

Become a

Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner

*Have a positive impact on Iowa's land
and people*



- **Help set local priorities for natural resource protection .**
- **Make decisions that will make your county a better place to live.**
- **Work with partners to improve the awareness and education of natural resource protection.**
- **Give back to your community by serving as a conservation district commissioner.**

Become a soil and water conservation commissioner. Here's how!

If you're qualified to vote in a general election, you're an eligible candidate for election to the county soil and water conservation district board.

Each district is governed by five commissioners who are elected at general elections on a nonpartisan basis for four-year terms. Only one commissioner may reside in any single township.

You'll need a nominating petition from the county Auditor. At least 25 eligible voters must sign the petition and you must file it with the Auditor no later than the 69th day before the general election. You must also file an affidavit stating your name, residence and an assurance that you are an eligible candidate. No political party is designated.

If elected, you will take an oath of office and begin your four-year term on the first day in January following the election (that is not a Sunday or a holiday).



Help direct local programs

As a commissioner, you'll help guide soil and water conservation programs in the county, and will have the opportunity to influence state and national conservation programs.

Your involvement will include establishing conservation priorities, resolving soil loss complaints, establishing acceptable soil loss limits, publishing an annual report, approving soil conservation plans, and assisting in the management of district funds and personnel.

You will be reimbursed for expenses, and be protected from personal liability. Among other things, you'll be expected to take part in regular monthly meetings, become knowledgeable of the soil and water conservation laws and programs, develop and carry out soil and water resource conservation plans, and help direct financial incentives programs.

A commissioner is a volunteer conservation promoter in the community, who helps direct activities such as field days, educational meetings and materials, contests, awards programs, and publicity.

The Conservation Partnership

Soil and water conservation districts work closely with a number of local, state, and federal agencies, as well as with local groups and organizations.

In particular, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have close ties. The Division helps districts administer state and local programs, including financial incentive programs, and assigns state technical and secretarial people to districts. The NRCS works through districts, providing technical soil conservationists and other natural resource specialists as well as office space for the local district.

Work with other agencies and groups

Districts work closely with other entities including the Conservation Districts of Iowa, USDA Farm Services Agency, USDA Rural Development, State Soil Conservation Committee, Iowa Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, county conservation boards, county boards of supervisors, drainage districts and levee districts.

District commissioners also personally call on many service organizations, businesses, agricultural organizations, media, environmental organizations, schools, and other local individuals and groups to help promote soil and water conservation and natural resource protection.

Help administer conservation programs

Soil and water conservation districts are legal subdivisions of state government. Commissioners are responsible for carrying out state laws and programs within district boundaries. These include:

- sediment control law
- conservation cost-sharing
- conservation revolving loan funds
- water quality protection projects
- resource enhancement and protection

Districts also play a key role in carrying out federal programs including, but not limited to:

- the Conservation Reserve Program
- the Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Conservation Compliance
- the Wetlands Reserve Program
- conservation planning

Districts serve as local sponsors for watershed projects, resource conservation and development areas, and soil surveys as well.

By law, conservation districts can ...

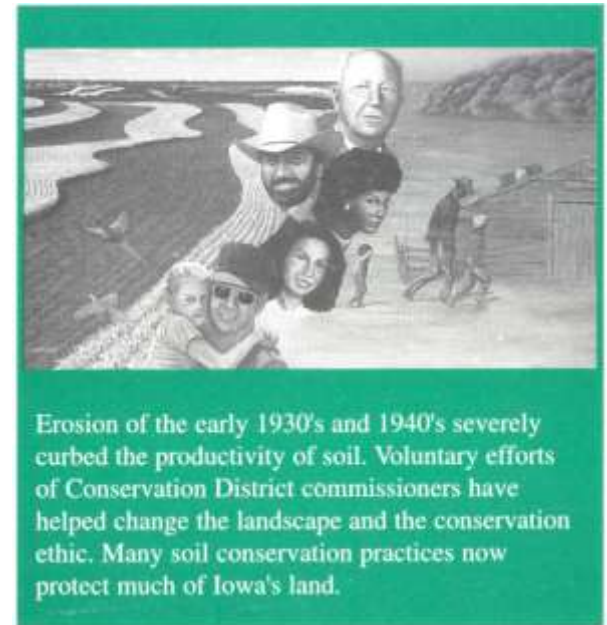
Iowa law grants authority to Conservation Districts to carry out activities that will help get conservation on the ground. According to the law, Conservation Districts can...

- Conduct surveys, investigations and research about soil erosion, sediment damages, flood-water, and develop or implement preventative control measures.
- Conduct demonstration projects.
- Cooperate or enter into agreements with, and furnish financial or other aid to government or other agencies, or any owner or occupant of land within the district to carry out erosion control and watershed protection.
- Obtain options and acquire property, rights, or interests by purchase, exchange, lease, gift, grant, or otherwise. May maintain, administer, and improve properties acquired. May receive income from such properties and expend income to carry out conservation activities.
- May accept donations, gifts and contributions in money, services, materials, or otherwise from the United States or any of its agencies, and from the State or any of its agencies to carry on district operations.
- Encourage local school districts to provide instruction about soil conservation as part of course work relating natural resources conservation and environmental awareness.
- Develop comprehensive plans to conserve natural resources including controlling and preventing soil erosion.
- Help administer cost share for conservation practices in the county.

Equal opportunity for all

Districts offer services without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, political beliefs or marital status. Studies have shown that where minorities and/or women are represented on boards in proportion to their presence in the area, program participation by these groups increased. District boards are seeking more diversity in their representation. To help broaden interest in district programs, and to bring different perspectives to district boards, districts encourage members from those groups to consider serving as a soil and water conservation district commissioner.

The major criteria for being a successful commissioner is an interest in the natural resources and the people of Iowa.



For more information about the activities and resources of the Conservation Partnership, visit the Iowa Conservation Partners home page at <http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov>