



Conservation District Operations



Power Point 5



What You Will Learn

Conservation district board operations, from:

- Recommended practices from experience

- State or federal law

- Rules adopted by the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission (Commission).

- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) or Supplemental MOU with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Most of the operational issues addressed in this overview are covered in greater detail elsewhere



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District Board Organization

Speak as a group, not as individuals

Elect officers annually

Select officers on merit, not seniority

Directors may succeed themselves indefinitely

Cultivate talented individuals with diverse experience and interests to ensure continuity, creativity and enthusiasm (e.g., recruit directors-in-training)



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District Board Meetings

Schedule at least one regular meeting monthly, an annual meeting and special meetings as needed.

No more than one regular board meeting should be held at the annual area meeting and one with the annual state meeting.

A quorum of three board members is required.

All meetings are subject to open meeting requirements (See Fact Sheet 13)



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NRCS Relationship

NRCS supports local planning but does not lead local planning.

USDA will enter into an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) pledging to cooperate and assist a district based on the [Conservation Needs Assessment](#) and [Conservation Action Plan](#)

After the USDA MOU is signed, the district may enter into a supplemental MOU with NRCS

Conservation District must develop its own [Annual Plan of Work](#), which is different than the NRCS plan of work

USDA requires that all MOUs be reviewed annually

NRCS employees are forbidden to engage in district financial activities.

District employees may work under the technical guidance of NRCS.



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Raising Funds

In addition to state funds earmarked for conservation districts, districts have legal authority to raise revenue from a wide range of sources:

- Fees charged for products and services

- Line-item funding from county and municipal governments

- Levy taxes that directly benefit conservation

- Federal, state, foundation, corporate and other grants

- Cooperative agreements and inter-local agreements

- Gifts/contributions

- In-kind contributions of all sorts



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Financial Management

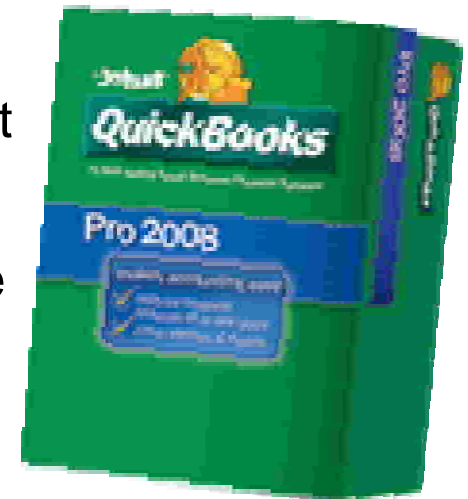
Districts must develop a budget that relates directly to its Annual Work Plan.

Districts are required to keep adequate financial records and use procedures that provide adequate controls. See Module 4.

Districts are required to use QuickBooks

Districts are required to use a standardized chart of accounts provided by ANRC

ANRC staff train conservation district staff to use QuickBooks.



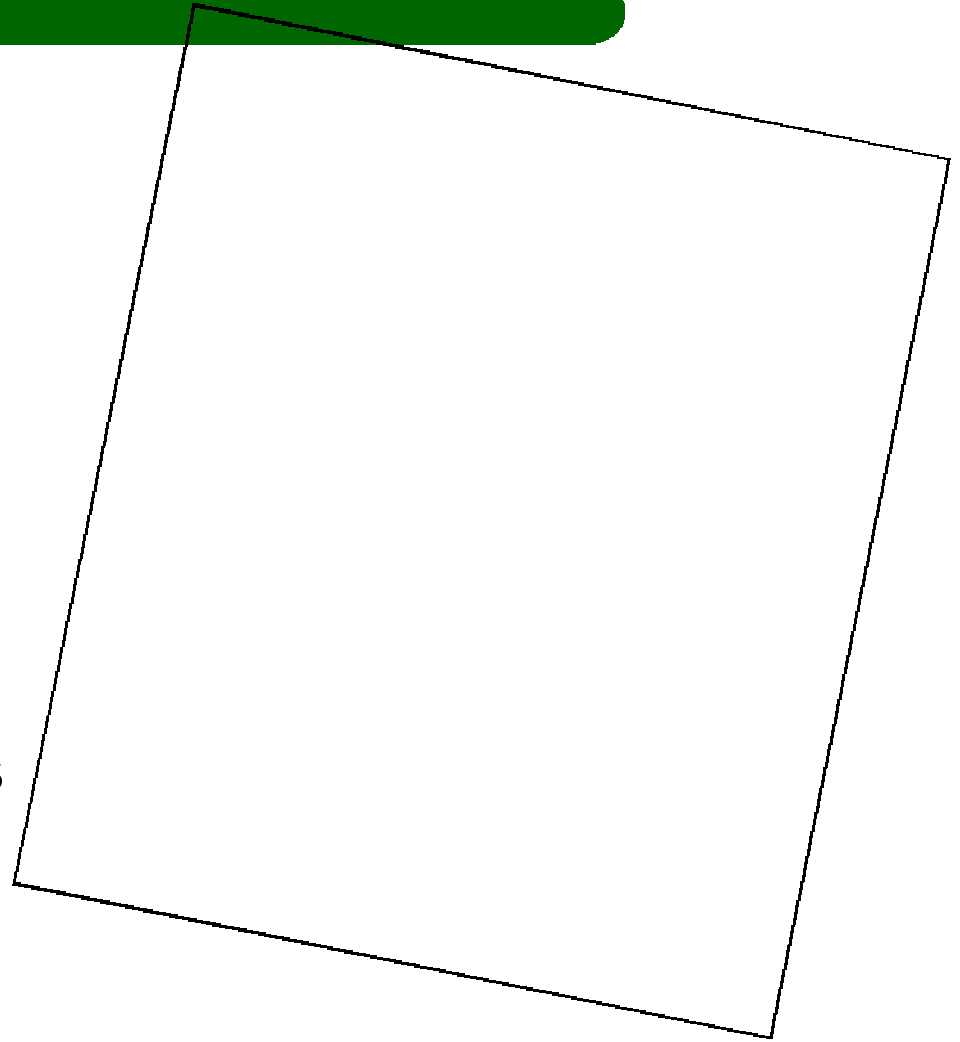
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Annual Budget

Budget should relate to
annual work plan

Developing, monitoring
and managing the
budget is part of the
board's most basic
fiduciary responsibilities



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District Employees

The board is responsible for recruiting, hiring, evaluating, firing, and promoting district employees

District directors should develop and implement a personnel manual

AACDE has developed a model personnel manual

Conservation districts are encouraged to enter into interagency working agreements to clarify the relationship between district employees and employees of those agencies that provide assistance to the district.



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Fund Raising

Districts should seek line-item funding from municipalities and county government

Revenue raised from sales of products and services should relate to the district's program goals and plans

Districts should evaluate the benefit-cost ratio of their fundraising and invest scarce staff and volunteer time in fundraising activities with the highest return per hour



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Evaluation and Reporting

ANRC evaluates conservation districts annually using a standardized instrument – called a program analysis (see Fact Sheet 20)

Evaluation results will be used to review allocation of Commission funds

Districts must prepare an annual report of accomplishments

Districts should involve the public in planning and report accomplishments to the public

Districts are encouraged to maintain an ongoing dialogue with mayors, county judges, quorum courts, Chambers, civic clubs, churches, educators, and others about their mission and accomplishments

Districts should promote natural resource management through contests, exhibits, tours, meetings, presentations, newsletters, media, demonstrations, etc



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Program Analysis

Program Analysis
awards points for
adopting
recommended
practices and
implementing required
practices/procedures.

Five page evaluation
instrument



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Cooperation/Partnerships

Conservation districts should actively pursue partnerships that will help them achieve their mutual goals and objectives

- Cooperate with other districts and governmental bodies

- Consult with and make recommendations to state and federal agencies

- Collaborate with university faculty

- Partner with water districts, watershed groups, wildlife groups, farm organizations, environmental groups, vendors, local newspapers and radio, and others



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Cooperation/Partnerships

Enter into MOUs or working agreements to clarify roles on joint initiatives, systems, projects

Always enter into a written agreement if partners have pledged cash or in-kind contributions to a joint project

Just as the district wants other agencies and organizations to partner with the district, it is important to participate in initiatives and projects led by other agencies and organizations. “If you want to influence the agenda, you have to be at the table.”

Share information that can help with resource planning at the watershed, regional and state levels.



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Equal Opportunity

Conservation districts must by state and federal law provide equal opportunity in employment and program delivery

An equal opportunity statement should be included on position announcements, meeting notices, program brochures, fact sheets and other program materials

Districts should actively promote their programs among minorities and other disadvantaged groups

Districts are encouraged to develop a record-keeping system to track its "Affirmative Action" efforts



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