

Soil Conservation District Planning– Supervisor Training Section

Soil Conservation Planning -

As stated in North Dakota Century Code (NDCC) 4.1-20-01, the purpose for the existence of the soil conservation districts is:

It is the policy of this state and within the scope of this chapter to provide for the conservation of the soil and soil resources of this state and for the control and prevention of soil erosion, and to preserve the state's natural resources, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, assist in maintaining the navigability of rivers, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of this state.

District Planning- The district planning process is critical and should be completed utilizing the best data available. It should include the physical facts of the district such as, climatic and soil conditions, land use, size and type of agricultural practices, and resource problems.

Also, it shall include suggestions for a program that will help correct the resource problems that exist. The NDCC Chapter 4.1-20-24.1(h) specifies what a plan must do:

“...plans must specify in such detail as may be possible the acts, procedures, performances, and avoidances that are necessary or desirable for the effectuation of those plans, including the specification of engineering operations, methods of cultivation, the growing of vegetation, cropping programs, tillage practices, and changes in use of land”

It is essential that district officials be thoroughly acquainted with resource problems, be able to evaluate their importance and be willing to take appropriate steps to solve these problems.

The planning process is an excellent opportunity for the board to bring in other agencies, groups, or individuals with interest and responsibilities in conservation to work together in planning and activating a dynamic conservation program that will benefit all. Districts may utilize trained facilitators to receive public input to assist in identifying and prioritizing conservation needs.

District Planning Process- After gathering data and public input, a plan shall be developed. This plan should include the items which will receive emphasis in the operation and education of the district. A broad-based goal shall be created for the district based on the resource needs and public input. To achieve the goal, the district shall complete a list of objectives that address the most pressing soil and water conservation problems. The final step in completing the planning process is creating specific tasks that detail the activities that will be carried out and ideas that will be promoted. Utilizing the S.M.A.R.T planning model each objective shall include:

- ✓ **S**pecific What is the objective the district wants to achieve?
- ✓ **M**easurable How will the district measure achievement of the objective?
- ✓ **A**ttainable What steps/tasks will be taken to achieve the objective?

- ✓ **Realistic** Does the district have the resources to achieve the task?
- ✓ **Timely** How long will it take to achieve the task?

Implementation - Remember, as a Board Supervisor, you are administering the activities or plan for your district. Call on such help as you need, detail work to the appropriate people, but you do the directing.

As part of the implementation process, NDCC 4.1-20-24.1(h) requires districts to:
“... *publish such plans and information and bring them to the attention of occupiers of lands within the district.*”

Evaluation- No plan is any better than the use that is made of it. The conservation plan / plan of work should be reviewed monthly and revised as new resource concerns appear, new best management practices are developed, or as new information; such as, more accurate soils surveys become available.

The review of the plan should be made the first order of new business at every regular meeting.

Partnering - Forming partnerships is critical to the success of a district’s plan. The district may consider entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with partners to detail expectations and activities that will lead to the accomplishment of tasks and objectives detailed in the plan. Potential partners include, but are not limited to:

- County Water Resource Board
- Municipalities
- North Dakota Game & Fish Department
- North Dakota Forest Service
- North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Training Opportunities - Board supervisors are encouraged to attend a Soil and Water Conservation Leadership Academy to receive training on how to identify natural resource concerns, obtain public input, develop a conservation business plan, and plan implementation and evaluation.