

South Carolina Conservation Districts Handbook

*Since 1937, SC Soil and Water Conservation Districts have been promoting
the wise use of soil and water through locally led conservation.*



Conservation
Districts

The South Carolina Conservation Districts Handbook is the framework for the South Carolina Conservation Districts Training Certification Program. This program was created by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources – Conservation Districts as a comprehensive resource for the SC Conservation Partnership. Supplemental resources referenced throughout this handbook and certification details can be found within the online training program.

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The SC Conservation Partnership consists of the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (districts), the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources – Conservation Districts (SCDNR-Conservation Districts), and the United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS). The South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts (SCACD) represents districts as their unified voice. These acronyms will be used throughout the training. Additional common acronyms can be found at the end of the handbook.

Conservation Districts 101

There are 46 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (Districts) in South Carolina divided by county lines. Districts are governed by a board of five nonpartisan commissioners authorized by the Soil and Water Conservation Districts Law (District Law). Two are appointed by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) Board and three are elected in the general election. Both elected and appointed positions serve four-year terms. Some districts have Associate Commissioners, Commissioner Emeritus, and/or a Chaplain.

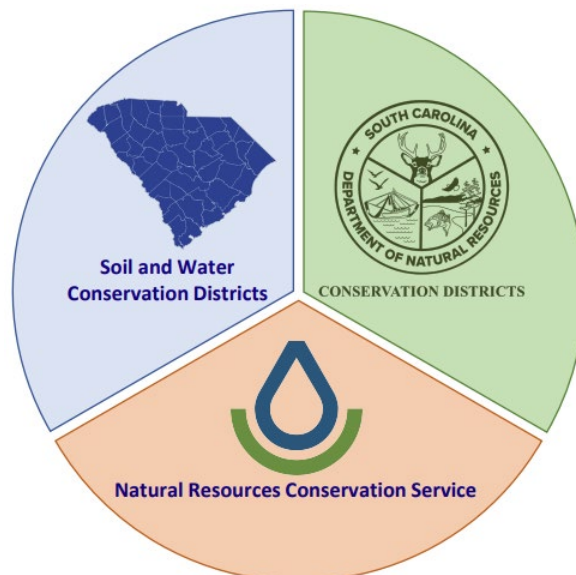
Authority & Purpose

Purpose: Districts are charged with promoting the wise use of soil and water through locally led conservation. They work closely with federal, state, and local government agencies to assist with the development and implementation of conservation programs within their district. These programs are offered to protect and conserve soil, water, farmland, woodland, wildlife, energy, and wetland resources through technical, administrative, and/or financial assistance.

Authority: State law created districts to provide grassroots leadership for developing and implementing conservation activities. Districts are a subdivision of state government and are organized pursuant to Section 48-9-10 of the South Carolina Code of Laws. The District Law provides general powers and authorities of districts and commissioners.

South Carolina Conservation Partnership

The SC Conservation Partnership is an agreement between each local district, SCDNR-Conservation Districts, and United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) to facilitate the working relationship within each district. As partners, we have independent responsibilities, while depending on each other for successful delivery of programs. South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts (SCACD) plays a vital role in holding all partners accountable for the mission of locally led conservation.



Conservation District History

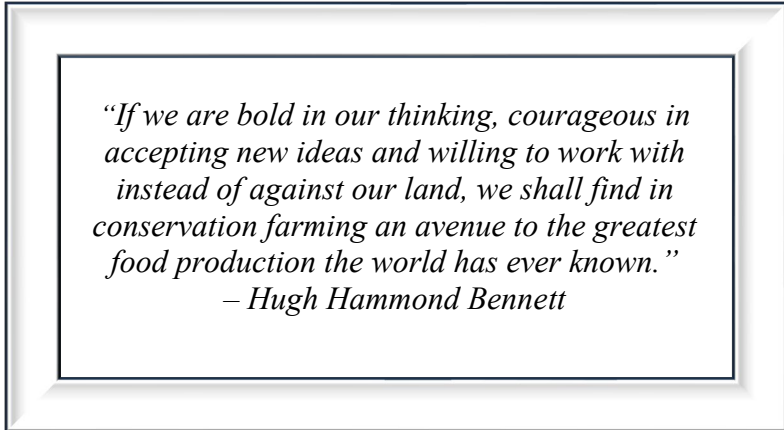
Dust Bowl & Great Depression: In the 1920s, low crop prices and high machinery costs meant that less than satisfactory land was put into production. Following that, from 1930-1941, unsustainable poor agricultural practices on the Great Plains caused widespread dust storms.

The 1929 stock market crash started a period of economic downturn known as the Great Depression. American citizens had lost trust in the government.

These major events, paired with little being known about soil conservation, laid the foundation for the severe soil erosion that would later be termed the Dust Bowl.

Hugh Hammond Bennett: In March of 1935, dust clouds passed over Washington and darkened the sky just as Congress commenced hearings on a proposed soil conservation law. Bennett took this opportunity to explain the cause of the storms and to offer a solution. Bennett's editorials and testimony before Congress led them to establish a permanent soil conservation agency to aid in this effort. The result was the Soil Conservation Act, signed into law on April 27, 1935.

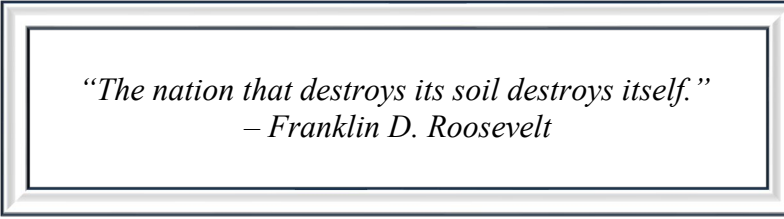
The establishment of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) embodied the efforts of Hugh Hammond Bennett, coining him the Father of Soil Conservation. Bennett went on to become the first Chief of the SCS where he served from 1935-1951.



“If we are bold in our thinking, courageous in accepting new ideas and willing to work with instead of against our land, we shall find in conservation farming an avenue to the greatest food production the world has ever known.”
– Hugh Hammond Bennett

Franklin D. Roosevelt was responsible for signing the Soil Conservation Act into law on April 27, 1935. Its goal was to combat soil erosion, preserve natural resources, control flooding, maintain river and harbor maneuverable, and protect public health and lands.

On February 26, 1937, Roosevelt sent a letter to all state governors encouraging each state to create individual state District Laws. Franklin was quoted as saying:



“The nation that destroys its soil destroys itself.”
– Franklin D. Roosevelt

First Soil Conservation Plan: The Federal Soil Erosion Service set up demonstration sites in strategic locations throughout the United States. One of the first demonstration sites covered the South Tyger River Watershed, located in Greenville and Spartanburg counties. The project began on December 18, 1933, at the J.L. Berry Farm, near Poplar Springs in Spartanburg County, to address a gully large enough to swallow a vehicle.

The first Soil Conservation Plan in America was implemented in Oconee on Ms. Ploma C. Adams' 330-acre farm on February 4, 1938. This plan was implemented with the help of the Upper Savannah Soil Conservation District in Oconee County, South Carolina. Ms. Adams' farm is no longer farmed and currently is the site of Seneca Middle School.

National Association of Conservation Districts: Districts continued to flourish during the 1940s, in part due to the transfer of heavy-duty WWII military equipment to peacetime uses. The equipment was now being used to protect and develop soil and water resources. In January 1946, district representatives met in Washington, D.C., to support surplus equipment transfer legislation. This legislation failed, and it became clear that district officials needed to band together to speak with one, unified voice.

On July 25, 1946, at the Morrison Hotel in Chicago, Illinois, 18 representatives from 17 states created the National Association of Soil Conservation District Governing Officials. In 1970, during the annual convention in San Francisco, the association's name was shortened to the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD). South Carolina played a key role in the creation of NACD.

- E.C. McArthur from the Broad River Conservation District in Cherokee County, South Carolina was the first president from 1946-1947.
- Ellen Cobb was a SCS employee from South Carolina who was the first executive officer and served as executive secretary from 1946-1948.
- The first NACD office was housed on North Church Street in Spartanburg, South Carolina from 1946-1947. NACD is now headquartered in Washington, DC.

Conservation Laws

See "Conservation Laws" document in Supplemental Resources for links to laws referenced below.

Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act Federal Public Law 74-46 was established on February 29, 1936. It promotes the conservation and profitable use of agricultural land resources by providing temporary federal aid to farmers. Soil Conservation Service (SCS) was formed within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to help farmers protect their soil. SCS offered expert advice and funding for soil protection acts like building farm ponds to raise the water table and planting trees to slow down wind erosion. This work was organized around the development of districts that were made up of local elected representatives of farmers, ranchers, and timber owners.

In 1994, Congress changed SCS's name to the USDA-NRCS to better reflect the broadened scope of the agency's concerns.

South Carolina Soil and Water Conservation Districts Law State Title 48, Chapter 9 was signed into law on April 17, 1937, by Gov. Olin D Johnston. This law gave South Carolina the authority to create local districts. This law clearly defines all lands of the state are among the basic assets of the state and the preservation of these lands is necessary to protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of its people.

The Land Resources Commission (LRC) was formed in 1937 to oversee the state District Law. In 1994, under the State Government Restructuring Act, the Soil and Water Conservation Districts Section was transferred to SCDNR-Land, Water, and Conservation and LRC was abolished. The District Law continues to support the working partnership between the state, the United States Secretary of Agriculture, SCDNR, and each district.

Watershed Protection & Flood Control Act Federal Public Law 84-566 was enacted on August 4, 1954. This act was developed to provide planning assistance and construction funding for projects constructed by local sponsors, often in the form of flood control district. It also gave SCS permanent watershed planning authority which led to the construction of 11,000 dams on some 2,000 watershed projects throughout South Carolina.

Watershed Protection & Flood Control Act Title 48, Chapter 11 was enacted in 1967. The Watershed Districts law gave Watershed Districts the authority to implement local soil and water conservation plans, often in collaboration with state and federal agencies such as SCDNR-Conservation Districts, USDA-NRCS, and the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES).

Please reference the Watershed training module for more information on Watersheds.

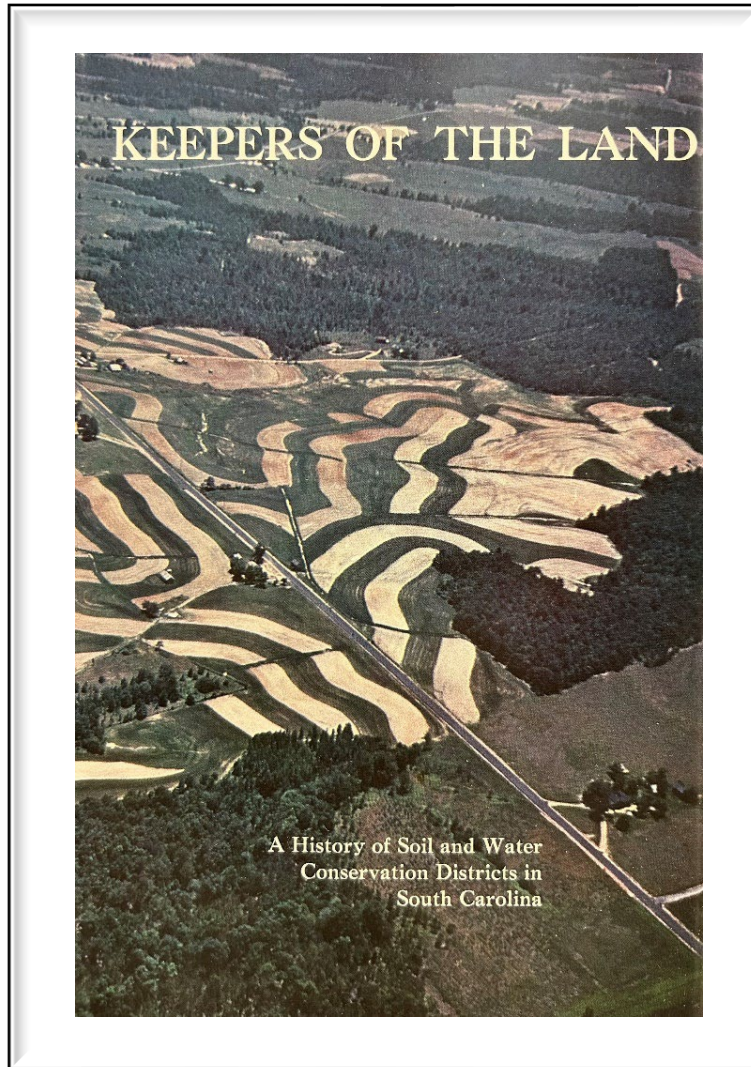
Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) was enacted by the General Assembly in 1978 to provide direct access to the functions of government to the public and the press. Government agencies and public officials have a duty to disclose any public information requested through FOIA, unless that information is protected.

The state of South Carolina believes that it is vital in a democratic society that public business be performed in an open and public manner so that citizens shall be advised of the performance of public officials and of the decisions that are reached in public activity and in the formulation of public policy. Recommendations for the following FOIA guidelines are:

- Disclose requested information
- Post the time, place, and purpose of the meeting
- Open the meeting to the public
- Release requested document(s)

Districts have an obligation not only to adhere to the letter of this law but also live up to its spirit through compliance with every reasonable FOIA request without delay or obstruction to the individual or entity seeking their right to public information.

Keepers of the Land: Published in 1972, provides a valuable in-depth history of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in South Carolina from 1937 – 1972. *See if your district has a copy to read.*



Fundamentals of a District: General Operations

Soil and Water Conservation Districts across South Carolina have various day-to-day operations, but there are general responsibilities all districts have in common. The checklist below is a beginning guide for general district operations; it is recommended to add to this list as appropriate.

General Operations Checklist

- Reporting
 - Monthly Reporting
 - Annual Reporting
- Planning
 - Short-Range (Annual) Planning
 - Long-Range Planning
- Funding
 - Budget
 - Audit
 - Funding Sources
- Insurance Reserves Funds (IRF)
- Local Work Group (LWG)
- District Employee Evaluations
- Monthly Board Meetings
- Statement of Economic Interests (SEI)
- Vehicle License Tags
- Commissioner Vacancies
- Watershed Structure Inspections and Budgets
- Public Relations and Events
- _____
- _____
- _____

Reporting

Monthly Report: The monthly report outlines the accomplishments and activities of the previous month and should be submitted to SCDNR-Conservation Districts administrative assistant and respective district coordinator by the end of each month. A deadline reminder is sent to district employees of the report deadline each month. The report should include accomplishments of the district. Reports are compiled, sent statewide, and archived by SCDNR-Conservation Districts.

Annual Report: The annual report is a published report of yearly district activities. The annual report can be timed to coincide with the end of the calendar year or the fiscal year. The best advice in preparing for the annual report is to collect photos and documentation throughout the course of the year and refer to the district's monthly reports for inspiration.

SCDNR-Conservation Districts develops the South Carolina Conservation Districts Annual Report every year. Templates are sent out each year to district employees with instructions, assistance and guidance is offered by SCDNR-Conservation Districts. Annual Reports are due to SCDNR-Conservation Districts at the beginning of January every year. South Carolina Conservation Districts Annual Report includes one-page reports from every district and partner to tell the conservation story and accomplishments. Hard copies of the annual report are sent to each commissioner, district office, legislator, and key partners. Each district is provided the one page report with statewide information to use throughout the year at events. The full report as well as each one-page report is available on SCDNR-Conservation Districts webpage. *The one-page report is recommended to be used by districts for outreach and promotion purposes.*

Planning

Long Range Plan serves as a broad outline of the district's response to long term shifts in land use, population patterns, and improvements in technology. The plan should be revised every three to five years and updated as needed.

Short Range (Annual) Plan outlines specific objectives and activities to achieve long-range plans.

The following are guidelines for all plans:

- Keep the plan simple
- Consult partners and LWG results
- Include goals for all partners: USDA-NRCS, SCDNR, district employees, and the board of commissioners
- The district, with its partners and constituents, must assess and define the conservation problems and needs of the district
- All commissioners, associate commissioners, cooperating agency representatives, and interested citizens should be involved
 - Commissioners are responsible for creating the plan, not employee(s)
 - Employees provide basic information, advice, and support
- Evaluate success after implementation

Funding

Budget: A district’s budget should include revenue (money coming in) and expenses (money going out). Budgets should be developed and approved no later than May 31 each year. The Fiscal Year (FY) runs from July 1-June 30 annually.

Audits: Each district is required to conduct an annual financial audit. The audit should capture the previous FY spending and needs to be completed no later than July 30 each year.

- SCDNR-Conservation Districts recommend districts utilize a certified public accountant (CPA) to conduct annual audits.
- If a CPA cannot be used, a “self-audit” is acceptable, where two board members audit the financials of the district. The audit should be conducted by two commissioners who are not the chair or treasurer. A supplemental volunteer who is not a commissioner can be used if needed. *The district employee should not conduct the audit and should only be available to answer questions and prepare necessary documents.*

Funding Sources

State Appropriations – Each year in August, SCDNR-Conservation Districts releases an “Aid to Conservation Districts Application” to district employees. This application details the budget and audit requirements that must be completed to receive state appropriations. The “Aid to Conservation Districts Application” and a copy of the district’s proposed budget must be submitted for consideration. Applications are due by December 31.

County Appropriations – It is imperative to work with the local county government to ensure required match funds will be received. County governments generally begin budget planning in January or February in anticipation of a July budget approval, this timeframe can vary. When making county funding requests, be sure to highlight how the district used previous year’s funds and the future goals of the district.

Grant and Contribution/Cooperative Agreement – Applications for grants and contribution/cooperative agreements open throughout the year. It is important to note the requirements and deadlines. See Conservation District Growth module for more information.

Insurance Reserves Funds

The following are general descriptions, and coverage is subject to all the terms and conditions of the policy. Visit <https://www.irf.sc.gov/> to learn more.

General Tort Liability policy pays for personal injury and property damage, caused by an occurrence, as those terms are defined by the policy, and subject to exclusions and limitations in the policy. The policy includes coverage referred to as Prepaid Legal Defense Costs Coverage. This coverage can help an insured pay for the cost of defending a lawsuit that is not otherwise covered by the policy. **Districts have this policy for coverage in the event of a lawsuit.*

Inland Marine coverage can be used to insure certain property that is neither Building and Contents or Automobile. Generally, it can be used to insure property that moves from location to location or is capable of being moved. Coverage is provided by one of several forms,

including Contractors Equipment, Miscellaneous Articles, Watercraft less than 26 feet in length, Fine Arts, and Museum Floater. Coverage is provided on an actual cash value basis, not a replacement cost basis. **Districts have this policy on rental equipment such as a grain drill.*

Automobile Liability policy pays for bodily injury or property damage to third-parties resulting from the negligent operation of an insured vehicle. The policy includes the statutory minimum amount of uninsured motorist coverage. The IRF does not issue additional uninsured motorist coverage and does not issue underinsured motorist coverage. Golf carts and low speed vehicles that have SCDMV permits, and VIN numbers are eligible to be insured. **Districts have this policy if there is a district owned vehicle.*

Local Work Group

Districts are responsible for collecting the local natural resource concerns by hosting a LWG meeting. This meeting is an opportunity for commissioners and employees to discuss concerns with local land users and partners. The results of the LWG meeting influence local initiatives, state programming, and allocation of federal funds. – *See Local Work Group module for more information*

Employee Evaluations

Each year the board should conduct an evaluation of district employees to enhance professional development and set goals for the employee that align with the strategic plan. If the district employee is employed through the county, follow the county timeline for an evaluation. If the district employee is employed directly by the district, evaluation should be completed each calendar year (January 1 – December 31) or fiscal year (July 1 – June 30). Either timeline is acceptable, however, the calendar year is recommended.

Monthly Board Meeting

Districts hold consistent monthly board meetings to conduct business and ensure the goals of the district are being met. To take action on items, a quorum (three or more commissioners present) is required. Detailed meeting minutes provide an accurate record of what was discussed and decided upon. – *See Board Meeting module for more information*

Statement of Economic Interest (SEI)

All elected commissioners are required to submit a statement of economic interest form online by noon March 30, each year, as well as appointed commissioners who are either chair or treasurer. *SEI's should be filled out by commissioners ONLY. Employee(s) should not file a SEI on a commissioner's behalf.* It is okay to use a computer in the office to file, but the commissioner MUST be the one to fill it out and submit it. – *See Commissioner module for more information*

Vehicle License Tags

Active Commissioners are eligible for a specialty Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner license plate which are assigned 1 – 230 based on seniority of the master commissioner list. – *See Commissioner module for more information*

Commissioner Vacancy

As commissioners retire or terms end, vacancies will need to be filled. Vacant positions, elected or appointed, must be advertised to the public. It is important that positions are filled in a timely manner, so it does not affect district goals being met. – *See Commissioner module for more information*

Watershed Structure Inspections and Budgets

There are 105 watershed structures and miles of canals in South Carolina maintained by 35 Watershed Districts. The local Soil and Water Conservation District oversees WSDs to comply with WSD law. WSDs have the authority to charge a tax millage to cover maintenance costs. An inspection of these structures must be conducted by May of each year with representation of all partners; WSD board, USDA-NRCS, SCDNR- Conservation Districts, a district commissioner and district employee. For dams that are labeled high hazard or significant hazard, SCDES will also perform an inspection. Watershed structure inspections give critical information in-regards to the health of the structure and what maintenance needs to be completed. After the inspection is complete, a budget of the maintenance of the structure should be developed and submitted to the district for approval and then to the county treasurer for the tax millage to be assessed. Budgets are typically due to the county treasurer no later than June each year, be sure to check local deadlines. – *See Watershed District module for more information*

Public Relations and Events

Education and Outreach - *See Education and Outreach module for more information*

- Host or attend events to raise awareness on conservation
- Create publications such as social media content, newsletter, etc.
- Provide resources to educators and community members

Legislative Relations

- Connect at Conservation Districts Day at the Statehouse
- Present at county council meetings at least quarterly
- Provide annual and monthly reports

Events

- SCACD: Conservation Districts Day at the Statehouse, Annual Partnership Conference, Mid-Year Meeting, Area Meetings
- SCCDEA: Trainings, Annual Meeting

- SC Envirothon: Coaches Training, State Competition
- NACD: Annual Meeting, Spring Fly-In, Summer Meeting, Region Meeting, Stewardship Week
- USDA-NRCS: State Technical Committee Meeting
- Local Work Group Meeting

Fundamentals of a District: Commissioner

South Carolina has 230 Conservation District Commissioners statewide with each district board consisting of five commissioners authorized by the Soil and Water Conservation Districts Law. A commissioner is an appointed or elected member of the governing body of a Soil and Water Conservation District. Two commissioners are appointed by the SCDNR Board and three are elected in the General Election.

Both elected and appointed positions serve four-year terms. Commissioner appointments and election procedures are outlined in the District Law Sections 48-9-1210, 48-9-1220, and 48-9-1230. This law charges districts with the responsibility of providing first-line leadership in developing and implementing plans to meet conservation needs of the district. It also charges commissioners with the responsibility of finding the resources with which to plan and implement programs that will address the conservation needs of the district.

Conservation District Commissioner Responsibilities

To be an effective member of the district board a commissioner must:

- Be familiar with the state law
- Identify conservation needs and develop annual and long-term plans to address needs
- Work with all agencies with conservation interests and expertise to meet conservation needs
- Collaborate with other districts and/or agencies to develop and carry out conservation plans and programs
- Determine funding needs and find funding sources to meet needs
- Engage with the public to advocate for district programs as well as local, state, and federal conservation programs
- Stay well informed of conservation issues and initiatives
- Evaluate the progress and future development of conservation programs
- Support the mission and goals of the SCACD by participating in South Carolina Conservation Partnership Conference, SCACD Mid-Year Meeting, workshops, and events; paying annual dues; promoting programs of SCACD
- *Finally, never relinquish commissioner responsibilities to employee(s)! Employee(s), whether district, SCDNR-CD or USDA-NRCS exist to help carry out programs formulated by commissioners. It is the responsibility of commissioners to plan and implement these programs*

Appointed and Elected Commissioners

Appointed Commissioner vacancies must be advertised in the district office, district social media, and/or district website for a minimum of two weeks. Applicants need to submit a resume and a Commissioner Application Form to the employee prior to the board meeting in which candidates will be considered. Once applications are received, the board of commissioners will review the applications and make a motion along with voting on the chosen appointed commissioner. Lastly, the Commissioner Application Form, Conservation District Certification Form, the Commissioner resume, and a copy of the minutes where action was taken must be sent

to SCDNR-Conservation Districts to go before the SCDNR-Land, Water and Conservation Advisory Committee for approval prior to going to the SCDNR Board for final appointment confirmation.

Elected Commissioner running on ballot must complete a petition, found on the S.C. Voters Commission website <https://scvotes.gov/> to run with 100 signatures in support of candidacy from local citizens who are registered to vote in the potential commissioner's county. It is recommended that the candidate obtain 125 signatures as some signatures are ineligible to sign. The petition is then submitted to the local elections office to get on the ballot.

Campaign Disclosure Requirements: <https://ethics.sc.gov/campaigns>
For information or clarification on ethics filing requirements, please contact the S.C. Ethics Commission here: <https://ethics.sc.gov/about-us/contact-us>

Elected Commissioner running as a write-in: There are no filing forms or fees required to run as a write-in candidate. However, write-in candidates should notify the local elections office conducting the election in writing that they are conducting a write-in campaign. The candidate will need to list all known aliases with the Election Commission so that all their write-in votes count.

Other Commissioners

Junior Commissioners: A major goal of districts is to enrich the conservation values of youth. Junior commissioners can be anyone under the age of 18 that is interested in learning what a district board encompasses. These commissioners can be involved with district events, promotion of the district, attending board meetings, and developing accurate record taking skills. A junior commissioner is the future of the district board!

Associate Commissioners are officially appointed by each local district board as advisors and representatives. They do not vote on board decisions but augment the board's knowledge and experience and assist with conservation district programs. They also offer a way to cultivate potential new commissioners, allow former commissioners to remain active in the district, and broaden community input to the district. Every two years, districts should review their roster of associate commissioners. Be sure to orient and involve associate commissioners in meaningful activities and projects.

Resignation of a Commissioner: In the event of the resignation of an appointed or elected position prior to term end, the district board must recommend a candidate to fill the remainder of the term by completing the appointment process as noted in the appointment section.

Commissioner Emeritus: The dedicated men and women who have served as commissioners do so without compensation and give freely of their time to the management of the Palmetto State's natural resources. Many of these individuals have demonstrated exemplary service as a commissioner. The title "Emeritus" conferred upon an individual is used to formally designate someone who has retired from a tenured and faithful service of public duty but is still interested in continuing to serve the district. This title does not confer any powers or responsibilities but is in recognition of faithful service to the district.

Upon retirement, the SCDNR Board, based on a recommendation from a district board and recommended by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources-Land, Water, and Conservation (SCDNR-LWC) Advisory Committee, may confer the title of Commissioner Emeritus upon deserving individuals. To recommend a retired commissioner for Commissioner Emeritus, the district must write a letter to the SCDNR Board that includes the following information:

- Length of service as a commissioner
- Positions of leadership held with the district
- Significant accomplishments
- Service to the community and state

A formal certificate will be presented to the Commissioner Emeritus upon SCDNR Board approval.

Commissioner Responsibilities

State of South Carolina Oath of Office: In taking the Oath of Office, a commissioner commits to exercising the rights and responsibilities of commissioners as spelled out in District Law, Section 48-9-10 of the South Carolina Code of Laws. Each commissioner must receive the Oath of Office prior to assuming the role as a public official or voting member of the board. The Oath of Office is taken by the governor and all municipal officers and must be administered by a Notary Public or a judge. Documentation of who is to take the oath will generally be sent from SCDNR-Conservation Districts. The district should maintain an appropriate copy of the Oath of Office for each commissioner.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA): All board meetings must be advertised and open to the public per the South Carolina FOIA at a minimum 24 hours in advance of the meeting. FOIA is not limited to in-person meetings, it includes text messages, emails, phone calls and casual interactions that involve any business related to the district. For action to be taken, a quorum of three of the five, board members must be present. Official meetings can still take place even if a quorum is not present but formal action cannot be taken. When district information is discussed, it is considered a board meeting that, per FOIA, must be open to the public.

Statement of Economic Interests (SEI): A SEI must be completed by all elected commissioners and any appointed commissioners who are either the chairman or treasurer. SEIs must be filled out online on the State Ethics Commission website **ONLY** by commissioners. Employee(s) **CANNOT** file SEIs on commissioner's behalf. It is appropriate to use a computer in the office to file, but commissioners **MUST** be the one to fill it out and submit it. Letters are sent from the State Ethics Commission each year as a reminder that SEIs need to be submitted annually by **noon on March 30**. For more SEI requirements visit:

<https://ethics.sc.gov/statement-economic-interests>

Vehicle License Tags: Active commissioners are eligible for a specialty Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner license plate. Plates are assigned 1-230 based on seniority of the master commissioner list. Each December, SCDNR-Conservation Districts will send an email to the district with the information required; vehicle make, VIN, and model of the vehicle to be tagged. Once all the information is received, SCDNR-Conservation Districts sends the seniority list and tag number assignment to the South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles

(SCDMV). Commissioners need to pay taxes and fees to the county. Tags are issued by the first of February.

- For commissioners who currently have a plate:
 - To obtain a new plate the commissioner must pay the vehicle property taxes and registration renewal fee (one year registration and special plate fee) to the county of residence. The new license plate will be ordered for manufacturing upon payment of fees and mailed to the commissioner. There are no SCDMV forms to submit.
- For commissioners who wish to obtain a license plate for the first time:
 - Commissioners must pay the vehicle property taxes and registration renewal fee (one year registration and special plate fee) to the county of residence.
 - Complete the SCDMV Application Form 5048
 - Mail or take Form 5048, a paid tax notice and specialty plate fee to any SCDMV.

Conservation District Board Officers

District boards should elect the following officers annually: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. Some districts combine the offices of Secretary and Treasurer into a single Secretary/Treasurer role. It is recommended to rotate officer roles and to have the roles effective from February 1 – January 31 on a biannual basis.

Duties of the Chair

- Calls, convenes, oversees, and adjourns all meetings of the board
- Assures a quorum is present to conduct business
- Assures FOIA requirements are met
- Assures all partners who are making reports are present. At a minimum, USDA-NRCS, SCDNR- Conservation Districts, and the employee(s) should give reports verbally and written
- Assures an agenda is ready for each meeting and is followed during the meeting
- Keeps meeting discussions short and relevant to the business at hand
- Oversees the establishment of committees
- Ensures the district's annual and long-range plans are prepared, revised, reviewed, and implemented
- Check in with employee(s) frequently to ensure efficient operations
- Maintains good communication with commissioners, employee(s), and program partners
- Familiarizes themselves with the programs and operation of district partners, including USDA-NRCS, SCDNR, SCACD, NACD, and others

Duties of the Vice-Chair

- Assists the Chair
- Performs the duties of the Chair in the absence of the Chair
- Takes on other duties as assigned by the board

Duties of the Secretary

- Informs the Chair of any business that should come before the board
- Ensures district proceedings are properly recorded in meeting minutes

Duties of the Treasurer

- Ensure that financial policies and procedures are followed
- Commissioners and employees understand and abide financial policies and procedures
- District funds are used responsibly
- Recommend any necessary changes
- Ensure an annual audit takes place (treasurer and chair cannot perform audit)
- Maintain complete and accurate records of income
- Pay district bills in a timely manner
- Account for restricted funds
- Maintain adequate liability insurance, surety bonds, inland marine insurance, workers compensation, etc.

Fundamentals of a District: Employee

The fundamental concept of districts is to be the voice for locally led conservation through supporting and representing land users within each district. A Memoranda of Agreement creates a structure through which federal and state agencies work on a local level. Employees serve as the initial contact between the public and federal, state and local programs, and activities. Districts recruit well-trained, knowledgeable employees with abilities to cover the wide range of tasks necessary to carry out the district mission and daily operations. The employee should expect to have support from Commissioners, USDA-NRCS, SCDNR-Conservation Districts, SCACD, SCCDEA, SC Foundation, and NACD.

District Employee Basics

Job Title: District employees cover a wide range of job roles. Regardless of the job title, employees are part of a team that is focused on the conservation of natural resources. For simplicity's sake, all employee positions will be referred to as "employee" throughout this document. Districts may have the following employment opportunities:

- District Coordinator
- District Manager
- Education Coordinator
- Administrative Assistant
- Intern
- District Technical Personnel

Employee Supervisor: Relationships between the board and employee must be effective. It can be very difficult for an employee to have five supervisors at once, especially if they offer conflicting input. The district chair or their designee is normally the board member who works directly with the employee as their day-to-day supervisor. The chair should maintain a keen awareness of employee concerns and should initiate employee evaluations, salary, and other actions. The district manager should supervise other employees, and the board chair should work through the manager to address concerns with other employees. Even if the employee is hired by the county, it is the board's responsibility to maintain district operations through the employee, recommend salary increases to the county, and perform routine evaluations.

South Carolina Conservation District Employees Association (SCCDEA): The mission of SCCDEA is to strengthen and promote the district programs by providing various levels of assistance, information, and representation to employees. Each year, SCCDEA hosts training and an annual meeting to provide networking and professional development opportunities. SCCDEA is funded through dues and various fundraising and is directed by a board made up of district employees. This is a great network for the employee to be involved.

Funding Sources: Districts can utilize local, state, federal, and grant funding to carry out their mission. SCDNR-Conservation Districts provides a state appropriation of funds to each district that must be met by a minimum county contribution. Many county/municipal governments exceed the minimum match required by the state to provide additional funding to hire employee(s) or provide conservation support. SCACD and NACD may offer technical assistance

grants to support resource technicians and conservation planners. Funding sources differ from district to district based on local needs and priorities.

Various Roles and Responsibilities

Employees assist the board to fulfill district responsibilities to conserve and protect natural resources within the district through education and technical assistance. It is the responsibility of the commissioners to establish job responsibilities of each employee(s) as clearly as possible. Tasks vary between districts depending on need and district programs. Effective communication is key to ensuring that everyone knows their duties and responsibilities! Depending on how employee position(s) are funded and structured, commissioners may need to develop a job description, recruit and interview candidates, hire, and supervise employees directly. In general, employees carry out the programs and duties assigned in the district's annual and long-range plans, as directed by the board. Duties may include:

Administrative Duties

- Utilize the district computer for correspondence, reports, publications, email, financial records, and record-keeping duties
- Responsible for restorable backups and maintaining hard copies of computer records in files for inspection at any time by the board
- Facilitate the building of annual and long-range plans with commissioner input and update regularly
- Be familiar with the general functions and district relationships with: USDA-NRCS, SCDNR-Conservation Districts, county agencies, and other partners
- Attend and assist with all district-related meetings, activities, and events as required by the board, including keeping commissioners informed of all upcoming pertinent events
- Prepare and assist with district board meeting essentials: meeting agenda, public notice, minutes, and financial reports
- Prepare and distribute all reports in consultation with the board, state, and federal agencies
- Maintain a standard, easy-to-understand and accessible filing system for records, materials, and literature
- Effectively communicate the needs of the district to USDA-NRCS and SCDNR-Conservation Districts so that they may coordinate available assistance to the district
- Retrieve and respond accordingly to daily correspondence
- Submit monthly and yearly reports to SCDNR-Conservation Districts

Financial Duties

- Prepare yearly budget, county funding requests, and track budget throughout the year
- Prepare for and assist commissioners in conducting annual audit and submitting to SCDNR-Conservation Districts
- Prepare checks for bills per annual budget or as approved by the board.
- Maintain accounting records and reconcile accounts monthly
- Keep payroll records, pay payroll taxes, and prepare tax records for district employee(s)

- Maintain benefit records and make payments (such as health benefits, tort liability, and worker's compensation)
- Responsible for financial management of district grants
- Order supplies and services for the district, maintain warranties and records, follow procurement policy
- Maintain accurate records of Affiliate Members, including years of membership, accurately account for annual contributions, invoice receipts, and prepare reports for the board

Education and Public Awareness Duties

- Provide information to the public through phone, email, fax, and written correspondence in a timely, courteous, and professional manner about district, USDA-NRCS, and SCDNR-Conservation Districts programs and services
- Administer Affiliate Membership Program by coordinating annual membership, contribution drive, and recognition
- Coordinate special meetings and functions, including field days and tours
- Assist schools, teachers, groups, and agencies in conservation education efforts. Design, develop, and present conservation education programs in schools, groups, local officials, and other agencies
- Take and maintain photographs and records of educational and public awareness activities
- Promote and conduct educational contests (essay, poster, photo, etc.) and recognition of winners
- Provide local schools, FFA, and 4-H with SC Envirothon Training Trunk

Technical Duties

- Greet and provide the public with general information about technical assistance and program funding for conservation
- Refer the public to agencies and organizations for assistance as appropriate
- Prepare conservation plan folders, maps, and data entry
- Assist USDA-NRCS with filing, correspondence, and reports
- Coordinate and facilitate the Local Work Group meeting yearly in conjunction with the board and provide conservation resource concerns to USDA-NRCS and SCDNR-Conservation Districts

Perform other duties as assigned that may have a bearing upon the district's administrative, financial, conservation, and public outreach programs.

Payroll and Benefits: Every district has its own unique payroll and benefits procedure. Some districts offer employees access to South Carolina Retirement System and the South Carolina State Insurance, which is available for districts to take advantage of for a fee. An employee's pay can be funded in any of the following ways including a combination of ways:

- County employees are directly paid by the county
- County provides funding to districts to cover employees' salary
- The district may be responsible for the payroll of the employee independently
- Employees can be an independent contractor who receives a 1099
- Grant funded
- Use of state appropriations

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP): A set of step-by-step operational and technical instructions should be available to help employees carry out routine operations. This document should be a formal, written guideline or instruction on day-to-day district operations. The SOP should include:

- Planning annual and long-range plans
- Employee job description(s)
- Copies of training materials
- Calendar of operations
- Banking information
- Affiliate member list
- Partnership contacts and information

It is recommended that all districts create a general email through a reputable email provider i.e. (Google, Yahoo) so that the board can access the district emails in the event of an absent employee.

Freedom of Information Act: All board meetings must be advertised and open to the public per the S.C. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) at minimum 24 hours in advance of the meeting. FOIA is not limited to in person meetings and includes text messages, emails, phone calls and casual interactions that involve any business related to the district. For action to be taken, a quorum of three of the five, board members must be present. Official meetings can still take place even if a quorum is not present but formal action cannot be taken. When district information is discussed, it is considered a board meeting that, per FOIA, must be open to the public.

Fundamentals of a District: Board Meetings

It is imperative that Soil and Water Conservation Districts consistently host board meetings each month to ensure goals and initiatives are being successfully implemented. Per FOIA, the only time commissioners can discuss district business is during an official board meeting that has had an agenda publicly advertised 24 hours in advance and is open to the public.

Pre-Meeting Logistics

2 – 3 weeks prior

- Reserve meeting space - ideally held in an easily accessible space, advertised in advance, and where the public is welcome. Restaurants, outside of a reserved room within the restaurant, can be difficult to secure enough space for the public to attend.
- Contact commissioners and partners for agenda items prior to invitation

1 week prior

- Remind essential attendees (include tentative agenda, date, time, and location)
 - Commissioner and associate commissioners
 - Affiliate members
 - Conservation Partnership representatives from USDA-NRCS and SCDNR– Conservation Districts
 - Federal, state, county, and city delegates
 - Guest speakers
- Publicly post tentative agenda (publicly accessible bulletin board, office door, website, social media, etc.)
 - PDF is recommended format

24 hours prior

- Check for quorum – three of five board members must be present for actions to be made
 - If not met, contact chair about cancelling/rescheduling
- Publicly post final meeting agenda minimum of 24 hours prior to meeting (publicly accessible bulletin board, office door, website, social media, etc.)
- Set up meeting space
 - Arrange chairs so everyone can make eye contact
 - Set-up name plates if available and include introductions for all present
- Gather things to bring
 - Commissioner contact information
 - Necessary meeting equipment (projector, presentations, screen, clicker)
 - Sign-in sheet
 - Meeting packets - copies for commissioners and employees
 - Extra agendas and appropriate handouts for all guests
 - Reference materials
 - Financial paperwork (receipts, bank statements, bills)
 - South Carolina Conservation District Handbook
 - Parliamentary procedure reference

Actual Meeting Logistics

Meeting Packet: Meeting packets should include:

- Agenda
- Minutes from prior meeting
- Financial report
- Upcoming dates
- Upcoming workshop flyers
- Information about ongoing projects
- Partner reports (minimum NRCS and SCDNR)

Agenda: The purpose of an agenda is to provide structure and transparency of the meeting business. Under FOIA, the agenda must be made available to the public at their request and posted in the office 24 hours prior to the meeting. The agenda must list the time, date, and place of the meeting and detailed information of all items to be considered at the meeting. The secretary should retain a file of all incoming and outgoing correspondence and notes on any other topics the board needs to consider at the meeting. The chair should work with the employee(s) to develop a list of all topics to be placed on the agenda. *See sample agenda with and without descriptions in “Sample Board Meeting Materials” in supplemental resources.*

Any decision or act that results in the following requires official action of the board of commissioners in an open meeting:

- *Expenditure of funds*
- *Establishment or change of policy*
- *Represents an aspect, opinion, or approval of an issue by the district*
- *Causes an obligation of any kind on the part of the district.*

Parliamentary Procedure: Most meetings, especially formal meetings, are conducted according to parliamentary procedure, such as Roberts Rules of Order. To learn more about suggested meeting procedures, *see “Sample Board Meeting Materials” in supplemental resources.* If your district has a process that varies from formal parliamentary procedures but follows the principles below, that works too!

Core principles of a successful meeting:

- Take up business one item at a time to maintain order and efficiency
- Promote courtesy, justice, impartiality, and equality
- Majority rules but minority must be heard

NACD offers a fact sheet on parliamentary procedure, “NACD Parliamentary Procedure: A Quick Reference Guide for Conservation District Officials”, developed to help conservation districts improve the quality of their meetings and make sure they are orderly, fair, and concise available through NACD’s Members Only page under District Board Materials.

<https://www.nacdnet.org/general-resources/district-guides/>

Minutes: Minutes are the official record of what is discussed, decided, and agreed upon during the board meeting. Meetings can be recorded for reference to finalize minutes (all meeting recordings must be made available at the request of the public per FOIA). Minutes should be taken by secretary or district employee. *See sample meeting minutes and parliamentary*

procedure examples in “*Sample Board Meeting Materials*” in supplemental resources. It is important that the meeting minutes be detailed and include the following items:

- Date, time, and place of the meeting
- Who called the meeting to order
- Board members present or absent
- Substance of all matters proposed, discussed, or decided
 - Announcements
 - Partner reports
 - Project planning
- Who made motions, seconded, and voting results
- Other information that any member of the public requests be included in the minutes
- *Ask for clarification or repetition when needed!*

Per FOIA, previous district monthly meeting minutes, agendas, and redacted financial records must be made available for public inspection. Each FOIA request is unique. It is recommended to reach out for specific guidance to SCDNR-Conservation Districts if a request is received.

Additional meeting minute resources can be found in the “*Sample Board Meeting Materials*” in the supplemental resources and “NACD Taking Minutes Made Easy: A Training Tool” presentation developed with notes about how to take better meeting minutes available through NACD’s Members Only page under District Board Materials. <https://www.nacdnet.org/general-resources/district-guides/>

Executive Session: To move into executive session, a vote must be taken in public. The only actions that can be taken in executive sessions are to recess the meeting or return to public session. The Chair must state the specific purpose of the executive session. No informal polling about a course of action may be taken in executive session. See *parliamentary procedure examples in the “Sample Board Meeting Materials” for additional Executive Session information.*

Allowable reasons for executive session include:

- Personnel matters of nonelected personnel
- Consultation with an attorney for the district which would be deemed privileged in the attorney-client relationship
- Matters relating to employer-employee negotiations, whether or not in consultation with the representatives of the district
- Preliminary discussions relating to the acquisition of real property

Post Meeting Logistics

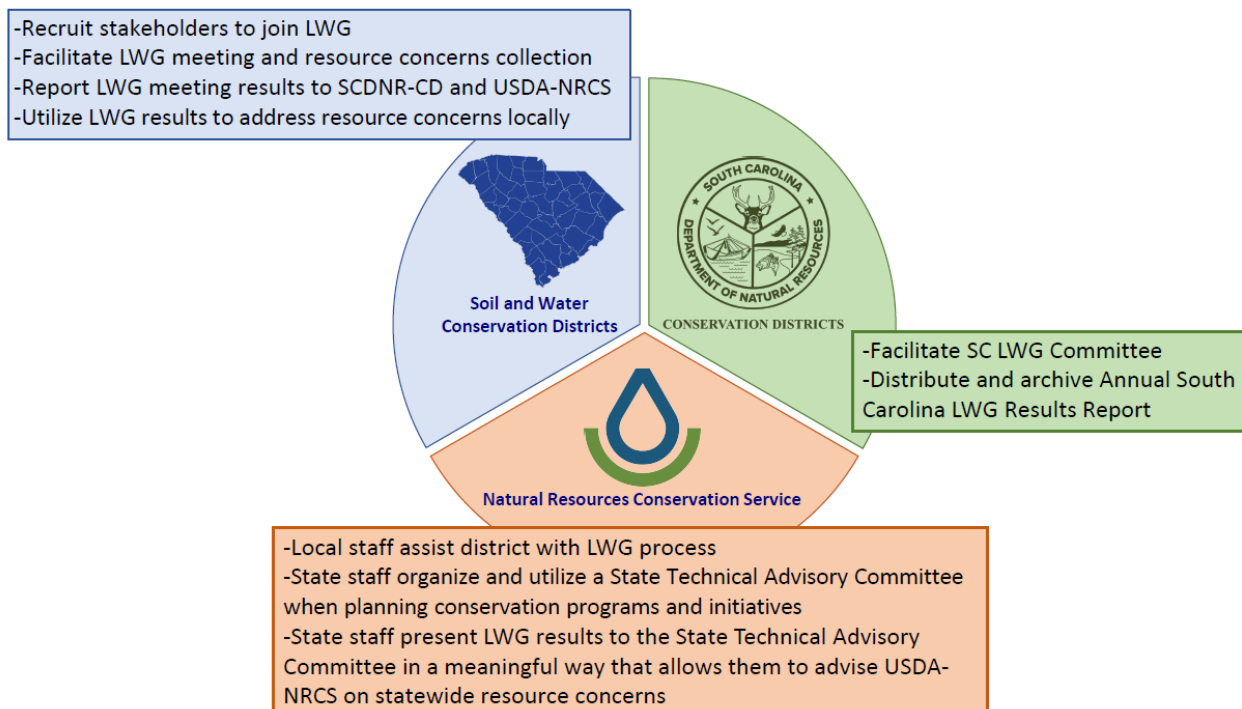
- Edit/type minutes shortly after meeting while it is fresh on your mind!
- Approved previous meeting minutes
 - Make changes if needed
 - Post online or office bulletin board
- Follow up on meeting action items
 - Archive: agenda, handout packet, approved previous meeting minutes
- Start planning for the next meeting!

Fundamentals of a District: Local Work Group

South Carolina Soil and Water Conservation Districts should host a minimum of one Local Work Group (LWG) stakeholder meeting per year. The purpose of the LWG stakeholder meeting is to collect local natural resource concerns from landowners, environmental professionals, and stakeholders of the district. LWG results are to be addressed by each partner of the SC Conservation Partnership: on the local level by the district, the state level by SCDNR-Conservation Districts, and on the federal level by USDA-NRCS.

It is the responsibility of the district to ensure that local stakeholders have the opportunity to share resource concerns through the LWG process and then compile, prioritize, and report these resource concerns to state and federal partners.

South Carolina Conservation Partnership LWG Responsibilities



Local Work Group Timeline

Below is an example timeline for the LWG process. It is imperative that this timeline is adapted to what works best for the district while still meeting mid-summer LWG reporting deadlines. This ensures local district results are captured in the annual SCDNR-Conservation Districts LWG report and are available for USDA-NRCS to utilize in determining cost-share priorities for the following year. Official LWG results report deadlines will be announced annually in the spring via email by state conservation partnership leaders.



Stakeholder Meeting Logistics

Date Selection: Select an appropriate time and date for the meeting. Try to avoid the peak busy times for farmers throughout the seasons. Consult local conservation and agriculture organizations to ensure other events will not interfere with attendance of stakeholders.

Invitations and Public Notice: Start advertising the meeting as soon as a date is selected – minimum 30 days prior to meeting date. Include a description of the significance of the LWG process with invitation/announcement. Advertise at local feed and seeds, farmers markets, on

social media platforms, USDA-NRCS website, etc. Personally invite potential stakeholders with as much notice as possible.

Potential Stakeholders to Invite:

- District commissioners
- District employees
- Landowners and producers
- District affiliate members
- Watershed directors
- Local USDA-NRCS staff
- Local SCDNR staff
- Local USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA) staff
- FSA county Committee
- Local Clemson Extension staff
- Local Forestry Commission staff
- Local SC Department of Environmental Services staff
- County stormwater managers
- Native American Tribes
- Local elected officials and/or staff
- Local groups and organizations
 - Forest landowner groups
 - River Keepers Land Trust
 - Nature Conservancy
 - Agricultural organizations
 - Farm Bureau
 - Producer lenders
 - Cattleman Association
 - Urban agriculture groups
 - Farmers markets
 - Pheasants Forever
 - National Wild Turkey Federation
 - Audubon Society
 - Quails Forever

Meeting Location: Select a central, easily accessible location. Be sure the space can accommodate enough tables and chairs for the meeting (classroom style or large U-shape) and has the necessary presentation equipment (speakers, microphones, laptop, screen, etc.). Ensure adequate bathroom facilities. Consider providing an option for virtual attendance. If a virtual option is provided for any attendee, it must be available for the public to also attend virtually. Test equipment and room set-up prior to the meeting.

Meeting Facilitation: *Choosing the best facilitator for the meeting is critical for success!* The facilitator needs to be comfortable keeping the discussion focused, resolving conflicts, and maximizing audience participation. The facilitator should ensure that input is gathered from all attendees and that the meeting is not driven by any one organization or stakeholder. Assign individuals with duties to help the facilitator with note taking, presentation of crucial information, and timekeeping. Technical experts from the district, USDA-NRCS, and USDA-FSA should be on hand to answer questions.

Meeting Materials: The right materials at the meeting, in the right quantities, in the briefest form possible will help the attendees with decision making.

NCPP offers a LWG resource page filled with training videos related to the LWG process on a national level that includes detailed examples of LWG materials.

<https://www.nationalconservationplanningpartnership.com/local-work-group-project-resources/>

Potential materials include:

- Agenda
- Sign-in sheet (collect name, organization, mailing, and email address – add new attendees to mailing list)
- “NRCS LWG Results” form
- Survey results (if performed)
- Note pages for presentations
- County/state maps with natural resource features
- USDA-NRCS and SCDNR Initiatives
- Data from previous year including SCDNR LWG Report
- Ranking sheets and procedure for ranking to take place
- Natural resource data

Meeting Agenda: When creating the meeting agenda, think about how to motivate the participants to become involved and generate significant input. See sample meeting agenda items below. Start the meeting on time and set the tone and purpose of the meeting from the beginning. Meet with speakers prior to establish meeting goals and expectations of the speaker. Be sure to end the meeting with a wrap-up session describing the next steps and the results stakeholders can expect from this meeting.

Consider having an assigned timekeeper who will keep track of each agenda items to maintain timeliness of meeting.

Sample LWG Stakeholder Meeting Agenda Items and Potential Information to Cover:

- Welcome and Introductions
 - Purpose, goals, and overview of LWG
 - Stress meeting is meant to collect data for entire county – not specific stakeholders or funding
 - Allow each attendee to introduce themselves with their name and role in the community
- Soil and Water Conservation District Report
 - Brief overview of district
 - 2023 LWG Results
 - 2023 Initiatives – specifically ones related to resource concerns brought forward by LWG previously
 - Survey results if performed
- USDA-NRCS Report
 - Brief overview of programs
 - 2023 applications received and contracts obligated
 - Common local practices applied and the resource concerns addressed by practices

- New initiatives
- SCDNR-Conservation Districts Report
- Other partner reports (optional)
 - Consider allowing other main partners to have a space on the agenda to report resource concerns from their field. Meet with partners prior to ensure they understand the purpose of LWG meeting and expectations of their report.
 - Clearly communicate time allotted for this report.
- Stakeholders Resource Concerns Comments
 - Time should be given for each attendee to speak
 - Set a time limit and stick to it (2-5 minutes) depending on the number of attendees.
 - Give a time warning when time is up.
 - Facilitator must keep meeting flowing!
- Resource Concerns Discussion
 - Consider breaking discussion into land use categories: crop, pasture, forestry, and animal waste. USDA-NRCS categories and forms do not have to guide discussion. Discussion can be open-ended focusing on actual resource concerns in layman's terms of attendees rather than in the technical, programmatic terms. The facilitator can guide the discussion to ensure all land uses and topics are covered throughout the discussion or at least offered up for discussion.
 - Ensure enough information from discussion is captured in the meetings notes to formulate resource concerns priorities for the district.
- Wrap-up
 - Overview of resource concerns collected during the meeting
 - Explain the next steps of how data will be used and compiled and reported back to stakeholders. Be sure statewide report is sent to stakeholders once released from SCDNR-Conservation Districts for transparency.

Local Work Group Results Reporting

District LWG Results Report: This report should be sent to all partners and stakeholders that participated in or were invited to the LWG Stakeholder meeting. It should also be referenced when determining district long-term and annual work plans. It is essential for adequate notes to be taken during the LWG meeting to formulate an accurate report. Report should include:

- Local Conservation Needs Assessment
 - Local resource concerns
 - Potential remedies to resource concerns
 - General needs or concerns related to conservation on a local, statewide, or federal level
- Completed USDA-NRCS LWG Results form. This form will be sent out with the deadline announcement emails in spring of each year. It is imperative to fill out this form based on LWG meeting results as it will have the most up-to-date resource concerns being utilized by USDA-NRCS for ranking purposes in Farm Bill program dollar allocation.
- Stakeholder meeting notes including meeting logistics, attendees, and comments of speakers

- District board meeting minutes showing approval of the LWG Results Report
 - An agenda item should be included on the district board meeting agenda to approve LWG results report. The meeting time could be used to compile the report, fill out the USDA-NRCS LWG Results form, and sort through stakeholder meeting notes or a completed report could be presented to the board for approval that has been compiled prior to the meeting

SCDNR-Conservation Districts LWG Results Report: SCDNR-Conservation Districts compiles and distributes a statewide report of each district results report. This report serves as a database of resource concern priorities for future use in a statewide cost share program, justification of need for initiatives, and an accountability resource for partners. Districts are encouraged to review the report to find districts with similar resource concerns for potential partnership or idea sharing opportunities to address resource concerns. The LWG results report compiles the LWG results reports from each district including resource concerns rankings from the USDA-NRCS LWG Results form and other resource concerns, areas of interest, and potential solutions.

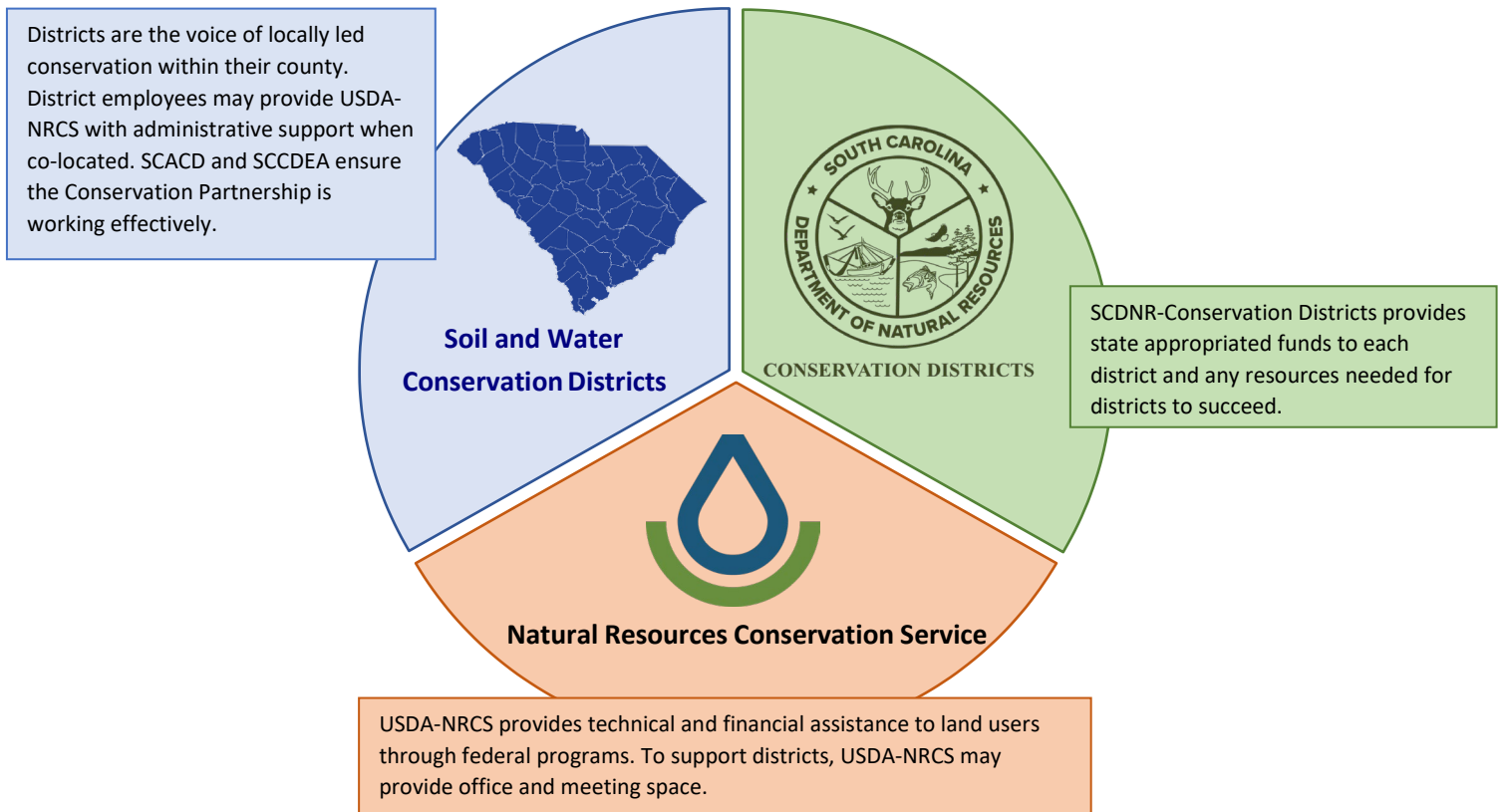
The district employees and commissioners should review and share the statewide report with stakeholders and LWG attendees.

USDA-NRCS Statewide LWG Results Use: USDA-NRCS is obligated by Federal Regulation to organize and utilize in an advisory capacity a State Technical Advisory Committee of statewide natural resource stakeholders when planning conservation programs and initiatives. This committee is charged with reviewing and utilizing LWG stakeholder meeting results in its advisements to USDA-NRCS. Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) - Title 7 (Agriculture), Subtitle B (Regulations of the Department of Agriculture), Chapter VI (Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture), Subchapter B (Conservation Operations), Part 610 (Technical Assistance), Subpart C (State Technical Committees) - <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/subchapter-B/part-610/subpart-C>

Partnership Roles and Responsibilities

Collaboration with partners allows Soil and Water Conservation Districts to serve their community efficiently and effectively. The roles and responsibilities of partners vary. The Conservation Partnership is the main partnership between local districts represented by SCACD, SCDNR-Conservation Districts, and USDA-NRCS. Other state and national organizations support districts by providing resources, training, and funding opportunities.

South Carolina Conservation Partnership



Soil and Water Conservation Districts (districts)

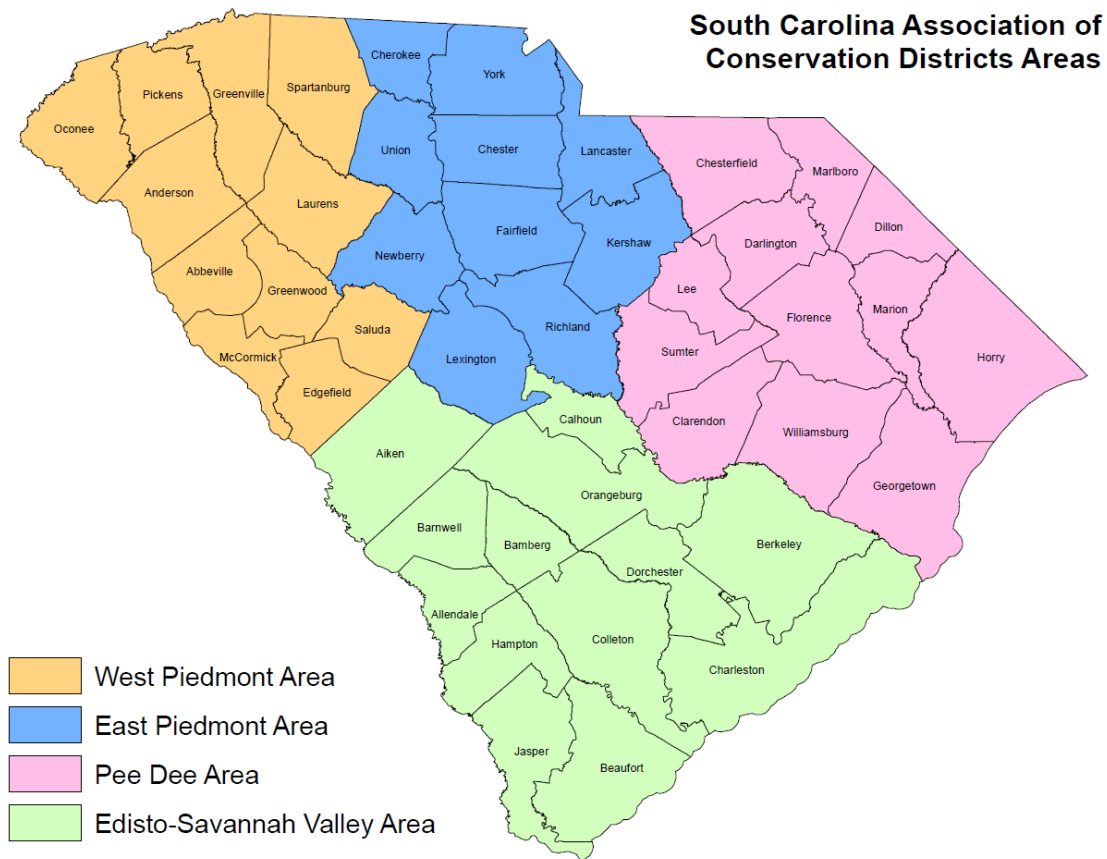
Districts are subdivisions of state government divided by county lines. Districts are charged with promoting the wise use of soil and water through locally led conservation. The board is comprised of five commissioners, two are appointed by the SCDNR Board and three are elected in the general election. Each district is staffed by at least one employee who carries out the day-to-day operations of the district. Districts are typically co-located with USDA-NRCS in a USDA-NRCS Field Office and provide administrative support for use of the office space. To better advocate for local resource concerns on local, state, and national levels districts host Local Work Group (LWG) meetings to collect conservation resource concerns from citizens. The results influence local initiative, state programming, and allocations of federal funding.

South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts (SCACD)



SCACD was founded in 1941 to support the state's 46 districts and their commissioners through conferences, workshops, awards, educational activities, and promotional assistance to enhance district programs. SCACD provides districts a voice in state and federal policy-making and legislative processes.

SCACD is divided into the following regions:



SCACD membership, board, and staff

- Voting Members- Conservation District Commissioners (commissioners) whose district has paid its annual dues to SCACD
- SCACD Executive Officers (held by commissioners)
 - President
 - Vice President
 - Treasurer
 - Secretary
 - Past President
 - National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Representative
- SCACD Area Directors (held by commissioners)
 - West Piedmont
 - East Piedmont
 - Edisto-Savannah Valley
 - Pee Dee
- Staff
 - Executive Director
 - Liaison
 - Agreement Coordinator

Policy Positions: A document developed by the SCACD members to represent the stance of districts conservation issues and statewide initiatives. Each year, the policy positions are discussed at the Mid-Year Meeting and recommended updates are made to be approved at the business meeting of the association during the Annual S.C. Conservation Partnership Conference. Commissioners and employees should be familiar with this document and are encouraged to participate in one or more committees to share their expertise.

Policy position committees are:

- Awards
- District Operations
- Education and Outreach
- Legislative
- Forestry, Wildlife, Recreation
- Land Use, Water Quality, and Research

Meetings and Events

- Area Meetings – Networking event where districts learn about conservation issues in the area and get to share district accomplishments. Each year, a district from within the area volunteers to host the meeting. Typically held late summer - early fall.
- Mid-Year Meeting – Statewide meeting where policy positions are discussed and recommended updates are made to be approved at the business meeting of the association during the Annual Partnership Conference. Partners also provide updates. Typically held in September/October in Columbia, South Carolina.
- Annual S.C. Conservation Partnership Conference – Annual conference where partners come together to share ideas, opportunities, and accomplishments. An awards banquet is held to recognize outstanding conservationists within South Carolina. An annual association business meeting is held to vote on policy positions and discuss statewide business. Typically held in January/ February.
- Conservation Districts Day at the Statehouse – Opportunity for SCACD members to educate state legislators on accomplishments and goals of districts. Held in early spring.

South Carolina Conservation District Employees Association



SCCDEA was organized in January 1993 and is directed by a board including a president, president-elect, secretary, and treasurer; along with area representatives (filled by district employees). The mission of SCCDEA is to strengthen and promote the district programs by providing assistance, information, and representation, and by supporting the professionalism of district employees. Each year, SCCDEA hosts trainings and an annual meeting to provide networking and professional development opportunities. SCCDEA is supported through dues and various fundraising.

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources-Conservation Districts

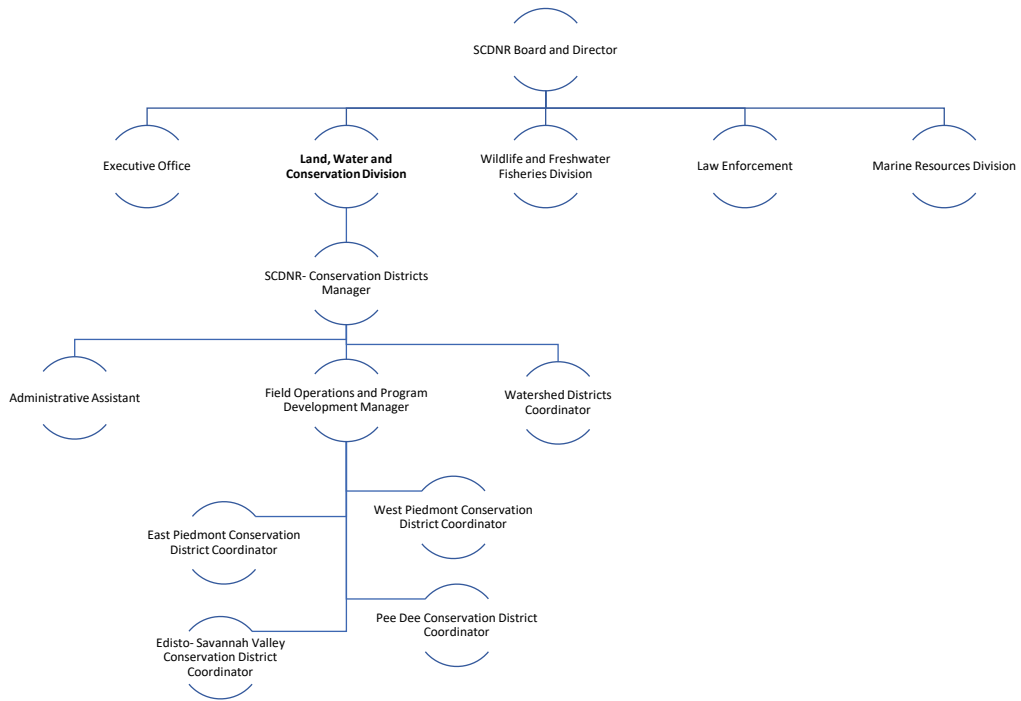


SCDNR-Conservation Districts is a section within the SCDNR Land, Water and Conservation Division charged with the responsibility of administering the state's Conservation Districts Law, Watershed Districts Law, and coordinating the efforts of the 46 districts on a statewide basis.

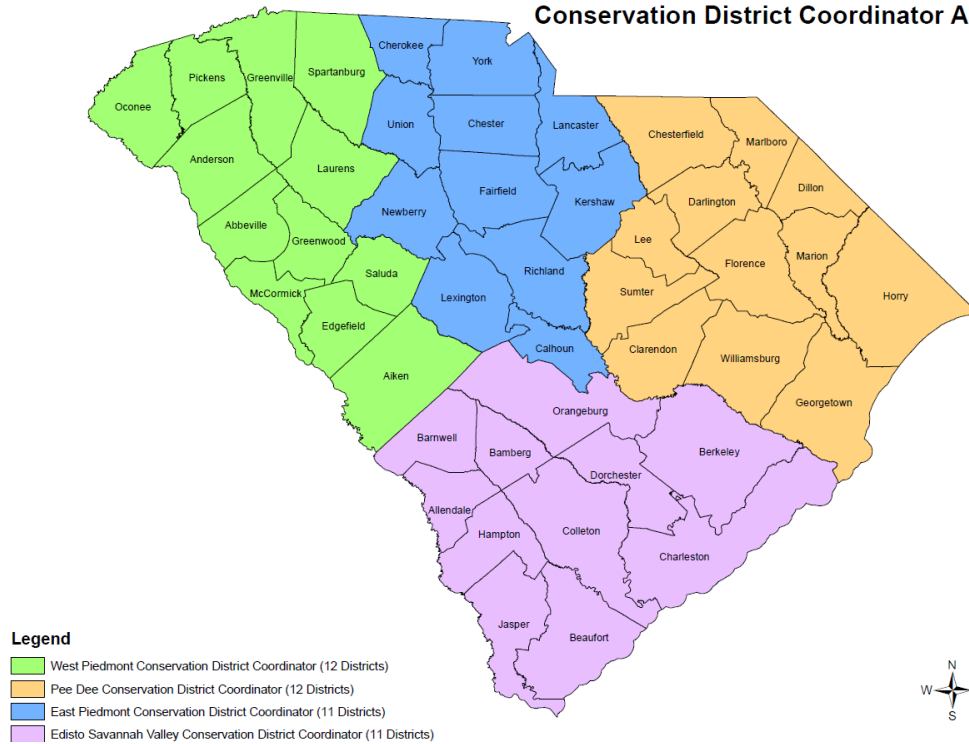
SCDNR-Conservation Districts assist districts by:

- Providing financial assistance through state-appropriated funds
- Providing professional and technical staff assistance, including timely training for all district commissioners, associate commissioners, district employees, partners and other volunteers
- Assisting in developing annual and long-range plans for carrying out district goals and objectives
- Developing, conducting and evaluating conservation education programs in cooperation with districts
- Promoting programs of districts through the news media, exhibits, tours, conferences, visual aids and brochures
- Ensuring the cooperation of state and federal agencies in assisting districts and land users
- Disseminating information on the activities and programs of all districts and SCDNR-Conservation Districts

SCDNR-Conservation Districts organization chart and coordinator areas



**SCDNR - Conservation District
Conservation District Coordinator Areas**



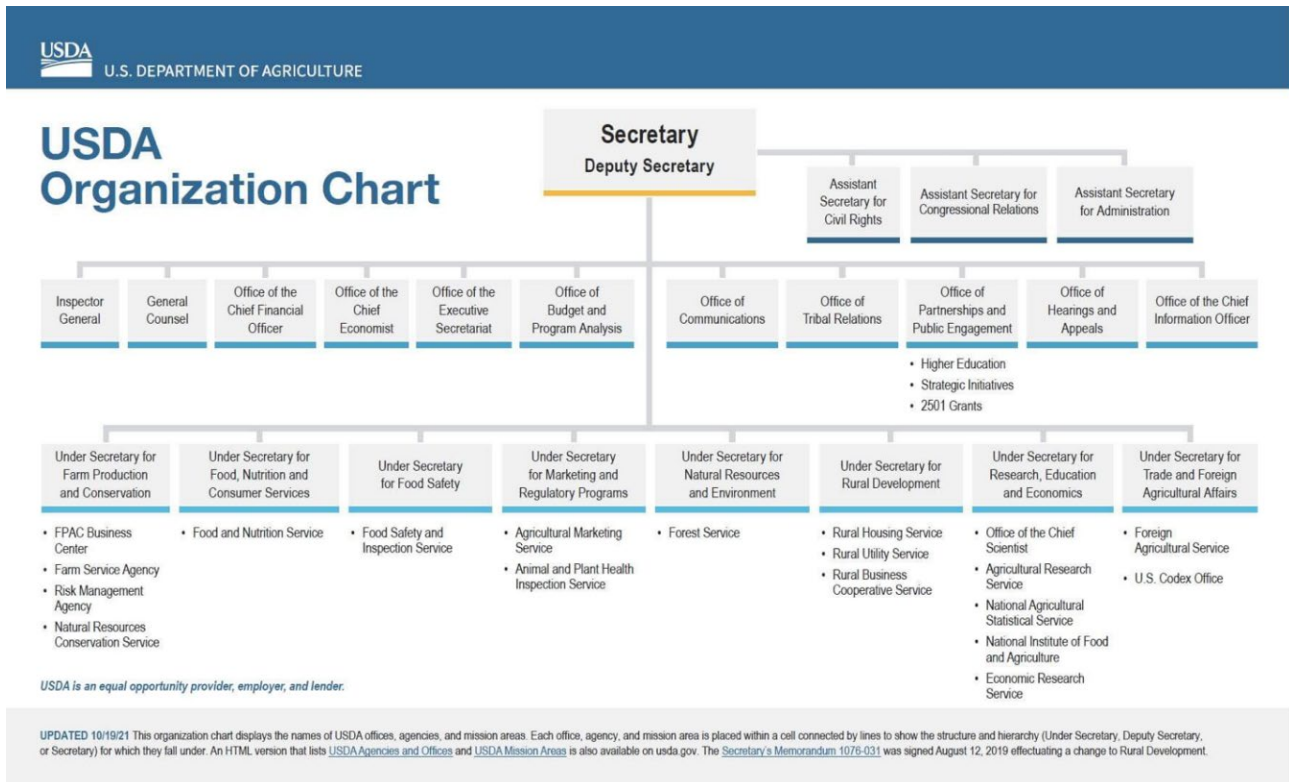
USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service



USDA-NRCS is a federal agency which provides, through Memoranda of Agreement with the district, direct resource management assistance to the land users of the district.

USDA-NRCS assists districts by:

- Attending regular and specially called district board meetings to provide commissioners with monthly reports and answer questions
- Attending the district's LWG meeting to provide guidance and clarification when needed
- Helping develop annual and long-range plans to address conservation concerns
- Reviewing and discussing with district officials the civil rights policies contained in the Cooperative and Mutual Working Agreements on an annual basis
- Helping private landowners develop conservation plans for land users
- Consulting with realtors, developers, commodity organizations, units of government, planning commission, county and city councils who need information about protecting natural resources
- Hosting the State Technical Committee meeting to discuss resource concerns on the state level



Additional Partners



South Carolina Conservation Districts Foundation was established in 1976 by the SCACD to promote educational, scientific, and charitable efforts to conserve South Carolina's natural resources. The Foundation is an IRS designated 501(c)3 non-profit organization which districts can utilize to apply for grants. Annually, the Foundation awards several college scholarships and supports conservation education programs. The Foundation is the sister organization to SCACD.



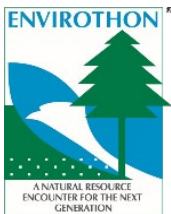
National Association of Conservation Districts

National Association of Conservation Districts formed in 1946 by districts and their state associations as a nonprofit organization that represents the nation's conservation districts and the leaders who serve on their governing boards. NACD's mission is to represent districts with one voice and enable districts to pool their resources to accomplish collectively what they could not accomplish alone.

The SCACD NACD Representative ensures South Carolina is at the forefront of national conversations and communicates national issues and resources to the SCACD Board. NACD members have access to the NACD Marketplace and Education Hub which offer educational resources and NACD merchandise. Members are also encouraged to participate in NACD professional development opportunities, webinars, Annual Meeting, Spring Fly-In, Summer Meeting, Stewardship Week and Southeast Region Meeting. NACD produces several news resources such as YouTube videos and e-newsletters to inform members of projects and programs happening across the nation as well as promote district accomplishments.



National Association of State Conservation Agencies was established in 1991 to serve as a network for state agencies such as SCDNR-Conservation Districts to exchange tools and resources with other states to enhance capacity to deliver conservation effectively and efficiently. NASCA works with the National Conservation Partnership to advocate for federal policy and Farm Bill recommendations.



National Conservation Foundation was organized in 1952 to provide districts and other conservation organizations funding for research, educational programs, and public outreach. In fulfilling its mission, NCF has two programs that work to develop the next generation of conservation leaders: NCF-Envirothon and Next Generation Leadership Institute (NGLI). NCF-Envirothon is a high school environmental and natural resources program and competition. Winners from local Envirothon programs feed into this international competition. The top placing team from the SC Envirothon Competition represents South Carolina at this international environmental competition. NGLI is a program that cultivates the next generation of locally led conservation leaders. Commissioners are encouraged to apply to participate in this meaningful leadership program. NCF is the sister organization to the [National Association of Conservation Districts](#).



Education and Outreach

Education and outreach are vital functions of locally led conservation. Soil and Water Conservation District (district) commissioners and employees are charged with being the prime advocates of conservation initiatives and practices within their community. This can include education of youth and adults in the form of distribution of education materials, hands-on workshops, getting into the classrooms, or through online platforms. Education and outreach can also be accomplished through partnerships with other agencies and nonprofit organizations.

Outreach Events Provide opportunities to connect with all ages	
Program Name	Description
Seed Library	Offers community access to free seasonal seeds, promotes healthy lifestyles, educates on agriculture and connects people to the land. Districts may contribute monetarily, partner with local library system, and/or fully organize the program.
Arbor Day	<p>State and nationally recognized celebration of the importance of trees. Districts can host a tree giveaway event or coordinate a tree planting at a local school or community park to promote planting and care of trees and the importance of forestry.</p> <p>Arbor Day is celebrated in South Carolina on first Friday of December and nationally on last Friday of April.</p>
Ag+Art Tour	<p>A free, self-guided tour of farms and markets that feature local artisans at every stop. Districts can participate by tabling at a tour site or being a part of the planning committee.</p> <p>Participating counties select a weekend in May or June to host the tour.</p>
Banquet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award banquets are a formal celebration to recognize outstanding members and contest winners. • Award picnics are casual celebrations to recognize contest winners. • Affiliate banquets are an opportunity to thank the affiliate members for their contribution to the district and highlight how funds were used.

Citizen science opportunities	Offer community members the tools and resources to participate in state and nationwide programs, such as: Adopt-A-Stream (SC Adopt-a-Stream South Carolina Department of Environmental Services) and Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network (CoCoRHAs) (South Carolina State Climatology Office (sc.gov))
Litter pickup	Organize litter pickup events, annually or monthly, for affiliate members and volunteers to participate. Offers an opportunity to connect with affiliate members and work together to beautify the county.
Tabling events	Local cities, counties, and private organizations host festivals or farmer’s markets where districts can apply to be a vendor. An opportunity to hand out flyers, offer promotional items, and gain newsletter signups.
Earth Day	Celebrated April 22 of each year, this global environmental observation provides an opportunity to spread conservation message. Tasks could be as simple as photographing the event for a news release and the annual report to completely organizing the event, manning an exhibit, or giving a presentation to a group.
Conservation Districts Day at the Statehouse	<p>An advocacy day for commissioners, district employees and partners to connect with their legislators when the general assembly is in session during the spring. Districts are encouraged to discuss current legislation and share the impact districts make on South Carolina’s agriculture and natural resources.</p> <p>Prior to visiting the Statehouse, SCACD provides legislative training with talking points. While at the Statehouse, districts are recognized in both the House and Senate and commissioner and employees are encouraged to connect with their legislators.</p>

Publications – *outreach tools used to stay connected with your community, affiliate members, volunteers, and new audiences.*

Newsletters/eNewsletters: Monthly newsletters are a great way to recap the previous month’s accomplishments and promote upcoming events or opportunities

- NACD eResources – sign up to receive their free publications at <https://www.nacdnet.org/news-and-events/publications/> to learn what other districts are doing throughout the nation. Be sure to submit your projects and accomplishments to be featured by emailing the [NACD Communications Team](#).

Annual Report: Districts can create an annual report or use the one-page report provided from the South Carolina Conservation Districts Annual Report.

Social media: There are many social media platforms available: Facebook, Instagram, X (formally Twitter). It’s recommended to have a consistent presence on social media whether that’s posting original content or sharing content from reputable partners, such as NACD, SCDNR, USDA-NRCS, etc.

Newspaper/magazine articles: Sharing content with local newspapers and magazines can help promote events, advertise rental equipment and highlight the district efforts to new audiences.

- Grown in SC Magazine - <https://agriculture.sc.gov/magazine/>
- Market Bulletin - <https://agriculture.sc.gov/category/market-bulletin/>
- South Carolina Wildlife Magazine - <https://southc.dspace7.dspace-express.com/handle/10827/39394>

Educational Programs Programs geared towards youth education, formal or informal settings	
Program Name	Description
SC Envirothon	Annual hands-on environmental problem-solving competition for high school students. Learn more below.
South Carolina Green Step Schools	Hosted through Environmental Education Association of South Carolina (EEASC), the program is designed to help South Carolina schools earn awards for establishing sustainability projects where students learn, do, and teach others. Many districts participate by being mentors for schools in their county. If you are interested in learning more about the program: visit: https://eeasc.org/Green-Step-Schools/ or watch the training video found in supplemental resources of this module.
NACD Stewardship Week	NACD hosts a Stewardship Week between the last Sunday in April and the first Sunday in May to celebrate different aspects of locally led conservation. The theme for the week, along with education resources, are released around August. Districts are encouraged to use this theme to guide their education programming for the year along with their contest topics. Learn more below.
Conservation camps	Typically weeklong day camps focused on educating youth about conservation practices through hands-on educational activities. Topics can include recycling, farming, wildlife, and forestry. Great opportunity to partner with other conservation and youth education organizations in the community.

Youth/Junior Boards	Offers middle and/or high school students the opportunity to be involved in district activities, learn more about conservation issues and practices within their county. These boards are often structured like the district board to allow students experience in event and program planning. Some districts will provide the youth/junior board with seed money to kickstart activities.
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SC Envirothon

Envirothon is the largest international environmental competition for high school students. The program spans across the United States, Canada, Singapore, and China with local programs that feed into the NCF-Envirothon. NCF-Envirothon is managed by the National Conservation Foundation in partnership with local programs and NACD. The first Envirothon Competition was held in Pennsylvania in 1988 by the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts. Envirothon provides high school students hands-on environmental and natural resource management education and motivates students to pursue careers in environmental studies, environmental law, natural sciences, and natural resource management. In addition, the competition offers students the experience of working together as a team with their fellow students.

In 1997, the South Carolina Conservation Partnership came together to form SC Envirothon. The program teaches students about the management and importance of natural resource conservation with topics of aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and current environmental issues. Students are tested with hands-on exams and an oral presentation where they solve a conflict scenario dealing with the current issue that changes each year. SCDNR-Conservation Districts coordinates SC Envirothon in partnership with Harry Hampton Memorial Wildlife Fund, SCACD, S.C. Conservation Districts Foundation (Foundation), local districts, Clemson Extension, S.C. Forestry Commission, USDA-NRCS, Francis Marion University, Central Carolina Technical College, S.C. Forestry Foundation, along with other grant programs and individual supporters. Grant funds and donations are vital to the SC Envirothon program budget.

SC Envirothon Events: coaches training, state competition, and international competition.

Coaches Training is a free, one day training held on a Saturday each February for individuals interested in learning more about the program. District employees and commissioners are welcome to attend to learn more about the program to be able to better promote it to local high schoolers.

Other training resources for teams to prepare:

- Training videos and documents
- Coaches manual
- Access to topic professionals
- SC Envirothon Training Trunks
 - Includes: Munsell Soil Color books, field guides, aquatic sampling equipment, DBH tapes, clinometers, etc.

- Districts can request a training trunk to lend to local coaches with a committed team. To properly manage the trunk districts are asked to track trunk use, inventory items when checking in and out to teams, and report lost or broken items to SC Envirothon.

SC Envirothon Competition is a one-day, hands on outdoor competition held on a Friday each spring - rain or shine. Teams are comprised of five high school students and an optional alternate student. There is a registration fee to participate that is often sponsored by the local district. The top three overall teams win scholarships, and the first-place team wins a fully sponsored trip to the international NCF-Envirothon Competition to represent South Carolina. SC Envirothon relies on volunteers, such as district employees and commissioners, to assist with preparation and day of responsibilities.

International NCF-Envirothon Competition is an international competition where Envirothon programs from the United States, Canada, Singapore, and China come together to compete in a weeklong outdoor competition. This competition is held at the end of July each year and rotates around to various host locations, typically a college campus where students stay in dorms. Students have an opportunity to network with other like-minded students from around the world in an extremely competitive, fast paced environment.

NACD Stewardship Week

To celebrate districts long history of locally led conservation, NACD hosts a Stewardship Week between the last Sunday in April and the first Sunday in May to focus on various aspects of agriculture and natural resources. The theme for the next year is released around July/August, along with education materials and contest details for districts to use. Districts are encouraged to incorporate the theme and resources into their education programming for the year. Education materials can be found at [NACD Marketplace - NACD \(nacdn.org\)](https://nacdn.org/marketplace) and contest details can be found at [Stewardship Week - NACD \(nacdn.org\)](https://nacdn.org/stewardship-week).

SCDNR- Conservation Districts offers a guide to celebrate SC Stewardship Week which is in line with the national celebration. The guide includes activities and challenges for districts. SCDNR-Conservation Districts obtains a Governor's proclamation for the week and presents it to the Outstanding District of the Year – districts are challenged to get local city and county proclamations. In-classroom activities and social media content provide districts an opportunity to educate community members about the theme of the week. In partnership with districts and other conservation organizations, SCDNR-Conservation Districts hosts a statewide field day which is open to everyone.

Resources from Partners

Training Opportunities

- Project WET – offered by <https://scprojectwet.org/>
- Project WILD – offered by SCDNR

- Project Learning Tree – offered by South Carolina Forestry Commission, <https://www.scfc.gov/education/project-learning-tree/>

Programs and Materials

- NACD Education Hub - <https://www.nacdnet.org/conservation-education-hub/>
 - Stewardship Week materials, curriculum, conservation career workshops, and pollinator guide
- SCDNR - <https://www.dnr.sc.gov/education.html>
 - SC Envirothon, aquatic education, Camp Wildwood, Carolina Coastal Discovery Marine Education, archaeology, Archery in the School, Boater and Hunter Safety, and Scholastic Clay Target Sports
- South Carolina Farm to School - <https://scfarmtoschool.com/about/>
 - Curriculum, Lending Library, and Garden Toolkit
- Clemson Extension/4H - <https://www.clemson.edu/extension/4h/index.html>
 - Livestock shows, leadership programs, and agriculture and natural resource projects
- Future Farmers of America (FFA) – Find a chapter and support their projects and programs: <https://www.clemson.edu/extension/scaged/for-educators/teacher-directory.html>
- South Carolina Forestry Commission - <https://www.scfc.gov/education/>
 - Wood Magic Forest Fair, Project Learning Tree, school programs, and teacher tours
- Farm Bureau – <https://www.scfb.org/ag-education>
 - Ag in the Classroom, Sprouts’ Monthly Book, Ag Learning Lab, Ag Combine Simulator

Contests	
Fun and engaging ways to promote conservation	
Program Name	Description
Photo	Encourages participants to get outdoors and observe natural resources The format for this contest varies. Typically, participants are grouped into age categories (High School, Middle School, Youth vs Adult, etc.). Some districts use the winning photos to create a calendar for affiliate members.
Poster	Follows NACD Stewardship Week theme to encourage youth participation. This contest is geared towards K-12 and celebrates natural resources through art. Many districts share the contest guidelines with local public and private schools. Districts can couple this contest with in-school programming.

(Poster cont.)	<p>State-level submissions are due to SCACD in November. The winners of the state-level are submitted to NACD in December and national winners are announced at the NACD Annual Conference in February.</p> <p>For more information: visit, https://www.nacdnet.org/contests/</p>
Essay	Encourages participants to get outdoors and observe natural resources.

Workshops Educational programs geared towards adults	
Program Name	Description
Rain barrel workshop	Promotes the wise use of stormwater by showing participants how to install rain barrel adaptors to 50-gallon food grade drums. Some offer paint-your-own barrel components!
Rainfall simulator	Demonstrates how rainfall moves across various surfaces and encourages ground cover practices. Many districts have the tabletop version, a large-scale version is also available through the S.C. Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition.
Prescribed fire	<p>Demonstrates how prescribed fire is used to manage forests with various benefits such as understory management and wildlife hazard reduction.</p> <p>Some districts offer a prescribed burn trailer for rent equipped with essential tools to conduct a proper prescribed fire.</p>
Invasive/nuisance species	Educates community members of the impact, identification, removal, and prevention of invasive/nuisance wildlife and plant species.
Rental equipment demonstrations	<p>Offers community members the opportunity to practice conservation at a low cost. Demonstration events teach potential users the benefits of equipment and proper operation.</p> <p>Common equipment offered: no-till drill, prescribed burn trailer, erosion control filter fabric, hog trap, cover crop crimper, etc. When considering new rental opportunities, ensure it will meet a resource need and assess the liability and cost prior to purchase.</p>

Local Work Group	<p>Annual meeting for local producers, landowners, professionals, and conservation minded individuals to voice their natural resource concerns to the district.</p> <p>These resource concerns are used to prioritize cost share dollars and establish new district initiatives.</p> <p><i>See the Local Work Group module for more information.</i></p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">Ways to Support Financially Opportunity to support local conservation organizations and initiatives</p>	
Program Name	Description
Mini grants	Supports conservation projects at local schools. Many districts request teachers to submit applications describing the planned project. Project can include establishment of a school garden, installation of a rain barrel, research project, etc.
Scholarships	<p>Supports an individual to attend programs such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College • Camp Wildwood • S.C. Governor’s School for Agriculture at John de la Howe • S.C. Commissioner School for Agriculture
Sponsorships	<p>Supports a program or organization to participate in activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC Envirothon • FFA Competitions • 4H Competitions • Local livestock shows

Conservation District Growth

It is important for Soil and Water Conservation Districts (districts) to plan for the future success of the district whether that's professional or financial growth. To achieve growth within the district, commissioners and employees should seek professional development opportunities, unique funding sources and foster partnerships.

Professional Development Opportunities

Provides technical and professional growth for commissioners and employees to increase capacity to better support to goals of the district

- Volunteer for leadership roles within S.C. Association of Conservation Districts (SCACD), S.C. Conservation Districts Employees Association (SCCDEA), and National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)
- Participate in webinars offered by partners such as NACD, Clemson Extension, etc.
- Enroll in leadership programs such as Next Generation Leadership Institute (NGLI) through National Conservation Foundation (NCF), Palmetto Leadership Program for the Environment, Agriculture and Forestry (PLEAF) through Clemson University, etc.
- Attend training to increase the district education programs, technical assistance, and administrative capacity

Commissioner and Employee Recruitment

Associate Commissioners participate in board meetings as non-voting members and volunteer to support district events. When a commissioner or employee position becomes vacant, associate commissioners often apply because they have an understanding on the responsibilities.

Youth/Junior Boards offer middle and/or high school students the opportunity to be involved in district activities and learn more about conservation issues and practices within their county. These students could be future commissioners or employees! – *See Education and Outreach module for more information.*

Commissioner Emeritus are retired commissioners who participate in board meetings as non-voting members. Their experience and expertise provide valuable knowledge to help decision making. – *See Commissioner module for more information.*

Volunteers are critical to successfully hosting events and programs as well as can help promote the district to new audiences.

Public Outreach

As the lead voice for conservation, districts are responsible for educating on and advocating for locally led conservation within the community. *See the Education and Outreach module for more information*

Funding Opportunities

Though districts receive state and county funding, it is important to look for additional funding sources, such as affiliate members, grants and agreements to support the growth of district programs.

Affiliate Membership: Districts have various affiliate member drive structures. Membership drives range from sending a letter to individuals and businesses requesting their monetary support of district programs to including a call for affiliate member in a monthly newsletter to posting on social media about affiliate memberships opportunities. To show appreciation, districts often host affiliate member events or send gifts to acknowledge support.

Example of Affiliate Member Request Letter:

Dear Friends of the District,

The _____ Soil and Water Conservation District is requesting donations to support our ongoing and future projects. Currently, the district is active in the schools offering free, hands-on conservation education. This year, we hope to host all 4th graders in our county at a one-day field trip to the Conservation Learning Center. Students will learn how healthy soil and water are the key to a healthy ecosystem.

All donations to the district are considered tax deductible charitable donations.

Thank you for your consideration,
Hand signed by commissioners and staff

Example of Affiliate Member Donation Levels:

- *Gold Member* (\$\$\$) – Receives 4 Tickets to the annual banquet and a photo contest calendar
- *Silver Member* (\$\$) – Receives 2 Tickets to the annual banquet and a photo contest calendar
- *Bronze Member* (\$) – Receives 1 Tickets to the annual banquet and a photo contest calendar
- Donations under \$ – Receive a photo contest calendar

*All members receive a 10% discount of rental equipment use

Examples of Affiliate Member Recognition:

- Banquets are an opportunity to thank affiliate members for their contribution and highlight how funds were used. Typically, an evening event with a catered meal, door prizes and awards presentation.
- Tours are a great alternative to banquets and offer affiliate members an opportunity to learn while being recognized for supporting the district.
- Gifts can range from calendars featuring winning photos from district photo contest to tumblers or hats with the district logo. These can be sent any time of year but it's popular to send them during the holidays.

Contribution Agreements: A collaborative working agreement where each participant contributes funds, assets, time, or services to achieve a mutual goal.

SCACD Contribution Agreements - reimburses districts working on Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) programs that exceeds to required 10% in the MOA.

USDA-NRCS Contribution/Cooperative Agreements - reflects the relationship between USDA-NRCS and another entity that serves a mutual interest and each entity contributes equal resources in carrying out the programs administered by USDA-NRCS.

Grants: Funds received from organizations to support education or technical assistance programs.

Tips on How to Apply:

- Decide what project(s) the grant funds will be used for
- Follow the instructions and application guidance carefully
- For questions regarding the application, reach out to the funder for clarity
- Create an itemized budget that is easy to understand and detailed
 - 'Materials' is a generic term. Consider listing out the exact material needed for the project(s)
 - 'Miscellaneous' or 'other' category may be red flags to reviewers. If it must be used, be sure it is only for a very minimal amount.
 - Match funds refer to a monetary match while in-kind refers to using the value of personnel, goods or services as match.

Opportunities to Consider:

National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)

Friends of NACD

Urban Agriculture Conservation Grant

Technical Assistance

USDA-NRCS

Federal Conservation Innovation Grants

State Conservation Innovation Grants

United States Department of Agriculture - Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA-AMS)

Farmers Market Promotion Program Grants

Local Foods Promotion Program Grants

S.C. Department of Environmental Services (formally SCDHEC)

319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Grants
S.C. Department of Agriculture
Specialty Crop Block Grants
Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Grants
Environmental Education Association of South Carolina (EEASC)
Palmetto Pride
Energy Companies
 Dominion Energy
 Duke Energy
 Santee Cooper Electric Co-op
Local Public Works/Utilities

Watershed Districts 101

There are 33 Watershed Districts (WSD) in South Carolina that oversee and manage 105 flood control structures and several miles of canals. Formally known as Watershed Conservation Districts (WSCD) but often simplified to Watershed Districts (WSD), Watershed Districts are not bound by county lines but defined by watershed areas meaning WSD's can span across multiple counties. Watershed Districts operate under the general supervision of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and are governed by a board of five volunteer nonpartisan directors pursuant to SC Code of Law Section 48-11. All five directors are elected during the general election and serve four-year terms.

Watershed District Purpose

Watershed Districts in South Carolina serve a vital role in protecting and managing the state's natural resources, particularly its soil and water. Watershed Districts are special purpose districts and public bodies, granted significant authority to address challenges such as soil erosion, flooding, and stormwater management. Their primary purpose is to develop and execute plans that conserve, protect, improve, and utilize the region's soil and water resources. This includes mitigating the impacts of heavy rainfall, controlling sedimentation, and ensuring the sustainable use of water for agriculture, recreation, and other community needs.

Watershed District Authority

Pursuant to South Carolina Code of Law Section 48-11-10, Watershed Districts, under the guidance of the Board of Commissioners of the Soil and Water Conservation District, are empowered to acquire land, easements, and rights-of-way to carry out their conservation goals. This can be done through purchase, lease, or even condemnation, although condemnation of land for public use is only permitted when essential and does not impair existing uses. WSDs are also responsible for constructing, maintaining, and improving infrastructure such as dams, channels, and other flood control works necessary for soil and water conservation. To fund these activities, Watershed Districts have the authority to borrow money, issue bonds, and levy annual taxes on real property within the district. They can also receive financial assistance and services from federal, state, and local governments, as well as private entities. Additionally, Watershed Districts may hire consultants, advisors, and employees to help carry out their plans effectively. Ultimately, South Carolina Watershed Districts work to ensure the sustainability of water and soil resources, reducing the risks of flooding and soil erosion, while promoting responsible land and water use across South Carolina.

South Carolina Watershed District History

The history of South Carolina Watershed Districts is closely tied to national efforts to address environmental challenges such as soil erosion, water resource management, and flood control in the mid-20th century. Watershed Districts were established in response to growing concerns

about the degradation of soil and water resources, which was especially critical for the agricultural economy of the state. The creation of Watershed Districts in South Carolina was part of a larger movement in the United States to conserve natural resources and manage water more effectively, particularly after the Dust Bowl and other environmental crises highlighted the need for more structured resource management.

A vital piece of federal legislation influencing the formation of Watershed Districts was Public Law 84-566, also known as the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, enacted by Congress in 1954. This law provided federal assistance for the planning and construction of small watershed projects to address flooding, erosion, and water quality issues. It allowed local entities to partner with federal agencies such as the Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA-NRCS) to plan, design, and implement Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention projects.

PL-566 legislation enabled local Soil and Water Conservation Districts to apply for federal funding for infrastructure projects like dams, levees, and drainage systems, aimed at controlling flooding, conserving soil, and improving water management. This legislation was crucial in developing small watershed projects across South Carolina, many of which were implemented during the 1950s and 1960s, transforming the state's landscape and improving its agricultural productivity. In 1954, one of the first pilot projects in upstate South Carolina was launched on the upper portion of the Twelve Mile Creek Watershed in Pickens County. As one of 60 initial pilot projects under PL-566, it had an estimated cost of \$1,659,039 and involved planned measures for land treatment and flood prevention throughout the watershed. This legislation provided federal, state, and local cost sharing for watershed development. This allowed for state and local governments or private interests the ability to provide additional water storage for municipal, wildlife, industrial, recreational, agricultural uses.

In 1967 Gov. Robert McNair enacted State Law Section 48-11 establishing Watershed Conservation Districts in South Carolina (WSD). Watershed Districts became essential partners in these federal initiatives. The Watershed Districts law gave Watershed Districts the authority to implement local soil and water conservation plans, often in collaboration with state and federal agencies such as SCDNR, USDA-NRCS, and S.C. Department of Environmental Services (SCDES). By doing so, WSDs played a key role in controlling flood damage, reducing soil erosion, and managing water resources in a sustainable way, which benefited not only agricultural lands but also residential and commercial areas.

Federal, State, and Local Partnerships

USDA-NRCS working with the Watershed Districts has been a crucial element in the success of the state's soil and water conservation efforts. USDA-NRCS offers expertise in planning, engineering, and implementing conservation projects, while the Watershed Districts manage the operation and ongoing maintenance of these efforts. Together, they have constructed essential infrastructure like dams, levees, and flood control systems, helping to prevent erosion, reduce flood risks, and manage water resources effectively. Additionally, this collaboration supports initiatives such as stormwater management, irrigation development, and habitat conservation.

The joint efforts of USDA-NRCS and the Watershed Districts continue to play a key role in safeguarding the state's natural resources and supporting the agricultural and rural communities that rely on them.

SCDNR – Conservation Districts and the Watershed Districts are collectively vital for the effective management and conservation of South Carolina's water and soil resources. SCDNR – Conservation Districts has statutory oversight of Watershed Districts in their organization and function solely per South Carolina Code of Laws Section 48-11-15. Working closely together, SCDNR - Conservation Districts provides essential guidance to help Watershed Districts carry out their conservation missions. This collaboration allows Watershed Districts to develop and implement plans for flood control, stormwater management, and soil erosion prevention, ensuring projects are aligned with state conservation priorities. SCDNR – Conservation Districts supports Watershed Districts by providing data, resources, and monitoring to ensure the health and sustainability of watersheds. Additionally, SCDNR – Conservation Districts assists in securing funding and coordinating efforts with other state and federal agencies to maintain and enhance water quality, wildlife habitats, and natural ecosystems. This partnership is instrumental in balancing the conservation of natural resources with the needs of South Carolina's communities, agriculture, and industry.

South Carolina Soil and Water Conservation Districts have significant authority and form critical partnerships with the state's Watershed Districts to protect natural resources. Under South Carolina law Section 48-11-10, Watershed Districts operate under the general supervision of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, which provide oversight to ensure that conservation efforts align with broader state goals. The Soil and Water Conservation Districts offer assistance with strategic planning and support to help Watershed Districts carry out their projects. These partnerships are essential for coordinating activities at local, state, and federal levels. Additionally, Soil and Water Conservation Districts often help Watershed Districts secure funding through budget reviews and navigate regulatory requirements, ensuring that the Watershed Districts have the resources and authority needed to implement effective conservation programs that benefit both the environment and local communities.

Local government agencies play a vital role in partnering with Watershed Districts to manage and protect water resources. These partnerships allow local governments to collaborate on essential projects like stormwater management and infrastructure development. County and city governments often work with Watershed Districts to assist and advise on implementing tax millage's, align local land-use planning, zoning regulations, and developing guidelines for watershed conservation efforts. This ensures that urban growth and agricultural practices do not negatively impact water quality or increase the risk of flooding. Additionally, local governments can provide financial support and technical assistance. This helps Watershed Districts implement projects more effectively. These partnerships ensure that both rural and urban areas benefit from conservation efforts, promoting sustainable development while protecting natural resources.

SCDES works closely with the Watershed Districts to protect water quality, pollution control, environmental safety, stormwater management, erosion control, flood prevention initiatives, and to ensure that conservation projects comply with state regulations related to water resources.

SCDES helps Watershed Districts implement best practices to reduce pollution runoff, protect drinking water sources, and improve the overall health of local ecosystems. This partnership also involves joint efforts enforcing environmental standards and conducting public education campaigns to promote responsible land and water use. SCDES provides regulatory oversight over the health and maintenance of watershed structure. Inspections are also completed by SCDES for compliance. Through this collaboration, SCDES and the Watershed Districts play a critical role in safeguarding both natural resources and the well-being of South Carolina's communities.

National Watershed Coalition (NWC) formed in 1989 as a nonprofit organization made up of national, regional, state, and local organizations, associations, and individuals who advocate using watershed as the planning and implementation unit when dealing with natural resource problems. It is governed by a board of directors of conservation and related organizations. The NWC uses total resource management principles in planning, offers assistance on watershed planning, helps provide testimony before Congress on watershed policies and programs, and represents the concerns and needs of watershed project sponsors at a national level. The National Watershed Coalition has assisted with multiple watershed rehabilitation projects across the country and are always looking for more ways to help Watershed Conservation Districts.

General Operations of Watershed Districts

General operations of Watershed Districts are similar to Soil and Water Conservation Districts. These operations include but are not limited to:

- Planning
 - Short-range (annual) planning
 - Long-range planning
- Funding
 - Budget
 - Tax millage
- Quarterly board meetings
- Statement of economic interests (SEI)
- Statement of candidacy
- Public relations and events

Planning – see *Fundamentals of a District: General Operations Module for more information.*

Funding - see *Fundamentals of a District: General Operations Module for more information.* Watershed Districts are required to create an annual budget that must be submitted and approved by the Soil and Water Conservation District. Watershed Districts are Special Purpose Districts that can levy a tax millage for maintenance of structures on all real property within the boundaries of the Watershed District.

Quarterly Board Meetings – See *Board Meeting Module for more information.* Watershed Districts should hold a board meeting at least four times a year (once per quarter) to conduct business and ensure the goals of the Watershed District are being met. There must be a quorum

of three or more directors present to be able to take action. Detailed meeting minutes are also needed as an accurate record of what was discussed and decided. Soil and Water Conservation District employees can provide assistance for meeting logistics, FOIA, and meeting minutes.

Statement of Economic Interests (SEI) - *See Commissioner module for more information.*

Since Watershed District Directors are elected officials, all are required to submit an SEI form online by noon on March 30th each year. SEI's should be filled out by directors ONLY. District Employee(s) should not file SEI on a director's behalf.

Statement of Candidacy – *See Reference Resources for PDF Document.* To run for election as a Watershed District director, the potential candidate must be a current resident within the Watershed District Boundary and must fill out a statement of candidacy form at their local elections office. Directors do not need to get signatures on a petition. Once the statement of candidacy form has been filled out and the candidate is approved as a qualified individual to run for the position, their name will be put on the ballot for the general election. To find more information regarding filing for a watershed director position visit:

<https://scvotes.gov/candidates/> and look for “Filing for Municipal & Other Nonpartisan Offices” for requirements for the Statement of Intention of Candidacy – Nonpartisan Form.

Public Relations and Events – *see Fundamentals of a District: General Operations Module for more information.* One example of Watershed District events includes Discover Your Watershed in Spartanburg County. Sponsored by Spartanburg Soil and Water Conservation District, Discover Your Watershed is a great way to engage with the community and explain how local conservation efforts are helping keep our waterways clean. Another example of an event would be Lake Robinson Day hosted by Greer Commission of Public Works (CPW). This event is held at the Lake Robinson dam that is an original PL-566 structure that is now owned, maintained, and operated by Greer CPW. This is another great event for Watershed Districts and Soil and Water Conservation Districts to engage with the local community about local conservation efforts.

Watershed District Responsibilities

Watershed Districts have multiple responsibilities to help protect and maintain the structures within their district. Some key items that must be taken care of on an annual basis include:

- Dam inspections
- Bids for maintenance of Watershed structures
- Emergency Action Plans
- Operating Budget
- Tax millage

Dam Inspections of all watershed dams regardless of hazard classifications should be performed by at least one board member, SCDNR-Conservation Districts, and/or USDA-NRCS annually. For dams with significant hazard classifications SCDES will conduct inspections every three years. Dams that have a high hazard classification will be inspected by SCDES every two years.

The best time of year to complete dam inspections is late fall or early winter when the dams are mowed and easily accessible.

Bids for maintaining watershed structures of the dams should be posted for the public every time any maintenance work needs to be performed on the structure. Per State Law Section 48-11-110(2) the Watershed Conservation Districts are allowed to “Construct, reconstruct, repair, enlarge, and improve the works of improvement as necessary or convenient for the performance of the operations authorized by this chapter and shall provide operation and maintenance for works of improvement.” Bids should be posted at least one month before the desired time for the work to be completed. This is to allow plenty of time for local contractors to conduct site visits and get bids back to the Watershed Districts.

Examples of maintenance include:

- Mowing
- Spraying
- Debris Clearing

Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) are an important piece of documentation. They outline the plan in place in the event of an impending or imminent dam failure. EAPs also have a list of contact information for all downstream property owners that could be affected by a dam failure. EAPs should be reviewed and updated as necessary at least once a year by the board. This is to stay up to date in the event of an emergency to make sure all downstream property owners can be alerted. Watershed Districts are encouraged to work with local emergency management departments, SCDES Dam Safety Program, and SCNDR-Conservation Districts when updating or developing EAPs.

Operating Budget: According to state law Section 48-11-130(B), the board of directors of each Watershed District is responsible for creating an itemized budget at least once per year. The budget should include an itemized list of funds needed during that fiscal year, including, when necessary, the decision on whether the Watershed District will levy a tax millage or not. This budget must be approved by the board of commissioners of the Soil and Water Conservation District.

Tax Millage: Watershed Districts are classified as special purpose districts giving them the right to implement a tax millage through State Law Sections 48-11-140. Section 48-11-140 explains the process of computing the tax due from each landowner with property within the Watershed District boundaries. When the board of directors of the Watershed District decide to levy a tax millage, the county auditors will levy a tax on all real property in the Watershed District at a millage rate that will meet a portion if not all of the total budget amount. It is also the responsibility of the board to provide the boundaries of the Watershed District to the county auditor.

Soil and Water Conservation District Board Responsibilities to WSDs

Soil and Water Conservation Districts have general supervision over Watershed Districts. Soil and Water Conservation Districts, pursuant to state law Section 48-11, are responsible for approving the Watershed Districts annual budget, approving appointments of vacant Watershed District directors, and when necessary, assisting in the process for establishing and discontinuance of Watershed Districts that have met the criteria deserving of discontinuance. Soil and Water Conservation District employees assist Watershed Districts with:

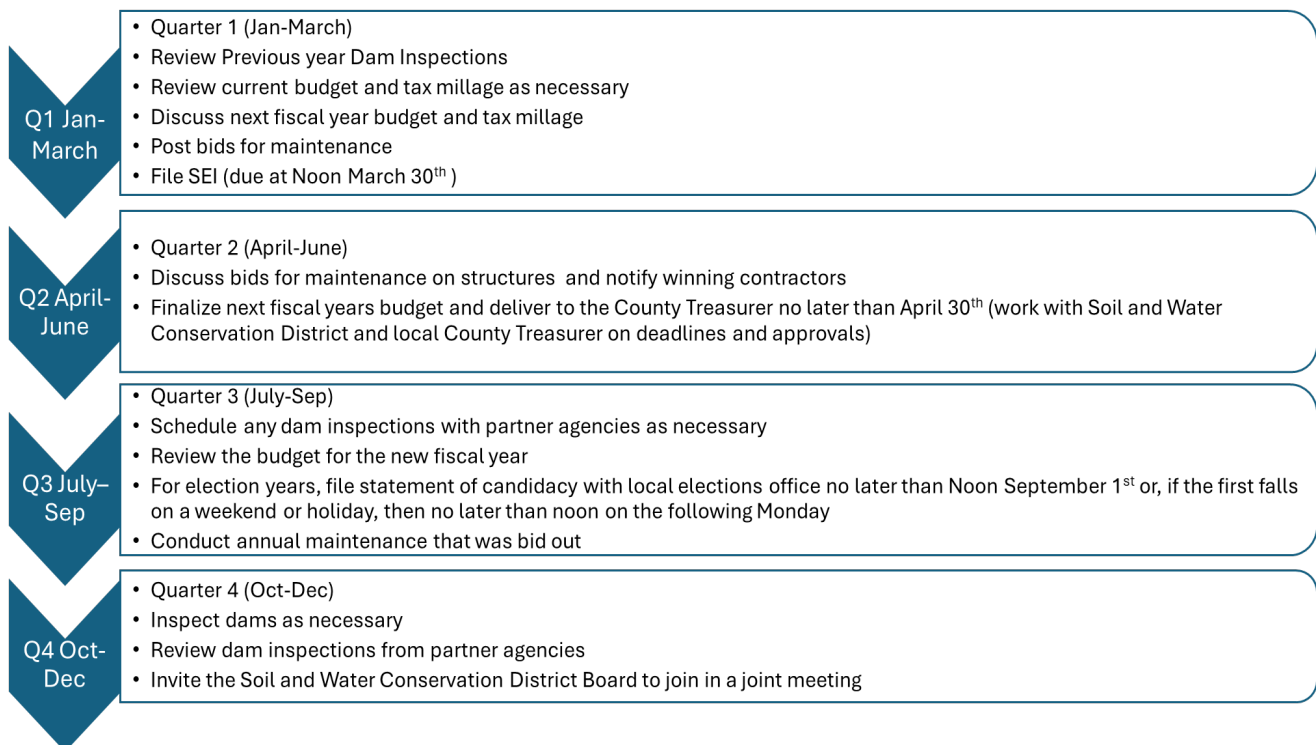
- Meeting logistics/support
- Administrative duties
- Financial duties
- Education and public awareness opportunities
- Technical responsibilities

For more details on these responsibilities refer to Fundamentals of a District- Employee Module.

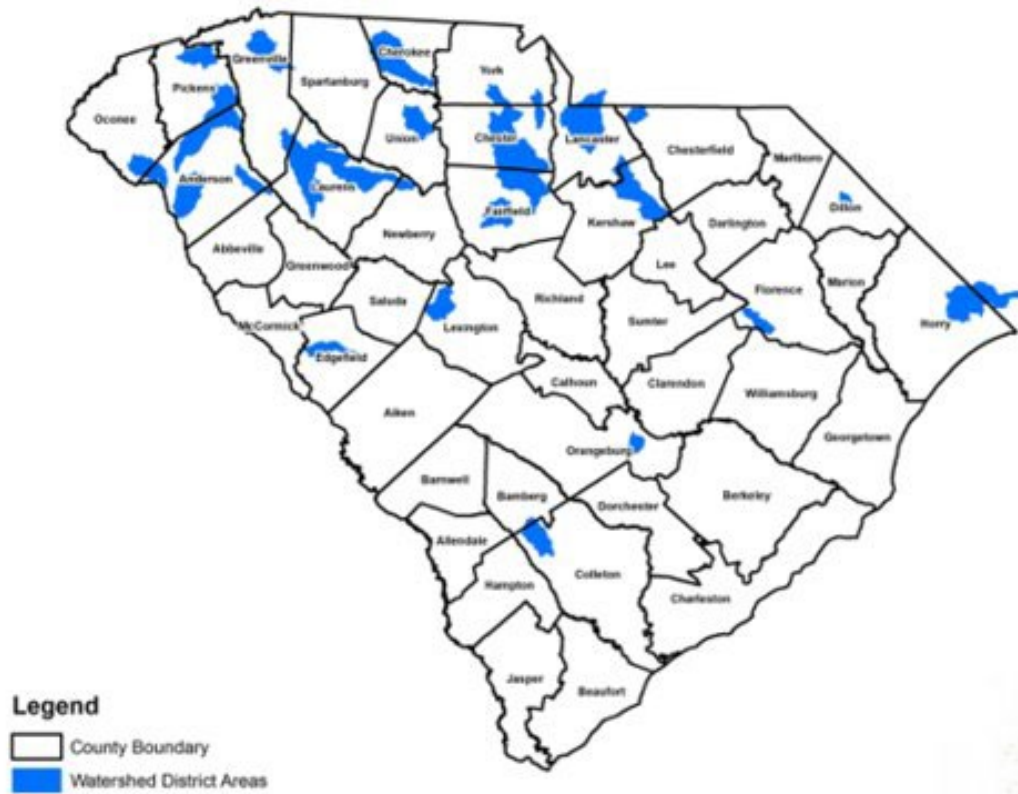
Watershed Districts Annual Timeline

Below is an example annual timeline for the Watershed District meeting process. It is imperative that this timeline is closely followed to ensure WSDs are meeting important deadlines. This timeline also ensures WSD success through making sure WSD operations are taken care of.

This timeline is broken up into quarters of the year. Q1 is Quarter 1 (Months January-March), Q2 is Quarter 2 (Months April-June), Q3 is Quarter 3 (Months July-September), and Q4 is Quarter 4 (Months October-December).



South Carolina Watershed Districts



- Beaverdam Creek, Edgefield County
- Beaverdam Creek, Oconee County
- Beaverdam-Warriors Creek, Laurens County
- Big Creek, Anderson County
- Broadmouth Creek, Anderson County
- Brown's Creek, Union County
- Brushy Creek, Anderson and Pickens counties
- Buck Creek, Horry County
- Carters Branch-Muddy Creek, Marlboro County
- Crabtree Swamp, Horry County
- Duncan Creek, Laurens County
- Fishing Creek, York County
- Gapway Swamp, Horry County
- George's Creek, Pickens County
- Hill's Creek, Chesterfield County
- Hollow Creek, Lexington and Saluda counties
- Little Lynches Creek, Kershaw and Lancaster counties
- Little Walnut-Tom and Kate, Dorchester County
- Lynches Lake-Camp Branch, Florence County
- Maple Swamp, Dillon County
- Oolenoy River, Pickens County
- Rabon Creek, Laurens and Greenville counties
- St. George-Gum Branch, Dorchester County
- Salem Community, Florence County
- Simpson Creek, Horry County
- Rocky Creek, Chester and Fairfield counties
- South Tyger River, Greenville County
- Thicketty Creek, Cherokee and Spartanburg counties
- Three and Twenty Creek, Anderson and Pickens counties
- Tinkers Creek, Chester and York counties
- Todd Swamp, Horry County
- Wateree Creek, Fairfield County
- Willow Swamp, Colleton and Bamberg counties

USDA-NRCS Overview

The USDA-NRCS works with landowners through conservation planning and assistance to benefit the soil, water, air, plants, and animals for productive lands and healthy ecosystems. Working at the local level, in field offices at USDA service centers throughout South Carolina USDA-NRCS employees should understand local resource concerns and challenges. USDA-NRCS succeeds through partnerships and a cooperative working agreement with districts and SCDNR-Conservation Districts. This partnership works closely with individual farmers, ranchers, landowners, local conservation districts, government agencies, tribes, and many other people to care for our state's natural resources.

Technical Assistance

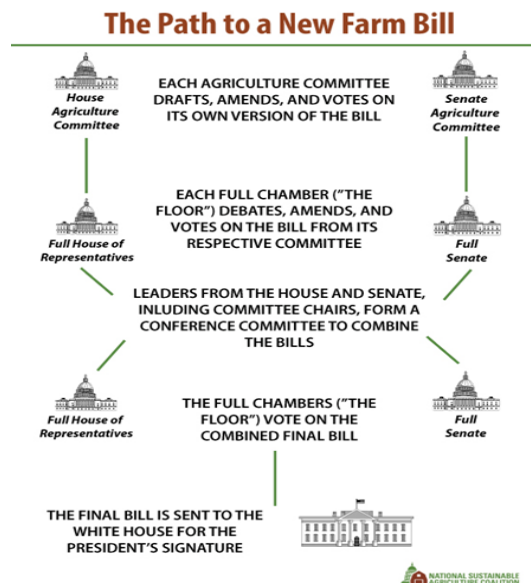
USDA-NRCS, in collaboration with partners, provides conservation technical assistance to land users to address opportunities, concerns, and problems related to the use of natural resources and to help land users make sound natural resource management decisions on private, tribal, and other non-federal lands. This assistance can help land users:

- Maintain and improve private land through management
- Implement better land management technologies
- Protect and improve water quality and quantity
- Maintain and improve wildlife and fish habitat
- Enhance recreational opportunities on their land
- Maintain and improve the aesthetic character of private land
- Explore opportunities to diversify agricultural operations
- Develop and apply sustainable agricultural systems

This assistance may be in the form of resource assessment, practice design, resource monitoring, or follow-up of installed practices.

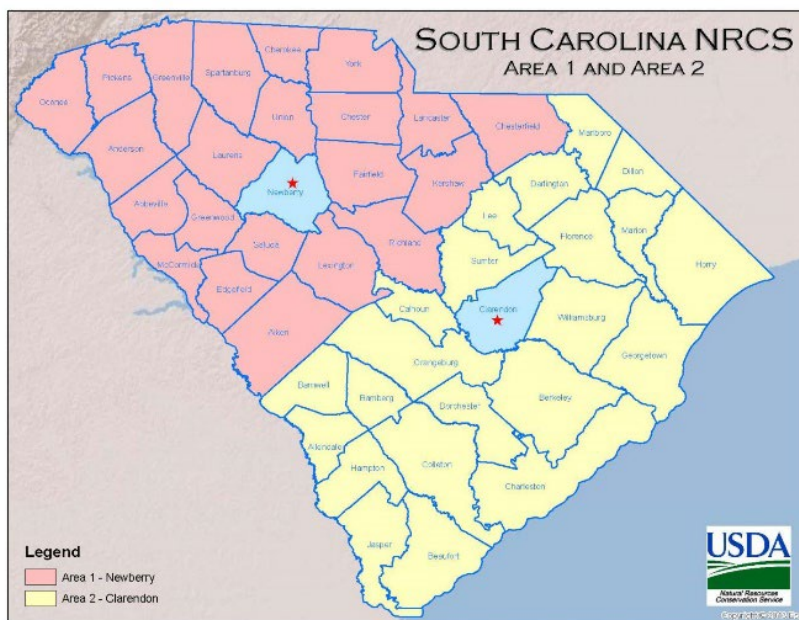
Farm Bill

The Farm Bill financially supports USDA-NRCS conservation programs that support America's farmers, ranchers, and landowners. The Farm Bill is a package of legislation passed roughly once every five years that goes through an extensive process where it is proposed, debated, and considered by Congress for passage and is then signed into law by the President. Encompassed in the Farm Bill are programs ranging from crop insurance for farmers, healthy food access, beginning farmer training, and support for sustainable farming practices; the Farm Bill sets the stage for our food and farm systems. As a leading advocate for local conservation, it is the district's job to make sure that this important bill adequately represents the needs of the local natural resources, consumers, and the natural environment.



South Carolina USDA-NRCS

There are 37 USDA-NRCS field offices in South Carolina. The offices are supported by two area offices and the South Carolina State Office, which is in Columbia.



Field Office Personnel

In addition to providing services to the public, USDA-NRCS personnel are required to attend regularly or special scheduled meetings called by the district board. USDA-NRCS assists the district in the development of annual and long-range plans and coordination of Local Work Group (LWG) meetings to address conservation concerns.

District Conservationists (DC) manage the local USDA-NRCS offices. They offer conservation planning and technical help for landowners to conserve the soil, improve water quality, manage nutrients, restore wetlands, and protect and improve wildlife habitat. District Conservationists provide outreach to clubs and organizations, set local conservation priorities, and help carry them out.

Soil Conservationists (Soil Con) work directly with farmers, ranchers, and foresters. They assist the DC with conservation planning and technical help for landowners. They advise landowners about applying soil and water conservation practices, survey, design conservation practices, oversee their installation, and ensure they meet USDA-NRCS quality standards. Soil Cons work is key to USDA-NRCS success, because their one-on-one time with producers result in on-the-ground practices that directly improve, conserve, or restore our natural resources.

Soil Conservation Technicians (Soil Tech) work directly with farmers, ranchers, and foresters. They advise landowners on the effectiveness of applying soil and water conservation practices, assist in research efforts, survey and design conservation practices by overseeing their installation, and ensure they meet USDA-NRCS quality standards. Their work is key to the success of USDA-NRCS, because most everything they do results in on-the-ground practices that directly improve, conserve, or restore our natural resources.

General Statewide Specialists

Rangeland (Grazing Land) Management Specialists plan grazing systems that improve the quality of forage and other grazing land functions.

Soil Scientists map and classify soils, identify problems such as soil moisture and erosion, and use digital and satellite imagery to map soils and write descriptions.

Engineering Technicians are responsible for the planning, design, and construction of engineering works of improvement for any conservation activities taken on by USDA-NRCS.

Biologists work with private landowners and partners to provide technical support and advice on the development or restoration of fish and wildlife habitat.

State Office Personnel

State Conservationist (State Con) is responsible for the management, leadership, and direction of all administrative and technical functions in the state. They are involved in planning, organizing and implementing comprehensive soil, water, and resource conservation programs for the USDA-NRCS state level operations.

State Resource Conservationist leads the development and implementation of statewide natural resource conservation plans, providing technical guidance and expertise to field staff, landowners, and partners, ensuring adherence to conservation standards and policies across the state, while overseeing the technical aspects of conservation programs and practices to protect soil, water, and wildlife habitats.

State Engineers have specialized skills in erosion control, water management, structural design, construction, hydraulics, soil mechanics, and environmental protection. Their job assignments may include restoring streams, controlling erosion, developing water systems for livestock, improving and conserving irrigation water, or restoring wetlands. They help solve a host of natural resource problems and may also become involved in helping communities recover from natural disasters.

Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations oversee USDA-NRCS areas in South Carolina. They serve on the state leadership team and participate in the formulation of overall operations for the state. They are responsible for managing field operations, associated programs, budget formulation, and execute agency deliverables in an assigned area of the state.

Assistant State Conservationist for Programs manages and implements various conservation programs across a state, providing technical guidance to field staff, ensuring compliance with program policies, and overseeing the delivery of conservation practices to landowners through Farm Bill initiatives, all under the direction of the State Conservationist.

Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships focuses on building and managing relationships with external organizations and stakeholders to promote and implement conservation programs across a state, facilitating collaboration to achieve broader environmental goals by leveraging diverse funding sources and expertise.

Assistant State Conservationist for Management and Strategy is responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of strategic plans, program management, and operational efficiency across the state's conservation programs, ensuring alignment with national NRCS goals and priorities, while coordinating with various stakeholders to achieve effective resource conservation outcomes.

National Leadership

Chief is the highest-ranking position within USDA-NRCS and is responsible for the overall direction and management of the agency, leading the conservation programs, partnerships, and business operations. The Chief is supported by an Associate Chief, Deputy Chiefs, and Regional Conservationists.

Associate Chief reports directly to the Chief and helps execute the agency's overall vision and goals. They are responsible for managing and coordinating multiple critical areas of the agency, including program delivery, science research, resource assessment, and management strategies.

Deputy Chief typically leads a specific area like program delivery, scientific research, technical assistance, or resource management, depending on their assigned role. They play a critical role in developing policies, guidelines, and strategies to guide the NRCS in achieving its conservation goals. They often engage with external partners, stakeholders, and landowners to understand conservation needs and build collaborative efforts.

Regional Conservationist oversees USDA-NRCS's four national regions: Northeast, Southeast, Central, and West. They provide overall direction for agency operations, programs, activities, and personnel consistent with the Chief's guidance. Regional Conservationists supervise the agency's State Conservationists and Directors of the Pacific Islands and Caribbean Areas.



USDA-NRCS Landowner Funding

USDA-NRCS offers voluntary programs to eligible landowners and agricultural producers to provide financial and technical assistance to help manage natural resources in a sustainable manner. Through these programs the agency approves contracts to provide financial assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns or opportunities to help save energy, improve soil, water, water, plant, air, animal, and related resources on agricultural lands and non-industrial private forest land.

Common USDA-NRCS Landowner Funding Programs		
Program	Description	Benefits
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Conservation program that helps farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners integrate conservation into working lands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved water and air quality • Conserved ground and surface water • Increased soil health. • Reduced soil erosion and sedimentation • Improved or created wildlife habitat • Mitigation against drought and increasing weather volatility
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	Help farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners build on existing conservation efforts while strengthening their operation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve grazing conditions • Increase crop resiliency • Develop wildlife habitat • Develop healthy forests
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	Provides a yearly rental payment to farmers who remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve water quality • Prevent soil erosion • Reduce loss of wildlife habitat
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)	Help landowners, land trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands or protect working farms and ranches through conservation easements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restores or conserves eligible grazing land • Protect grazing land • Protects, restores and enhances wetlands • Limits nonagricultural uses • Protects farmland from development

USDA-NRCS Resources to Districts

Web Soil Survey (WSS) provides agricultural producers, agencies, technical service providers, and others electronic access to relevant soil and related information needed to make land-use and management decisions. The benefits to WSS are:

- Alternative to traditional hardcopy publication for quicker delivery of information
- Access to full soil survey report content
- Access to the most current data
- Customers can download spatial, tabular and thematic soils data for use in GIS

Education and Teaching Materials [USDA-NRCS Distribution Center -](https://nrcspad.sc.egov.usda.gov/DistributionCenter/)

<https://nrcspad.sc.egov.usda.gov/DistributionCenter/> USDA-NRCS provides a wide array of education and teaching materials to districts. Districts can utilize coloring sheets, posters, and planting guides. Prints of these materials can typically be ordered for distribution at NO cost to districts.

Grants and Agreements help districts reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce damage caused by floods and other natural disasters.

- A Contribution Agreement reflects the relationship between USDA-NRCS and another entity, such as a district that serves a mutual interest, and each entity contributes equal resources in carrying out the programs administered by USDA-NRCS.
- A Cooperative Agreement reflects an assistance relationship between USDA-NRCS and a state or local government. The principal purpose of the relationship is to transfer a thing of value to a recipient to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by federal law.

Common USDA-NRCS Partner Funding Programs		
Program	Description	Benefits
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)	Partner-driven approach to conservation that funds solutions to natural resource challenges on agricultural land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land management/land improvement/restoration practices • Land rentals • Entity and U.S. held easements • Public works/watersheds

<p>Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)</p>	<p>Competitive program that supports development of new tools, approaches, practices, and technologies to further natural resource conservation on private lands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water quality • Air quality • Soil health • Wildlife habitat
<p>Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP)</p>	<p>Provides funding to help State and tribal governments encourage landowners to allow public access to their land.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunting • Fishing • Wildlife-dependent recreation
<p>Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)</p>	<p>Helps agricultural producers manage financial risk through diversification, marketing, or natural resource conservation practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct or improve water management structures or irrigation structures • Plant trees for windbreaks • Improve water quality • Mitigate risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices
<p>Wetland Mitigation Banking Program (WMBP)</p>	<p>Competitive grant program that supports the development and establishment of wetland mitigation banks to make credits available for agricultural producers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration, creation, or enhancement of wetlands • Compensation for wetland impacts from development • Impacts from agriculture

Acronyms

ACEP - Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

AMA - Agricultural Management Assistance

AMS - Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA program)

APO - Annual Partnership Plan

BMP - Best Management Practice

CIG - Conservation Innovation Grants

COG - Council of Governments

CoCoRHAs - Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network

CRP - Conservation Reserve Program

CSP - Conservation Stewardship Program

DC - District Conservationist

EAP - Emergency Action Plan

EEASC - Environmental Education Association of South Carolina

EPA - Environmental Protection Agency

EQIP - Environmental Quality Incentives Program

EWP - Emergency Watershed Protection Program

FOIA - Freedom of Information Act

FOTG - Field Office Technical Guide

FRPP - Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program

FSA - Farm Service Agency (USDA)

FY - Fiscal Year

GIS - Geographic Information System

GPS - Global Positioning System

HFRP - Healthy Forests Reserve Program

IRF - Insurance Reserves Funds

LTA - Long-term agreement

LRC - Land Resource Commission

LWG - Local Work Group

MOA - Memorandum of Agreement

MOU - Memorandum of Understanding

NACD - National Association of Conservation Districts

NASCA - National Association of State Conservation Agencies

NCF - National Conservation Foundation

NCPP - National Conservation Planning Partnership

NGLI - Next Generation Leadership Institute (part of NCF)

NRCS - Natural Resources Conservation Service

NWC - National Watershed Coalition

PLEAF - Palmetto Leadership Program for the Environment, Agriculture, and Forestry

RCPP - Regional Conservation Partnership Program

SARE - Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education

SCACD - South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts

SCCDEA - South Carolina Conservation District Employees Association

SCCDF - South Carolina Conservation Districts Foundation

SCCDEA - South Carolina Conservation District Employees Association

SCDES - South Carolina Department of Environmental Services

SCDNR - South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

SCS - Soil Conservation Service

SEI - Statement of Economic Interest

SOP - Standard Operating Procedure

STC - State Technical Committee (STAC - State Technical Advisory Committee)

SWCD - Soil and Water Conservation District

USACE - United States Army Corps of Engineers

USDA - United States Department of Agriculture

VPA-HIP - Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program

WHIP - Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

WMBP - Wetland Mitigation Banking Program

WRP - Wetland Reserve Program

WSD - Watershed District