

Arkansas Conservation Districts  
Training Program



# Overview of District Operations



Power Point 5



# What You Will Learn

- Conservation district board operations, from:
  - Recommended practices from experience
  - State or federal law
  - Rules adopted by the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission (Commission).
  - Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) or Supplemental MOU with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Most of the operational issues addressed in this overview are covered in greater detail elsewhere



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# District Board Organization

- Speak as a group, not as individuals
- Elect officers annually
- Select officers on merit, not seniority
- Directors may succeed themselves indefinitely
- Cultivate talented individuals with diverse experience and interests to ensure continuity, creativity and enthusiasm (e.g., recruit directors-in-training)



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# District Board Meetings

- Schedule at least one regular meeting monthly, an annual meeting and special meetings as needed.
- No more than one regular board meeting should be held at the annual area meeting and one with the annual state meeting.
- A quorum of three board members is required.
- All meetings are subject to open meeting requirements (See Fact Sheet 13)





# NRCS Relationship

- NRCS supports local planning but does not lead local planning.
- USDA will enter into an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) pledging to cooperate and assist a district based on the [Conservation Needs Assessment and Conservation Action Plan](#)
- After the USDA MOU is signed, the district may enter into a supplemental MOU with NRCS
- Conservation District must develop its own [Annual Plan of Work](#), which is different than the NRCS plan of work
- USDA requires that all MOUs be reviewed annually
- NRCS employees are forbidden to engage in district financial activities.
- District employees may work under the technical guidance of NRCS.



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# Raising Funds

- In addition to state funds earmarked for conservation districts, districts have legal authority to raise revenue from a wide range of sources:
  - Fees charged for products and services
  - Line-item funding from county and municipal governments
  - Levy taxes that directly benefit conservation
  - Federal, state, foundation, corporate and other grants
  - Cooperative agreements and inter-local agreements
  - Gifts/contributions
  - In-kind contributions of all sorts



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# Financial Management

- Districts must develop a budget that relates directly to its Annual Work Plan.
- Districts are required to keep adequate financial records and use procedures that provide adequate controls. See Module 4.
- Districts are required to use QuickBooks
- Districts are required to use a standardized chart of accounts provided by ANRC
- ANRC staff train conservation district staff to use QuickBooks.



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# Annual Budget

- Budget should relate to annual work plan
- Developing, monitoring and managing the budget is part of the board's most basic fiduciary responsibilities

Arkansas Conservation District Directors Training Manual  
**Budget Worksheet & Appropriations Request**

Expenditures		Budgeted Amount
Employees	\$	
Office	\$	
Financial/Legal	\$	
District Director	\$	
Building Property	\$	
Conservation Equipment	\$	
Conservation Materials	\$	
Information/Education	\$	
Projects/Other Activities Identified in Plan of Work*		
Project 1*	\$	
Project 2*	\$	
Project 3*	\$	
Other 1*	\$	
Other 2*	\$	
Other 3*	\$	
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	\$	
<b>Revenue</b>		<b>Projected Amount</b>
Locally Generated	\$	
Match from ANRC	\$	



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# District Employees

- The board is responsible for recruiting, hiring, evaluating, firing, and promoting district employees
- District directors should develop and implement a personnel manual
- AACDE has developed a model personnel manual
- Conservation districts are encouraged to enter into interagency working agreements to clarify the relationship between district employees and employees of those agencies that provide assistance to the district.





# Fund Raising

- Districts should seek line-item funding from municipalities and county government
- Revenue raised from sales of products and services should relate to the district's program goals and plans
- Districts should evaluate the benefit-cost ratio of their fundraising and invest scarce staff and volunteer time in fundraising activities with the highest return per hour





# Evaluation and Reporting

- ANRC evaluates conservation districts annually using a standardized instrument – called a program analysis (see Fact Sheet 20)
- Evaluation results will be used to review allocation of Commission funds
- Districts must prepare an annual report of accomplishments
- Districts should involve the public in planning and report accomplishments to the public
- Districts are encouraged to maintain an ongoing dialogue with mayors, county judges, quorum courts, Chambers, civic clubs, churches, educators, and others about their mission and accomplishments
- Districts should promote natural resource management through contests, exhibits, tours, meetings, presentations, newsletters, media, demonstrations, etc





# Program Analysis

- Program Analysis awards points for adopting recommended practices and implementing required practices/procedures.
- Five page evaluation instrument



## Arkansas Conservation District Directors Training Manual Annual Program Analysis

1-10-01 (Revised 2010) 109  
Updated 3 September 2007

\_\_\_\_\_ Conservation District:

### 1. Compliance with Financial Rules and Regulations: (25 Points)

- A. Use and maintain QuickBooks for all financial accounting and reports. (5 Points)
- B. Comply with "Arkansas Natural Resources Commission Rules Governing Conservation Districts" (2005), Title II, Subtitle XIX, dealing with District Operations – Financial. (10 points)

*Note: These rules were delivered to your office. For details refer to Title II Subtitle XIX Section 219. Accounting. If your district did not get a copy, please let your Land Resources Specialist know ASAP. The Arkansas Natural Resources Commission can penalize districts when deficiencies are found relating to misuse of state funds or other flagrant deficiencies of the ANRC Rules Governing Conservation Districts.*

- C. Annual Financial Report sent in to ANRC by September 30<sup>th</sup>. (2 Points)
- D. Semi- annual program review by the Land Resource Specialist assigned to your county results in:
  - 1. No Agreed-to-Items (5 Points)
  - 2. One or more Agreed to Items, however, the deficiencies are corrected within 3 months of the program review. (5 Points)

*Note: An Agreed-to-Item is needed when a deficiency is found that is serious enough to warrant corrective action by the conservation district board. Points for this section are not lost if the Agreed-to-Items are corrected within the three month period following the review. This relates to all deficiencies, except misuse of state funds and other vagrant deficiencies, as noted in 1.B*

- E. Reviews financial activity to include monthly financial statements, bank statements, transaction reports and supporting documentation for all expenditures. All financial reviews documented in minutes with vote of approval by the board. (3 Points)

*Note: All review of information, such as, bank statements does not have to take place during the board meeting. This activity can be delegated to a board member. The delegated board member can review documents before the meeting and report results of the review during the board meeting*



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# Cooperation/Partnerships

- Conservation districts should actively pursue partnerships that will help them achieve their mutual goals and objectives
  - Cooperate with other districts and governmental bodies
  - Consult with and make recommendations to state and federal agencies
  - Collaborate with university faculty
  - Partner with water districts, watershed groups, wildlife groups, farm organizations, environmental groups, vendors, local newspapers and radio, and others



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# Cooperation/Partnerships

- Enter into MOUs or working agreements to clarify roles on joint initiatives, systems, projects
- Always enter into a written agreement if partners have pledged cash or in-kind contributions to a joint project
- Just as the district wants other agencies and organizations to partner with the district, it is important to participate in initiatives and projects led by other agencies and organizations. “If you want to influence the agenda, you have to be at the table.”
- Share information that can help with resource planning at the watershed, regional and state levels.





# Equal Opportunity

- Conservation districts must by state and federal law provide equal opportunity in employment and program delivery
- An equal opportunity statement should be included on position announcements, meeting notices, program brochures, fact sheets and other program materials
- Districts should actively promote their programs among minorities and other disadvantaged groups
- Districts are encouraged to develop a record-keeping system to track its “Affirmative Action” efforts



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