

Supervisors Roles & Responsibilities

Programs

Wyoming Conservation District Law W.S. 11-16-101 through 11-16-134 provides district authority for developing programs and services that may include:

- ? Providing technical assistance, for conservation planning
- ? Conservation forestry
- ? Assisting landowners in complying with federal and state laws
- ? Developing policy
- ? Developing local land use and natural resource plans
- ? Developing watershed plans, water quality monitoring and water quality improvement projects
- ? Water quality monitoring
- ? Adult and youth education programs
- ? Wildlife habitat programs and projects
- ? Waste management programs
- ? Represent local constituents on state and national conservation issues and federal land management planning

To develop and maintain effective programs, supervisors should identify local conservation needs, set corresponding goals, plan to achieve those goals, ensure implementation of district plans and evaluate each district program's effectiveness.

In addition, [Wyoming § 35-11-406](#) and [Wyoming § 18-05-306](#) respectively provide authority for conservation districts to assist in mine reclamation efforts and subdivision reviews to promote sound conservation and natural resource practices.

Conservation districts are parent districts for watershed improvement districts, per [Wyoming § 41-8-101](#) *et seq.* Watershed improvement districts are structured to provide local landowners with the opportunity to develop mutual water development and rehabilitation plans and the legal authority to fund these plans.

Long Range Planning

Planning is the basic tool for developing conservation district programs. There are several levels of conservation district plans. A Long Range Plan is typically developed every five years, to serve as a broad outline of your district's response to long-term shifts in land use, population patterns and improvements in district.

The Long Range Plan serves as a guide for the district's long range goals and objectives; describes activities and district functions, not only for the district but state and federal agencies; and it serves as the basis for annual plans of work.

See the Long Range Planning section at Tab 4 – Page 4 for more information.

Education

It is important that districts stay knowledgeable on natural resource issues that are affecting their districts and be willing to educate the public on these concerns. Conservation districts encourage volunteer cooperation of landowners and the general public through information and education. Land managers should be educated so they will understand and adopt conservation values and practices, and those environmental laws affecting them. The general public must be reached so they will understand their stake in conservation and contribute their financial, political and volunteer support to district programs. Districts must also inform locally elected officials, state and federal legislators on district priorities.

To have effective information and education programs, you should understand your audiences and implement the most effective method of communication. You should also understand how to integrate public relations into your program. Finally, you should be aware of the many forms of media available to communicate your message.

Adults

Conservation districts work with many adult audiences, including land managers, community leaders, civic clubs, agency personnel and others.

There are a variety of methods to reach adults including:

- ? Personal contact
- ? Invitations board meetings
- ? Area meetings
- ? Community meetings
- ? Newsletters
- ? Field tours
- ? Demonstration plots
- ? Case studies
- ? Workshops
- ? Speeches or videos
- ? Panel discussions
- ? Symposiums
- ? News articles
- ? TV and radio programs
- ? Other media, state news publications, etc.

Elected Officials

District's constituents are often directly affected by local, state or federal laws. WACD, the Western Coalition of Conservation District and NACD are the principal lobbying voice for conservation districts; inform them of the district's legislative concerns.

Supervisors can assist the WACD and NACD in their lobbying efforts. The first step is to learn how the legislative process works and get to know your representatives' backgrounds and views on conservation. The Wyoming Trucker's Association publishes a guide that lists information on

each legislator including profession, background and affiliations. The guide is also a good resource for committee membership and contact information. Copies of the guide can be obtained by calling the Wyoming Trucking Association at (307) 234-1579.

Visit the Wyoming State Legislative Website at <http://legisweb.state.wy.us/>.

Make personal contact throughout the year with representatives through personal contact or written correspondence. Supervisors may also have opportunities to give testimony in formal meetings or hearings on natural resource issues.

Visit the Legislative Outreach and Effectiveness section at Tab 7 – Page 3 for more information on the legislative process and establishing an effective legislative program.

Youth

As our youth become increasingly further removed from direct involvement in agriculture and natural resource management, it becomes increasingly important to provide them with related educational experiences.

You may work with the whole youth population or specific groups, such as area schools, 4-H, FFA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and others. Try to be conscious of the special needs of different youth audiences, such as teens or kindergartners, etc. and use the most appropriate methods.

Conservation districts have used a wide variety of methods to reach youth, including:

- ? Youth conservation education camps and academic programs.
- ? Training teachers and youth leaders in conservation.
- ? Providing educational materials for conservation components of youth group programs.
- ? Inviting youth group leaders to board meetings.
- ? Setting up a "youth board" a small scale version of the conservation district board.
- ? Seeking sponsors for awards and other conservation programs for youth.
- ? Encouraging youth groups to implement conservation plans on their facilities and property.
- ? Developing conservation programs and projects which can involve youth.
- ? Demonstration tours
- ? Poster Contests
- ? National Day of Water Monitoring
- ? WYRED – Wyoming Resource Education Days
- ? Envirothon.

The NACD has a variety of ready-made educational materials for working with youth. There are also materials developed by other groups, such as Wyoming Ag in the Classroom, Project Learning Tree, Project Wild and others.

Public Relations

The conservation district's public image affects every aspect of the district's work. Public relations is a continuing program to help people understand what your conservation district is, what you are doing, and why it is important. Good public relations can:

- ? Inform the public of what the conservation district is and does
- ? Promote favorable recognition of the district
- ? Ensure that potential cooperators are aware of the availability of district assistance
- ? Build rapport with other groups
- ? Increase the amount of funds that districts receive
- ? Increase the quality and amount of assistance the district obtains from agencies
- ? Promote interest in district activities

Your board should appoint one person or a committee to be in charge of conservation district public relations. The district should set goals for basic understandings the board would like the public to have about the district. These public relations goals should grow naturally out of what the conservation district is doing, then permeate all aspects of the conservation district's plans and programs.

Make sure the district sends consistent information. Sometimes written, graphic and non-verbal aspects of programs can give different messages. It is also recommended that the board adopt a media policy. [Click here for a sample media policy.](#)

WACD, WDA, NACD and many other sources have more specific information on conducting public relations programs.

Board Members

As elected officials, board members have a certain level of responsibility. Board members should be:

- ? Attending and actively participating in all board meetings
- ? Carrying out responsibilities
- ? Keeping abreast of local natural resource issues
- ? Attending area and state association meetings

The board should:

- ? Identify local landowner and constituent issues and representing those on the district board
- ? Keep the conservation district's mission in focus based on statutory direction (Conservation District Law 11-16-102 through 103)
- ? Work effectively with district staff and partnering agencies
- ? Efficiently implementing district programs
- ? Follow correct financial management procedures (See Tab 10 – Page 1 for information on downloading the Special District Accounting Handbook)
- ? Develop, implement and evaluate annual plans
- ? Report to the public on the district's programs

- ? Ensure conservation districts are reaching full potential by being creative, responsive and establishing progressive programs

The board may evaluate themselves as a board, or have someone from the outside evaluate the board (ex: peer review by a group of supervisors from outside the state or region).

Recruiting New Board Members

Conservation district supervisors are elected to four-year terms. Potential new supervisors should be constantly cultivated. Associate supervisor positions are an excellent way to prepare individuals to become board members. Look at skills that are needed for the board (including interpersonal skills). For example, if the district's educational programs aren't as strong as the board would like, the board might recruit someone with a strong educational background. It is recommended that the district advertise board vacancies in advance of filing deadlines.

Associate Supervisors

Associate supervisors can be officially appointed by the board as advisors and representatives. Associates cannot vote on board decisions, but can augment knowledge and experience and assist with conservation district programs. They also offer a way to cultivate potential new supervisors, allow former supervisors to remain active in the district and broaden community input to the district. Be sure to orientate associates just like any elected supervisor, and involve them in meaningful activities and projects. Associate supervisor policies are recommended.

Filing Board Vacancies

Board vacancies can occur due to elected supervisors resigning or a supervisor being removed from office for neglect of duty or malfeasance of office. Once an individual has been recommended by the board to fill a vacancy, the appointment needs to be approved by the Wyoming Board of Agriculture. While waiting for approval, the appointee can attend board meetings but cannot vote. Once the appointment has been approved, the individual can serve only until the next general election. At that time, they can file for the position and individuals are eligible to run for a new term. For more information, see the [Conservation District Law](#), Wyoming State Statute 11-16-108 or the section Supervisor Vacancies and Removal at Tab 3 – Page 23.

New Supervisor Orientation

After new supervisors take the [Oath of Office](#) (Tab 3 – Page 22) in January, welcome them with a letter or phone call and issue news releases announcing their election. Formally orientate new supervisors, but don't burden them with too much information at once. Initial orientation is usually done by the board chair. When they are appointed to a committee, that committee should orient them as well. WDA and WACD can also help orient new supervisors through training.

Each new supervisor should be provided with a copy of Conservation District Law, along with the Annual Plan, Annual Report and Long Range Plan of the District; a WACD Policy Book and Directory; and the New Supervisors Handbook, available from WDA.

Area meetings and the annual WACD convention are also opportunities to develop supervisor skills. Supervisor training conducted by WDA and WACD is available at any time. Periodically review Supervisor Training Modules located in the district office.

It is also good to periodically rotate board members to different positions and committee assignments to broaden their experience.