




Utah Conservation Districts Continuing Education

Module 1:
The Basics



What you'll learn in this module:

- | What is a conservation district?
- | What is it supposed to do?
- | Who are the people involved in getting the job done?

Discussion questions:

- | What is the purpose of conservation districts?
- | What is the legal definition of a conservation district?
- | What are the key activities of a conservation district?
- | What are the roles of conservation district supervisors?
- | What are the roles of conservation district staff?

The Purpose of Conservation Districts

- | Utah's 38 conservation districts are responsible for local soil and water conservation programs.
- | By working with landowners, organizations and government the conservation districts work to protect soil, water quality and other natural resources, maintain resource productivity and protect or improve profitability.

The Purpose of Conservation Districts

- | Utah's Conservation Districts could be referred to as "gateways" to natural resource management in their local communities.
- | Sharing boundaries with most Utah counties, they provide linkages between landowners/managers and a host of conservation service providers.

Legally Speaking

Utah's conservation districts are legally defined in Utah Code, Special District, Title 17A-3, Part 8 (The Conservation District Law).

- | Conservation districts are political subdivisions or special service districts. Other examples of special service districts are school districts and water conservancy districts.
- | As a political subdivision, a conservation district has some basic statutory duties, organizational guidelines and financial reporting ties to the state.

Legally Speaking

- | A conservation district is **NOT** a non-profit organization
- | Utah conservation districts are **NOT** authorized to levy taxes

Legally Speaking

- | In many ways, a conservation district can act as a business. It can own property, accept gifts, sue and be sued, and raise funds from work performed.
- | Conservation districts do **NOT** have the right of eminent domain. They generally cannot mandate conservation practices.

Key Activities of Districts

- | On an ongoing basis, conservation districts assess the resource needs of the district (resource assessment)
- | They develop long-range and annual plans with the goals and objectives designed to meet prioritized needs
- | They provide linkages between land users and conservation service providers

Courtesy USDA-NRCS

Key Activities of Districts

- | They seek funding to implement land manager education, public awareness and the adoption of conservation practices based on the needs identified in their long-range plan
- | They assess the progress of the district in meeting the goals of their long-range plan

Conservation District Supervisors

- I When the residents of a conservation district elect a supervisor, they delegate the responsibility of directing the conservation needs of the district's natural resources to them.

Roles of District Supervisors

- | Be aware of the different natural resource needs within the district and actively seek input for solutions
- | Be an example of conservation management by practicing applicable conservation methods
- | Promote the ethic of good resource stewardship among all residents

Roles of District Supervisors

- | Be familiar with laws, policies and program concepts of importance to the district
- | Manage staff, finances and property of the district (through zone coordinator)
- | Regularly attend district meetings and functions, take an active role in overseeing your employees' activities, and generally make conservation district business a priority

Conservation District Staff

District staff members are responsible for the day-to-day business of the district:

- | Maintaining office records
- | Performing conservation projects
- | And being the representative of the district and the board to the community.

Roles of District Staff

- | Implement policies and activities as directed and approved by the board
- | Recommend board action on district business as appropriate, advise the board on issues, projects, budgets and any other matters as necessary or requested
- | Report to the board, residents of the district and state agencies on a regular basis about district activities, meetings and events.

Summary

- I A conservation district is a legal entity with many responsibilities and powers of a business. It plans and implements conservation practices, seeking voluntary cooperation and input from the public.

Summary

- 1 Conservation districts assess the conservation practices of the district, coordinate with federal and state agencies, prepare a long-range plan to address the specific conservation needs of the district, secure the necessary funding, perform needed work and evaluate the success of the work performed.

Summary

- I Conservation districts educate their residents on good conservation practices and encourage good stewardship of natural resources.



Courtesy USDA-NRCS

Summary

- 1 Supervisors are elected by the residents of the district to represent their interests in natural resource conservation. They are leaders, using their own operations and activities to set a good conservation example to others and demonstrate conservation benefits.



Summary

- | District staff perform much of the day-to-day work of the district. They maintain the district office, assist the board, landowners and managers and the general public with information, project assistance and access to resources.



Courtesy USDA-NRCS

Review Questions

- | What is the purpose of a conservation district?
- | What is the legal definition of a conservation district?
- | What are the key activities of a conservation district?
- | What are the roles of conservation district directors?
- | What are the roles of conservation district staff?

Resources Available

Resource Available	Where to Find It
Video: <i>"Conservation at Work"</i>	Located in each zone office
The Conservation_Handbook	Located in each zone office and each supervisor should have a copy for personal use
SCD Administrative_Handbook	Located in each zone office
Conservation District Law	Located in The Conservation Handbook & the SCD Administrative Handbook
Pocket Handbook	Located in each zone office and each supervisor should have a copy for personal use