrum of community representation in their long range planning process. Local conservation leaders, community leaders, educators, agricultural producers, industry leaders, and community citizens at large should be invited to participate. Participation can take many forms:

- The conservation supervisors can plan and carry out a series of long range planning forums within their conservation district. A staff person for the district can take notes of the findings for inclusion in the plan.

- The conservation district can prepare a series of vision statements to which local community citizens and groups can be asked to respond. The written responses can then be used in establishing the long range plan.
- The conservation district can prepare a written survey soliciting input on priority topics for the conservation district for the next ten years. These responses can be used by supervisors in planning.

The Mission Statement - First Step in Long-Range Planning

Your conservation district has a mission that should be in writing, stating clearly the reason the conservation district exists and the vision that the board holds for the future of the conservation district.

The mission is not a fuzzy little piece of philosophy, but a clear statement of where this district wants to go. It states what difference the district will make by its existence.

The mission statement is the cornerstone around which all other planning for the organization takes place.

Elements of a Long Range Plan

- Vision statement- A two- or three-sentence statement that describes the vision of what the conservation district will look like at the end of a ten year period of time. Vision statements are broad and open to interpretation.
- Goals- One or more statements of broad intent to fulfill the vision statement of the conservation district. Goals should always relate to the vision statement.
- General Action Statements (objectives)- Several broad statements under each goal that describe the intended way to achieve a goal.
- Stakeholders- A listing of all constituencies who are affected by the vision and long range plan process. This also identifies the key players who should be involved in the strategic planning activities to come.

The Benefits of long Range Planning

Long range planning encourages conservation districts to look beyond the obstacles of today. Community members, conservation supervisors, conservation district staff, and community leaders have the ability to dream and need to exercise their abilities to create a vision for the future. The long range planning process allows this look beyond today. Some key benefits include:

- The process provides a way to actively involve a large constituency in the planning process. Involving large groups of community members encourages them to learn more about conservation.
- Getting beyond the obstacles of today can free people to look at creative and unusual solutions to conservation issues facing a community now and in the future.
- Long range planning identifies emerging trends and provides a process to address them

before they become critical problems.

- Good long range planning makes strategic planning better. Through review of the “big picture” of conservation assures that strategic planning addresses the most pressing issues facing the conservation district for the next three to five years

A Long-Range Plan is Not Written in Stone

It is a common misconception that a long-range plan once written is locked into place and not changed for the life of the plan. You should consider your conservation district’s long-range plan a flexible and changeable document.

Your written plan should be reviewed at least once a year and modified where necessary. For example, if your plan calls for expansion of your services in three years, but you suddenly find enough revenue to expand in two years, the plan will be modified.

Good Planning Takes Time

The annual long-range planning session will probably include the board, manager, staff and other resource people and last as long as one or even two days.

In that special planning meeting you should be ready to set aside the limitations that you struggle with monthly in your district board meetings. You will be asked to dream about the future of the conservation district and then plan how you will make those dreams reality over the next 2-15 years.

Planning is an exciting and vital board responsibility. Planning makes dreams reality for your conservation district.

The basic elements of a good long-range plan are:

- Do-ability: Actions can be taken to accomplish the plan.
- Flexibility: The plan can be modified over the years.
- Measurability: There are ways to identify accomplishment of the plan.
- Accountability: Completion dates and responsible parties are identified as part of the plan.

Strategic Planning

What is Strategic Planning?

Strategic planning is a process used by a team to make a concrete plan for the future (usually no longer than five years), document those plans, and adopt a formal method to execute those plans and evaluate their success?

Strategic plans are focused, detailed, and clear about what is to be done, who is/are involved and how, when each step is to be performed, and how the success of the plan will be evaluated.

Why should conservation districts practice strategic planning?

- To be effective, conservation district teams need to be built and developed around a specific purpose or purposes. Developing a strategic plan fosters agreement on what is to be done by the team.
- Between 50% and 70% of all decisions made at meetings are never carried out. A strategic plan provides a written record of decisions made and a plan to implement those decisions. Referring to the plan reminds everyone of what is to be done and how each step fits in the overall plan.
- “Failing to plan is planning to fail.” The process of developing a plan - and the process of carrying out a plan - increase the effectiveness of the conservation district in meeting its responsibilities.

Elements of a Strategic Plan

- Mission Statement- A one-sentence statement of the purpose of the organization (i.e., Why is the team here?). Mission statements are usually broad and open to interpretation.
- Goals- One or more statements of intent to fulfill the mission statement of the organizational unit (i.e., What do we want to do?). Goals should always relate to the mission statement; they should be relevant. Goals should always be attainable within a reasonable time so that they can be measured and evaluated. Goals are often written or updated every year or two.
- Objectives- One or more measurable statements of intent to achieve a goal. For example: “We will increase our district cooperators’ awareness of the need to control water erosion on land sloping 2 to 6 percent.”
- Strategies- One or more specific, measurable statements to define how the objective will be accomplished. For example: “We will develop, implement, and complete plans to establish erosion control systems with ten cooperators on 2,000 acres of land each for the next five years.

Conservation district strategic plans should include the goals of their Hydrologic Unit plans, their Long-Range Plans, and the Statewide Coordinated Natural Resources Conservation Plan.

Priority Actions for the next 12 months:

Staffing Needs:

Annual Budget Needs:

Salaries & Benefits: _____

Equipment: _____

Office Supplies: _____

Programs & Cost Share: _____

Rent & Utilities: _____

Other: _____

Total Annual Budget: _____

Key Individuals to Reach for Program Success:

Annual Board Evaluation

Directions: Every supervisor should complete this form. Take plenty of time to consider your responses. Then discuss the results. Check "yes" if the item is true all the time. Check "some" if the item is at least partially true. Check "no" if the item is never true.

	Yes	Some	No
Policies: Board activities are confined to policy, not management issues			
All management activities are delegated to the administrator			
The board annually reviews district law and the policy manual			
Roles and responsibilities: Each board member has a copy of his or her job description			
Board members understand their legal responsibilities as trustees			
Board members talk positively about the District in public			
The board holds yearly self-evaluations			
Committees meet only if they have work to do			
The full board approves the annual evaluation of the administrator			
Board needs are clearly communicated to the administrator			
Board members are recruited for their knowledge, skills and diversity			
New board members receive an orientation			
Each board office and committee has a job description			
Board members receive in-service training at least every six months			
Board members understand that communication with staff should be channeled through the administrator			
Planning: Board activities focus on the mission statement			
The board makes a written long-range plan			
Meetings: Board meetings follow a system of parliamentary procedure			
Board meetings stick to the agenda and are businesslike			
Board meetings start on time and end on time			
Board members arrive on time for meetings			
Board members participate in discussion at board meetings			

Board of Supervisors Calendar

Regular meetings are usually held approximately monthly at the office in _____.

The District reimburses board members for the following:

- mileage: _____
- meeting fee: _____
- lodging: _____
- meals: _____

The District encourages sharing travel whenever possible.

Area meetings are arranged by the SDACD area directors. Supervisors, advisors, and staff are encouraged to attend the area meeting. The District will reimburse travel expenses as outlined in the financial policies of the District..

SDACD Annual convention occurs the third Sunday, Monday and Tuesday of September (at this time). Supervisors, advisors and staff are encouraged to attend. The District reimburses board members for the following:

- mileage: _____
- meeting fee: _____
- lodging: _____
- meals: _____

The District encourages sharing travel whenever possible.

Leadership Conference is usually held during January or February. The program normally begins at 1:00 pm and concludes at noon the next day. Supervisors, advisors and staff are encouraged to attend. The District reimburses board members for the following:

- mileage: _____
- meeting fee: _____
- lodging: _____
- meals: _____

The District encourages sharing travel whenever possible.

Special travel is at the discretion of the Chair, who assigns board members, staff, or district personnel to represent the District. Reimbursement for special travel is outlined in the financial policies of the District.

Officers and directors are encouraged to attend the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) annual meeting, NACD Northern Plains regional meeting, and NACD Leadership Conference. The District will reimburse travel expenses as outlined in the financial policies of the District.

Working with the Media

In order to be effective in carrying out their mission, all conservation districts need the informed support of their communities. To keep the public informed of their plans, their work, and their accomplishments, conservation districts must be able to communicate important information to the newspapers, radio, and television stations serving their area. When the conservation district becomes involved in conflict or controversy, a good working relationship with the media can help get your message out quickly.

Getting the Message Straight

- Designate one person to be the district's spokesperson. It should be the district manager, the board chairperson, or someone selected by the chairperson.
- Make sure that the spokesperson understands the issues and concerns of the district and can give information which is understandable, concise, and factually correct.
- Unless the spokesperson is doing a long feature article or radio call in show, only one message should be given at a time. For example, if the news is that your conservation district has received a \$50,000 grant, focus on the project the grant will help pay for; don't "muddy the waters" by insisting that unrelated actions taken at the last board meeting be discussed at the same time.
- The spokesperson should avoid giving personal opinions; stick to the facts of the situation and the actions taken to address the situation. Never say "I" when communicating with the media; always say "the board," "the conservation district staff," etc.

Press Releases

The best press releases have these things in common:

- they are one page long
- they are typed and double spaced
- they cover one subject
- they always include the spokesperson's name and telephone number (in case a reporter needs to follow up and get more information)

Your press release should always answer the six basic questions of journalism: who, what, when, where, and how.

Make your press release interesting. Ask yourself: "Why should the news paper print it?" "Why would anyone want to hear you press release on the radio?" Focus on the one thing people should remember after reading/hearing your press release. Start your press release by stating that one memorable item.

Interviews

Doing interviews with the media is an excellent way to get your message across. The most important rule of giving good interviews is: be prepared. Know your subject and know what one thing you want people to remember when you're through talking.

Whether interviews are done on radio, on television, by telephone, or in person one-on-one with a newspaper reporter, remember to be yourself - when you're at your best. Everyone is capable of speaking clearly and distinctly, using eye contact, and holding an audience without thinking about it. When the subject and the audience are important to you, you speak well. Your points are clear, you know your subject, and you don't speak too much or too little.

If you are asked to appear on television, focus on the interviewer as you speak. Don't worry about the cameras, lights, or other people. Grooming and dress are important, but don't go to extremes. For example, if you're being interviewed at a sale barn, don't wear a suit (unless that's the way you normally dress).

Etiquette

- Have your chosen spokesperson make the effort to identify and personally visit with the offices of all the newspaper(s), radio stations, and television stations in your district and introduce themselves to the appropriate editor and reporter. Provide address and telephone information to each media representative.
- Never thank a reporter for writing your story; that's their job. However, compliment them if they did a good job of presenting your story.
- Never criticize a reporter for not writing your story or doing it poorly. If you think there's a pattern or bad coverage or no coverage developing, meet with the editor. Ask how you can improve your procedure to make their job easier. Remember, sometimes even the best story never gets reported by the media; no one gets every press release in the paper.
- Follow the Golden Rule. Don't play favorites with the media. Give all reporters equal access to the same information. Don't lie to the media; if you can't answer a question, tell them you can't answer.

Who Speaks for This Conservation District?

Situation	Manager responds	Board member comments
A major expansion will double the size of the District's budget	Yes	"We're very excited about this project. Our manager can provide you with more specifics about it."
A person the District serves was arrested at one of the District's facilities.	Yes	"I really can't talk about that because of our confidentiality policy. Perhaps you should talk with the manager."
The District is launching a \$1 million fund raising campaign.	Yes	"I'm very excited about this project. I'll be happy to talk with you about the general details or you can speak with the chair of the District."
The District is being sued by a former employee.	Yes	"I really don't have specifics. Our manager handles all of our personnel matters."
A board member disagreed with a decision to launch a new program within this District. The rest of the board supports the idea.	Yes	"I expressed reservations about this program at our board meeting. Our board supports it, so I'll back the decision, too."

Building Legislative Relationships

A conservation district is directly affected by actions of state legislators. Sometimes, changes take the form of needed legislation; sometimes, a competing interest lobbies for their program at the expense of conservation districts.

Elected officials react to what they read and hear and who they speak with. In order to influence the legislative process, it is necessary to take action to educate, inform and persuade.

To build effective legislative relationships, conservation district members, and especially conservation district leaders, should be informed on issues affecting their district and its goals. They should also know their elected representatives and other legislators who influence conservation district funding and policy. Finally, they should be prepared to present the case for conservation district interests effectively.

The Power of Being Positive

To be effective in influencing legislators, positive thinking and acting are very important. Communicating a positive attitude will open doors and keep them open. You and legislators you deal with should:

- Know that your issue or concern is always an affirmative one; for example, you should consider yourself “pro-conservation” and not “anti-agriculture.”
- Realize that in order for you to “win” on your issue, no one should have to “lose” their argument or issue. Look for the “win-win” solution.
- Remember that there is always a desirable solution to your problem.

Effective Legislative Techniques

The Plan: Having a good legislative plan and knowing that plan are essential when dealing with legislators. Especially during legislative session, priorities change quickly and legislators are pulled in many directions at once.

Your plan should reflect your vision of how things ought to be; it should also accept the reality of how things really are. A balanced plan is a successful plan.

- Establish goals or priority issues— know what you want to accomplish.
- Research goals and alternatives – know the history of your issue, the likely opposition to it, and how to persuade opponents to your point of view.
- Be prepared – never assume that you have enough or have worked hard enough to develop your plan.
- “Sticktoitiveness” – complete your goals sequentially. Don’t jump around. Groups can lose effectiveness if they seem to have an “issue of the week” which they try to push on legislators. Accomplish your first goal, then accomplish your second goal, even if it takes time.

When working to get your legislation passed, remember that you have the responsibility to see it through the process. If you don't care enough to work for your bills, who else should?

- When drafting legislation, use the assistance of the Legislative Research Council as available.
- Select key sponsors for your legislation. Make sure you do it – don't leave it up to them. You should know the best people to represent your bills in committee and on the floor of the House and Senate.
- Contact all leadership members and briefly give them a summary of your legislation.
- Meet with all legislators to discuss your bills. Get a vote commitment from them if possible.

Credibility

In order to be effective with legislators, you have to prepare your plan and work hard to see it accomplished. You must also be a credible spokesperson for your issue. Credibility is easily lost and rarely ever restored without years of hard work. To establish and maintain credibility, remember the following:

1. You don't have to be disagreeable to disagree.
2. Follow the Golden Rule: treat everyone the way you would like to be treated. Use the rule with legislators, staff members, pages, janitors; you never know who can help (or hurt) your cause.
3. Be true to your convictions.
 - a. Be honest.
 - b. Getting caught in one lie will kill a thousand truths.
4. Keep your word. Before you make a promise, make sure you can and will keep it.
5. Listen, listen, listen. This is especially important with new legislators. The best research won't give you half the information an attentive ear will.
6. Be positive.

Writing to your Legislators

Letters from people who live in a legislator's district and other concerned citizens can be very influential as part of the legislative process. Just a few well-chosen letters can alert a legislator to an important concern back home that must be addressed.

Effective letters are:

- Concise – short and to the point. One subject per letter.
- Specific – the reader should be able to know exactly what your concern is and what you want him/her to do.
- Neatly handwritten or typed – part of your effort to be easily understood.
- Personal – use your own words. Legislators know when they're getting form letters.
- Positive – focus on your point of view and its merit. Limit your discussion of how bad other points of view may be.

Dealing With Difficult People

The Behavior of a “Difficult” Person

- The dominator attempts to control by asserting authority or appearing superior.
- The blocker opposes the group beyond reason and uses a hidden agenda to establish a point of view.
- The aggressor expresses disapproval of another’s suggestion, including attacking a group, person, or problem and joking in a sarcastic or barbed way.
- The disrupter doesn’t share in the groups goals and isn’t really involved. The disrupter can be cynical, removed from the group, or use humor to harm others.
- The procrastinator takes on tasks and never gets them done, limiting the effectiveness of the group.
- The gossipier has nothing to say in front of groups, but a lot to say between meetings.

Confronting Difficult People Without Harming Relationships

- The dominator-In a meeting setting, ask the group to impose its own time limits during discussion on issues. This will allow everyone to talk while limiting long-winded dialogue. Another strategy is to ask groups of persons to identify a spokesperson to speak for the group. The leader must keep control and not allow others to interrupt the spokesperson.
- The blocker-Ask the group to identify a “recorder” who will put the decisions of the group on a large sheet of paper for all to see. This will limit the blocker from trying to resurrect ideas and plans already rejected by the group.
- The aggressor-Ask the group to set ground rules for it’s meeting. One of the rules might be “attack an idea, but never attack a person.” This will send a message to aggressors that personal attacks will not be tolerated.
- The disrupter-The leader of the group meeting has responsibility to read the underlying meaning of a disrupter’s behavior. The leader can attempt to draw out a withdrawn disrupter or ask for clarification of cynical comments.
- The procrastinator-For every task assigned to individual members, there should be clear time lines for completion and a clear description of the planned outcome. For added safety, ask the group to establish a project monitor who will make calls to the working members on a defined time schedule.
- The gossipier-Prevention is the best approach to work with this difficult person. The group leader should remind all members of the importance of sharing information at the meetings. Ask the group to encourage communication by all members in the group. And remember, communication is a two way street—if someone is gossiping to you....it’s because you’re listening. Encourage them to take their comments to the entire group.

Is It Possible that I Might Be a Difficult Person???

It is important for each group member to assess his/her involvement in group activities carried out by the conservation district. It might be possible that others perceive your behavior as blocking the progress of the group.

Following are some of the ways you might be hindering progress of the team, group, or meeting members:

- Assess your listening skills. Do you always allow “equal time” to others when discussing issues? Do you listen actively to others?
- Speak up. If you have an opinion on a project or activity, ask to be heard. State the facts clearly and concisely and then listen closely to responses.
- Keep commitments. If you have taken on a project and are unable to complete it in a timely manner, ask for help or to have the activity reassigned.

Strategies to Lessen the Impact Of Negative People

Team Leader/Meeting Facilitator

- Be well prepared
- Have a planned meeting agenda
- Encourage full participation from all members
- Be fair in providing all members equal time to present issues
- Follow up on issues presented at the meeting, providing additional information to all members

Participants

- Actively listen and take note of your body language. Don't let yourself back away from the group or fold your arms in a defensive posture.
- Be an active partner in the group planning process. By being part of the meeting, your views will be heard and you will have a better understanding of the views of others

Acronyms

AFO	Animal Feeding Operation: definition of livestock, usually less than 1000 animals, contained for more than 45 days in 12-month period with area deprived of vegetation
AITC	Ag in the Classroom: nonprofit promoting agricultural awareness, including natural resources conservation education
ANMT	Agricultural Nutrient Management Team: technical assistance team with staff from districts & NRCS who help promote & establish ag waste systems
ASTC	Assistant State Conservationist: NRCS employee supervising field offices
CAFO	Concentrated (or Confined) Animal Feeding Operation: Same as AFO with 1000 or more animals
CC	Conservation Commission : see description on page 02-21
CCRP	Continuous Conservation Reserve Program: USDA cost share and land retirement program promoting conservation practices on sensitive lands
CD	Conservation District: governmental sub-division of state government
CREP	Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program: program focusing on a state's specific needs to enhance USDA's CRP program
CRP	Conservation Reserve Program: USDA cost share and land retirement conservation program
CTIC	Conservation Technology Information Center: located at Purdue and formed by conservation partners (including conservation districts) to facilitate dissemination of conservation technology
DC	District Conservationist: NRCS employee assigned to assist one or more conservation districts
DENR	Department of Environment & Natural Resources: see description on page 02-23
DU	Ducks Unlimited: national organization promoting waterfowl & grassland enhancement & restoration
ECP	Emergency Conservation Program: USDA cost share program for implementing conservation practices on emergency basis
EI	Erosion Index: calculation used to estimate potential soil erosion
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency: see description on page 02-35

EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Program: USDA cost-share program promoting conservation
FSA	Farm Service Agency: see description on page 02-29
FSO	Field Support Office: NRCS offices located in Brookings, Pierre & Rapid City to support field offices
FWS	Fish & Wildlife Service: see description on page 02-33
GFP	Game Fish & Parks: see description on page 02-23
HEL	Highly Erodible Land: land defined by USDA as erodible and requires a conservation plan to be eligible for USDA programs
HU	Hydrologic Unit: geospatial description of watersheds
KSDG	Keep South Dakota Green: non-profit association whose emphasis is tree planting
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding: agreement of cooperation entered into with various agencies
NACD	National Association of Conservation Districts: see description on page 02-27
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service: see description on page 02-29
PF	Pheasants Forever: nonprofit organization promoting pheasant habitat through technical assistance and cost-share incentives
PIP	Practice Incentive Payment: payment received by producer for completion of certain USDA program conservation practices
PLT	Project Learning Tree: nonprofit organization promoting conservation education and forestry awareness
RC&D	Resource Conservation & Development: see description on page 02-28
RC&F	Resource Conservation & Forestry: see description on page 02-22
SDACD	South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts: see description on page 02-25
SDACDE	South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts Employees: see description on page 02-26
SDCL	South Dakota Codified Law
SIP	Signing Incentive Payment: producer payment received for enrolling in certain USDA conservation programs

