



Arkansas Conservation District Directors Training Manual

District Responsibilities, Authorities and Program Examples

The drafters of the act that authorized creation of

Arkansas' conservation districts envisioned a creative and broad role for these units of local government to manage land and water resources.

District's Responsibilities

The Act describes a broad role for conservation districts in managing land and water resources, giving conservation districts local responsibility for:

- control and prevention of soil erosion
- use of soil surveys and other technologies for erosion control practices and improvement of soil fertility and condition
- prevention of damage from flood water and sediment
- utilization and disposal of water
- maintaining active roles in water management for irrigation, drainage, flood control, recreation, pollution abatement and fish and wildlife development
- preservation of agricultural land
- landscape beautification
- education and involvement of citizens in conservation programs
- wise planning and guidance to land managers for present and future use of the state's land and water resources.

Districts' Powers and Authorities To Fulfill Their Responsibilities

Act No. 197 of 1937, as amended, codified at Arkansas Code Annotated 14-25-101, gives conservation districts broad powers and authorities to carry out their responsibilities, including:

- To carry out preventive and control measures for better utilization of soil and water resources.
- To enter into agreements and furnish financial or other aid to any private or public agency or land user within the district for better utilization of soil

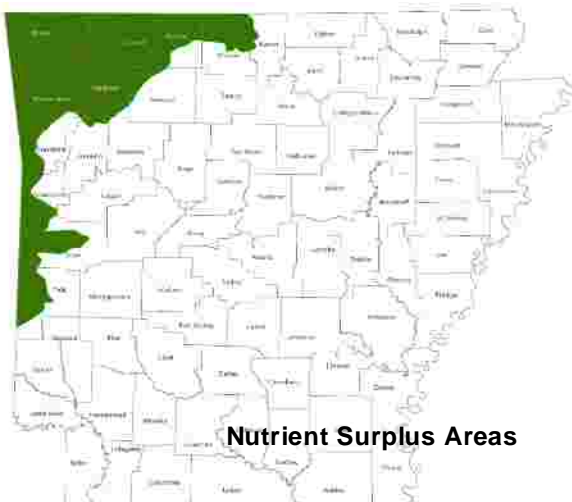
and water resources and for removal of excess water as the directors deem necessary.

- To obtain by purchase, gift or otherwise, any real or personal property to accomplish the goals of the district.
- To make available to land users any equipment and materials needed to carry out soil and water conservation programs.
- To construct, improve, operate and maintain works of improvement as needed.
- To develop comprehensive plans for soil and water management in the district and bring this information to the attention of land users.
- To accept contributions in money, service or materials from any source for use in carrying out the district program.
- To sue and be sued in the name of the district; to have perpetual succession unless; to make and execute contracts; to borrow money, issue notes and bonds, and mortgage property; levy taxes based on specific benefits; and to make and amend regulations as needed.
- As a condition to extending benefits on private lands, the district may require contributions in money, services, or materials, except that the district may not charge for technical services provided by NRCS or other agencies providing technical assistance. Technical assistance provided by the district may be supported by a reasonable fee or charge.
- To develop land use regulations within the district when needed to conserve soil and water resources.
- To cooperate with other districts in the exercise of any of these powers.
- To organize an irrigation, drainage or watershed development district to install, operate and maintain works of improvement such as dams, levees, ditches and pumping stations.
- To form improvement project areas to assume local obligations in installing, operating and maintaining structural measures in watershed projects and Resource Conservation and Development measures.

- The conservation district has the power of eminent domain (condemnation) defined as a parallel to that power entrusted to other improvement districts, levee and drainage districts and local governmental entities. The use of condemnation powers must be consistent with the specific conservation purposes in the conservation district law. Any condemnation procedure will require, by Arkansas law, an assessment and compensation for damages resulting from the action.
- Act 469 of 1989 authorizes the ANRC to delegate its power to conservation districts to allocate surface water during times of shortage.

Program Examples

- Work with poultry operators and other farmers, to develop nutrient management plans, especially in **Nutrient Surplus Areas** (see map)
- Register poultry operators statewide



- Work with farmers to develop conservation plans that reduce soil erosion, sediment entering waterbodies and reduce utilization of irrigation water.
- Provide education for land managers on best management practices and programs that will provide technical assistance and/or cost share for implementation.
- Assist landowners in preparing applications for Farm Bill-funded cost-share programs (see table at the end of this fact sheet)
- Assist landowners in preparing applications for State-funded tax credits, loans and other conservation incentives (see Module 5).
- Conduct conservation education and outreach programs for land managers (e.g., soil,

groundwater, surface water, water quality, habitat improvement)

- Educate farmers on poultry registration and annual reporting requirements. Provide local site for registration and reporting.
- Educate farmers on well registration and annual reporting requirements. Provide local site for registration and reporting (see Module 5, Fact Sheet 24).
- Educate water users on water cycle, reusing and recycling of water, and other measures to conserve water, especially in **Critical Groundwater Areas** (see map)



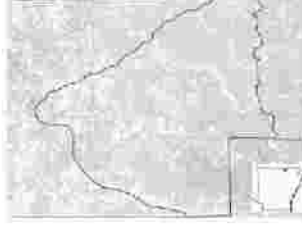
- Administer local beaver eradication program (see Module 5)
- Rent equipment needed for specialized conservation measures (e.g., no-till drills)
- Work with schools to provide conservation education to children through curriculum and special events
- Sponsor youth to participate in youth conservation programs (e.g., scholarships, camps, etc)
- Monitor groundwater levels (e.g., Union County)
- Partner with Resource Conservation & Development Districts to demonstrate producing electric power for onsite use from cellulosic material, primarily poultry litter.

- Promote habitat improvement for quail and elk, especially in focal areas (see map)

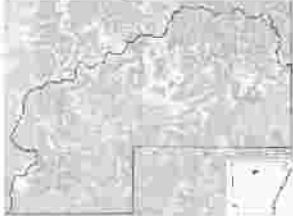
Damascus County Quail Focal Area



Fulton County Quail Focal Area



Searcy County Quail Focal Area



Elk Special Project Area



- Sponsor/maintain PL-566 dams
- Assist **levee districts** with maintenance and/or administrative functions (see map).
- Assist **drainage districts** with maintenance and/or administrative functions (see map).
- Help form or participate in watershed groups to bring together rural and urban interests to improve water quality (e.g., L'Anguille River Watershed Coalition) and/or sponsor a stream team
- Develop recreational trails, bird-watching areas, etc.

Working In Partnership

conservation districts work in partnership with other local, state and federal entities in both the public and the private sector.

- Work with land managers to develop habitat improvement plans and prepare applications for cost share.
- Design and carry out water quality demonstration projects, particularly Clean Water Act 319(h) projects in **Priority Watersheds** (see map)

