



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.

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 cooperative 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. An individual that wishes to cooperate with the district, for example with an education project, can become a district cooperator.

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

The status of cooperator agreements must be kept current since an individual must have an agreement on file to run 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 Resources:

Conservation District Handbook, Chapter 2