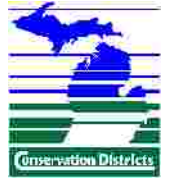


An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground and middle ground, there are large, rectangular plots of land, likely vineyards or agricultural fields, with rows of plants visible. A road or path runs diagonally across the left side. In the background, there are rolling green hills, more fields, and a few farm buildings, including a large barn and a house. The overall scene is lush and green, suggesting a rural or agricultural setting.

Conservation Districts in Michigan

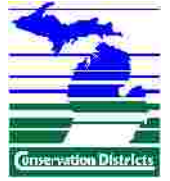
- *The Basics* -

Training Module 1



What You'll Learn In This Module

- | What is a Conservation District?
- | What is it suppose 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 Directors?
- | What are the roles of Conservation District Staff?



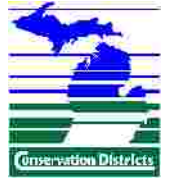
The Purpose of Conservation Districts

Michigan's 80 Conservation Districts are responsible for educating the public to the benefits of conservation practices.

They work to convince resource users to protect the resource, maintain its productivity, and protect or improve its profitability.



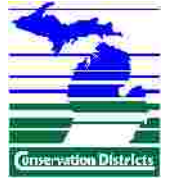
Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS



The Purpose of Conservation Districts

Michigan's Conservation Districts are referred to as "*gateways*" to natural resource management in their local communities.

Sharing boundaries with most Michigan counties, they provide linkages between land owners/managers and a host of conservation service providers.



Legally Speaking

According to Section 9301 of Public Act 463 of 1998 (The Conservation District Law) the legal definition of a Conservation District is:

A governmental subdivision of this state, and a public body corporate and politic, organized in accordance with this part, for the purposes, with the powers, and subject to the restrictions set forth in this part.



Legally Speaking

- | A Conservation District is **NOT** a non-profit organization
- | Michigan Conservation Districts are **NOT** authorized to levy taxes
- | Michigan Conservation Districts can ask their county commissioners to place a millage on the ballot



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



Key Activities of Districts

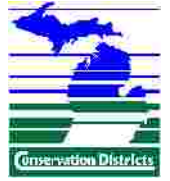
- | They seek funding to implement land manager education, public awareness, and the adoption of conservation practices based on the needs identified in their long-range plan
- | They assess the progress of the District in meeting the goals of their long-range plan



Conservation District Directors

When the residents of a Conservation District elect a director, they delegate the responsibility of directing the conservation needs of the District's natural resources to them.





Roles of District Directors

- | 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 Directors

- | Be familiar with laws, policies, and program concepts of importance to the District
- | Manage staff, finances, and property of the District (through Administrator or Executive Director)
- | Regularly attend District meetings and functions, take an active role in overseeing your employees' activities, and generally make the 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

| 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.



Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS

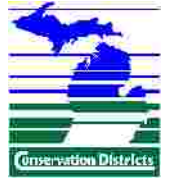


Summary

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 work performed.



Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS



Summary

I Conservation Districts educate their residents on good conservation practices and encourages good stewardship of natural resources.



Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS



Summary

Directors 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.



Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS

Summary

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





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>"Stewards of the Land"</i>	Located in each District office
Conservation District <u>Operations</u> Handbook	Located in each District office
Conservation District <u>Directors</u> Handbook	Located in each District office, and each Director should have a copy for personal use.
Brochure: <i>"Elements of Michigan's Model Conservation Districts: the gateway to natural resource mgmt"</i>	<u>Click here</u> for a copy.
Conservation District Law: P.A. 463 of 1998.	Located in the Directors Handbook as well as the Operations Handbook.