



Empowerment beyond the
Conservation District borders,
it's training time!

Michigan's Conservation District Training
opportunities

If you offer it, they will come...

Not true, persuasion and funding might get them there, maybe some guilt.....

With district budgets zeroed out, getting directors to attend trainings is harder than ever, however once they go it is amazing the difference and the empowerment they feel after meeting with districts outside of their region. Giving them the “big picture” helps them to think outside of the local box and bring new ideas to the table.

If you offer it, they will come...

Directors can often be very provincial. If we had a director scholarship this would allow more statewide travel and thereby allow directors to discover what other districts are doing and how they manage with little funding. Our state employee's association does have scholarships available for paid members and they are often not fully utilized.

The question is, how do we get there? We know what we need to train them on to help them do their jobs, but they have to come to the training. We field staff have the knowledge to help them avert difficult and illegal situations, but they don't trust "the man" or utilize us enough.

Does it take more field staff? Seeing the board members more frequently? Training them on site?

Trainings typically offered

Yearly we (by we, I mean the association of districts – more on that on the next slide) offer:

- New Directors and Staff training (4 locations around the state)
- Summer Conference (recently redesigned to include board members)
- Annual Meeting (in December)
- Numerous technical trainings for our grant staff in partnership with Extension and NRCS.

If they come, you must train them....

The Michigan Department of Agriculture does not put on any of the trainings. We assist the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts with all of them, but directly training board members is really only done at the New Directors and Staff Workshops.

The rest of the year, we sit on the training committee and give input for the agendas. I do personally feel that since districts are in our charge, MDA should be the ones charged with training them.

How are board member trainings handled in your state?

MACD Annual Meeting

This is designed to offer trainings for our partners, directors and staff.

Last year's agenda looked like [this](#).

Last year's annual meeting had the highest attendance yet with over 300 attendees (this number includes 18 vendors).

MACD Annual Meeting

We have almost 500 board members; about 79 district administrators/executive directors; 100 technical staff for various grant programs and at least 50 admin assistants, education coordinators and other miscellaneous staff.

Our board members are not on the ballot, they are elected at each district's annual meeting.

Potentially we could have 700 people there, if we had the funding and the motivation was there.

Money and time away from home are the biggest factors.

Summer Conference in the North Woods

This year's summer conference was changed to try to get more board involvement. It was also tied to a State Council meeting so that State Council members could attend and mingle with the other board members and answer questions and address concerns.

Even with tight budget times, we still had about 125 attendees with at least 25 board members in attendance.

Here is a quick glance at our recent [agenda](#).

New Directors and Staff

We are in the middle of change, but the new plan is:

- Four training dates every 3 months to capture the new directors coming on board throughout the year.
- Four set locations around the state.
- We used to hold them all in February and March so that it didn't interfere with the farming season (in MI at least, we still have snow then). Many of our board members hail from diverse backgrounds now, but most are still farmers.

FY 2006 Directors and Staff Workshop Agenda

8:45 am – 9:00 am Coffee & Rolls

9:00 am – 9:30 am Welcome and Introductions: Why are we here? Group activity

9:30 am – 10:00 am **HELP, I'm New: *What you need to know first***; The basics of a [Conservation District](#); The Gateway approach to conservation; People to call on for help

10:00 am – 10:45 am **The Conservation Partnership** How does [MACD](#), [MDA](#), [NRCS](#) and others assist Districts Participant's activity: *Who helps you locally?*

FY 2006 Directors and Staff Workshop Agenda

10:45 am – 11:00 am Break/Networking with classmates

11:00 am – 12:00 noon Personnel Management Directors' role in personnel management Staff supervisors' role in personnel management Interviewing, hiring, evaluating and firing; Fair Labor Standards Act; At Will and Just Cause; If my grant comes from the state, do I work for MDA? We always need far more than an hour for this one.

12:00 pm – 12:45 pm Lunch

12:45 pm - 1:15 pm "Survivor" Panel Discussion Experienced members from select Districts will tell you how NOT to get voted off the island

FY 2006 Directors and Staff Workshop Agenda

1:15 pm – 2:15 pm Understanding the Conservation District Law Participant's activity: *Can we do that?*

2:15 pm – 2:30 pm Break/Networking with classmates

2:30 pm - 2:45 pm Resources Available to Help You
[Operations Handbook](#), [Directors Handbook](#), [How to read and understand financial reports](#)

2:45 pm - 3:00 pm [MDA Operations Grant and Other Contracts](#)

3:00 pm – 3:45 pm Bringing it all Together: [It's Time to Play Jeopardy](#)

3:45 pm – 4:00 Closing Comments & Evaluation

Solutions?

I don't have the answers, but I know that more funding will help.

I do want to know how *you* get your board members to the training table.

None of our training is mandatory.

- Should it be?



Thanks for your time!