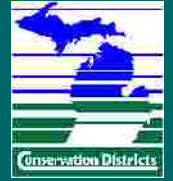


The History & Future of Conservation Districts

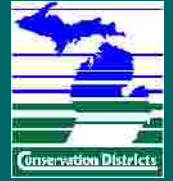


Training Module 2



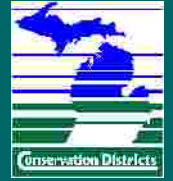
What You'll Learn In This Module

- | The history of Conservation Districts
- | Current trends in land use and conservation
- | How Conservation Districts are meeting the needs of current landowners



Discussion Questions

- | What ecological disaster brought about the creation of Conservation Districts?
- | In the beginning, Conservation Districts focused programs on what type of land owner?
- | What type of land owners are Conservation Districts now serving?
- | What is the “gateway” approach to conservation?



The Origin of Conservation Districts

In the early 1930s, along with the Great Depression, came an equally unparalleled ecological disaster known as the Dust Bowl.

Huge black dust storms that stretched across the nation blotted out the sun and swallowed the countryside.





The Origin of Conservation Districts

On Capitol Hill, while testifying about the erosion problem, soil scientist Hugh Hammond Bennett drew back the curtains to reveal a sky blackened by dust.



Congress immediately declared soil and water conservation a national policy and priority.



The Origin of Conservation Districts

Since about three-fourths of the land in the U.S. is privately owned, Congress realized that only active support from landowners would guarantee the success of conservation on private land.

The idea of soil and water conservation districts was born.

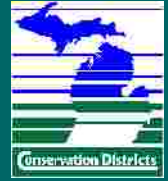




The Origin of Conservation Districts

Today, there are nearly 3000 Conservation Districts nationwide – one in almost every county

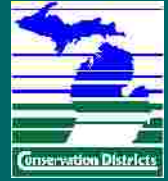




In The Beginning

In their early beginnings, Conservation Districts focused their programs on rural America; assisting farmers and ranchers in conservation measures to prevent their soil from blowing and washing away.



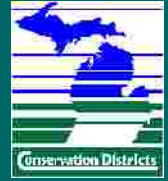


Current Conservation Trends



In recent years, land use patterns have changed dramatically.

The land is continuously being divided, creating new landowners who have little or no knowledge of land and resource management.



Current Conservation Trends

Pressures on natural resources have continued to mount with erosion problems due to developing sensitive areas without proper conservation measures in place.

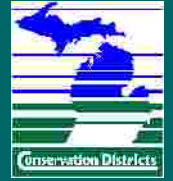




Current Conservation Trends

And other types of non-point source pollution occurring due to the actions of the many new landowners in rural and suburban areas.

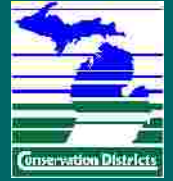




Current Conservation Trends

It became clear to the Conservation Districts that their role must evolve in order to serve this new and expanding clientele, in addition to serving their agricultural customers.



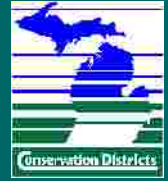


The Future...The Gateway Approach

Michigan's 80 Conservation Districts are referred to as "*gateways*" to natural resource management in their local communities.

They provide linkages between landowners and managers and a host of conservation service providers.

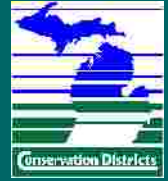
These can include state, federal and local governments, conservation organizations, and the agricultural community.



The Future...The Gateway Approach

Conservation Districts continuously scan the needs of their communities, work with others involved in conservation to set local priorities, and develop action plans to help understand and solve natural resource problems.



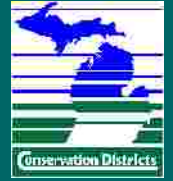


The Future...The Gateway Approach

Delivery of these efforts by Conservation Districts allows citizens to manage their land for a cleaner, healthier, and more productive Michigan.

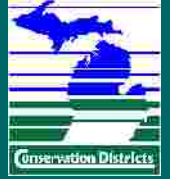
It allows the public a point of access in their communities to practical, everyday aspects of resource management.





Summary

- | Conservation Districts have a proud history in leading the efforts to provide assistance in erosion control and rehabilitating farmlands and forests.
- | Today's citizens appreciate access to the education and technical expertise that Conservation Districts can provide.

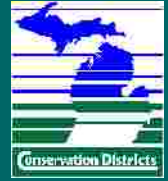


Summary

- | Whether for wildlife habitat, timber, recreation, aesthetics or similar uses, District personnel help make property owners more fully aware of the complexity of the resources they own and the relationship they have to the land around them.

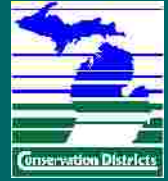


So if you hunt, fish, hike, garden, farm, eat, or do anything else involving natural resources, then you benefit from the work of Michigan's Conservation Districts.



Review Questions

- | What ecological disaster brought about the creation of Conservation Districts?
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- | What is the “gateway” approach to conservation?



Resources Available

- Additional information about the history of Conservation Districts can be found on the following internet sites:

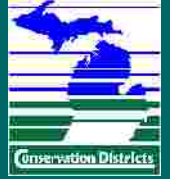
National Association of Conservation Districts

www.nacdnet.org

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

www.nrcs.usda.gov

- Many Conservation Districts keep local historical information on file in the District office.



Credits

Photos courtesy of the USDA Natural
Resources Conservation Service