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ND State Soil Conservation Committee



Created in 1937, the State Soil Conservation Committee was established to serve as a state agency and to provide for conservation, protection, improvement, and profitability of agricultural land in North Dakota. The committee formed four soil conservation districts which could be organized when twenty-five occupiers of land within a district requested that a soil conservation district be formed. Each soil conservation district elected three supervisors. The supervisors directed the programs and activities and served as the link between the district and the State Soil Conservation Committee. (S. L. 1937, Ch.9).

In 1971, the legislature divided the state into five geographical districts which were grouped along county lines. The State Soil Conservation Committee changed to five members, one district supervisor from each district being elected by the district land owners or occupiers, and two members appointed by the Governor. The gubernatorial appointees represented the interests

of farmers and ranchers, rural areas and small towns, cities, industry, and business for those not already represented. Members serve two year terms and no member serves more than two successive terms. (S. L. 1971, Ch. 94)

Legislation in 1983 added a new subsection to the North Dakota Century Code relating to a tax to be levied by the Soil Conservation Districts. The district supervisors put a one mill tax levy on all real property lying within a conservation district. The tax levy is paid by the owner of the land and is used for administrative and operating expenses of the districts. Supervisors could choose to raise the levy, but the increase had to be authorized by three-fourths of the voters in the district (S. L. 1983, Ch. 97). The number of qualified voters needed to approve an ordinance was reduced to two-thirds in 1985 (S. L. 1985, Ch. 95).

In 1997, the purpose of the State Soil Conservation Committee was defined to promote soil conservation through programs and activities conducted under the auspices of the State Soil Conservation Districts; direct organization of State Soil Conservation Districts; provide

operating guidelines for State Soil Conservation Districts; administer small watershed projects in the state; and develop water quality management plans for controlling nonpoint sources of pollution.

Additional goals of the committee included securing cooperation and assistance of state, federal, regional, local, and private agencies with districts; representing the state in matters affecting soil conservation; establishing uniform accounting methods that must be used in all districts; requiring annual reports from all districts; receiving from other state and local agencies for review and comment suitable descriptions of their plans and programs activities affecting the conservation of natural resources; and arranging for and participating in conferences to avoid conflict with other plans and programs. All surface mining operators file an annual detailed report of their activities with the committee which, in turn, transmits the information to the district. The committee also administers the soil conservation technician grants program with the objective of reducing wind and water erosion damage on cropland. (S. L. 1997, Ch. 50).

Since 1997, the North Dakota State University Extension Service has assisted the director with the administrative duties of the committee within the limits of legislative appropriation to deliver information and services to the districts. The committee meets annually but the chairman may call special meetings as needed, or four committee members may request in writing that a special meeting be called (S. L. 1997, Ch. 50).

In 2003, elected members must attend a training session conducted by the State Soil Conservation Committee. The chairman of the committee may serve a total of three years (S. L. 2003, Ch. 58).

In 2009, all qualified electors in the district may vote in any regular election in the district. Supervisors may levy a one mill tax on all land within the districts. The tax levy increased to two mills in 2009 (S. L. 2009, Ch. 74).

In 2011, changes to the Code allowed Soil Conservation to submit a report in place of an audit (S. L. 2011, Ch. 394).

More SSCC history - <http://history.nd.gov/archives/stateagencies/soilconservation.html>

The State Soil Conservation Committee

The North Dakota State Soil Conservation Committee was created by the 1937 Legislative Assembly and is maintained as a state agency. The SSCC has a membership of seven voting member, five elected and two appointed by the Governor. One representative from each of the five geographical areas are elected. The SSCC assists with administrative matters and provides program planning assistance to the soil conservation districts in the state. (N.D.C.C. 4.1-20-03)

State Soil Conservation Committee Duties and Powers: (N.D.C.C. 4.1-20-05)

- To offer such assistance as may be appropriate to the supervisors of districts in the carrying out of any of their powers and programs.
- To keep the supervisors of each of the several districts informed of the activities and experience of all other districts, and to facilitate an interchange of advice and experience among such districts and cooperation among them.
- To secure the cooperation and assistance of state, federal, regional, interstate, and local, public, and private agencies with districts and to facilitate arrangements under which districts may assist or serve county governing bodies and other agencies in the administration of any activity concerned with the conservation of natural resources.
- To review agreements, or forms of agreements, proposed to be entered into by districts with other districts or with state, federal, interstate, or other public or private organizations, and advise the districts concerning such agreements or forms of agreement.
- To recommend to the director biennial budgets necessary to finance the activities of the committee and districts and to distribute moneys appropriated by the legislative assembly for grants to soil conservation districts.
- To represent the state in matters affecting soil conservation.
- To require annual reports from districts.
- To establish uniform accounting methods that must be used by districts, and to establish a uniform auditing reporting system.
- To receive from other state and local agencies for review and comment suitable descriptions of their plans, programs, and activities affecting the conservation of natural resources for purposes of coordination with district conservation programs; arrange for and participate in conferences necessary to avoid conflict among such plans and programs; call attention to omissions; and avoid duplication of effort.

Extension assistance to State Soil Conservation Committee – N.D.C.C. 4.1-20-06.

The North Dakota State University Extension shall assist the committee in performing the committee's duties, within the limits of legislative appropriation. The director shall instruct extension agents to cooperate in the delivery of information and services to the districts.

Soil Conservation District Supervisors -Training. N.D.C.C. 4.1-20-19.

As soon as practicable after an individual is elected or appointed to the position of a Soil Conservation District Supervisor, the individual shall attend a training session delivered by the state soil conservation committee. An individual who has attended a training session as an elected or as an appointed Soil Conservation District Supervisor may not be required to attend any additional or subsequent session. **Subject to change – 2019 Legislative Bill**

State Soil Conservation Committee Responsibilities

Soil Conservation District Assistance Funds - One of the responsibilities of the Committee is distributing funds to local SCDs through the District Assistance Program. The ND Legislature may appropriate state funds each session to help defray costs of the local SCDs for conservation activities. These funds are used to cover salaries of SCDs employees who plan and design local soil conservation projects. The Extension Service assists the State Soil Conservation Committee in the process to distribute those dollars to the SCD's.

The State Soil Conservation Committee approves the allocations and NDSU Extension notifies each district of their funding allocation and directions for reimbursing them for salary expenditures through the NDSU Agriculture Budget Office. The District Assistance Program funds are tracked throughout the biennium by the NDSU Extension to ensure the funds are not overspent and periodic updates are provided to the State Soil Conservation Committee and SCDs.

Recordkeeping - The State Committee keeps a file for every District showing:

- All actions taken in the organization of each District.
 - District approved minutes. (electronic copy)
 - District annual plans of operation.
 - District annual reports.
 - The financial audit of each District.
 - District rules, regulations, contracts, agreements and other information, such as newsletters, and reports as may be necessary.
- A record of each supervisor - when elected or appointed.
- Additions of territory, changes of district boundaries, consolidation of districts, change of district names and dissolution of districts.

Why it is necessary to keep a record of this type for each Soil Conservation District at the State level:

- Soil Conservation Districts are a governmental subdivision of State government operating under State Law (N.D.C.C. Chapter 4.1-20-23) of the North Dakota Century Code and are subject to provisions of the State constitution and various rules and regulations which require a State entity for governmental subdivision to keep such records.
- In order for the SSCC to carry out its general duties and powers spelled out in N.D.C.C. Chapter 4.1-20-22 of the Conservation Law, it is necessary for the SSCC to keep such records and other information available at all times.
- A complete record of Districts and their activities are necessary in statewide planning for development in the field of land and water resources, and land-use planning and economic development.
- Records of each District provide information necessary for state appropriation requests and other legislative action.