



# Oklahoma Conservation Commission

## District Directors' Responsibilities:

### A 10-Minute Guide Series

This is one in a continuing series of informational/discussion topics designed to help conservation district directors become more informed and knowledgeable about their responsibilities. It is suggested that board members review these guides before a board meeting and then have a 10 minute discussion on them at the meeting.

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#### *Guide No. 4 - District Cooperator Agreements*

Conservation districts have used district cooperator agreements since the formation of districts. A district cooperator is, by law, those who have entered into a cooperator agreement with the conservation district for the purpose of protecting, conserving and practicing the wise use of the renewable natural resources under their control (Title 27A of the Oklahoma Statutes, Section 3-1-103(9)).

#### **What is a District Cooperator Agreement?**

Every district has its own cooperator agreement form, although most are very similar. Most are a one page document signed by individual and by a district board member.

For 70 years producers have entered into cooperator agreements with districts. In the agreements producers agree to develop and carry out a conservation plan and maintain conservation measures and the district agrees to provide technical and other assistance.

When districts were first formed they obtained cooperator agreements from landowners and used them to request NRCS (know then as Soil Conservation Service) to provide technical assistance and assist in development of a conservation plan for the cooperator.

As time passed the formality and use of the district cooperator agreement has changed. This has caused some confusion as to how the document should be handled.

Currently it is not uncommon for NRCS technicians or district conservationists to have blank district cooperator agreements for landowners to sign when they are in the field working on conservation plans or one of the

Farm Bill programs. This works well as long as the signed form then gets to the district staff so they can be approved at a district board meeting.

The document is neither legally binding nor required in order for an individual to receive technical assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

#### **Who Can be a District Cooperator?**

Historically, a district cooperator either owned or operated land. However, there is no provision in the statute that states that an individual must own land. While most current agreements refer to conservation practices, etc. that implies the cooperator must be a land owner, an individual that wishes to cooperate with the district, for example with an education project, can become a district cooperator.

*A new cooperator agreement is being developing by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission that will be more appropriate for for use with an individual that is not a landowner or a group, organization or company.*

## **Approval of District Cooperator Agreements**

A cooperator agreement must be approved by the board of directors during a regularly scheduled board meeting and signed by an authorized district director to be in effect. The name of each cooperator for who an agreement is approved must be listed in the minutes of the board meeting.

## **Importance of Keeping Status of Cooperator Agreements Current**

It is important to keep cooperator agreements current since an individual must have an agreement on file to run for election or to be appointed to the office of district director.

The agreement is considered "on file" after it has been approved by the board during a board meeting and signed and dated by an authorized district director.

*The cooperator agreement must have been on file 30 days prior to a person being recommended for appointment to office, or prior to filing for election as a board member.*

## **District Document**

The district cooperator agreement is a district document. The approval of these agreements is done in open session at a board meeting. They are not part of the approval process for conservation plans and contracts.

Therefore, these files should be maintained in a manner which keeps them current on a monthly basis.

It would be beneficial for districts to go through their files and develop a database of current district cooperators.

## **Other Uses of Cooperative Agreements**

Conservation districts represent their cooperators when developing annual and long range plans, promoting needed conservation practices in the district, and searching for funding and other resources needed by landowners.

When talking to legislators, civic groups and other agencies and organizations, district officials can use the number of district cooperators to make the point that the district is not just five a board of five members.

Board members represent their cooperators and other landusers in the district on conservation matters. When people sign up as district cooperators they agree to cooperate and support the district and in turn the district agrees to support their conservation efforts. So these cooperators actually become part of the conservation district.

## **Other Resources:**

Conservation District Handbook, Chapter 2  
Sample Agreements attached

# Conservation District Cooperator Agreement

I, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby request assistance from the \_\_\_\_\_ Conservation District in planning and applying such conservation practices as are necessary or desirable to protect and improve my soil, plants, and wildlife. I understand that the ultimate goals of the \_\_\_\_\_ Conservation District program are the use of all renewable natural resources in the District within their capabilities and the treatment of the resources according to their needs for protection and improvement. I understand that this conservation agreement can be cancelled at any time by me or by the District by giving written notice.

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Date	Signature	Address	Telephone
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Date	Signature	Address	Telephone
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## ACCEPTANCE OF AGREEMENT

The \_\_\_\_\_ Conservation District hereby accepts the above request for assistance and planning and/or applying a conservation program for your renewable natural resources. We will furnish a conservation soil or range survey map with interpretations and, as available, the assistance needed and requested to help you improve your soil, water, wildlife and related natural resources. We welcome you as a cooperator with \_\_\_\_\_ Conservation District.

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Date	Signature of Member-Board of Directors
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