



Module 1: History of the Conservation Movement

A director should be familiar with the history of the conservation movement and the creation of conservation districts.

Pennsylvania Partnership Conservation Leadership Initiative

Since 1986, the “Building for Tomorrow” Leadership Development Program has been working to develop tools and training products aimed at enhancing the leadership and professional development of Pennsylvania’s conservation districts.

Conservation District History

- Early 1930s–Depression rocked the country
- Dust Bowl–unparalleled ecologic and agricultural disaster that drove people from their homes
- In 1933, FDR summoned Hugh Hammond Bennett, a soil scientist, to the White House to see what could be done
- Bennett told FDR that 100 million acres had lost its topsoil, nearly half had been destroyed and could never be farmed again.
- FDR gave Bennett \$5 million in relief funds to start the Soil Erosion Service, a temporary agency intended to provide relief

Conservation District History (cont.)

- In 1935, Hugh Hammond Bennett testified before Congress to persuade them to fund a permanent agency to heal the land.
- He wanted there to be local control, with every farm community setting up a soil conservation district.
- While talking to Congress, he looked out the window –revealed a “cloud of dust” coming from the Great Plains, two days after the infamous Black Sunday.
- Congress unanimously passed legislation making soil & water conservation a national policy and priority.



Conservation District History (cont.)

- 1937–President Roosevelt wrote governors of all states recommending conservation district enabling legislation
- Standard Soil Conservation Law—to persuade farmers & landowners to utilize soil conserving methods
- Brown Creek SWCD (NC) first conservation district established on August 4, 1937

NACD History

- In 1946, 32 soil conservation districts met in DC to form the National Association of Soil Conservation Districts (NASCD).
- Over 1600 districts had already formed.
- Early conservation district leaders recognized the need for a unified message to policy makers.
- Today there are nearly 3000 conservation districts nationwide.

First PA Conservation Districts

- Pennsylvania's first districts were formed in 1945 under the authority of the Conservation District Law (Act 217).
- An earlier law was passed in 1937 which allowed the creation of Conservation Districts along watershed lines was later superseded by Act 217 of 1945

First PA Conservation Districts (cont.)

The Potter County Commissioners were the first in the state to create a Conservation District – which they did by resolution dated November 28, 1945.

- Within a year, eight more districts were created – Allegheny, Berks, Clarion, Clinton, Fulton, Jefferson, Lehigh, and Tioga.
- Currently there are 66 districts throughout the state.



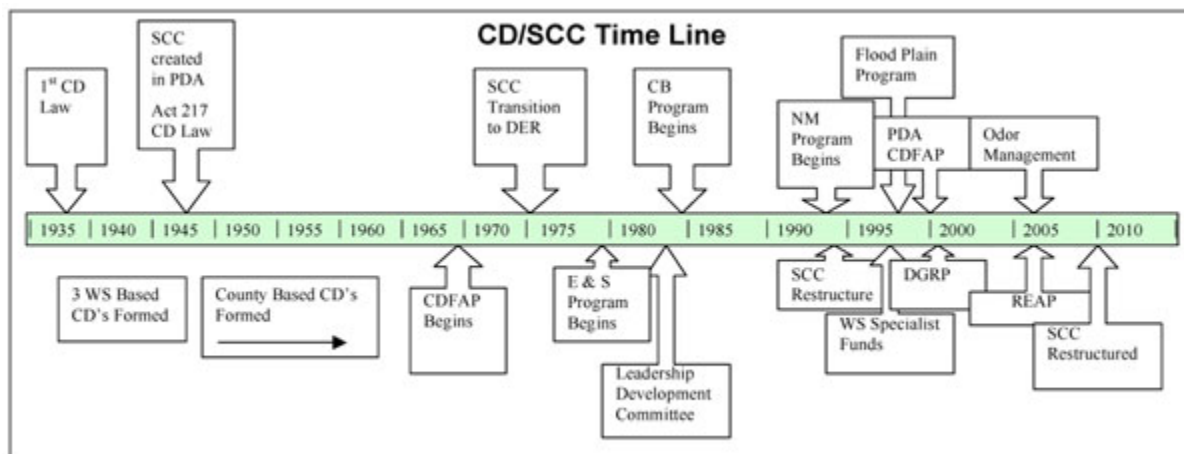
- Philadelphia was designated as an Urban Conservation Partnership which is similar in philosophy and function to a conservation district.

First PA Conservation Districts (cont.)

The State Conservation Commission (SCC) which provides oversight to districts was originally housed and supported by the PA Dept of Agriculture (PDA) until 1979.

From that date until 1995, the SCC was housed under DER. From 1995 until present day the SCC has been housed in the PDA.

The influence of these supporting agencies has had a major impact on program development, staffing and funding for conservation districts.



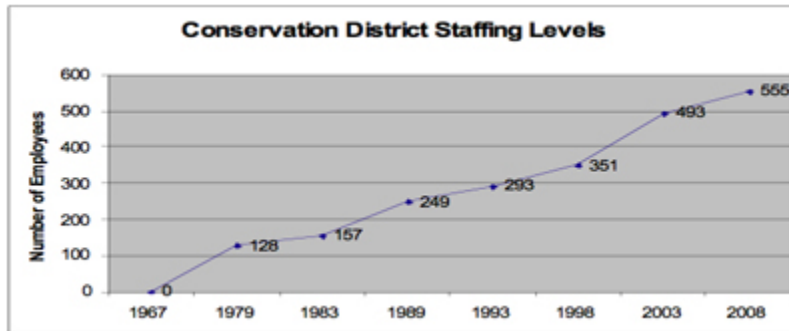
Today in PA Conservation Districts

In 1979 the state recognized the potential of districts ability to educate, promote and deliver sound soil and water conservation programs on a local level through their local partnerships and connections.

As a result the state may enter into formal contracts, delegations and grants to deliver these programs. Some of these programs include:

- Erosion and Sediment Pollution Control
- Watershed Specialist

- Nutrient Management Act Program
- Chesapeake Bay Non-Point Source Pollution Program





Module 2: Conservation District Law

It is essential that all Board members have a working knowledge of the Conservation District Law to fulfill their responsibility as a public official.

Conservation District Law Intent

- To provide for the conservation of the soil, water and related resources of this Commonwealth.
- To designate conservation districts as a primary local government unit responsible for the conservation of natural resources in this Commonwealth.
- To authorize and encourage conservation districts to work in close cooperation with landowners and occupiers, agencies of Federal and State Government, other local and county government units and other entities identified and approved by the State Conservation Commission (SCC).

Role of SCC

The State Conservation Commission provides support, funding, administration and oversight of conservation districts, directors and staff and other cooperating organizations and individuals.

State Conservation Commission

The State Conservation Commission is made up of:

- Rotating Chairs Secretary of Department of Environmental Protection & Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
- Dean of the College of Agriculture of the Pennsylvania State University
- Four farmer members
- Two Public Members
- Associate Members (non-voting) include:
 - The State Conservationist of the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the USDA
 - The Associate Director of the Cooperative Extension Service of the Pennsylvania State University



- The President of the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, Inc.
- The Secretary of Conservation and Natural Resources or a designee
- The Secretary of Community and Economic Development or a designee

SCC Duties and Powers

In addition to the duties and powers herein conferred upon the commission, it shall have the following duties and powers:

- To offer such training, assistance and certification
- To approve and coordinate the programs, projects, funding and standards of the conservation districts
- To approve applications for projects and recommend priorities
- To approve and monitor the delegation of and contracting for certain functions and powers to districts
- To review fees for services established by conservation districts
- To develop, implement and enforce programs which meet the purposes of the Conservation District Law (Act 217)
- To keep the directors informed
- To secure the cooperation and assistance of any governmental agency
- To disseminate information concerning the activities and programs of the conservation districts
- To accept contributions of money, services or materials
- To designate county nominating organizations
- To provide assistance through conservation districts to municipal environmental advisory councils
- To receive such funds as appropriated, given, granted or donated to the SCC

Matters Requiring SCC Approval

- Allocations and reallocations for the Conservation District Fund Allocation Program



- Allocations and program direction for the Chesapeake Bay Nonpoint Pollution Program and other nonpoint source pollution programs implemented in whole or in part under the Commission's legal authority
- Entering into contracts, when the estimated project cost exceeds \$250,000
- The format for contracts or agreements for the Landowner Reclamation Program Public Law 566 projects
- Resource Conservation and Development Program project areas
- Contributions to a conservation district, of any character and from any source, unless the funding is from another governmental agency, or unless specifically authorized under Act 217 (i.e. the purchase, exchange, lease, gift, or grant of any real property).
- Memoranda of Understanding when any State or Federal agency is party to the memoranda
- The addition or deletion of organizations from the list approved to nominate district directors
- Increases or decreases in the number of directors on a district board
- Changes in the composition of the board of directors
- Conservation district long-range work programs
- A district's acceptance of any authority delegated by municipal or county governments, the Commonwealth or the Federal government
- Other federal programs requiring Commission approval

Matters Requiring Commission Notification

Commission approval is not required for the following matters; however, notification of the Commission is required.

- Memoranda of Understanding and/or other formal agreements between the district and county agencies or local municipalities
- Appointment of district directors



- District's annual program of work
- District's annual budget and financial report
- District audit

Pennsylvania's Districts

Pennsylvania's first districts were formed in 1945 under the authority of the Conservation District Law (Act 217).

This Act was later amended in 1978/1979 and then again 1995 and most recently in 2008.

Function of a Conservation District

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 user for conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources.

Functions & Powers – Operational

- Each district is a political subdivision of the state government
- Employ personnel necessary to properly conduct the operations of the District
- Cooperate or enter into agreements
- Acquire property or interests therein
- Borrow and invest money
- Make available material or equipment to assist with the effective conservation and utilization of soil resources
- Construct, improve, and maintain such structures and facilities

Functions & Powers – Operational (cont.)

- Accept, upon approval by the State Conservation Commission, any authority delegated by municipal or county governments, the Commonwealth or Federal Government
- Sue and be sued in the name of the district



- Require contributions in money, services, materials or otherwise as a condition to extending benefits under this act
- Enter into negotiations with state agencies concerning fee schedules
- Enter into a contract or agreement with federal, state, county or local governments for work performed or services rendered by the district.

Functions & Powers – Operational (cont.)

- Be exempt from provisions applied to other public bodies with respect to the acquisition, operation or disposition of property
- Any motions made and acted on at a public meeting are part of the public record
- Accept contributions with the consent and approval of the State Conservation Commission
- Sponsor projects and other federal programs.
- Enter public or private property to make such inspections to the authority has been delegated to a district by the department
- Establish a program of assistance to environmental advisory councils.

Functions & Powers – Natural Resources Management

- Conduct surveys, investigations and research
- Devise and implement preventative & control measures on any lands with written consent of the owner and occupier of such lands
- Assist and advise owners and occupiers of land in developing and/or implementing plans for storm water mgt., soil erosion, water pollution control, etc.
- Assist and advise county and municipal governments in subdivision and land development
- Engage in natural resource programs approved by the Commission
- Conduct educational programs and publish related educational materials



District Board of Directors

- Conservation district directors are appointed by the county commissioners to serve on a 7-9 member board
- Submitted by approved nominating organization and appointed by the County Governing body for 4 year terms
- Consists of farmers members, public members and a member of County Governing Body
- Directors shall serve without pay unless approved by the SCC
- The Board shall elect a Chair, Vice-chair, Secretary and Treasurer
- A majority of voting members will constitute a quorum

District Board of Directors – Director Replacement

- Directors that are absent from meetings three or more times per year may be removed from the board
- Directors may be removed for misfeasance or malfeasance
- Each Board decides which programs and services to offer their community
- Establish/implement programs to protect & conserve soil, water and other renewable natural resources on local, non-federal land

Board Responsibilities

- Identify local conservation needs
- Develop, implement, evaluate strategic plan to meet those needs
- Develop vision and mission
- Set goals & priorities
- Hire staff to carry out programs/plans

Powers Not Granted to Conservation Districts

A conservation district does NOT have the powers of taxation, police or eminent domain that are normally associated with a subdivision of state government.



Module 3: Laws Related to Conservation Districts

A director should be familiar with and comply with all applicable laws pertaining to public bodies and their business.

Public Official and Employee Ethics Act

District Directors are considered Public Officials Under this Act.

The Act promotes full financial disclosure of officials by filing a statement of financial interest annually.

Anyone who engages in a conflict of interest or who offers, seeks, or solicits improper influence commits a felony.

Sunshine Act

The Pennsylvania Sunshine Act requires that all official actions and deliberations of a Conservation District Board must be by a quorum of members and take place at meetings that are open to the public.

- Public notice: At the beginning of each year, the district must give public notice of the schedule of its regular meetings throughout the year.
- The district can adopt its own rules for conducting meetings, but there must be a reasonable opportunity for public comment.
- Must take and retain meeting minutes.
- The board can hold executive sessions, without meeting any of these requirements, in certain limited circumstances.

Right to Know Act

Provides citizens the right of access to public records and sets forth the conditions under which a document maintained by a Commonwealth agency is deemed a public record.

- The District must make public records available to the public upon request.
- The District must have a written Right to Know Policy.



- The District may charge fees for copying, postage and other costs outlined in the Act.
- The District must appoint an Open Records Officer.

Employment Law

Employment laws that Conservation Districts may be subject to:

- Fair Labor Standards Act
- Equal Pay Act
- The Pennsylvania Minimum Wage Act
- Pennsylvania Wage Payment and Collection Law
- Exemptions under the Fair Labor Standards Act
- Independent Contractors
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
- Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986
- Pregnancy Discrimination Act
- Family and Medical Leave Act

ALWAYS CONSULT AN EMPLOYMENT LAW ATTORNEY WHEN YOUR DISTRICT IS ADOPTING PERSONNEL POLICIES OR TAKING PERSONNEL ACTIONS.

Director Liability & Protection

Delegated Programs

The Conservation District Law requires the Commonwealth to defend and indemnify district directors, associate directors and employees for duties performed as part of delegated programs

Non Delegated Programs

For all non-delegated programs or activities, directors and district staff have general liability protection under a state law called the Political Subdivision Tort Claims Act. The District should review all programs to ensure they are consistent with the CD law and evaluate the need for additional insurance.



Module 4: Relationships and Partners

Board members need to understand the roles and function of the core conservation partners.

State Conservation Commission

The Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission (SCC) is an 14-member commission that has a primary function of providing oversight and support to the state's 66 county conservation districts for the implementation of conservation programs in an efficient and responsible manner.

Programs Administered by SCC

Some of the programs that the SCC administers are:

- PA Nutrient Management Program
- Facility Odor Management Program
- Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance Program
- Conservation District Fund Allocation Program funds (CDFAP) which includes programs such as: Administrative Assistance cost share, Technical Assistance (1st & 2nd Technician) Agricultural Conservation Technician cost share, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program support, Leadership Development and Ombudsman Program
- Resource Enhancement and Protection Tax Credit Program (REAP)

PA Department of Environmental Protection

The Department of Environmental Protection ensures the wise use of Pennsylvania's natural resources; protects and restores the natural environment; protects public health and safety; and enhances the quality of life for all Pennsylvanians. DEP is responsible for designating resources to assist in the development, implementation and enforcement of programs adopted by the State Conservation Commission and delegated or contracted to Conservation Districts.



DEP Delegated or Contracted Programs

The following are DEP programs that are delegated or contracted to districts:

- Chapter 102 (Erosion and Sediment Control, NPDES, & Stormwater Management)
- Chapter 105 (Streams, wetland encroachments)
- Chesapeake Bay Program
- Watershed Specialist Grant (Growing Greener)
- Abandoned Mine Reclamation
- Biosolids
- Conservation District Fund Allocation Program (CDFAP)
- West Nile Virus Program

Other support provided by DEP to districts:

- DEP Conservation District Field Representatives
- Training

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture encourages, protects and promotes agriculture and related industries throughout the commonwealth while providing consumer protection through inspection services that impact the health and financial security of Pennsylvania's citizens. PDA provides resources and assists the State Conservation Commission in the administration of programs developed by the Commission that support agricultural production.

PA Department of Agriculture Delegated or Contracted Programs

Programs administered by the PA Department of Agriculture that support program initiatives of the State Conservation Commission:

- Nutrient Management Certification Program (Act 38 Nutrient Management Program)



- Odor Management Certification Program (Act 38 Facility Odor Management Program)
- Commercial Manure Hauler and Broker Certification Program (Act 49)
- Agricultural Conservation Technical Assistance Program (CDFAP)
- Agricultural Conservation Easement Administrative Support Program (CDFAP)
- Trainings for staff and directors

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly called the Soil Conservation Service) has a long and extensive tradition of working with conservation districts. It is responsible for the federal technical service available for establishing conservation practices and for making reviews and recommendations on conservation programs.

Programs & Assistance to Districts

Programs and assistance to districts include:

- Resource Conservation and Development Areas (RC&Ds)
- Farm Bill Programs
 - Environment Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)
 - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
 - Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)
 - Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)
- Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP)
- Conservation and Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning
- Technical Service Provider (TSA)
- Cooperative working agreements
- Direct assistance to conservation district capacity
 - Engineering job approval
 - Design and certification of conservation practices
 - Training
 - Shared office resources



Penn State Cooperative Extension

Through Penn State Extension, a county-based partnership, agents, faculty, and local volunteers work together to share unbiased, research-based information with local residents.

Extension Programs & Support to Districts

- Cooperative workshops and trainings
- Training to District Staff
- Facilitation for strategic planning
- Cooperative staff agreements
- Video conferencing and webinars
- Publications

County Government

County government Provides the authorization for the creation of the conservation district and provides general support for its mission and function.

Support the county governing body is required to provide to the district:

- Commissioner or County Council member appointed to the board
- Appointment of the board members

Support the county governing body may provide to the district:

- Financial support
- Legal support
- Facilities
- Staff support & benefits
- Departmental resources sharing

Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts

The Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. is a private, nonprofit organization organized in 1950 to serve as a collective voice of Pennsylvania's conservation districts.



Programs and support provided to districts:

- Collective voice to legislators and decision makers
- Inter district communications network
- Newsletters, listservs, website
- Administer educational mini-grants
- Administer grants
- Facilitate training for districts
- Coordinate regional and state meetings

National Association of Conservation District

The National Association of Conservation Districts is a private non-governmental organization representing nearly 3,000 local conservation districts and their state associations.

The National Association of Conservation Districts lobbies for federal conservation legislation and funding in Congress. It also provides brochures, reports, conservation films, communications technology and coordinates regional and national annual meetings.

Other Important Conservation Partners

- Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
- Bureau of Forestry
- Bureau of State Parks
- Bureau of Topographic Survey
- Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
- Pennsylvania Game Commission
- Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
- Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
- Susquehanna River Basin Commission
- Delaware River Basin Commission
- Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors
- Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation
- Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation



- Pennsylvania State Grange
- The Pennsylvania State University
- Farm Bureau
- Pennsylvania Environmental Council
- Trout Unlimited
- Pennsylvania Lake Management Society
- Municipal Governments
- Watershed Associations
- USDA Farm Service Agency
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Environmental Protection Agency
- US Forest Service
- US Geographic Survey
- US Army Corps of Engineers



Module 5: Leadership

Districts need strong board leadership to function effectively.

District Vision and Mission

The board develops and adopts the vision and mission of the conservation district.

- The board develops and approves the District's Strategic Long Range plan and should revisit the plan periodically.
- The board communicates the vision and mission to the staff and community through both internal and external communications.
- The board is responsible for ensuring implementation of a dynamic strategic long range plan and ensuring consistency of district programs and activities with the ongoing strategic long range plan.

Leadership of Board Members

Board provides clear leadership to staff and the conservation district clients by:

- Active attendance and participation at Board meetings, on committees and through district programs and other district activities
- Understanding of who are the district's clients and what are their needs
- The development of policy decisions that provide clear guidance on district functions and programs

Board members should communicate the districts message to the community and the community's message to the Board.

Clear Roles and Expectations of Board Members

- Provide a clear director training plan
- Orientation and mentoring for new directors
- Director Handbook
- Job description
- Board self-evaluations



Ethics

Board members not only need to be cognizant of the legal ethical requirements of a public official but also embody a sound conservation ethic for the resources they manage.

- Actions and decisions must be consistent with the Pennsylvania Public Official and Employee Ethics Act.
- Directors are in the public eye and should set an example for the community.

Strategic Long Range Planning

The board should ensure implementation of a dynamic strategic long range plan.

- A board that is able to analyze the social/economic landscape and knows when and how to implement change
- A board should ensure consistency of district program and activities with the ongoing strategic long range plan.

The Board and the Bigger Picture

The board must provide a 'bigger-picture' perspective:

- Knowledge of the roots of the Conservation District
- Knowledge of regional, state and national conservation programs, policies and issues
- Participation in Regional, State and National associations
- Awareness and understanding of the roles of state and national natural resources agencies

Board Ownership of Programs

Board members should recognize they have a common ownership of all district programs.



- Understand the purpose and function of the programs the district is involved with in relation to the strategic plan.
- Understand the benefits and challenges of all district programs.

A board that is able to analyze the social/economic landscape knows when and how to implement change.

Meeting Management

- Defined set of meeting procedure and rules
- Appropriate board, staff, partner and public participation
- Transparency by ensuring that the Sunshine and Right to Know Acts are followed
- Adequate meeting space
- Awareness that the board is making public decisions
- Adheres to laws appropriate to public meetings (Sunshine, Ethics Act, & Right to Know, etc.)
- Organized agenda with supporting documentation
- Decisions based on adequate information
- Accurate board meeting minutes



Module 6: Operational Oversight & Policy

Proactive policies regarding office operations and program delivery procedures are essential to the efficient functioning of a growing, busy conservation district.

Policy

Policies may include:

- Operational Policies
- Fiscal Policies
- Personnel Policies
- Employment Policies

All policies should be compiled in a policy manual and available to all directors and staff. It is the Board's responsibility to adopt policies at a public meeting.

Personnel Policies

As the governing body of the District, the board of directors has the responsibility of ensuring legal personnel policies and practices are followed and overseeing the proper management and growth of the District staff.

Personnel policies should:

- Ensure applicable employment laws are followed
- Provide guidance in hiring, firing and discipline of employees
- Assure expectations for employees such as dress code, absences, use of electronics technology etc are understood and followed
- Establish and communicate clear roles and expectations of manager and staff
- To set a baseline for performance expectations and evaluations
- Enable the staff to effectively carry out the mission of the district
- Can be outlined in job descriptions, Individual Development Plans and evaluations



Evaluation Procedures & Processes

Develop and utilize evaluation procedures and processes for staff and manager:

- Helps establish goals of performance
- Provide an opportunity to identify professional and personal growth.
- Enable the board to identify training needs
- Provide an opportunity to update job description and responsibilities
- Evaluate recent job performance
- Provide avenue for open communication between staff, board and manager
- Provide the opportunity for recognition of exceptional performance

Develop and utilize a professional development plan for manager and staff:

- Help identify and target training needs
- Enable district to budget for training needs
- Provide for personal growth and empowerment Increases the district's overall technical capacity Identifies the opportunities for cross training

Planning

To best realize its potential, districts benefit from a planning process that includes developing a common vision and mission, as well as short- and long-term goals and any new direction.

Benefits of Planning

- Shared vision of the community's natural resource needs
- The identification of strategies to meet those needs
- The identification of resources and partners to meet those needs
- Clearly identifies the districts role in meeting the communities goals
- Communicate needs and secure resources to accomplish the goals of the strategic plan



Strategic Long Range Planning

Strategic Long Range Planning is a process used to make concrete plans for the future, document those plans, and adopt a formal method to execute those plans and evaluate their success.

- Reaches two to five years into the future and is focused, detailed, and clear about what is to be done
- Who is/are involved – District, partners, community
- When each step is to be performed
- How the success of the plan will be evaluated

Annual Plan

An Annual Plan should spell out in detail:

- What the district expects to accomplish during the coming year
- How action is to be taken to accomplish the goals
- Who is to carry out the action or be responsible for its completion
- When the action is to be accomplished
- How it is to be measured

Planning Tools

The annual plan should be reviewed, updated and evaluated regularly.

- Each year, your conservation district should evaluate the success it had in reaching the goals and objectives it planned and capture the “whys” of what worked and what didn’t.
- Invest the time in creating a meaningful plan and evaluating its usefulness.

Operational Oversight

As the governing body of the District, the board of directors has the responsibility for overseeing the proper management and growth of the District program.



Well-Functioning Districts

A well-functioning District maintains:

- An active and engaged board that makes well informed policy decisions
- A committee and volunteer structure that supports the board in its decision making process
- A network of active and knowledgeable partners
- A set of operational policies that set clear guidance for the district to carry out programs

Roles of Associate Directors or Volunteers

Clear roles and expectations of associate directors or other volunteers:

- Knowing the Conservation District Law and responsibilities of directors and staff
- Know and understand the local Conservation District programs and operations
- Know and understand the job descriptions of associate directors and other volunteers
- Provide specialized expertise to the board
- Research issues to facilitate informed board decision making
- Provide training excellent training for men and women who are potential directors
- Provide a direct tie to different area of the community
- Provide a pool of resources to implement district programs
- Carry forward the Districts mission to other organizations in the community

District Committees

District committees perform an important role:

- Provide a forum for research and debate on topics of interest to the board
- Committees can also be used to acquaint new board members with program specifics



- Advise the board on program decisions
- Analyze and/or develop proposed policies as needed
- Directly involve partners in business of the district

Understanding Resources

It is important that district committees understand what resources are required for proper operation of the District:

- Know and understand the true costs of implementing projects and programs
- Know the people resources required to effectively carry out programs
- Provide the appropriate facilities and tools for staff to carry out their responsibilities
- Understand the training needs of the district's human resources



Module 7: Fiscal Management

Director knowledge, understanding, direction and involvement in the internal fiscal well-being and management of the District are critical.

Knowledge of Budget and Funding Sources

District must develop an annual budget and it must be submitted to the State Conservation Commission by March 31st of each year.

- Directors should be knowledgeable of the system used to set salaries within the District.
- As public officials, conservation district directors are accountable for funds, property, and equipment belonging to the district.

Potential funding sources available but not limited to Districts across the state include:

- Local Governing Body
- Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)
- State Conservation Commission (SCC)
- Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA)
- Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)
- Fees for Services
- Grants
- Sale of products
- Private donations (subject to SCC Policy)

The Districts do not have the authority to levy taxes.

Funding

State agencies that have a line item in their budget for Conservation District Funding include DEP and PDA.

Conservation District Fund Allocation Program contributes to the support of management, technical assistance positions and administration of the district.



Knowledge of Internal Financial Controls

It is the responsibility of the district board to develop fiscal policies.

- Internal financial controls – A recorded process and procedure for receiving and dispersing funds
- Develop a financial plan to ensure that the district can meet their short and long term financial obligations

Audits

Conservation District Law and SCC policy requires Districts to have an annual audit completed by a certified public accountant and submitted to the SCC by October 1st each year.

- Audits should also be completed if required by any other programs.
- Each district is strongly encouraged to have their auditor attend a monthly board meeting to present the findings of the completed audit.
- The Board is responsible to see that appropriate audit recommendations are implemented.

Remember!

Funds obtained by conservation districts are classified as public funds, regardless of how they are obtained.

The board should be aware of all conditions and restrictions associated with funding sources.



Module 8: Communications & Advocacy

It is the Board members' responsibility to assure proper communication of the district's goals and needs between the District, the community, elected officials and its partners.

Internal Communications

Between board and manager

- Communicate the district's vision and mission to the manager and staff
- Close and regular communication between the board and manager
- Appropriate chain of communications
- Regular transfer of information between manager and board between board meetings
- Participation on committees

Facilitate Internal Communication

Assure that there is an adequate internal communication between management, staff and the board:

- An established chain of command and information exchange
- Regular staff meetings
- Appropriate staff input to board decisions and policy making
- Appropriate staff participation at board meetings Interaction of staff, board and partners on committees

Seek informal opportunities for communications through activities such as

- Retreats
- Special events
- Banquets
- Envirothon
- Field Trip and tours



External Communications

Community communication of district activities and programs should use media such as:

- Newsletters
- Press Releases
- Annual Report
- Participation in fairs and special events
- Webpages

Agency/Partner Communications

- Mutual participation on committees and advisory boards
- Participation in strategic and annual planning
- Mutual training opportunities
- Shared projects (i.e. Watershed projects, workshops, NRCS projects)

Advocacy

It is a core responsibility of the Board member to communicate the goals and needs of the District to elected officials.

Formal & Informal Communication Methods

Directors should take advantage of these formal and informal communication methods to advocate to elected officials.

- Memorandum of Understanding
- Capital Day
- Legislative Breakfast/lunch
- Testimony at hearings
- Bus tours of field sites
- Participation on municipal and state advisory boards and committees
- Provide written comments on legislation
- Regular update meetings to legislators
- Presentation at community meetings & service clubs



- Phone calls Invitation of their participation in district activities (i.e. Envirothon, Banquet)

Networking

Look for opportunities to network with local, state and national organizations with common cause.

- Nominating Organizations
- Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts
- National Association of Conservation District
- Conservation Organizations (i.e. Watershed groups, Trout Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, etc.)

Getting the Message Out

An organized, concise, justifiable request for targeted needs.

- The board should select champions to convey the district's message and needs to elected officials.
- Board members should follow up to address legislators' questions and needs.

Every Board Member Communicates

Board members are nominated by local organizations and are a conduit for communication between the nominating organization and the board of directors.

Each board member should have an active role in communicating the district's mission and programs to the community.