

# Utah Conservation Districts Continuing Education

The Basics



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Utah Soil Conservation Commission  
Utah Association of Conservation Districts

# Utah Conservation Handbook

*For Utah Soil Conservation  
District Supervisors*



For illustration  
purposes only.

To obtain a copy of  
this handbook,  
contact your Zone  
Coordinator.

# What you'll learn in this module:

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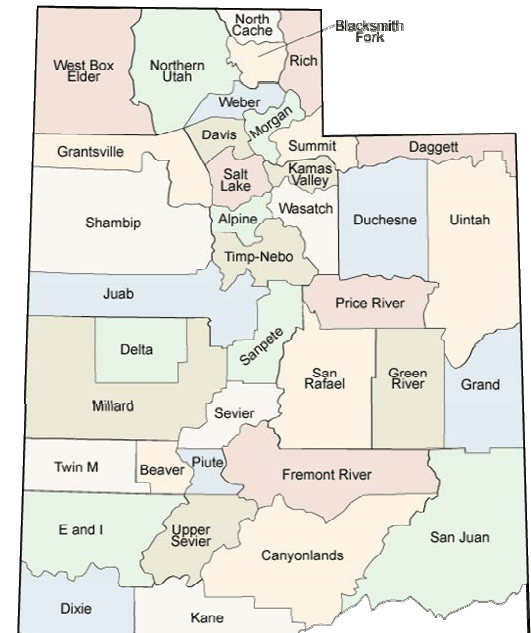
- What is a conservation district?
- What is it supposed to do?
- Who are the people involved in getting the job done?

# 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 supervisors?
- What are the roles of conservation district staff?

# The Purpose of Conservation Districts

- Utah's 38 conservation districts are responsible for local soil and water conservation programs.
- By working with landowners, organizations and government the conservation districts work to protect soil, water quality and other natural resources, maintain resource productivity and protect or improve profitability.



# The Purpose of Conservation Districts

- Utah's Conservation Districts could be referred to as “gateways” to natural resource management in their local communities.
- Sharing boundaries with most Utah counties, they provide linkages between landowners/managers and a host of conservation service providers.

# Legally Speaking

Utah's conservation districts are legally defined in Utah Code, Special District, Title 17A-3, Part 8 (The Conservation District Law).

- Conservation districts are political subdivisions or special service districts. Other examples of special service districts are school districts and water conservancy districts.
- As a political subdivision, a conservation district has some basic statutory duties, organizational guidelines and financial reporting ties to the state.

# Legally Speaking

- A conservation district is **NOT** a non-profit organization
- Utah conservation districts are **NOT** authorized to levy taxes



# 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



Courtesy USDA-NRCS

- 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 Supervisors

- When the residents of a conservation district elect a supervisor, they delegate the responsibility of directing the conservation needs of the district's natural resources to them.



# Roles of District Supervisors

- 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 Supervisors

- Be familiar with laws, policies and program concepts of importance to the district
- Manage staff, finances and property of the district (through zone coordinator)
- Regularly attend district meetings and functions, take an active role in overseeing your employees' activities, and generally make 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.





# 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.



Courtesy USDA-NRCS



# 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

- 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 the work performed.

# Summary

- Conservation districts educate their residents on good conservation practices and encourage good stewardship of natural resources.



Courtesy USDA-NRCS

# Summary

- Supervisors 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.



# Summary

- District staff perform much of the day-to-day work of the district. They maintain the district office, assist the board, landowners and managers and the general public with information, project assistance and access to resources.



Courtesy USDA-NRCS

# 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>"Conservation at Work"</i>	Located in each zone office
The Conservation_Handbook	Located in each zone office and each supervisor should have a copy for personal use
SCD Administrative_Handbook	Located in each zone office
Conservation District Law	Located in The Conservation Handbook & the SCD Administrative Handbook
Pocket Handbook	Located in each zone office and each supervisor should have a copy for personal use

- [www.uacd.org](http://www.uacd.org)
- [www.nacdnet.org](http://www.nacdnet.org)