



Conservation District Supervisor Fact Sheet

December 2023

Conservation District Local Work

Conservation districts are citizen-directed organizations, so they are ideal and practical partners to coordinate local, state and federal initiatives to protect natural resources and enhance water quality. In addition to local programs, conservation districts administer the State cost-share programs which provide financial assistance to landowners to install conservation practices. Conservation district employees work closely with employees of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and cooperate with other federal and state agencies to help protect and conserve natural resources in Kansas.

Conservation districts work cooperatively with local citizens to solve local conservation problems, which in turn benefit the agricultural community and society as a whole. Additional natural resource conservation challenges continue to emerge even amidst the many conservation improvements. Conservation districts provide resident leadership by helping landowners address a wide range of local agricultural and urban environmental needs which include the following:

- Protecting federal reservoirs and other public water supplies from pollutants and siltation.
- Reducing flood damage in critical flood-prone areas.
- Reducing nutrients reaching streams from agricultural run-off.
- Achieving non-point pollution reduction goals set forth by the Total Maximum Daily Loads process.
- Improving health of stream riparian areas.
- Promoting wise use of grasslands.
- Reducing soil erosion.
- Improving habitat for wildlife and aquatic species.
- Reducing consumptive use of groundwater supplies to sustain and preserve agricultural, industrial, and municipal water supplies.

Conservation District Mission

“To develop and implement programs to protect and conserve soil, water, farmland, rangeland, woodland, wildlife, energy, and riparian and wetland resources.”

Conservation District Statistics

- 105 conservation districts
- 525 volunteer conservation district supervisors
- 102 district managers

Conservation District Priorities

- Delivery of local financial & technical assistance.
- Reduction of sedimentation, nutrient, pesticide run-off.
- Water quality protection and restoration in streams and above reservoirs.
- Protection and sustainability of the Ogallala and related aquifers.
- Promote conservation practices that improve soil health.

Overview of Conservation Districts

Severe soil erosion problems during the Dust Bowl prompted the passage of the Conservation District Law by the Kansas legislature in 1937. This legislation led to the formation of conservation districts in Kansas. The first conservation district was formed in Labette County in 1938 and the last, Shawnee County, in 1954. Through the years, additional natural resources conservation challenges have emerged. Across the state, 105 conservation districts provide local leadership by helping local people address local natural resource needs.

- The conservation district supervisory board is comprised of five elected local citizens known as supervisors.
- Supervisors establish local priorities, set policy and administer non-regulatory conservation programs during monthly board meetings.
- Supervisors, although serving as public officials, do not draw a salary.
- District employee(s) are hired by supervisors to provide daily coordination of district activities.
- The conservation district is the primary local unit of government responsible for the conservation of soil, water and related natural resources within the county.
- Conservation districts are political subdivisions of state government charged with this vital role.
- Funding is provided by county and state allocations; some districts also generate funds by providing conservation goods and services.
- Each conservation district has an annual meeting either in January or February where the public is informed of district accomplishments and learn more about the programs offered in the county.
- At the annual meeting, an election is conducted for the position(s) of supervisor(s) to fill the expired three-year term. In this election, every qualified elector residing in the county is eligible to vote.
- Conservation districts address a wide range of environmental concerns - agricultural and urban erosion and sediment control, water quality, water quantity, range and pasture management, fish and wildlife habitat, and other natural resource management issues.
- Conservation districts work cooperatively with local citizens to solve local conservation problems.
- Conservation districts provide information and education to landowners, schools and the general public about soil and water conservation issues.

Conservation District Supervisors

A conservation district supervisor has important roles as a local conservation leader (not limited solely to this list):

- Volunteer who serves people, landowners, and communities within the district by observing, reporting on, advocating for, and directing efforts to address natural resources.
- Public officials obligated to uphold high ethical standards.
- Knowledgeable about natural resources issues, familiar with challenges facing the state, knowing many people, businesses and organizations affected by issues.
- Cooperatively work with landowners, concerned citizens, local governments, community organizations, state and federal agencies, fellow supervisors to address matters by seeking out common ground and sensible solutions.