

# Mississippi Soil & Water Conservation Commission



# Commissioner Certification Program

# What you will learn:

- Establishment of Conservation District Law, Powers and Authorities.
- Responsibilities of Commissioners.
- Working relationships with other agencies and organizations.
- Personnel Management Issues.
- Making your District successful.

What do YOU want to  
accomplish as a district  
board member?

# Part 1.

What is a Soil & Water  
Conservation District?

What is a . . .

‘Soil & Water Conservation District’?

- A governmental subdivision of the state of Mississippi.
- Organized according to the Soil & Water Conservation District Law.

# What is the purpose of a District?

- To provide for the conservation, development and proper utilization of the water and soil resources of this state.
- For control and prevention of soil erosion.
- To preserve natural resources.
- To improve water quality.

# What are Powers of Districts and Commissioners?

- a. To conduct surveys, investigations and research relating to soil erosion.
- b. To conduct demonstration projects.
- c. To carry out preventive and control measures.
- d. To cooperate, or enter into agreements.
- e. To obtain options upon or acquire property.
- f. To make equipment, etc., available to landowners and cooperators.
- g. To construct, improve and maintain certain structures.



- h. To develop comprehensive conservation plans.
- i. To acquire and administer conservation projects.
- j. To assist individual landowners or cooperators on conservation projects.
- k. To enter into contracts.
- l. To collect cost-sharing funds.
- m. To receive and expend funds.
- n. To sue and be sued in the name of the District.
- o. May make requirements of cooperators to enter into agreements.
- p. Other issues regarding property must be legislated.

# How is a District organized?

Administered by 5 Commissioners

- One from each supervisor's beat.
- 3 elected by landowners, 2 appointed by MSWCC.

# Qualifications:

- Resident of supervisor beat which they represent.
- Landowner and/or operator within the District.
- Be qualified to carry out the authority and responsibility of the office.
- Be willing to serve the three-year term.
- Must attend 75% of meetings.

# District Officers:

- Chairperson
- Vice Chairperson
- Secretary-treasurer

*Each District is authorized to appoint up to 5 deputy commissioners.*

# What are my responsibilities as a Commissioner?

# 1 - You are a public official  
responsible to the people of  
your District.

# Some of your responsibilities:

- Participate in Commissioners Meetings.
- Secure funds.
- Prepare budget.
- Maintain up-to-date long range plan.
- Participate in Annual Plan of Operation.
- Provide for record-keeping.
- Publish Annual Report.
- Prepare Annual Financial Statement/Audit.

- Personnel management.
- Solicit and utilize resources to carry out District Program.
- Surety Bonds.
- Manage equipment.
- Establish District policies.
- Establish work priorities.
- Public outreach activities.

## Personnel Management issues:

- Employer responsibility to employees.
- Establishing District policies relative to employees.
- Developing and writing a job description.
- Purpose and applications of performance appraisals.
- Benefits.



Conducting meetings.

Could this be your District  
meeting?

Part 2.

Working relationships.



# What is the MSWCC?

- State agency.
- Established in 1938.
- Soil & Water Conservation Law.
- Each county organizes Soil & Water Conservation District.

# Membership of Commission:

Commissioner of Agriculture	State Forester	MACD President
MACD 1st VP	MACD 2nd VP	MACD Past President
One member from each Congressional District (5)	Director MSU Extension Service	Director MS Ag. & Forestry Experiment Stations
	NRCS State Conservationist	

# What are responsibilities of MSWCC?

- District Assistance.
- Program coordination.
- Secure cooperation and assistance of Federal and State agencies.
- Disseminate information.
- Establish and administer qualification standards for District Commissioners.
- To give guidance and overall supervision to districts.
- Study, classify and evaluate land use needs.



# What is the Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts (MACD)?

- Established in 1945.
- Non-profit organization.
- Primary purpose is to promote soil and water conservation by educating the public.
- Governed by a 31 member Board of Directors: *Executive Committee and 22 Directors.*
- Has NO employees.



## MACD sponsors programs and activities:

- Annual Commissioners Conference (MACD's annual winter meeting).
- Tree Planting Week.
- District and statewide awards programs.
- Conservation Youth Camp.
- Mississippi Envirothon.
- Conservation Poster and Essay contests.

- Endowment Fund.
- Student Scholarships
- Grants to Districts.
- Educational Programs.
- Conservation Grandparents.
- Native Wildflower Project.
- Membership Drives.

What are some agencies and organizations in your area with whom you could join/partner on conservation issues, or develop some type of working relationship?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

In your opinion, what are some of the critical issues/resources/sites in your District?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Assume that time and money were available to confront ONE issue, resource or problem.

Which of those that you just listed would you address?

Identify the 2nd most important issue you would address.

Identify the 3rd most important issue  
you would address.

## Why would the District need:

- employees?
- to know the difference in organization structure?
- to know how the process of prioritization works?
- to partner with other organizations?
- Commissioners?



# Characteristics of a Successful District.

1. Commissioners understand and accept responsibilities.
2. Has and uses long-range program.
3. Commissioners understand program.
4. Locals understand and support program.
5. Develops and carries out Plan of Operations.
6. Holds regular meetings.

7. Has necessary funding.
8. Has employees and personnel practices in place.
9. Uses all available people and resources.
10. Good public outreach and education program.
11. Establishes and maintains communications and working relations with other agencies and organizations.
12. Publishes Annual Report to public.