

Carlson

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HANDBOOK
FOR
SOIL CONSERVATION
DISTRICT
COMMISSIONERS



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INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet is published by the Iowa Soil Conservation Committee for the purpose of acquainting the new as well as the experienced soil conservation district commissioners with some of the duties and responsibilities of their office.

It is hoped that it will be helpful to each soil conservation district in getting conservation on the land.

The Iowa Soil Conservation Committee also publishes the bulletin "Conserve Iowa's Resources", which contains the laws under which the Soil Conservation Districts are organized. This should be reviewed from time to time to better understand the place of a soil conservation district in the soil conservation program.

THE OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER

As a Soil Conservation District Commissioner you are an official of a governmental subdivision of the State of Iowa. A soil conservation district is a public body corporate and politic organized under the Iowa Soil Conservation District Law enacted by the State Legislature in 1939.

You are a director of an organization designed to band together in community wide action the many specialized groups and individuals, towards getting conservation on the land. When the local people take an active part in some phase of the program you are building a solid program even though this program is slower than others.

Soil Conservation is a relatively new science involving many other specialized sciences to solve the problem. Likewise many Federal, State, and Local governmental organizations and many private organizations can coordinate their activities through local Soil Conservation Districts. As a District Commissioner, you should be thinking about every possible way in which these local groups can promote soil conservation. Many of these groups won't act unless requested.

COOPERATING GROUPS AND AGENCIES

To get conservation of soil requires some knowledge from many fields of science. Likewise it requires the effort of many different community groups to contact all of the people. Conservation

of the soil is everybody's job. Some of the local people and groups who can help in the soil conservation districts program are Civic Clubs, Chambers of Commerce, Sportsmen's Clubs, Farm organizations, County Superintendents of Schools, Vocational Agriculture Teachers, County Bankers' Associations, Churches, County Boards of Supervisors, Newspapers, and Radio Stations.

A number of government agencies from National, State and County levels co-operate with soil conservation districts. Each agency is usually specialized in one field or another and does a part of the conservation task.

Government agencies which co-operate with districts in a large way, usually have a memorandum of understanding with each soil conservation district in which the terms of the co-operation are outlined. Listed below are some of the agencies which have memorandums of understanding with Soil Conservation Districts in Iowa.

1. Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture has been responsible for the technical assistance given to soil conservation districts by furnishing technicians to the districts.
2. Extension Service of Iowa State College is responsible for the educational phases of the district program through the facilities which they may have.
3. Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station is responsible for any experimental work the district may wish to carry out. The district cannot carry on experimental work except in cooperation with the experiment station.
4. The State Conservation Commission is co-operating with soil conservation districts in which artificial lakes are located by furnishing additional funds for technicians to work in the water-sheds above the lakes.
5. The State Soil Conservation Committee by law is responsible for the supervision of organization of soil conservation districts and the election of the commissioners. The State Committee is also responsible for the administration of state funds which are made available to districts. These funds may be for the administration of the district or for techni-

cians to be added.

6. Other government agencies which have and will co-operate with Soil Conservation Districts are the Production and Marketing Administration and the Farmers' Home Administration.

WORK PLAN AND WORK PROGRAM

Shortly after each district was formed and granted a charter by the Secretary of State, a Work Program and a Work Plan were drawn up for the district. The Work Program outlines the problems of the district and what it will take to solve the problems. The Work Plan outlines the procedures to be used and who will do the various jobs of the district. The Work Plan needs to be revised from time to time and it should be referred to often in guiding the work of the district. Likewise it is well to review the work program occasionally.

COMMISSIONER MEETINGS

If a soil conservation district is to operate successfully, regular district commissioners meetings are a must. Meetings should be set for a certain day such as the second Tuesday of every month. If more meetings are necessary to get things done, they may be called. Notices should be sent before each meeting and should include some items of business to be brought up.

Meetings should be conducted in a business like manner. Since the commissioners group is small, there is a tendency to get away from a regular procedure which results in confusion, delay, and lack of understanding as to what has been actually acted upon.

To avoid waste of time a definite order of business should be set up. A suggested order is outlined below:

1. Call to order by the Chairman.
2. Roll Call.
3. Minutes of the last meeting by the Secretary, followed by their approval or corrections.
4. Treasurer's Report.
5. Old Business (included approval of bills and committee reports).
6. New Business.
7. Adjournment.

A neat typewritten set of minutes should be kept

of each meeting in a book for that purpose. It is important to keep the minutes of meetings in a book which will preserve their record. Minutes should include the following:

1. Date, time and place of meeting.
2. Purpose of meeting if special.
3. Names of those present.
4. Names of advisory personnel and visitors.
5. Approval and corrections of previous meetings minutes.
6. Each item of old and new business and voting results.
7. Authorization for expenditure of funds.
8. Committee reports.

The Roberts "Rules of Order" is usually used at meetings.

FLOOD CONTROL

From the results of research we are getting information of the effects of soil conservation practices on flood control.

The results are leading most flood control experts to the conclusion that soil conservation on the watershed basis, plays a vital part in solving the problem.

The first flood control project in Iowa which is combining channel control with conservation practices on the uplands is the Little Sioux River Project in Northwest Iowa. Projects of this type involve many problems of cooperation. The Local soil conservation districts are responsible for the administration part of the program from the standpoint of determining organization of watersheds, priority of work, providing right-of-ways and setting up the program of maintenance. Soil conservation planning groups organized on a watershed basis will become more necessary as other flood control projects are put into operation.

ANNUAL REPORTS

At the end of each year, an annual report of the activities of your soil conservation district is prepared and submitted to the State Soil Conservation Committee, to the Extension Service, and the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture.

The districts annual report should be prepared with the thought in mind of addressing it to the

people in the district rather than to cooperating agencies.

Very good use can be made of an annual report. It should be distributed to every farmer and landowner in the district.

Following is a list of some of the items which should be included in an annual report:

1. Cooperation by the various groups and agencies contributing to the district program. A good method to use is have a representative of each group report on the activities which they have done during the year.
2. The years' goals as set forth and the accomplishments in comparison. A special effort should be made to get all of the work done listed, because too often many items are overlooked.
3. Applications on hand, an estimated work load and the amount of help needed to get the work accomplished. The number of years at the present rate to complete the work would be interesting.
4. A review of special activities such as tours, demonstrations, and etc.
5. News clippings from newspapers of district activities.
6. Graphs and progress maps seem to fit well.
7. Treasurer's report.
8. General summary.

Every effort should be made to make an attractively prepared annual report which will be interesting to many people of different walks of life.

ASSISTANT DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS

Assistant District Commissioners may be appointed by the district commissioners to aid them in their work. The amount of authority that is delegated to them is at the discretion of the commissioners themselves.

The key to making this kind of a program a success is giving the assistant commissioners plenty of work to do. Unless this is done, they soon lose interest and become inactive.

Assistant district commissioners can contribute a great deal towards the program of a soil conservation district by keeping more people informed of soil conservation district activities.

COMPENSATION

As a commissioner you may be paid for expenses incurred in carrying out district activities providing funds are available in the district treasury. The State does furnish funds for this purpose.

A soil conservation district cannot levy taxes nor may you receive compensation for your services. When no salary is involved, the people will seek the man for the office rather than the man seek the position.

DISTRICT EQUIPMENT

Under the Soil Conservation District Law, a district may purchase, receive on loan or receive as a gift or grant, equipment to do soil conservation work.

Equipment has been generally either of the small type such as sod cutters, grain drills, small blades for farm tractors and others which are rented to farmers at cost or the large type such as bulldozers and draglines for which the district hires an operator or leases to a reliable contractor on a rental basis.

Many districts have contracts with reliable contractors in which the contractors agree to do the work according to standards established by the districts and pay to the district treasury 1, 2, or 3 per cent of the gross amount received on a project in return for the service rendered by the district.

Some districts have followed the policy of encouraging private contractors to do soil conservation work rather than get into the business themselves. Both methods have been successful. However, one of the big reasons why some districts have been successful in getting conservation on the land is that they have encouraged contractors to get into the soil conservation field, and have trained them to do quality work with a minimum of supervision.

