

# Supervisor's Handbook

for supervisors of soil and water conservation districts



Written and compiled by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources

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**Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources**  
**SUPERVISOR HANDBOOK**  
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## I. ACRONYMS

### AGENCIES

#### State

BWSR:	Board of Water and Soil Resources
DNR:	Department of Natural Resources
DOER:	Department of Employee Relations
LCMR:	Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources
MDA:	Minnesota Department of Agriculture
MDH:	Minnesota Department of Health
MES:	Minnesota Extension Service
MGS:	Minnesota Geological Service
MPCA:	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
OWM:	Office of Waste Management
SPA:	State Planning Agency

#### Federal

ACOE:	Army Corps of Engineers
FSA:	Farm Service Agency
EPA:	Environmental Protection Agency
NRCS:	Natural Resources Conservation Service
RC&D:	Resource Conservation and Development
RECD:	Rural Economic and Community Development
USDA:	United States Department of Agriculture
USF&WS:	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS:	United States Geological Survey

#### Local and Regional

CHS:	Community Health Service
JPB:	Joint Powers Board
RDC:	Regional Development Commission
SWCD:	Soil and Water Conservation District
WD:	Watershed District
WMO:	Watershed Management Organization

### ASSOCIATIONS

#### State

AMC:	Association of Minnesota Counties
AMWRAP:	Association of Minnesota Water Resources Administrators and Planners
MACDE:	Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees
MACPZA:	Minnesota Association of County Planning and Zoning Administrators
MARC&D:	Minnesota Association of Resource Conservation and Development
MASWCD:	Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
MAWD:	Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts
MLA:	Minnesota Lakes Association
MLMF:	Minnesota Association of Lake Management Federation

**National**

NACD: National Association of Conservation Districts  
NWF: National Wildlife Federation  
SWCS: Soil and Water Conservation Society

**PROGRAMS**

**State**

CLMP: Citizens Lake Monitoring Program  
CLWP: Comprehensive Local Water Planning  
C-S: Cost-Share Program  
CREP: Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program  
CWP: Clean Water Partnership  
FDR: Flood Damage Reduction  
LAP: Lake Assessment Program  
MFIP: Minnesota Forestry Improvement Program  
NPEA: Nonpoint Engineering Assistance  
PFM: Private Forestry Management  
PWP: Permanent Wetlands Preserve  
RIM: Reinvest in Minnesota  
WCA: Wetland Conservation Act

**Federal**

CRP: Conservation Reserve Program  
ECP: Emergency Conservation Reserve  
EQIP: Environmental Quality Improvement Program  
FEMA: Federal Emergency Management Act  
FACTA: Food and Agriculture Commodity Trade Act (1990)  
WBP: Water Bank Program  
WRP: Wetland Reserve Program

## **II. PURPOSE OF THE HANDBOOK**

Congratulations on your election as a soil and water conservation district (SWCD) supervisor and welcome to the SWCD organization. SWCDs have been working with landowners to conserve soil and water since 1938.

As an SWCD supervisor, you will set conservation policies for your district. The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) has compiled this handbook to help you understand your role as an SWCD supervisor and give you important information about the organization you will be representing.

The primary purpose is to give you, the supervisor, information you need to fulfill your duties. But the handbook also contains sections on the history of SWCDs, descriptions of other resource agencies and associations, keys to understanding the legislative process, and some tips on staff development.

We hope you will find this handbook useful. We look forward to working with you as an SWCD supervisor.

### III. COUNTY FACT SHEET

<b>TOTAL ACRES</b>	_____	<b>POPULATION</b>	_____
Crop Acres	_____	% Rural	_____
Forest Acres	_____	% Urban	_____
Pastured Acres	_____		
Private Acres	_____		
Public Owned	_____		
Covered by Water	_____		
Wetlands	_____		

#### POTENTIAL ERODIBLE ACRES

**T = Annual Allowable Soil Loss**

2 T	_____	Treated	_____
1 -2 T	_____	Treated	_____
T	_____		

#### TEMPERATURE DATE

Range	_____
First Frost	_____
Last Frost	_____
Yearly Avg.	_____
Growing Days	_____

#### PRECIPITATION

Avg. Snowfall	_____
Avg. Rainfall	_____

#### LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

STATE

Senate	_____
House	_____

FEDERAL

Senate	_____
House	_____



**IV. MISSION OF YOUR DISTRICT**

The mission statement provides for a sense of purpose and gives direction to the district for implementing its annual and comprehensive plans. Each SWCD should use its mission statement to evaluate and list specific types of resource problems that are occurring in the district and indicate what technical and administrative assistance can be provided in order to address the problems. In many cases, the mission statement can be contained in as little as one paragraph. Once developed, it should also be listed under a separate heading in the comprehensive plan.

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**SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

**MISSION STATEMENT:**

## **V. HISTORY OF THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT IN MINNESOTA**

Soil erosion, wind erosion, water quality—these problems have been around for many years, and citizens and government officials have been trying to practice wise use of our resources for almost as many years. One of the first attempts to protect our soil and water resources was the formation of Soil Conservation Associations in 1934-35. These associations, which were the precursor to our modern-day soil and water conservation districts, were organized around 11 Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps and conservation demonstration projects.

In 1937, one of these associations—the Southeast Minnesota Soil Conservation Association—lobbied the state legislature to pass a bill permitting the establishment of soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) within Minnesota, as outlined by the guidelines in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Soil Conservation Districts Law. The bill passed, and the Minnesota Soil Conservation Districts Law became effective July 1, 1937. It enabled farmers within set boundaries to organize for conservation purposes and gave them the power to enter into legal agreements and furnish financial aid to landowners.

The State Conservation Committee was established in 1937 to organize the SWCDs. The committee later became the districts' administrative arm, called the Minnesota Soil and Water Conservation Board, and later, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR).

On May 3, 1938, Minnesota's first SWCD was organized—the Burns-Homer-Pleasant District (which consolidated with the Winona SWCD in 1986). The organization and consolidation of districts accelerated during World War II until, in 1973, the Ramsey County SWCD became the final SWCD in the state to organize. Minnesota now has 91 SWCDs.

Governed by an elected group of five supervisors, SWCDs operate from annual and comprehensive work plans indicating local conservation priorities, resource treatment needs, and construction schedules. The district is authorized to conduct survey and demonstration projects, public information activities, and to implement any necessary practices within its boundaries.

*Thou shalt inherit the holy earth as a faithful steward, conserving its resources and productivity from generation to generation. Thou shalt safeguard thy fields from soil erosion, thy living waters from drying up, thy forests from desolation, and protect thy hills from overgrazing by thy herds, that thy descendants may have abundance forever. If any shall fail in this stewardship of the land, thy fruitful fields shall become sterile, stony ground and wasting gullies, and thy descendants shall decrease and live in poverty or perish from off the face of the earth.*

W.C. Lowdermilk

## VI. THE SWCD SUPERVISOR

### A. ROLES OF AN SWCD SUPERVISOR

As a soil and water conservation district supervisor, you have been entrusted with some of Minnesota's most precious assets: our natural resources. Your primary responsibility is to ensure that your community uses its natural resources wisely, with an eye toward the future.

To do this, you must seek and achieve a delicate balance between people and the land we inhabit. The future of Minnesota's environment rests on your ability to maintain this balance and garner your neighbors' support for an active and protective natural resources program.

In order to be an effective board member and feel a sense of accomplishment for the people you serve, you must have a good working knowledge of your responsibilities as (1) an SWCD board member, (2) an elected official, and (3) a community leader.

#### **Role of a Supervisor as an SWCD Board Member**

There are three key aspects to the role of a supervisor as an SWCD board member: policy development, annual and long-range plans and budgets, and working with the district staff.

#### Policy Development

The SWCD board of supervisors is a policy board, meaning that its primary focus is not on running the day-to-day activities of the district, but on setting overall policy and long-term objectives. The staff then uses these policies and objectives to ensure that the district is proceeding in the general direction laid out by the board.

The board of supervisors should develop policies on:

- Personnel management—a separate personnel policy handbook is usually suggested.
- Technical assistance.
- Use of cost-share dollars.
- Compensation for supervisors and staff.
- Travel.
- Training.
- Use of district equipment.
- Charges for services.
- Election of officers.
- Fiscal matters (check signing, bonding, insurance).
- Plan development.
- Agreements with other agencies or units of governments.
- Membership in organizations.
- Others.

**Example of a travel policy:** Travel must be directly related to the business of the district. Staff must keep travel logs, and all travel must be approved by the board. If more than one staff member is attending a meeting, only one will be reimbursed for car mileage. ETC.

Obviously, then, board policy is a key element in the smooth operation of the district. The board should develop policies on items ranging from expenditure of cost-share funds to the election of officers. Do not wait until a situation arises requiring a policy; develop a policy beforehand so that guidelines are available if a question is raised. (See box on the previous page for examples of the types of things for which policies should be developed.)

Although it is the board's responsibility to develop policy and the staff's responsibility to implement it, you will find that the fairest and most useful policies are developed with the help of significant staff input.

### Planning and Budgets

Because board members focus on long-range objectives and goals, one of the most important parts of your job is developing your district's annual and comprehensive plans. (These plans are required under Minnesota Statutes (M.S.) Chapter 103C.331.)

The comprehensive plan (long-range plan) must cover a minimum of five years; annual plans cover one year. To be eligible for grant funding from the BWSR, all districts must have an approved comprehensive and annual plan on file. Both plans must include budgets. Annual plans must be submitted to the BWSR by March 15. The annual plan should fulfill the comprehensive plan by identifying items that can be accomplished over the course of the year. (For more information on these plans and deadlines, see the SWCD Operational Handbook.)

Annual plans should contain:

- Specific statements about the district's activities for the upcoming year.
- Specific goals and objectives for the upcoming year.
- Budgets and staffing for each program.
- Activities that work toward fulfilling the comprehensive plan.

For more information, see the SWCD Operational Handbook.

Supervisors must be involved in all aspects of plan development and implementation, particularly in determining the long-term objectives of the district. Although, theoretically, the board members write the plan and the staff carry it out, realistically, staff involvement is often critical in the plan development and supervisors often have a strong role in carrying out the plan.

When working on the annual and long-range plans, supervisors should take a strong leadership role in the following areas:

- Definition of purpose: Supervisors must determine the purpose of the district in the community.
- Prioritization of resource problems: Supervisors must decide which resource problems the district will address and their relative importance. Supervisors should look at the big picture and develop broad policies that address the resource as a whole in their SWCD. Staff can work within these broad policies to address individual concerns.
- Development of objectives: Supervisors must adapt the objectives they feel the district should pursue to meet the resource needs of the district.
- Determination of actions: Supervisors must outline the actions to be taken by the board and staff to carry out their stated objectives. These actions should be consistent with their stated purpose and will result in a more effective conservation program.

- Adoption of plan: The board must formally adopt the plan.

To achieve full participation in the planning process by both board and staff, a planning committee may be formed to develop the plan for recommendation to the board. The chair may appoint one or two board members to work with staff to develop the plan.

Annual plans, comprehensive plans, and budgets should be reviewed on a regular basis to determine if goals are being achieved. The stated goals can be compared with actual performance and dollars available. Supervisors can use this information to decide what changes, if any, may be necessary to keep the district on track.

#### Working With Staff

Although the policies and annual and long-range plans developed by the board will guide the district staff in everyday activities, there are a number of more specific items you should work on with the staff. The district manager or other lead staff person should be the board's key contact to supervising the operation of the district.

The board should work closely with the manager to:

- Delegate responsibilities to employees.
- Set work priorities.
- Develop annual and long-range budgets.
- Identify training needs and arrange schedule for board and staff.
- Develop an employee evaluation system.
- Provide adequate clerical and technical help to meet the needs of your district. Provide each employee with a specific job description.
- Obtain a surety bond for all individuals within the district organization entrusted with district funds and equipment.
- Keep in close contact with the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), both the board conservationists and central office, to keep lines of communication open.
- Approve or reject conservation plans.
- Look for new programs to expand existing programs.
- Support local, state, and national associations to keep lines of communication open and provide representation of SWCD concepts to all levels.
- Prepare an annual report of accomplishments, making sure to circulate copies to all interested parties.

## **Role of a Supervisor as an Elected Official**

As an elected official, you're responsible for operating the district as a political subdivision of state government. Specifically, your duties are:

- Establishing policies to implement state grants programs.
- Maintaining a working relationship with other political bodies and state agencies, including BWSR, USDA, FSA, NRCS, county commissioners, county extension, and other agencies.
- Entering into memorandums of understanding or working agreements with as many agencies as necessary to coordinate the conservation and development of resources in the district.
- Pursuing funds and/or insurance for district operation from county commissioners, the State of Minnesota, and other entities as opportunities arise.
- Cooperating with other districts and watersheds in resource activities.
- Conducting an annual meeting.
- Monitoring your actions to comply with program rules and regulation.

## **Role of a Supervisor as a Community Leader**

As a community leader, you help guide your community in natural resource issues. Specifically, you are responsible for:

- Acting as a local grassroots representative for soil and water conservation.
- Maintaining good conservation on the land you manage.
- Acting as a spokesperson on conservation and environmental issues.
- Utilizing existing and new innovative programs to promote conservation at the local level, such as:
  - Youth education.
  - Award programs.
  - Newsletter.
  - Tree and tillage programs.
  - Tours.
  - Exhibits, demonstrations, and special projects.
- Discussing the district's programs with businessmen, civic and sporting clubs, professional groups, educators, and farm owners and operators.
- Joining various planning organizations and agencies, within the conflict of interest guidelines, and helping to guide these people in the use of good resource management practices.

## **B. SUPERVISOR COMPENSATION AND REIMBURSEMENT**

Compensation and reimbursement for expenses for supervisors is allowed when the event attended and expenses incurred are essential to district operations. The compensation rate is set by the district board. However, it cannot exceed the maximum rate set by the Board of Water and Soil Resources (see the SWCD Operational Handbook for details). Compensation is set on a per day basis; therefore, if more than one meeting in a day is attended, only the rate established per day can be claimed.

Auto mileage can be reimbursed at a rate set by the district board. However, the rate cannot exceed the rate set by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Reimbursement can be claimed only for the vehicle making the trip.

All other expenses, such as lodging and meals, are reimbursed at actual cost. All claims should be accompanied by receipts.

Compensation rates, mileage reimbursement rates, events and meetings attended (other than the regular board meetings) requiring compensation and expense claims must be approved and recorded in the minutes of a district board meeting.

For further guidance on supervisor compensation and reimbursement, please refer to the District Supervisors section of the SWCD Operational Handbook.

### **Income Tax Requirements**

All supervisor compensation is taxable income, and supervisors will receive W-2s for the calendar year. A retirement plan for supervisors is available through the Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA). Participation in that plan, called the Deferred Compensation Plan (DCP), is voluntary. Supervisors should fill out a W-4 form for their personnel file.

## **C. TIME OFF FOR PUBLIC OFFICE MEETINGS**

A district supervisor must be permitted to take time off from their regular employment to attend meetings required by their public office (M.S. 211B.10, subd. 2). The district supervisor is responsible to come to an agreement with their employer as to whether the time off will be without pay, with pay, or made up with other hours. Retaliatory action cannot be taken by the employer for absences to attend meetings required by the district supervisor's office.

## **VII. THE SWCD**

### **A. POWERS AND DUTIES**

Minnesota Statutes (M.S.) 103C.331 establishes soil and water conservation districts as political subdivisions of the state of Minnesota with certain powers and duties. An SWCD:

- Is a legal subdivision of the state and can exercise public powers.
- May conduct resource surveys and demonstration projects.
- May carry out soil and water conservation measures on any lands in the district with the consent of the landowner.
- May cooperate or enter into agreements with any governmental agency or individual landowner for the purpose of carrying on a program of erosion prevention and control.
- May purchase or accept property and income and provide equipment and supplies that will help to bring about conservation practices.
- May construct, install, improve, maintain, and operate such structures and works as may be necessary for proper performance of the district.
- May develop a comprehensive and annual plan for the conservation of soil and water resources. These plans are required for the district to receive state grant funds.
- May assume land by purchase, lease, or otherwise to improve, maintain, operate, and administer any soil and water conservation project undertaken by federal or state government.
- May sue or be sued.
- May require compensation or contributions for goods and services provided.
- May make application or enter into an agreement with any designated authority for federal assistance.
- May perform any other acts necessary to secure and use federal aid.
- May acquire land, easements, or rights-of-way needed in connection with works of improvement installed with federal assistance.
- Shall present an annual budget to the board of county commissioners.
- May use necessary funds to provide membership in state and national associations that pertain to district operations, and is authorized to participate and appropriate necessary funds to defray expenses of district representatives for meetings of such groups.
- May procure necessary insurance.



- May publish any information relating to the activities of the district.
- May provide advice to or consult with county or municipal representatives.

Since SWCDs are political subdivisions of the state of Minnesota and considered special purpose local governmental units (LGUs), they are not classified as a nonprofit organization.

## **B. PROGRAMS ADMINISTERED BY SWCDS**

### **Local SWCD Programs**

Many SWCDs earn money to support other district programs by:

- Selling and planting trees for conservation projects.
- Charging for services such as technical surveying and plat development review.
- Renting out conservation tillage implements and no-till drills.
- Selling conservation construction material such as seeding mulch or netting.
- Selling grass seed and running a seeding program.
- Signing grant agreements with other units of government such as the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

#### BWSR programs:

- General Services Grant
- Erosion, Sediment Control and Water Quality Cost-Share Program
- Special Project Program
- Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Program
- Local Water Resources Protection and Management Program (LWRPMP)
- Wetland programs
- Nonpoint Engineering Assistance (NPEA)
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

### **BWSR Programs**

These programs have been established by the state to assist districts in protecting their community's soil and water resources. Because these programs were developed in response to the needs expressed through SWCDs, many of them fit well with the resource needs of your district. Rather than tailoring your requests to fit these programs, it is important that you first evaluate your resource needs and then see how the programs can help.

General Services Grant: BWSR annually allocates funds to all Minnesota SWCDs for expenditures necessary to the operation of the district.

Erosion, Sediment Control, and Water Quality Cost-Share Program: Provides up to 75 percent cost-sharing to landowners for installation of soil and water conservation practices. SWCDs receive an annual allocation from the BWSR.

Special Project Program: Provides additional source of cost-sharing for demonstration projects, innovative projects, long-term agreements, and non-structural erosion control practices or planning techniques. SWCDs must apply to the BWSR for special project funds.

Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Program: A land retirement program that pays landowners to retire marginal agricultural land. It includes wetland restoration, riparian lands, and sensitive ground water area payment provisions, among others. The land must be retired under 20-year or permanent easements. The program is administered locally by the SWCDs.

Local Water Resources Protection and Management Program (LWRPMP): Counties apply to the BWSR for base grants and competitive challenge grants for implementation of local water plan initiatives. SWCDs are often involved in plan development and implementation.

Wetlands Programs: During the 1991 legislative session, the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) was passed to conserve wetlands and establish a no-net-loss of wetlands policy in Minnesota. The BWSR is the lead state agency in carrying out many of the administrative aspects of the act, the DNR plays a strong role in enforcement, and the local units of government implement the act. SWCD roles vary from county to county with main responsibilities of serving on technical evaluation panels, repository for resource maps and materials, and developing wetland restoration and replacement plans. Some counties have also delegated the total local implementation to the SWCD.

Nonpoint Technical Assistance Grant, a.k.a. State Revolving Fund (SRF) Implementation Program: Funds are allocated to groups or joint powers organizations of SWCDs to hire engineers and technicians for the purpose of assisting landowners in the installation of best management practices (BMPs). The initial purpose of these funds was to support the technical needs required for the State Revolving Fund loans; however, technical support for other programs dealing with BMPs is allowed.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program: The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) combines the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) with the state Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Program. CREP gives landowners an opportunity to enroll eligible land in a conservation easement program with annual CRP payments and a one-time RIM bonus payment. The goal of the second generation of CREP is to protect and enhance up to 120,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land in three regions of the state.

## **Special Programs**

Rural Rainfall Monitoring: This program is a cooperative effort between the BWSR, SWCDs, and the State Climatology Office to monitor precipitation in a statewide network. Individual observers spaced at 12-mile intervals (every other township corner) report monthly precipitation totals to the local SWCD, which forwards the information to the state climatologist.

Area II Minnesota River Basin Projects, Inc.: Ten counties in southwestern Minnesota are involved in this cooperative effort with the BWSR. The BWSR provides 75 percent cost-share funds to Study Area II for flood control projects (50 percent if federal funds are involved). The BWSR also provides a staff engineer for the program.

Observation Well Program: The DNR provides funds to SWCDs to monitor water levels in selected wells. The objective is to increase the quantity of ground water data throughout Minnesota.

### C. INSURANCE NEEDS

Insurance covering the district's property and actions is highly recommended. The types of coverage and amount needed will vary from district to district. Each district should analyze its insurance needs and procure the appropriate coverage.

The following is a list of types of coverage an SWCD should procure. It is not intended to identify all the insurance needs of a district but to identify the major areas of coverage a district needs to consider.

#### Insurance needs of SWCDs:

- liability insurance
- errors and omissions insurance
- district property insurance
- vehicle insurance
- surety bonds

Liability insurance: Protection against damages caused by the district's actions to people or property on or off premises. Guidelines for an SWCD to procure liability insurance are provided in M.S. Chapter 466.06. SWCD supervisors and employees may wish to purchase additional liability insurance.

Errors and omissions insurance: protection against poor advice given or failure to advise by district supervisors and employees.

District property insurance: Coverage of property in and out of the office. This should cover office contents and field equipment owned and/or leased by the district.

Vehicle insurance: For district-owned vehicles. The district needs to analyze its vehicle conditions and usage and procure the appropriate insurance.

Surety bonds: A guarantee of a sum of money that was lost due to one's performance or character. Surety bonds should be secured for all employees and officers who are entrusted with district funds or property.

For the use of federal vehicles on SWCD (nonfederal) business, additional insurance is needed. Contact the area office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for details.

If personal vehicles are used on official SWCD business, people are encouraged to obtain a rider on their personal auto policy to cover such situations.

### D. RELATIONSHIPS

SWCDs work with a wide variety of other organizations, including counties, watershed districts, watershed management organizations, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, and the NRCS. It is important that these partnerships work smoothly to ensure the efficient operation of the SWCD.

#### SWCDs and Counties

Although SWCDs are independent local units of government as established by M.S. 103C, they have very close ties to county government. Since SWCDs do not have taxing authority, they must rely on county government to supplement their operating expenses. SWCDs must submit an annual budget to the

county board. Most county boards treat their SWCD like other county departments and fund it on a relative scale with other county departments. As a supervisor, it is essential that you understand the local relationship between your SWCD and the county board. The level of county support depends on the strength of the relationship between the two boards.

The county attorney acts as the attorney for the SWCD. When questions arise with legal implications, you should consult the county attorney.

Most SWCD boundaries follow county boundaries in Minnesota. From a planning standpoint and a resource protection standpoint, it makes sense that SWCDs and counties work closely toward common goals. By using the county's taxing authority and ordinance functions, the SWCD is able to accomplish some things it would be unable to do alone.

### **SWCDs and the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)**

The BWSR is the state administrative agency for soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), watershed districts (WDs), and in some cases, counties. As such, the BWSR is the district's direct line to state government. The BWSR coordinates the water and soil resource planning activities of SWCDs, WDs, counties, and also watershed management organizations (WMOs).

Seventeen voting members serve on the Board. The Board is composed of twelve members appointed by the governor and five agency representatives. The governor appoints three county commissioners, three soil and water conservation district supervisors, three watershed district or watershed management organization representatives, and three members of the public to staggered four-year terms. The chair is appointed by the Governor from the above twelve members. Five additional members represent the Department of Natural Resources, the Pollution Control Agency, the Department of Health, the Department of Agriculture, and the University of Minnesota.

The Board employs an executive director who serves as the head of agency operations. The central office in St. Paul houses nearly one-half of the staff who work in one of four sections: engineering and technical services, land and water, communications, or business management. Field offices are located in Bemidji, Brainerd, Duluth, Fergus Falls, Marshall, New Ulm, Rochester, and St. Paul.

The BWSR performs the following functions and services:

- Administers a variety of resources management programs such as the RIM Reserve Program and the Erosion, Sediment Control, and Water Quality Cost-Share Program (also called the cost-share program). The programs are implemented at the local level by SWCDs. BWSR staff oversee local program administration to ensure consistency with program rules and state laws.
- Is service-oriented and responds to the needs of SWCDs, WDs, and counties by maintaining handbooks, assisting in program planning and evaluation, providing training opportunities, and troubleshooting.
- Provides financial support to SWCDs through general service allocations and other grants. The BWSR also provides funds to counties for base and challenge grants for development and implementation of water plans.

- Responds to concerns and needs raised by local units of government throughout Minnesota and works to transfer those concerns into programs, staff, funding, or whatever is required to wisely manage soil and water resources.
- Facilitates communication among state agencies and between state and local units of government to make the expertise and resources of state agencies more readily available to local units of government.
- Develops information and education programs to increase the awareness of local water and soil resource problems and opportunities.
- Is responsible for hearing and resolving disputes, appeals, and interventions related to comprehensive local water plans, appeals of watershed district decisions, and metropolitan water management organization projects.
- Develops rules, guidelines, and allocation formulas for its various grants to local units of government. The BWSR staff conduct regular compliance audits of local administration of BWSR grant funds.
- Hears petitions to establish, enlarge, or terminate SWCDs, WDs, and WMOs. The BWSR also has final approval authority for SWCD comprehensive and annual plans, county water plans (103B plans), watershed overall plans, and metropolitan water management plans.
- Develops statewide soil and water conservation policies and implements conservation programs to carry out the policies.

### **SWCDs and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**

Since 1933, the Soil Conservation Service, now known as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), has been providing technical assistance to SWCDs across the nation. The NRCS is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA); its staff is often housed with local SWCD staff. NRCS staff work with SWCD staff to design, plan, and carry out a variety of conservation practices for cooperating landowners. NRCS also provides specialists at the regional and state level in agronomy, forestry, engineering, and soil science.

NRCS assistance is subject to USDA policies and federal budget priorities. Consequently, NRCS priorities do not always match those of your local district. The NRCS-SWCD conservation partnership has been proven effective. However, supervisors should understand the opportunities as well as the limitations afforded by NRCS assistance.

### **SWCDs and the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD)**

The Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) represents Minnesota's 455 elected soil and water conservation district (SWCD) supervisors. MASWCD was incorporated in 1952 as a nonprofit corporation under Section 501 (C) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954.

The state association is made up of eight area directors, a president, and vice-president who represent eight different areas of Minnesota. MASWCD is a nonprofit organization that provides a common voice for Minnesota's soil and water conservation districts and maintains a positive, results-oriented relationship with rule-making agencies, partners, and legislators. MASWCD also provides educational opportunities to the districts so they may carry out effective conservation programs.

MASWCD acts as an advocate for SWCDs in Minnesota. Its staff and directors work with the state legislature to provide programs and funding to promote soil and water conservation in Minnesota. MASWCD addresses the needs of SWCDs by adopting policies and passing resolutions to support soil and water concerns raised by supervisors from throughout the state.

## **VIII. LEGAL OBLIGATIONS OF THE SWCD**

Minnesota Statutes (M.S.) Chapter 103C is the enabling legislation for the formation of soil and water conservation districts. M.S. 103C.101, Subd. 10 of this chapter identifies soil and water conservation districts as governmental subdivisions, which means SWCDs are subject to the state laws that apply to all units of local government.

To assist SWCDs in dealing with legal matters, M.S. 103C.321, Subd. 4 indicates that “The county attorney of the county where the major portion of the district is located or one otherwise employed by the board shall be the attorney for the district and its supervisors. The district board may call upon the county attorney for the district and its supervisors.”

To develop a good working relationship with the county attorney it is suggested that the district board discuss with the county attorney and county commissioners details on services provided. The district board may also choose to use the services of legal counsel other than the county attorney. In any event, the district board should know who its attorney is and consult with that attorney frequently concerning its legal responsibilities.

All activities of a soil and water conservation district are governed by state or federal laws and sometimes both. These activities range from the way employees and supervisors conduct themselves on the job to how the district spends its funds. This section should by no means be considered a complete list of the legal obligations of a soil and water conservation district. The intent is to identify the most highly visible areas encountered by all SWCDs.

### **A. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION/DISCRIMINATION**

Affirmative action emphasizes taking positive, active steps to bring about change, rather than simply adopting a passive attitude of nondiscrimination. Affirmative action can be defined as policies and practices that identify and remove all barriers to employment and advancement opportunities that are not based on specific job requirements. Initial employment and advancement opportunities for persons in protected groups, shown to be underutilized in an SWCD’s work force, should be encouraged so that the imbalance is corrected.

#### **Discrimination**

Discrimination is defined as unfair treatment, whether intentional or unintentional, based on protected characteristics. Under the Minnesota Human Rights Act (M.S. Chapter 363) SWCDs must not discriminate against the following protected characteristics: race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, disability, and age. It is important to note that this is true for services provided as well as employment.

For more information on Human Rights, contact:

Minnesota Department of Human Rights  
190 East 5th Street  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
651-296-5663 or 800-657-3704

## **Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)**

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) is a nondiscrimination policy of basing personnel decisions solely on individual merit of applicants and employees related to the specific job requirements and without regard to protected characteristics.

For more information on EEO or affirmative action, contact the following:

Equal Opportunity Division  
Department of Employee Relations  
200 Centennial Office Building  
658 Cedar Street  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
651-296-4600

## **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment, due to its relationship to sexual discrimination, is addressed in the Minnesota Human Rights Act and Title VII of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Unlawful sexual harassment includes a range of behaviors from those that are merely annoying to those where individuals offer or threaten to use the power of their position to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, or job of another person.

What constitutes sexual harassment is not always clear. What may be welcome by some individuals may be considered offensive by others and, therefore, of a harassing nature.

For further information about sexual harassment, contact:

Minnesota Department of Human Rights  
190 East 5th Street  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
651-296-5663 or 800-657-3704

## **B. OPEN MEETING LAW**

Meetings of soil and water conservation districts are governed by Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13D (formerly Chapter 471), Minnesota Open Meeting Law, and **are generally considered to be open meetings to the public**. If a soil and water conservation district has established a regular monthly meeting date with the same time and location each month, it is not necessary to post notices of these meetings. However, if the district holds a special meeting or changes the date, time, or place of the regular meeting, it is necessary to post a written notice of the date, time, place, and purpose of the meeting on the principal bulletin board of the district, or on the door of its usual meeting room, at least three days prior to the meeting. It is not required, but highly recommended, to publish the notice in the official or qualified newspaper at least once three days prior to the meeting.



An emergency meeting, defined as “a special meeting called because of circumstances that, in the judgment of the public body, required immediate consideration by the public body,” need not be published or posted. However, a good faith effort to provide notices to news media should be made. The notice should include time, date, place, and subject matter.

Closed meetings of an SWCD are also to be publicized as previously mentioned. The closing of a public meeting, or a portion of it, can be, at times, controversial and highly criticized, making it important that it is done legally and for appropriate matters.

Following are general guidelines for meetings of a public body that cannot be closed, meetings that must be closed, and meetings that may be closed:

Cannot Be Closed: A meeting cannot be closed to discuss data classified as “not public data.” Not public data is defined in statute as any government data which is classified by statute, federal law, or temporary classification as confidential, private, nonpublic, or protected nonpublic.

Must Be Closed: Portions of a meeting must be closed if required by other law or if the following types of information will be discussed:

- Data that would identify alleged victims or reporters of criminal sexual contact, domestic abuse, or maltreatment of minors or vulnerable adults.
- Internal data relating to allegations of law enforcement personnel misconduct.
- Educational, health, medical, welfare, or mental health data that are not public data.
- For preliminary consideration of allegations or charge against an individual subject to the board’s authority.

May Be Closed: A meeting may be closed in the following circumstances:

- To evaluate the performance of an individual who is subject to its authority, provided that the individual is identified prior to closing the meeting; (Note: Findings must be summarized at the next open meeting. The meeting must be open at the request of the individual who is the subject of the meeting.)
- To consider strategy for labor negotiations. (Note: To close a meeting for this reason, there needs to be motion and a majority in favor.)
- If expressly authorized by statute or permitted by attorney-client privilege.

**IF YOU ARE IN DOUBT, CONTACT YOUR COUNTY ATTORNEY OR LEGAL COUNSEL.**

The complexity of this law makes it impossible for this handbook to summarize all of its many provisions. The intent of this section is to make you aware of the basics of the Open Meeting Law, not to offer specific direction for each situation that may arise. You are encouraged to contact legal counsel when closing a meeting or a portion of a meeting. Failure to abide by any aspects of the Open Meeting Law is subject to personal liability in form of a civil penalty not to exceed \$300 and removal from office after the third offense.

## C. FISCAL OBLIGATIONS

The fiscal obligation of a soil and water conservation district is to ensure that all monies received and spent by the district are legal and within the intent of the law. All monies include county allocations; grant money received from state, federal, and private sources; self-generated money from sales and services offered by the district; gifts; and any other money that enters a district's account.

A district's expenditures must be for purposes of implementing M.S. Chapter 103C as it relates to the goals and objectives that the district has identified in its comprehensive plan. Examples include, but are not limited to, personnel, equipment, supplies, office facilities and maintenance, educational materials, operating expenses, and construction and maintenance of improvements by the district.

To assure that the district is spending money in accordance with the law, the state auditor or a certified public accountant under contract with the state auditor, shall audit the district and its supervisor annually or by request of the district board. However, the state auditor may determine that an annual audit is not necessary, in which case an audit shall be made at least every three years.

To protect the district from misuse of district funds, employees and supervisors are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the district's annual and comprehensive plans and M.S. Chapter 103C to ensure they are not conflicting. The district board should assume the duties of good internal accounting control. For more details on good internal accounting control, please refer to the Accounting section of the SWCD Operational Handbook provided by the Board of Water and Soil Resources.

## D. ELECTION PROCEDURES

Election procedures and applicable information may be obtained from the county auditor or the local soil and water conservation district. The county auditor, working closely with the district's secretary, is responsible for carrying out election procedures and maintaining proper election records.

The election of SWCD supervisors is a process that is similar to many other elections, but differs in some aspects.

Refer to the SWCD Operational Handbook in the local SWCD office for complete details on elections.

Some key points are:

Nominating districts: SWCDs are typically divided into five nominating districts at the discretion of the district board. One supervisor represents each nominating district. In counties where county boards consist of seven members and districts have been divided into supervisor districts, the county board may establish seven supervisor districts.

Term: Each supervisor term is for four years. Terms are staggered so no more than three terms expire in a given year.

Filing: To file you must:

- Be a legal voter residing in the SWCD.
- Reside in the nominating district for which you are filing.

- File during the period beginning 70 days before the state primary and ending 56 days before the state primary. This means that the filing period is open for about two weeks some time in July.
- Complete the form “Affidavit of Candidate For Nomination Without Party Designation.”
- Either submit a nominating petition along with a filing fee or file a petition signed by qualified voters of the nominating district. Number of signatures required is determined by last general election participation.

Election:

- Is held during the November general election. No matter how many nominees, no primary election will be held.
- Although supervisors are nominated from a specific nominating district, the election is conducted at-large within the boundaries of the SWCD. In other words, all voters in the SWCD vote for supervisors from any nominating district with an open position.

Special notes: For vacancies that occur before a term is up, please refer to the SWCD Operational Handbook in the local SWCD office.

District law defines compatible offices. Minnesota Statute Chapter 103C.315, Subdivision 6, states “The office of soil and water conservation district supervisor and the offices of mayor, clerk, clerk-treasurer, or council member in a statutory or home rule charter city of not more than 2,500 population contained in whole or in part in the soil and water conservation district are compatible offices and one person may hold both offices. The office of soil and water conservation district supervisor and the office of town clerk or town supervisor in a town of not more than 2,500 population contained in whole or in part in the soil and water conservation district are compatible offices and one person may hold both offices. A person holding both offices shall refrain from voting or taking any other formal action on any matter coming before the soil and water conservation district board or the city council or town board that has a substantial effect on both the soil and water conservation district and the city or town. This subdivision does not apply to an office located in whole or part in Anoka, Hennepin, Ramsey, or Washington county.”

**E. FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT (FLSA)**

Soil and water conservation districts are subject to the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act and the Minnesota Fair Labor Standards Act. The intent of these two acts is to protect the rights of the employee in the work place, so the act that provides the greatest benefit to the employee takes precedence. Among other topics, these acts address wages, hours, and compensation for overtime.

For more information on Minnesota Fair Labor Standards Act, M.S. Chapter 177, Secs. 177.21 to 177.35, contact:

Department of Labor and Industry  
 Labor Standards and Prevailing Wage Division  
 443 Lafayette Road  
 St. Paul, MN 55155  
 651-296-2282

For more information on Federal Fair Labor Standards Act, contact:

U. S. Department of Labor  
Wage and Hour Division  
220 South Second Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
612-370-3371

### **M.S. Chapter 181: Employment; Wages, Conditions, Hours, and Restrictions**

Although this chapter is not summarized in this handbook, it may contain material that pertains to some labor-related questions that may arise. This chapter deals with such topics as pay assignments, pay schedules, wage discrimination, parenting leave, and drug and alcohol testing in the workplace.

IN CONCLUSION, this section merely attempts to raise the awareness of the legal obligations of a soil and water conservation district. It is not intended to answer all your legal questions. **REMEMBER: WHEN IN DOUBT, CONTACT YOUR LEGAL COUNSEL OR COUNTY ATTORNEY.**

For copies of any of the M.S. Chapters stated in this section or any other chapter, contact:

State Registrar and Public Document Division  
177 University Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
651-297-3000  
[www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/statutes.htm](http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/statutes.htm)

## APPENDIX A: THE DISTRICT BOARD MEETING

### A. RUNNING YOUR BOARD MEETING

#### Elements of a Successful Meeting

The key to a productive meeting lies in developing and following format. This will allow you to conduct business quickly, efficiently, and constructively. This format should contain:

1. Premeeting socialization
2. Orientation
3. Reports
4. Business decision making
5. Ending formalities
6. Postmeeting feedback
7. Socialization

Premeeting socialization: builds team spirit. Most boards are composed of people with diverse backgrounds who may never see each other outside the board room. They need time to warm up and get used to working as a team.

Board meeting orientation: Call meeting to order on time. Take attendance. Recognize visitors.

Reports: Approve the agenda, minutes, and treasurer's report. These should be sent to each member in advance to provide adequate time to respond and to streamline your meeting. Hear committee and administrators' reports. This will involve designated board members and staff, including technicians, the manager, and district conservationists.

Business decision making: Unfinished business such as tabled motions, actions interrupted by adjournment, and intentionally carried over items should be addressed. Consider new business. Deal with items needing a motion and a vote. Some issues, such as an administrator's evaluation and long-range planning, don't belong except as reports or for specific recommendation for board action.

Ending formalities: Make informational announcements on which no action is required. Adjourn the meeting. A motion, second, and majority vote are required.

Postmeeting feedback and socialization: Evaluate your meeting. A few times a year review your procedure and be open to change. Socialize. Relationships may be strained due to difference of opinions on issues addressed. Put on the coffee and rebuild.

Added tips: To add to a successful meeting consider:

- The early part of a meeting tends to be more lively and creative than the end of it, so if an item needs mental energy, bright ideas, and clear heads, it may be better to put it high on the list. If an item is of great interest and concern, it may be a good idea to hold it back and get some other items taken care of first. Then the star item can be introduced to carry the meeting over the attention lag that sets in after the first fifteen to twenty minutes.

- Some items unite the meeting while others divide the members. Whether the chair starts or finishes with an agenda item which splits the board, the point is to be aware of the choice. It may make a difference in the whole atmosphere of the meeting. As a rule, it is a good idea to find an item of agreement with which to end the meeting.
- A common fault is to dwell too long on trivial items or run off on tangents. This can be remedied by putting on the agenda the time at which discussion of the important, long-term issues will begin and by sticking to it.
- Include a finishing time as well as a beginning time on the agenda.

## **B. PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE**

Although parliamentary procedure may seem confusing at first, it is important that board members learn and use it. When they do, you will find that your meetings are briefer and more productive.

### **Order of Business**

1. The meeting is called to order by the chair.
  - roll call (if used)
2. The minutes of the preceding meeting are read by the secretary and:
  - may be approved as read; or
  - may be approved with additions or corrections.
3. Monthly statement of treasurer is “received as read and filed for audit” (chair so states). No motion of approval is necessary.
4. Reports of standing committees are called for by the chair.
5. Reports of special committees are called for by the chair.
6. Unfinished business is next in order at the call of the chair.
7. New business is called for by the chair.
8. If the meeting is an annual or special meeting, the program—such as awards, a speech, etc.—follows. The program is considered part of the meeting. The chair presides throughout.

### **Principle Motions**

General Statement: When a motion has been made, seconded, and stated by the chair, the assembly is not at liberty to consider any other business until this motion has been disposed of. If the motion is long and involved, the chair asks the mover to hand it in writing to the secretary. The mover cannot withdraw the motion after it has been stated by the chair. In general, all important motions should be seconded, which may be done without rising or addressing the chair.

Typical steps:

1. address chair
2. recognized
3. state motion
4. second motion
5. stated to group by chair
6. discussion
7. vote
8. announcement of results

## Terminology

To amend: This motion is “to change, and/or omit words” in the original main motion, and is debatable; it must be approved by a majority vote. To amend an amendment is a motion to change, add, or omit words in the amendment; it is debatable and must be decided by a majority vote. Method: The first vote is on changing words of the amendment; the second vote (if first vote adopts change) on first amendment as changed; the third vote is on adopting main motion as changed.

To commit: When a motion becomes involved through amendments or when it is wise to investigate a question more carefully, it may be moved to commit the motion to a committee for further consideration. Debatable and amendable.

To lay on the table: The object of this motion is to postpone the subject under discussion in such a way that it could be taken up at some time in the near future when a motion “to take from the table” would be in order. These motions are not debatable or amendable; majority vote.

To postpone: A motion to postpone the question before the assembly to some future time is in order, except when a speaker has the floor; debatable, majority vote.

To adjourn: This motion is always in order except:

- When a speaker has the floor.
- When a vote is being taken.
- After it has just been voted down.
- When the assembly is in the midst of some business which cannot be abruptly stopped.

When the motion is made to adjourn to a definite place and time, it is debatable.

To reconsider: The motion to reconsider can be made on a motion that was carried or lost in order. The motion to reconsider a motion that was carried or lost in order, if made on the same day or the next calendar day, must be made by one who voted with the prevailing side. The motion is debatable and must be decided by a majority vote. It requires two votes: first on whether it should be reconsidered; second on original motion after reconsideration. No questions can be twice reconsidered.

The previous question: This motion is to close debate on the pending question. This motion may be made when debate becomes long and drawn out. It is not debatable. The form is “Mr. (Madam) Chair, I move the previous question.” The chair then asks “Shall debate be closed and the question now be put?” If this is adopted by a two-thirds vote, the question before the assembly is immediately voted upon.

Steps to make a general motion:

- address chair
- be recognized
- state motion
- second motion
- statement repeated to group by chair
- discussion
- vote
- announcement of results

Point of order: This motion is always in order, but can be used only to present an objection to a ruling of the chair or some method of parliamentary procedure. (For example, if the chair makes a procedural mistake and allows someone not voting on the prevailing side to move to reconsider a motion.) This form is “Mr. (Madam) Chair, I rise to a point of order.” The chair: “Please state your point of order.”

After the member has stated his objection, the chair answers:

- your point of order is sustained; or
- your point of order is denied.

If any member is not satisfied, he may appeal from the decision of the chair. The chair then addresses the assembly, “Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?”; this is debatable and the presiding officer may discuss it without leaving the chair. Voted on like any other motion. Majority of the vote sustains the decision of chair. Requires a majority of “no” votes to reverse decision of the chair.

Main motion: To bring business before the board.

Vote immediately: To stop discussion and to get a vote.

Parliamentary inquire: To let a member ask a question.

Division: A request for the chairperson to use a more accurate method of voting, generally a show of hands. “Mr. or Madam Chair, I call for a division on that last vote.”

Refer to committee: To allow for study and investigation by a smaller group. “I move to refer the main motion to a committee of those appointed by the chair.”

Quorum: The minimum number of members who must be present in order to transact legal business.

Precedence: Refers to the rank of motions. When a motion has been made, any motion of higher order may be proposed but no motion of lower order may be proposed. (There are a few exceptions.) Motions are discussed and voted upon in inverse order to their proposal. (The last motion made will be acted on first.)

## **Study of Parliamentary Procedure**

1. Robert, Henry M., Robert’s Rules of Order  
10<sup>th</sup> Edition. See [www.robertsrules.com](http://www.robertsrules.com) for ordering information.
2. Aver, J. Jeffrey, Essentials of Parliamentary Procedure  
2nd Edition, Appleton-Century-Crafts, Inc., New York
3. Sikkink, Donald, Understanding Parliamentary Procedure  
Peaceful Acres Press  
17614 - 33rd Avenue  
Clearwater, MN 55320
4. FFA or 4-H manuals



## **C. GOOD MINUTES**

Minutes are the official record of board action. They need to be accurate, concise, and complete. Minutes contain official history and permanent record of the proposals, reports, and decisions of the members. They are of vital importance to an organization, providing an invaluable reference, and, if the situation arises, the courts give them great weight regarding their use as evidence. Auditors depend on them for proof of authorization for expenditures.

The importance of minutes should not be taken lightly or dealt with in a lackadaisical manner. Careful review before the meeting to address errors and raise concerns can be accomplished by providing each board member with a copy three to four days prior to the scheduled meeting date. This provides an adequate amount of review time and contributes to a smoother, more efficient meeting.

The secretary, working under the direction of the chair, is responsible for the minutes. They should be prepared as soon after a meeting as possible to ensure their accuracy. An employee may prepare them under the direction of the secretary, but only the board secretary may sign them.

Formats may vary from district to district, but should contain the following general information:

- all actions; not discussion.
- date.
- time.
- location.
- type of meeting.
- presiding officer and board members in attendance.
- that a quorum was present.
- a record of motions, including:
  - whether it passed or failed.
  - name of individual making motion.
  - name of second.
  - way motion was disposed of.
  - exact wording.
  - number voting on each side.
  - each member's vote on a roll call.
- time of adjournment, which should close the minutes.

### **Special Reports and Committees**

Each report:

- should be recorded with the name of member presenting it.
- should include action taken on the report.
- should include reference to file where the report may be found.

NOTE: You may want to summarize report.

Minutes kept by committees are often more detailed than the minutes of the meetings of the organization because committee minutes frequently serve as the basis for the committee's report. Minutes of committee hearings frequently list those who speak for or against proposals and summarize the facts presented by each speaker.

## Closing a Meeting

If a meeting is “closed” under the Open Meeting Law, special procedures must be followed to accurately and properly document the actions of the board. Refer to the Open Meeting Law or your legal counsel.

## D. OFFICER DUTIES

Regular monthly meetings are a must if the district is to be successful. Supervisors, as representatives of the people, are obligated to conduct the business of the district in an orderly and business-like manner. Successful board meetings depend upon the direction given by the chair and upon the willingness of board members to carry out their assignments as appointed.

### Chair

The chair is the steering mechanism of your district. It is up to the chair to do that little extra to motivate board members and other public-minded individuals to do what they can to assist in serving the present and future citizens of the district. After receiving a few years of board experience, a supervisor should welcome the opportunity to be chair of the board. It provides an opportunity to become more closely involved and gain a broader perspective of the total program and its purpose.

Offices of a board are:

- chair
- vice-chair
- secretary
- treasurer
- public relations and information (PR & I)

Specific responsibilities of the chair are to:

- preside at all meetings.
- call special meetings when necessary.
- meet with district office staff members, the district conservationist, and heads of other agencies involved at least one week prior to the scheduled meeting to address agenda items. This can be done by a short office visit and perhaps a few telephone calls. A formal meeting may not be necessary.
- refer regularly to the long-range goals of the district and the district annual plan of work and operations when preparing the agenda, trying to ensure that all planned activities are addressed.
- make sure a copy of the agenda, minutes of the previous meeting, and a financial statement (at a minimum) are sent to each board member three to four days prior to the meeting.
- see that agendas and pertinent material are sent to all individuals who should attend the meeting and take part in the discussion.
- keep in contact with other supervisors on the progress of various programs delegated. Insist on regular attendance of supervisors.
- call meeting to order promptly and at the specified time. Follow proper rules of order for a business meeting. A well-planned meeting should take no longer than 1½ to 2 hours.
- recognize visitors and other individuals present at the board meeting.

- assume the role of facilitator. This will encourage all supervisors to participate in discussion of existing issues.
- complete an item of business in the order listed before taking up the next item. Stick to the agenda.
- utilize special committees to involve individuals other than board members and require committee reports at board meetings.
- avoid the “rubber stamp approach.” Encourage board members to question staff or individual presenters regarding clarification of a specific point, thus allowing them to draw conclusions to adequately make their own decisions.
- adjourn meeting promptly after all business has been completed.

### **Vice Chair**

The vice-chair position becomes most important in the absence of the chair. The vice-chair should note the activities of the chair and how they are carried out, in case it is ever necessary for the vice-chair to chair a meeting.

Specific duties of the vice-chair are to:

- assume the duties of the chair in the absence of the chair.
- assist in organizing and implementing the district program.
- oversee the work of committees and coordinate their reports as delegated by the chair.
- be familiar enough with the total program of the district to be able to work closely with the chair and fill in when necessary.

### **Secretary**

The primary responsibility of the district board secretary is to arrange for the recording of official proceedings of the board and to see that the entire board approves the minutes as the legal record of the district. As elected officials using public funds, these minutes should then be signed, becoming the permanent record of what is done and why. Copies for general information purposes should be forwarded to the area and central office of the Board of Water and Soil Resources. They can also be sent to other interested organizations, such as the local chapter of the employees association, other state agencies, etc.

Specific duties of the secretary are to:

- make a complete record of all proceedings.
- indicate date and place of meeting, refer to whether it is a regularly scheduled meeting or a special meeting, official presiding, names of all those present including visitors, organizations represented, and names of supervisors absent.

- record each motion in full.
- complete action on each item of business so that a record can be made of what was addressed and completed.
- initiate correspondence on behalf of the board as the need arises.
- inform the chair of any business that should come before the board.
- sign the official copy of the board minutes after approval by the board at the next meeting and see that the chair does likewise.

### **Treasurer**

The district treasurer is responsible for the financial matters of the district, including the financial records.

Specific duties of the treasurer are to:

- oversee the completeness and accuracy of district receipts and expenditures.
- be prepared to answer questions from other board members regarding monthly and/or quarterly financial statements, as well as year-end figures.
- oversee payment of bills approved by the board and issuance of receipts for incoming funds.
- assure that all bills authorized for payment by the district board are recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- work with the district staff to develop a fiscal year budget.
- arrange for surety bonds covering appropriate SWCD supervisors and staff.

### **Public Relations and Information (PR&I)**

The PR&I officer is the liaison between the district and the public. This person assures that the district's purpose, activities, and value are understood by the public and elected officials. He or she also oversees education programs that address priority natural resource issues in the district. The PR&I officer represents the district when communicating with the media and at public events where official representation from the district board is beneficial.

The PR&I officer should develop a district information and education strategy that is reviewed annually and revised as needed. The strategy should address, but not necessarily be limited to:

- working with the media to communicate district messages and to establish the district as a reliable source of natural resources information.
- utilizing community events and meetings of community organizations to share district information.

- informing others that serve district clientele of the district's services so they can provide referrals and accurate information. Examples include agri-businesses, bankers, land improvement contractors, university extension educators, and county department staff.
- maintaining communication and establish relationships with township, county, state, and federal elected officials so they are informed on priority soil and water resource issues in the district and are aware of the district's activities and value.
- working with K-12 schools, technical colleges, colleges, University of Minnesota Extension Service, and other educational institutions to provide natural resources education and service learning opportunities to children and adults.
- assuring the district office is readily located by clientele, and that district information is easily found in the phone book, on the Internet, and from county offices, libraries, and other common sources of public information.

## APPENDIX B: LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

### A. CONTACTING YOUR LEGISLATOR

Supervisors must contact their legislators from time to time to inform them on the importance of a bill or issue or on the district's opinion on an issue or bill. Although there are registered lobbyists acting on your behalf, your contacts can also be effective if done appropriately. To get the name, address, and phone of your state representative or senator, contact:

House Information Office  
651-296-2146

Senate Information Office  
651-296-0504 or 888-234-1112

Or call the state's toll-free number, 1-800-652-9747, and ask for the House or Senate Information Office. Information can also be found on the Minnesota State Legislature websites [www.house.leg.state.mn.us](http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us) or [www.senate.leg.state.mn.us](http://www.senate.leg.state.mn.us).

There are three major ways of contacting your legislator: writing a letter, phoning, or visiting.

#### Letter Writing

- Keep your letter to one page. The letter should be written or typed clearly and address only one bill or issue.
- Use your own words; don't use prepared letters.
- Include the House or Senate file number, if appropriate. Sometimes several bills address the same issue.
- Get right to the point. Open the letter with your stand, then use the remainder of the letter supporting your stand and possibly outlining the effects the bill will have if it becomes law.
- Be polite and reasonable.
- Find out your legislator's position on the bill or issue. This is common courtesy.
- Address your letter as follows:

#### Formal Address

The Honorable  
John Doe  
Room XX State Capital  
St. Paul, MN 55155

#### Salutation

Dear Senator (name)  
or  
Dear Representative (name)

#### Personal Visits

When going to St. Paul, make appointments so the legislator can prepare and arrange for your visit. Also, try inviting your legislator to your district meetings.

## Phone Calls

Use the phone selectively. When calling, know your topic. Know such things as the bill number and status—you can get this information from the House and Senate Information Offices listed above—and if possible the legislator’s opinion on the issue or bill. Leave your name and phone number.

## Special Event Activities

- Legislative Breakfasts (or other meals): depending on the time of year, they can be held locally or in St. Paul.
- Legislative Tour: Tour of projects your district has done or in which it is involved.

## B. HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW

A brief explanation of how a bill becomes a law will help you better understand the legislature. This explanation is for a bill originating in the Senate; of course, bills may also originate in the House.

1. Proposal: Individuals, public interest groups, state agencies, or business organizations transform a proposal into a specific legislative package with the help of a legislator.
2. Bill drafting: An attorney from the Office of the Revisor of Statutes, a private attorney, or a House or Senate staff attorney draft the bill in the appropriate form.
3. First reading: The chief author of the bill (always a legislator) introduces the bill to the Senate, and it is given its first reading. The bill is given a file number and referred to a committee.
4. Committee hearing: The chief author requests a hearing from the committee to which the bill has been assigned. During the hearing, proponents and opponents of the measure present their viewpoints. (Public attendance and participation is welcomed.)
5. Committee action: The committee may vote to pass the bill in its original form, or it may vote to amend it. After a bill is amended, the committee may then vote to recommend that the bill be passed and sent directly to the Senate floor; recommend that the bill be passed and sent to another committee; send the bill to the floor or another committee with no recommendation for passage; keep it in committee indefinitely; or defeat it.
6. First passage: When the bill is passed out of its final committee, it is given its second reading before the full Senate. It is then brought up for discussion in front of the entire Senate. Senators vote on preliminary approval or disapproval of the bill. Bills may be amended at this time.
7. Layover: If the bill receives preliminary approval, there is a 24-hour layover requirement.
8. Final passage: After the 24 hours, the bill is read for the third time and a roll call vote is taken for final passage.
9. Bill to House: The bill is sent to the House; it may be substituted for a companion bill. In the House, the bill goes through a process similar to the Senate process.

10. House passage: The House takes a final vote on the bill. If the House and Senate versions of the bill differ, then either body can vote to accept the other's version. If neither body will accept the other's version, the bill is sent to a conference committee. The conference committee is made up of an equal number of senators and representatives. Once the conference committee works out a compromise, the bill is sent back to both bodies for approval.
11. Governor's signature: The governor may sign the bill into law or veto it. If the governor vetoes it, a two-thirds vote of each body will override the veto.
12. The bill becomes law.

*Special thanks to the Senate Information Office for this information.*

### **C. RULES VS. LAWS**

A law is enabling legislation that lets something happen or exist. Laws must wind their way through the legislative process. Laws usually only identify and set general standards and indicate the main enforcer or administrator of the law.

A rule sets the more defined standards on how the law is going to be enforced or administered. A rule does not go through the same process that a bill does to become law. The identified administrator of a law drafts its rules, which are then submitted for public comment. Once the draft rules are amended so they meet little or no public opposition, they are adopted. Amendments to rules must pass through the same process.



## **APPENDIX C: ASSOCIATIONS**

Belonging to and participating in related associations and their activities can prove to be very beneficial to district operations. M.S. Chapter 103C.331, Sud. 17 states, “A district may appropriate funds to provide membership in state and national associations that have as their purpose the betterment and improvement of soil and water conservation district operations...”

These associations include national, state, and county associations. The following is a list and a brief description of some of the associations.

### **A. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (NACD)**

The National Association of Conservation Districts is the nonprofit organization that represents the nation’s 3,000 conservation districts and 17,000 men and women who serve on their governing boards. NACD’s mission is to enable conservation districts to pool their resources to accomplish collectively what they cannot accomplish individually.

The chief policy-making body of NACD is the council, which is made up of one representative from each state. The council meets at the annual national convention to consider resolutions that have worked their way up from individual districts through the state associations. Every resolution adopted by the council is assigned to a staff member who works with the appropriate NACD committee to accomplish its objectives.

The policies established by the council are carried out by a board of directors and the staff. The board is composed of directors from each of seven regions. Minnesota is part of the North Central Region.

The NACD headquarters is in Washington, D.C. Regional offices are located in five different locations.

The association offers many services in the area of legislation, communications, awards programs, and coordination.

### **B. MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (MASWCD)**

see page 20

### **C. MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS EMPLOYEES (MACDE)**

The MACDE is an association made up of and for district employees throughout the state of Minnesota. The association is dedicated to providing a means for these district employees to exchange information and ideas in order to encourage unification and coordination of district programs, inform members of job and training opportunities, and update members of current events.

MACDE is not affiliated with any labor union nor does it represent individuals in wage or other internal negotiations. However, the association does strive to maintain a stable and harmonious working relationship between district employees, supervisors, and cooperating associations and agencies.

MACDE is led by a board of directors representing the eight MASWCD areas. They meet periodically to discuss issues brought to them by their members and cooperating associations and agencies.

#### **D. RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (RC & D)**

Although the RC & D program is coordinated by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, it is sponsored and directed by SWCDs and other county governmental units. It provides a forum for local people to identify their rural development needs and to plan and implement projects to meet those needs. Technical and financial assistance to complete projects is obtained from a wide variety of public and private sources.

Each RC & D area sets its own goals and priorities, but most fall within the following categories:

- Development and improvement of agriculture through land use planning that allows for proper management of prime agricultural land, more local markets, improved drainage systems, better flood control, completion and use of soil surveys, and more widespread application of soil and water conservation practices.
- Improvement of forestry through protection and management of high quality forest land and development of local markets for forest products.
- Improvement and expansion of recreational facilities and promotion of historical and scenic attractions.
- Establishment or improvement of needed community facilities such as hospitals, sewage treatment plants, and roads.
- Development of fish and wildlife habitat.

#### **E. REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

Regional or special interest groups exist across the state. Their activities range from educational activities to upland treatment incentives to flood control projects. As with all associations, the involvement in these associations is up to the discretion of the district board. The district's involvement in these regional associations can often times be very beneficial to the district and help accomplish its goals and objectives.

## APPENDIX D: OTHER RESOURCE AGENCIES

### STATE

#### Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

The Department of Conservation was created in 1931 and was renamed the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in 1971 to reflect the agency's broader responsibilities. The DNR staffs more than 350 offices in Minnesota's cities, towns, woods, and farmlands. The DNR's field staff are divided into six regions, with regional offices located in Bemidji, Grand Rapids, Brainerd, New Ulm, Rochester, and St. Paul.

The DNR is organized by resource divisions: Forestry, Fish and Wildlife, Parks and Recreation, Minerals, Trails and Waterways, Enforcement, and Waters.

Enforcement Division: The division enforces all natural resource laws in the state and regulates commercial and sport fishing, trapping, fur buying, and hunting. Conservation officers enforce boat and water laws, manage licensing and operation of snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles, and enforce laws dealing with alterations of beds of lakes and streams.

Fish & Wildlife Division: The division manages all programs concerning fish and wildlife. The division also acquires land to be developed as wildlife management areas.

Division of Forestry: The division manages and protects Minnesota's forest resources. Its forest management program includes forest fire protection, insect and disease protection, management of state forests and other state-owned land, management assistance to non-industrial private forest landowners, counties, schools, and municipalities, and assistance to wood users to improve harvesting, utilization, and marketing of the timber sources. The division also directs the sale of timber from state-owned lands and builds and maintains state forest campgrounds and recreational sites.

Minerals Division: The division is responsible for the leasing of mineral rights and of industrial minerals and peat associated with the state-owned lands the DNR is charged with managing.

Parks and Recreation Division: The division develops and manages a system of state parks and waysides that contains examples of Minnesota's most scenic lands.

Trails and Waterways Unit: The Trails and Waterways Unit is responsible for the operation of state park and forest trails, state trails, water access sites, designated canoe and boating routes, and snowmobile trails.

#### State resource agencies:

- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Minnesota Department of Health
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Minnesota Geological Survey

#### Federal resources agencies:

- U.S. Geological Survey
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation

Waters Division: The division regulates activities conducted in the beds of protected waters, regulated water appropriations, and land use activities in shoreland and floodplain areas.

### **Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)**

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is the state's official health agency. Established in 1872, MDH is responsible for developing and maintaining programs and services for protecting, maintaining, and improving the health of the citizens of Minnesota.

The Environmental Health Division is responsible for protecting the public from potential health hazards associated with drinking water, the workplace, food and beverage establishments, individual sewage treatment facilities, and others. The Division of Public Health Laboratories performs lab analysis of environmental samples for MDH and other governmental agencies.

MDH is one of Minnesota's largest state agencies. Its headquarters are in Minneapolis, with district offices in seven locations around the state. The MDH is headed by the commissioner of health, who is appointed by the governor.

### **Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)**

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) was established in 1967. The MPCA enforces state and federal laws related to air quality, solid waste collection and disposal, surface and ground water quality, toxic and hazardous substances, and others.

The MPCA is governed by a nine-member board appointed by the governor. Staff are divided into three main divisions: Air Quality, Water Quality, and Solid and Hazardous Waste.

Air Quality Division: The division enforces laws relating to air pollution. In addition to attaining air quality standards in high pollutant areas, the division also engages in various programs to prevent deterioration of present air quality in clear-air areas. The division enforces and administers state noise standards.

Solid and Hazardous Waste Division: The division administers solid and hazardous waste programs and the Superfund (including cleaning up Superfund sites), issues permits for solid and hazardous waste facilities, and oversees the development of solid waste management plans. The division is also responsible for developing an overall strategy for ground water protection.

Water Quality Services: The division enforces and administers all laws relating to water pollution in the state. The division collects water quality data on rivers and lakes, establishes water quality standards to protect all water users, issues and enforces wastewater facility discharge and operating permits, provides management planning to alleviate pollution from nonpoint sources, administers grant programs, and provides engineering review, technical assistance and training to assure proper construction, operation and maintenance of wastewater treatment facilities.

In addition to specialists located in St. Paul, the MPCA has staff in five regional offices located in Duluth, Brainerd, Detroit Lakes, Marshall, and Rochester.

The MPCA has staff on call 24 hours a day to respond to pollution emergencies.

## **Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)**

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is the state agency that speaks for and promotes the development of agriculture and related industries in Minnesota. The agency adopts and enforces rules to clarify laws and to prevent fraud and deception in the manufacture and distribution of foods, animal feeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds.

The MDA is divided into three “service areas”: Agricultural Promotion Service, Agricultural Protection Service, and Administration and Financial Aid Service.

Agricultural Promotion Service: This service provides programs that promote and develop markets for Minnesota’s agricultural products. Sections that fall in this service are Agricultural Marketing, Agricultural Statistics, Promotion Councils and Activities, and Family Farm Services.

Agricultural Protection Service: The Agricultural Protection Service area regulates the safety and inspection of Minnesota’s agricultural products. Sections in this service area are Agronomy Services, Dairy and Livestock, Food Inspection, Grain Inspection, Grain Licensing and Auditing, Laboratory Services Division, and Plant Industry.

Administration and Financial Aid Service: This service provides administrative support to the agency through the sections of Financial Administration, Information Services, Personnel and Office Management, Agricultural Planning and Development, and Rural Finance Authority.

## **Minnesota Geological Survey (MGS)**

The Minnesota Geological Survey (MGS) investigates the geology of Minnesota and publishes reports and maps of its findings. Staff members can be consulted on water and mineral discovery, environmental issues, waste disposal, and construction materials. Survey publications, open file geologic maps, U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps, and hydrologic atlases are available from MGS. Information from computerized data banks of water well driller’s logs, containing information about the state’s subsurface geology mineral resources, may also be used by the public.

The MGS has one office located at:

2624 University Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55114-1057  
612-627-4780

## **FEDERAL**

### **U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)**

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is a bureau of the U.S. Department of the Interior. It was established in 1879. The U.S. Geological Survey’s primary responsibilities are identifying the nation’s land, water, energy, and mineral resources; classifying federally owned lands for minerals and energy resources and water power potential; investigating natural hazards such as earthquakes, volcanoes and landslides; and conducting the National Mapping Program.

The USGS prepares maps and digital and cartographic data, collects and interprets data on energy, mineral and water resources, performs fundamental and applied research, and publishes and disseminates the results of its investigations in new maps and reports each year.

For further information contact:

U.S. Geological Survey  
St. Paul District Office  
2280 Woodale Drive  
Mounds View, MN 55112  
763-783-3100

### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USF & WS)**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USF & WS) is a bureau of the U.S. Department of the Interior. The USF & WS is responsible for migratory birds, endangered species, certain marine animals, inland sport fisheries, and fish and wildlife research activities.

Some of the activities of the USF & WS include:

- studies of fish and wildlife populations.
- surveillance of pesticides, heavy metals, and thermal pollution.
- hatchery production of lake trout and other species.
- fisheries research on genetics, disease, nutrition, and taxonomy.
- development of the endangered species lists.
- operation of wildlife refuges.
- enforcement of game laws.
- aid programs for projects designed to conserve, develop, and enhance the nation's fish and wildlife resources.

The service is composed of a headquarters office in Washington, D.C., seven regional offices in the lower 48 states and Alaska, a regional research structure, and a variety of field units and installations. These include 450 national Wildlife Refuges and 150 Waterfowl Production Acres comprising more than 91 million acres; 25 major fish and wildlife laboratories and centers; 36 cooperative research units at universities across the country; 70 National Fish Hatcheries; and a nationwide network of wildlife law enforcement agents.

Minnesota is served by the regional office located at:

Twin Cities Field Office  
4101 East 80<sup>th</sup> Street  
Bloomington, MN 55425  
612-725-3548

## **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USCOE)**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USCOE) has been regulating activities in the nation's waters since 1890. Until 1960, its primary purpose was to protect navigation. Since the early '70s, the USCOE jurisdiction has expanded and now considers the full public interest for both the protection and utilization of all waters of the United States, including wetlands.

Under Section 10 of the River and Harbor Act, a permit is needed from the USCOE before putting any structure, or doing any other work, in a navigable water of the United States. Under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, filling, dredging, material disposal, sidecasting for drainage, or other filling activities in lakes, streams, and wetlands come within the scope of the USCOE regulatory jurisdiction.

For more information contact:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
190 East Fifth Street  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
651-290-5200

## **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was created as an independent federal agency in 1970. The EPA acts to control pollution by use of a variety of research, monitoring, standard setting, and enforcement activities. The agency coordinates and supports research and antipollution activities by state and local governments, private and public groups, individuals, and educational institutions. Some of the activities of the EPA include:

Air: The EPA develops and enforces national standards for air quality.

Water: The EPA develops national programs and regulations for water pollution control and water supply. It develops and enforces water quality standards and effluent guidelines.

Solid waste and emergency response: The EPA develops policies, standards, and regulations for hazardous waste treatment storage and disposal. It manages the national Superfund Toxic Cleanup Program. It develops guidelines and standards for underground storage tanks.

Pesticides and toxic substances: The EPA directs pesticides and toxic substances enforcement activities. It assesses the impact of existing chemicals and new chemicals to determine if they are hazardous, and, if needed, develops appropriate restrictions.

Research and development: The Office of Research and Development directs the research activities of the agency's national laboratories. General functions include management of selected demonstration programs, planning for agency environmental quality monitoring programs, and coordination with other agency monitoring programs.

The EPA has 10 regional offices. The regional administrators are responsible for accomplishing, within their regions, the national program objectives. Minnesota is served by the Chicago regional office of the EPA located at:

77 West Jackson Boulevard  
Chicago, IL 60604-3507  
312-353-2000

### **Farm Service Agency (FSA)**

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) was established in 1961. The FSA is the agency in the U.S. Department of Agriculture that administers commodity and related land use programs designed for voluntary production adjustment, resource protection, and price, market, and farm income stabilization. In each of the approximately 3,080 agricultural counties, a county committee composed of three farmer members is responsible for local administration.

Programs administered by the FSA include:

- the Commodity Credit Corporation's commodity stabilization programs for wheat, corn, soybeans, sugar beets, and other commodity crops.
- the Dairy Indemnity Payment Program.
- the emergency assistance programs for farmers.
- the Farm Facility Loan Program.
- the Dairy Termination Program.
- the Farmer Owned Reserve Program.

Of special interest is the Conservation Reserve (CRP) Program. The CRP Program, authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985, conserves and improves soil on highly erodible cropland. Program participants receive a payment for establishing and maintaining vegetative cover, implementing a conservation plan, and not allowing grazing for the 10-year contract period. The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical support for this program.

### **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**

For over 50 years, the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) (formerly known as the Soil Conservation Service [SCS]) has been providing technical assistance to SWCDs across the nation. The NRCS is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), with staff co-located with SWCD staff in local offices. Through Memorandums of Understanding with SWCDs, NRCS provides technical staff, equipment, and technical specifications for soil and water conservation work. NRCS also provides approval authority for virtually all soil and water conservation practices installed through SWCDs. NRCS assistance in most district offices consists of one district conservationist and one technician. NRCS staff work with SWCD staff to design, plan, and layout a variety of conservation practices for cooperating landowners. NRCS also provides specialists at the area and state level in agronomy, forestry, engineering, and soil science.



NRCS assistance is subject to USDA policies and federal budget priorities. Consequently, NRCS priorities do not always match those of your local SWCD. The NRCS-SWCD conservation partnership has been proven effective. However, supervisors should understand the opportunities as well as the limits afforded by NRCS assistance.

## **APPENDIX E: PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING**

As district supervisors, you must ensure that your district keeps pace with the changing demands placed upon natural resources. By planning for the future, your district will use its resources wisely and avoid many potential problems.

However, as demands change, your employees will need additional training and developmental programs to keep their skills well-honed and applicable to today's problems. Training of district employees should be approached systematically to avoid duplication of efforts and to get the most out of district training dollars. The following approach is recommended:

1. determine training needs.
2. set training goals and objectives.
3. decide how training will be accomplished.
4. evaluate training

### **A. DETERMINE TRAINING NEEDS**

Both supervisors and employees are responsible for identifying, discussing, and acting on training needs which can be determined by:

- performance review.
- job application form.
- daily observation.
- good communication between supervisor and staff.

Once determined, training needs should be precise, including method, objectives, and formal course names, if possible. Detail will assist a coordinated training schedule.

### **B. TRAINING OBJECTIVES**

Before any training is scheduled, a definite objective should be set that will let the employee know exactly why the training is being provided. Training for training's sake is a waste of time and money. A session can only be determined a success if an observable change in ability, skill, or knowledge is evident.

### **C. TRAINING AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE**

As professionals determining avenues of training, it is important to first review what can be accomplished through self-development or on-the-job training.

SWCDs are in the unique position of being able to work with other districts in their area in a coordinated effort. The best and most cost-effective method of training is for supervisors and employees to obtain hands-on training from each other, thereby strengthening their own district.

Self-development should also include home study, conferences, course work at local schools and universities, and participation in professional societies.

If training needs cannot be met locally or between neighboring districts, they can be addressed through formal training courses conducted by:

- Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) (both central office and area board conservationists).
- Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees (MACDE).
- Minnesota Department of Employee Relations (DOER).
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) - Employee Development (both the state office and the area conservationist).
- Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD).