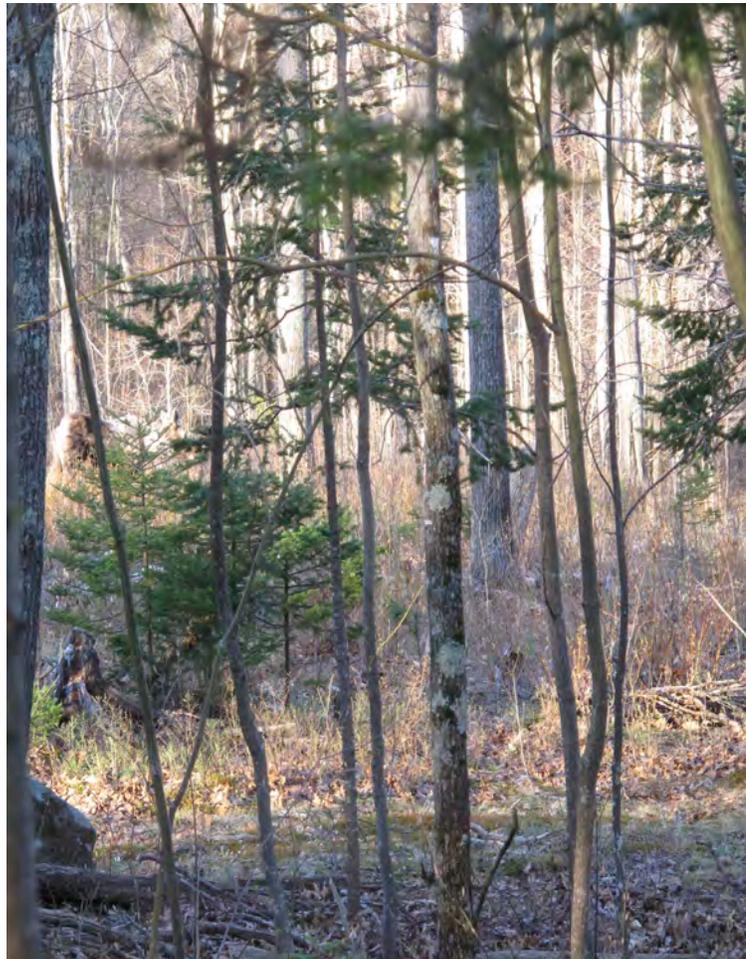


**New Hampshire
Conservation District**

**Supervisor's
Guide**



August 2014

PUBLISHED WITH SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE FROM:



**New Hampshire
State Conservation Committee**



**New Hampshire
Association of
Conservation Districts**



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service



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Welcome

Congratulations on your appointment as a **District Supervisor!** On behalf of the New Hampshire State Conservation Committee and the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts, I thank you for volunteering as a conservation district supervisor.

Conservation districts have a long history going back to 1937 when President Roosevelt wrote the governors of all states recommending legislation that would allow local landowners to form soil conservation districts. At that time, legislators were concerned with providing for the permanent security of our basic natural resource: productive soil! Healthy soil continues to be a top priority, but New Hampshire faces many other challenges----from development, climate change, water quality, loss of critical wildlife habitat for endangered species, to invasive species---that threaten the health of our beautiful natural environment and our quality of life. In fact, all of New England today faces unprecedented and profound threats to its land and natural resource base. As a conservation district supervisor, you play an important role in addressing these issues.

You and your fellow supervisors on the district board can help bring together and coordinate the educational, technical, and financial assistance to private landowners and communities to protect vital natural resources and implement sound and responsible conservation practices.

The roles and responsibilities of New Hampshire conservation districts, and the relationships between districts and cooperating state and federal agencies, are detailed in New Hampshire Law and the *Handbook for Supervisors of Conservation Districts in New Hampshire*.

The intent of this guide is to complement those sources by providing supervisors with a basic understanding of the purpose and function of districts and their roles and responsibilities as supervisors. You can think of it as a quick-start guide!

A copy of the full reference manual is maintained and kept in each conservation district office and is also available through the New Hampshire State Conservation Committee.

Linda Brownson, Chair
New Hampshire State Conservation Committee
August, 2014



What is a Conservation District Supervisor?

A conservation district supervisor is a volunteer who serves the people, landowners, and communities within his or her district by observing, reporting on, advocating for and directing efforts to address natural resource issues within the community. District supervisors are public officials and are obligated to uphold high ethical standards.

A supervisor is knowledgeable about natural resource issues. They are familiar with the challenges facing their state and they know many of the people, businesses, organizations in their community who are affected by these issues, particularly those involved in farming and forestry. They also know which issues have the potential to affect the health and well-being of human and natural communities within their district.

Supervisors, who are landowners or land occupiers in the district, are nominated by the conservation district board to the State Conservation Committee for appointment. Upon approval, the SCC appoints the supervisor to a term of three years, with the term beginning August 1. The supervisor then serves on a five person board of supervisors that guide the actions and efforts of the county conservation district. Associate supervisors are appointed by the district governing body as deemed necessary and serve without vote when there is a quorum of supervisors present and voting.

The district boards hold open meetings, usually monthly, where any landholder in the county can bring forth conservation concerns or request assistance from the district on matters related to soil, water, wildlife, and other natural resources. District supervisors can discuss, debate, and resolve to take action, or not.

Supervisors work cooperatively with landowners, concerned citizens, local governments, community organizations, state and federal agencies and their fellow supervisors to address these matters by seeking out common ground and sensible solutions. They apply available resources in a cost-effective manner.

A supervisor's roles and responsibilities are defined by state law [432:16] and are summarized in this booklet, but they are not limited by that definition. This reference guide will provide you with the history, law and other information about conservation districts and district supervisors. The guide is intended to be just that: a guide. How you apply the information is up to you in your new role as conservation district supervisor.

Introduction to Conservation Districts

Conservation districts play an important role in the delivery of conservation practices that conserve soil, maintain water quality, and protect natural resources. They are legislatively-created bodies whose form and function are defined by state law. [Section 432:8] Districts are part of a nationwide structure that is closely tied to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and are a unique form of non-regulatory government.

Today, all across our country, nearly 3,000 conservation districts ---almost one in every county---are helping local communities and landowners to conserve land, water, forests, wildlife, and related natural resources. Known in various parts of the country as “soil and water conservation districts,” “resource conservation districts,” “natural resource districts,” and similar names, they share a single mission: to coordinate assistance from all available sources---public and private, local, state and federal---in an effort to develop locally-driven solutions to natural resource concerns.

Districts match local resource needs with technical and financial resources to help landowners implement “on-the-ground” conservation projects. Their effectiveness is derived from their structure as local boards of knowledgeable and concerned volunteers. More than 17,000 citizens serve in elected or appointed positions on conservation districts’ governing boards. These supervisors guide how their district uses resources, authority and partnerships to meet local resource concerns.

Among other things, conservation districts:

- Implement farm and forest land conservation practices to protect soil productivity, water quality and quantity, air quality and wildlife habitat;
- Conserve and restore wetlands, which purify water and provide habitat for birds, fish and numerous other animals;
- Protect groundwater resources;
- Help communities and homeowners to plant trees and other land cover to hold soil in place, clean the air, provide cover for wildlife and beautify neighborhoods;
- Help developers control soil erosion and protect water and air quality during construction, and;
- Reach out to communities and schools to teach the value of natural resources and encourage conservation efforts.

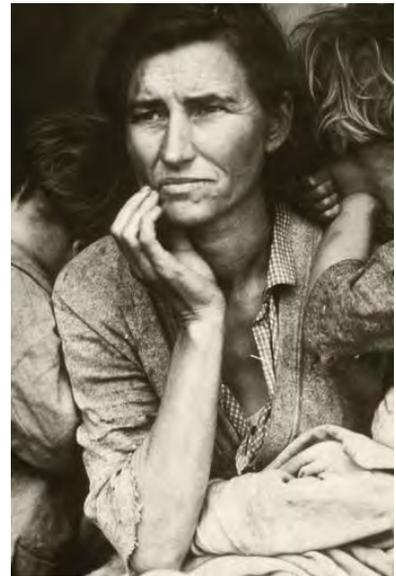
Conservation districts can do many things under the state code to encourage, educate, coordinate, and take action to assist the land users within its boundaries, but what actually occurs is often largely a reflection of the dedication, vision, and commitment of conservation district supervisors.

The History of Conservation Districts

A brief look at the history of the districts will help to provide context for their current status.

Conservation districts have their roots in the great Dust Bowl of the 1930's, in response to devastating soil erosion conditions. The Dust Bowl was a period of terrible dust storms caused by severe drought coupled with poor agricultural practices. Wind-blown topsoil from Texas to Oklahoma had been seen as far as 300 miles out in the Atlantic Ocean. This resulted in major ecological and agricultural damage to the American Midwest.

Hundreds of thousands were uprooted. Dust pneumonia and other illnesses plagued those who stayed. The dust storms helped awaken the nation to the threat of soil erosion while leading people to despair of ever being able to use the land again. By 1934, 100 million acres no longer had enough topsoil for crops.



*"Take care of the land and the land
will take care of you."*

Hugh Hammond Bennett, considered today to be the father of soil conservation, urged the nation to address the "national menace" of soil erosion. Bennett's speeches inspired action. When a dust storm from the Great Plains moved over Washington DC in the spring of 1935 during the height of the Dust Bowl, Bennett was testifying before a Congressional Committee on the bill that would create the Soil Conservation Service. He knew the dust storm was coming and revealed the urgent need for soil conservation by pulling back the curtains in the hearing room.



Outside, the typically clear Washington DC sky was dark with clouds of desiccated topsoil blown from America's mid-western farmland. The lawmakers in that room were duly impressed with this dramatic demonstration and voted to approve the Soil Conservation Act of April 27, 1935 and the creation of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) at USDA.



Bennett served as the chief of SCS until he retired in 1951.

The agency set up demonstration projects, developed many of our modern techniques for surveying soils and provided methods for determining what kinds of crops the land was capable of sustaining. All types of soil conservation practices were studied, experiments performed and solutions found. Numerous techniques were devised and perfected to prevent the erosion of the soil, such as contour farming, terracing, strip-cropping and grassed waterways.

Despite these efforts, the agency was not successful in getting farmers to implement the new practices. Recognizing that SCS could not force landowners to implement soil conservation measures, President Franklin D. Roosevelt determined that an organization was needed at the local level to carry out and promote soil and water conservation programs. This local organization would determine local conservation needs, find ways to solve local problems and encourage their solution by individual landowners within the community.

On February 27, 1937, Roosevelt sent a letter to all state governors urging the passage of state legislation to effect a soil conservation district program. He enclosed a copy of *A Standard State Soil Conservation Districts Law* prepared by USDA at the suggestion of several state representatives. The states complied with enthusiasm. The standard act provided that land occupiers could organize soil conservation districts as local governmental subdivisions of the state. It set up procedures for establishing districts, and defined their duties and powers.



The act recommended that districts direct and manage erosion control programs through local citizens participating voluntarily in the planning and installation of conservation practices. The district would be empowered to determine local needs and encourage their solution by individual landowners within the community on a voluntary basis. The standard act provided districts with powers to carry out research in erosion control; conduct demonstration projects; direct prevention and control measures; make agreements with land occupiers and give them various kinds of assistance; make loans of equipment and conservation materials; accept contributions of money, services, and materials; and propose land-use regulations. The act also provided that districts would be governed by five supervisors.

The first soil conservation district in the United States was organized on August 4, 1937 in North Carolina and was named the Brown Creek Soil Conservation District. Forty-five states enacted such laws before the first New Hampshire statewide soil conservation district was created in May 1945. Today, all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, islands in the Pacific Basin, and the District of Columbia have enabling legislation creating approximately 3,000 local districts.



New Hampshire Conservation Districts

At first, New Hampshire created the entire state as a district. To administer the law within such a structure, a policy was adopted organizing ten county 'sub-districts.' But, on August 1, 1955, a law was enacted changing the sub-districts into ten soil conservation districts, one in each county, and made them governmental subdivisions of the State.

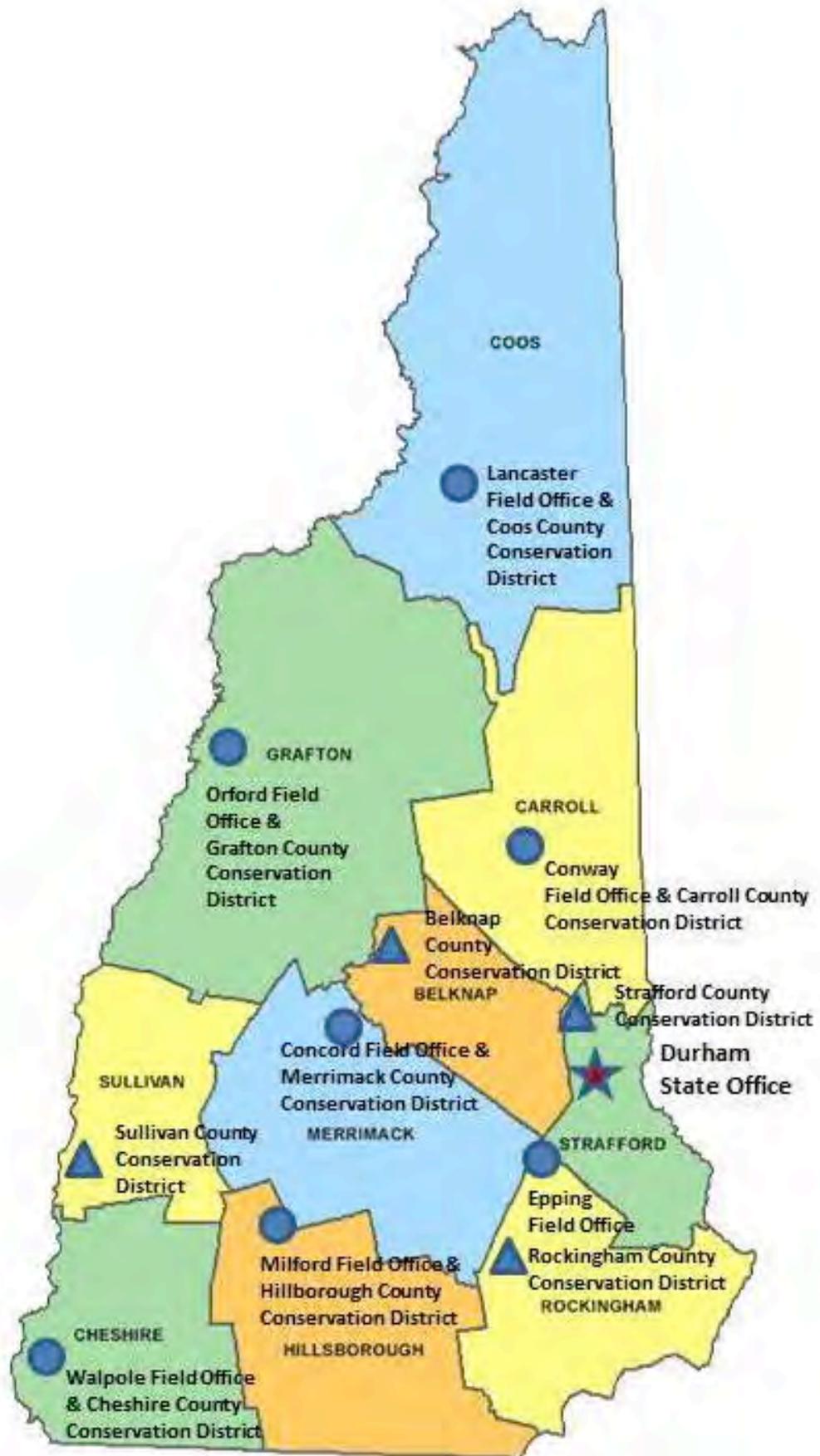
There are hereby established, as governmental subdivisions of this state and public bodies corporate and politic, 10 conservation districts as follows: (1) each of the 10 counties within the state is hereby incorporated into a conservation district; (2) each of the 10 districts shall be known by the name of the county to which its boundaries conform.

The dates of the original county sub-districts' organization are as follows:

Cheshire	October 10, 1945
Sullivan	January 24, 1946
Merrimack	January 24, 1946
Belknap	February 14, 1946
Hillsborough	March 8, 1946
Grafton	April 24, 1946
Coos	April 24, 1946
Carroll	April 25, 1946
Strafford	April 25, 1946
Rockingham	April 26, 1946

Each district is governed by a board of five supervisors. Most districts also appoint associate supervisors to help carry out responsibilities. They are environmentally aware citizens of the county from diversified backgrounds who are concerned with the wise management of the county's natural resources. They set priorities; deliver information and education efforts; provide administrative, technical and financial assistance to cooperators, land users, and municipalities; and sponsor projects. Districts rely on voluntary cooperation to achieve thoughtful use or needed treatment of the land.

District offices are usually shared with our partner in conservation, the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Four of the ten conservation districts in New Hampshire, however, have offices of their own: Belknap County, Rockingham County, Strafford County, and Sullivan County Conservation Districts. This is due to the larger service area of NRCS field offices in the state. The map on the following page shows the locations of the 10 conservation districts and the 7 NRCS field offices, as well as the NRCS State Office in Durham.



Changing Roles of Conservation Districts

The roles of conservation districts, their legal definition, and their relationship with state and federal agencies have changed over the years and will continue to change to adapt to local conditions and concerns.

In the early days, assistance offered by districts was primarily for land drainage, construction of ponds, and land clearing operations, including removal of rocks and stone walls! Originally, assistance was farm-oriented, but the changing patterns of land use and lifestyles over the years have led to new environmental concerns and challenges that require a wider focus.

This shift is also reflected in the name of the districts' partner agency, which in the 1990's changed from the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Farm Bill programs, which provide the focus for NRCS activities, have also changed and broadened to include forestry and energy issues.

Districts have since become involved in a wide range of issues that are no longer primarily soil-based, but are related to the conservation of all our natural resources, including our wildlife. Districts may now find themselves working in a forest, a salt marsh, a stream, or along urban streets and parks. They have become involved in open space and resource planning, wildlife and fisheries habitat, renewable energy, urban forestry, and environmental education.





Agriculture in New Hampshire has also changed, with new ideas and issues such as aquaculture, invasive species, community supported agriculture (CSA's), and many new interesting crops, livestock species and technologies. Dairy farms, for instance, are now beginning to use such innovations as robotic milkers, manure separators, and methane digesters.

The internet and increasingly advanced communication technologies present another

major challenge and benefit to districts. Successful farmers are generally well-educated and more skilled in most aspects of their farming operation, thanks in part to the "Information Age." The same holds true for soil conservation technicians. It is no longer a matter of educating uninformed farmers---as districts did 75 years ago. Today, it is more a matter of convincing a busy hardworking farmer that your information is better than his (if it is!), and that a good conservation system will save his soil, and make him money---either in the short or long-run.

NRCS has responded to the need for a more effective and efficient conservation delivery system by launching its Conservation Delivery Streamlining Initiative in 2012. Through reduced document handling, reduced decision and approval times, and improved access to best-available information and technology, this new business model will enable field technical staff to spend more time in the field with farmers, foresters, and other landowners. "Client Gateway" is not 100% complete as yet, but when it is, a farmer will be able to do it all from his tractor with his iPhone---that is, look over the list of conservation practices and make an application.

These changes bring many challenges but also provide opportunities for conservation districts to play meaningful roles in addressing them. In the final analysis, it will be people and ideals that define the success of conservation across our country. As Sam Studebaker, former president of the National Association of Conservation Districts, told the 1967 Annual Convention of NACD: "Soil and water conservation does not start with land treatment. It starts in the mind of the landowner."

Organizational Structure

Conservation districts are organized within state government as semi-autonomous---and currently unfunded--- units of state government. The organizational chart on the last page of this section shows the relationship of districts to other organizations.

The partnership of federal, state, and local agencies interested in the protection and wise use of soil and water resources has become strong and enduring. Districts provide guidance and assistance to federal and other agencies and groups interested in soil and water conservation. Soil erosion control was the major concern in the beginning, but the success of this partnership led to the assignment of many other duties over the years. This has resulted in a dedicated corps of conservationists dealing with current land and water problems.

The following organizations, briefly described, make up the core of this partnership in New Hampshire:

The State Conservation Committee (SCC): is an agency of the State of New Hampshire established under RSA 432:10, and provides support and guidance to the districts.

The Ten Conservation Districts: are subdivisions of the State of New Hampshire, organized along county lines. Each district is governed by a board of five supervisors.

The New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food (NHDAMF): is the state agency designated to administer and fulfill the requirements of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allocation Act enacted by the U. S. Congress.

The New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts (NHACD): is a private, non-profit statewide organization formed by the ten conservation districts.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): is the technical arm of the U. S. Department of Agriculture for soil and water conservation. Work is accomplished primarily through the locally organized conservation districts. NRCS provides the skills of trained soil conservationists, technicians, soil scientists, engineers, agronomists, biologists, foresters, and other experts to deliver technical assistance to groups, individuals, and units of government. Responsibilities of the NRCS include technical assistance to district cooperators in reducing soil erosion, improving soil quality, watershed planning, upstream flood protection, rural development, enhancing and protecting wetlands, resource inventories and improving farm and forest land. NRCS has the leadership for the implementation of conservation provisions of the Farm Bill.

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD): is the national membership organization for the nation's nearly 3,000 soil and water conservation districts. NACD maintains a national office in Washington, D.C. NACD was founded in 1946, following the Dust Bowl days and the creation of the nationwide conservation district system. NHACD elects a voting representative (delegate) to represent the Association on the NACD Board of Directors.

OTHER AGENCIES:

Conservation districts also have working relationships with numerous other agencies and organizations to provide assistance on natural resource conservation in New Hampshire. Following is a brief description of some of the groups with whom you may be working most frequently:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA): holds the greatest expertise in soil and water conservation of all federal departments. Each conservation district has a mutual agreement with the USDA and cooperative working agreements with the particular agencies within the USDA. The agreements spell out district and USDA responsibilities for accomplishing conservation efforts. The following are those agencies within the USDA with which conservation districts work most closely:

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) (see above description)

Farm Service Agency (FSA): is the USDA agency that administers farm commodity and resource conservation programs dealing with nearly all facets of agriculture. These include catastrophic crop loss programs such as the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), farm lending, including operating and real estate loans, Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL), as well as Emergency Loans for disaster areas as designated by the President or Secretary of Agriculture.

In addition the Agency is responsible for important conservation programs, including the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) for farmers removing environmentally sensitive land from crop production, the Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) for woodland owners, and the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP). In partnership with NRCS, the FSA provides administration and eligibility determinations for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The Agency also participates in determining conservation needs and priority areas.

Forest Service (USFS): is the agency in the USDA responsible for federal forestland management and state and private forestland assistance. Through forestry research, cooperation with the state-owned and private

forest owners, and management of the national forests and national grasslands, the USFS strives to provide quality management of the nation's forest resources. It is dedicated to the principle of multiple use management of the forest resources for sustained yields of wood, water, forage, wildlife, and recreation.

Rural Development (RD): is an agency of the USDA with three main components:

- 1. The Rural Housing and Community Development Service (RHCD):** makes direct and guaranteed loans on housing; loans and grants for home repairs; loans to developers for multi-family housing; labor housing; and direct and guaranteed loans to assist communities and community-based, not-for-profit organizations to provide essential services to towns with populations of 20,000 or less.
- 2. The Rural Business and Cooperative Development Service (RBCDS):** has several programs to help establish businesses and to help businesses grow in rural areas.
- 3. The Rural Utility Service (RUS):** has a loan program to help communities develop water, sewer, solid waste, and storm damage systems. The program is called the Water and Waste Disposal Program.

The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension (UNH-CE): brings information and education into New Hampshire communities to help make New Hampshire's individuals, businesses, and communities more successful and its natural resources healthy and productive. Cooperative Extension focuses on food and agriculture, community and economic development, natural resources, and 4-H youth and families. Headquarters are at the University of New Hampshire, the state's land grant institution, in Durham.

New Hampshire Agricultural Experiment Station (NHAES): conducts research to generate knowledge and technology to support a highly diversified agricultural and natural resource system that produces, processes and delivers food, fiber, forest products, and myriad environmental services for New Hampshire's citizens. The NHAES is administered by the University of New Hampshire's College of Life Sciences and Agriculture in Durham.

Office of State Planning (OSP): operates as a part of the office of the governor. OSP is charged with planning for the orderly development of the state and the wise management of the state's resources. Assistance is provided to cities and towns in planning, growth management, and development activities. OSP advises in matters of land use and water resources planning.

New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES): was formed in 1987 under RSA 21-0 as an all-encompassing environmental agency. The mission of DES is to protect, maintain, and enhance environmental quality in New Hampshire. DES is composed of three divisions, as follows:

1. **The Air Resources Division:** committed to ensuring that the state achieves its policy of attaining and maintaining clean air.
2. **The Waste Management Division:** committed to the protection of public health and the environment by proper management of solid and hazardous waste.
3. **The Water Division:** committed to the stewardship of the state's water resources for the multiple benefits of our state, its people, economy, and environment.

New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED): includes two divisions with which conservation districts work closely.

The Division of Forests and Lands: includes the position of State Forester and is responsible for programs in the areas of forest protection, forest management, land management, and urban forestry.

The Division of Parks and Recreation: is responsible for the maintenance and operation of the state park system. Districts often use the facilities of this division to conduct their workshops and educational programs.

New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NHF&G): is the guardian of the state's fish, wildlife and marine resources. The agency works in partnership with the public to: conserve, manage and protect these resources and their habitats; inform and educate the public about these resources; and provide the public with opportunities to use and appreciate these resources.

New Hampshire Rural Development Council: seeks to foster community-based, rural development on a statewide basis by listening to people at the community level to identify key problem areas and helping those at the community level to find solutions through collaborative partnerships that will apply and leverage existing resources.

Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D): offers a unique program that helps people care for and utilize their natural resources in ways that will improve an area's economy, environment, and social conditions. RC&Ds organize resource committees and project teams to bring together diverse groups of individuals, organizations, and agencies in a neutral atmosphere to address concerns and develop opportunities. NRCS has been delegated administrative responsibility for the RC&D program; however, though the program is 'authorized,' it is currently not funded.

New Hampshire is divided into the North Country and Southern New Hampshire RC&D areas. County conservation districts are represented on both RC&D councils. To achieve their mission, RC&D Councils facilitate a pro-active process that defines area resources, issues, and needs. Most projects deal with forestry, agriculture, water, and community development issues.

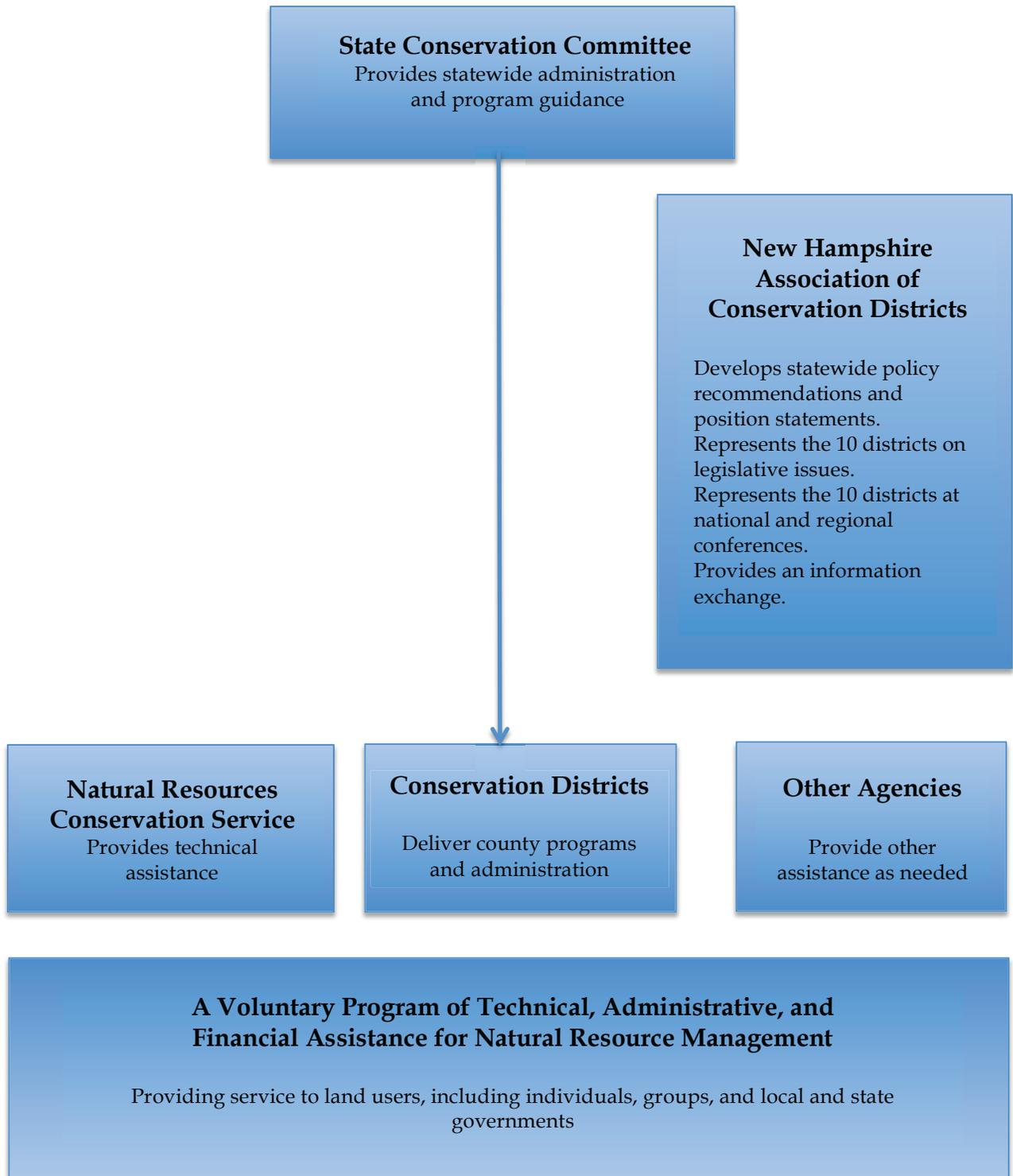
Regional Planning Commissions (RPC): are state-chartered agencies responsible for the preparation of a coordinated development plan for a region. Their boundaries are not established along county lines. A conservation district may have more than one RPC within its boundaries. There are nine in New Hampshire.

New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions (NHACC): is a non-profit, membership association of municipal conservation commissions. It was founded in 1970 to foster the conservation of New Hampshire's natural resources, to assist conservation commissions in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities, and to facilitate communication and cooperation among commissions and other conservation organizations.

Conservation Commissions: are established under state law by town and city governments. A commission is the only local board specifically charged with protection of the municipality's natural resources. Conservation commissions may receive and manage gifts of money and property; may acquire development rights, water rights, and easements to conserve open spaces and other land and water areas within the community. State law provides for conservation commission participation in the wetlands permit process and management of town and city forests.



A Partnership that Works



Authorizing Legislation

The roles of the State Conservation Committee and the conservation districts are established and defined within New Hampshire Law, under Chapter 432: Soil Conservation and Farmland Preservation, Sections 8 through 17.

There are items within these sections of law, which, because of changes in state agencies or changing economic and budgetary conditions, have not been implemented for many years. For example, the State Conservation Committee [Within the limits of the appropriation] “may employ such employees as it requires and fix their compensation subject to the rules of the division of personnel.” The appropriation, unfortunately, has not been forthcoming for the past few years, due to drastic budget cuts in the State House which occurred in 2011. The law also states that the “supervisors may employ such employees as they may require and shall determine their qualification, duties, and compensation.” Today, about half of the district employees (most often one per district: the district manager) are paid by the county government as a county employee, while the other half are paid by their district. Nonetheless, the law provides a legal structure for the districts and the State Conservation Committee and grants certain legal authority that enables them to carry out their duties.

The relevant sections of **Chapter 432** are summarized below. The full text is contained within the *Handbook for Supervisors of Conservation Districts in New Hampshire* and can be found online at:
<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/NHTOC/NHTOC-XL-432.htm>

Section 8: Declares it to be the policy of the state to provide for the establishment of conservation districts under the supervision of a state conservation committee.

Section 9: Lays out definitions to be used in this Chapter.

Section 10: Establishes the State Conservation Committee, its member composition, and terms.

Section 11: Outlines the duties and responsibilities of the State Conservation Committee

Section 12: Establishes the creation of conservation districts as governmental subdivisions of the state, each of the ten to be known by the name of the county which it serves.

Section 13: Outlines the appointment of district supervisors

Section 14: Sets organizational procedures and terms of office.

Section 15: Grants the district supervisors the right to employ such employees as they may require. It also outlines the responsibility of supervisors to provide for the execution of surety bonds, the keeping of full and accurate records of all proceedings, and an annual audit of the amount of receipts and disbursements.

Section 16: The longest section, listing all the powers and duties of districts and supervisors.



The State Conservation Committee

The New Hampshire State Conservation Committee (SCC) is a state agency established in 1985 by legislative action of the NH General Court (RSA 432.10) and serves as the main governing body for conservation districts.

The committee is affiliated with the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food, and meets quarterly in the months of February, May, August, and November.

The purpose of the SCC is to provide guidance, coordination, and assistance to the county conservation districts in planning and implementing their programs and to facilitate coordination of the activities of federal, state, county, and local governments/agencies in natural resource conservation matters.

The SCC meetings bring district representatives together with a number of state and federal agencies and organizations and provide the opportunity for raising and addressing issues of concern to the districts and their partners.

The State Conservation Committee consists of 12 members:

1. Coos/Grafton Conservation District appointee
2. Belknap/Carroll Conservation District appointee
3. Hillsborough/Merrimack Conservation District appointee
4. Cheshire/Sullivan Conservation District appointee
5. Rockingham/Strafford Conservation District appointee
6. Commissioner, NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food (DAMF)
7. Commissioner, NH Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED)
8. Commissioner, Department of Environmental Services (DES)
9. Director, University of NH Cooperative Extension (UNHCE)
10. Director, NH Agricultural Experiment Station (NHAES)
11. Executive Director, NH Fish & Game Dept (NHF&G)
12. Executive Director, NH Association of Conservation Commissions (NHACC)

The five appointed members, 1 through 5 above, are district supervisors, or former district supervisors, nominated from within the districts they represent. Each district may nominate up to two candidates for appointment. These nominations are sent to the governor for consideration and final appointment. The governor makes appointments with the advice and consent of the Executive Council. Terms for appointed SCC members are for four years, commencing from August 1, and/or until qualified successors are appointed. A vacancy created by an unexpired term is filled by normal appointment procedures. The

appointed members are the only members who can serve as chair of the SCC (per RSA 432:10).

Each agency member, 6 through 11 above, may appoint a designee to officially represent his/her agency. This designation is made annually (August 1) in writing to the chair of the SCC.

Each member (or official designee) has one vote. Seven voting members constitute a quorum.

Advisory Members to the SCC

The following people are welcome to contribute their expertise to the Committee as advisory members, though they do not have voting privileges. Others may be appointed by the SCC, as deemed appropriate.

- The New Hampshire State Conservationist of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- State Executive Director of the NH Farm Service Agency (FSA)
- President, New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts (NHACD)

Duties of the State Conservation Committee

The powers and duties of the SCC are defined in the Supervisor Manual and summarized below.

- Appoint/remove conservation district supervisors
- Offer assistance, advice, and consultation to conservation districts to formulate and implement programs
- Work to gain the cooperation, support, and assistance of the federal government, and other state and county agencies to further the conservation of natural resources.
- Inform the public about conservation district programs and activities.
- Establish cooperative arrangements to reduce and eliminate duplication between the conservation districts and other agencies with similar mandates.
- Administer the SCC Conservation Grant, a part of New Hampshire's Conservation License Plate (Mooseplate) Program.
- Maintain and periodically update the Supervisor's Guide and the New Hampshire Conservation District Supervisor Manual.

Conservation Districts

Board of Supervisors

In an earlier time, when the sole emphasis of districts was to assist farmers primarily with soil conservation, district supervisors were also usually farmers.

Conservation districts now focus on many different natural resource issues, including soil conservation. Reflecting this change, districts now need supervisors from many disciplines, including farming. Today, a supervisor can come from just about any walk of life.

One thing all supervisors must have in common is a deep interest in the field of conservation, a belief in their obligation to help in this effort and the dedication to conscientiously perform their duties.

District supervisors are public officials who serve without compensation. The only legal requirement for someone to become a supervisor is that the person be a land occupier residing in or owning land within the district.

Election of Supervisors

- Supervisors shall serve for terms of three years.
- Terms begin on August 1st.
- Supervisors may be nominated by the district board or by land owners/users in the district.
- A supervisor nomination form, signed by chair of district, is sent by the district to the secretary of the State Conservation Committee (SCC).
- SCC representative from that district speaks to the appointment at the SCC meeting.
- If approved, SCC sends a letter of confirmation to supervisor and copy to district.
- A supervisor may succeed himself/herself in office and shall serve until a replacement is appointed by the SCC.
- Unexpired terms are filled by the same procedure.

Associate Supervisors

To assist the board in the many different duties which they must perform, it is recommended that the board appoint associate supervisors, also called associates. Associates are appointed by the board of supervisors. They can speak at any meeting, serve on committees, serve as secretary or treasurer and represent the district as directed by the chairperson. Associates are non-voting members of the board, though in the absence of a quorum of supervisors, one or more associates may be designated by the chair to participate and to vote in place

of any absent supervisors. No more associates will be designated to vote at a meeting than needed for a quorum.

Meetings

The board of supervisors meets regularly on a monthly basis, or as needed to meet its responsibilities, in a public building or other place which is open to the general public. Anyone wishing to attend will be welcome, will be heard if they desire to speak and are recognized by the Chairperson. Participation by the public is vital to district activities and success.

Supervisors absent from three or more consecutive meetings, without legitimate reason, may be asked by the State Conservation Committee to resign, if so requested first by a vote of the district board.

Board representatives are expected to respond to invitations to attend town committee or agency meetings when aspects of district responsibilities are under discussion. When possible, board members should attend state, regional, and national meetings of conservation district associations.

Each district holds an Annual Meeting in the spring, at which district cooperators, other agency personnel, and the general public are invited. This meeting is used to elect one or more supervisors and to inform attendees of the activities of the district during the past year.

Governance

The governing body of the district shall consist of 5 supervisors, appointed by the State Conservation Committee, who shall be land occupiers in the district. The board of supervisors of each district shall, annually, between September and November, elect a chair, vice-chair, secretary, and treasurer for the coming year. The chair and vice-chair shall be members of the board of supervisors.

- The supervisors of a conservation district shall be the governing body.
- They may delegate to one or more of their members such powers and duties as they shall deem proper.
- They will be responsible for keeping records of all procedures, policies, and orders issued or adopted at its meetings. These records are public information and shall become a permanent file of the district.
- They shall furnish the State Conservation Committee, upon request, copies of such rules, regulations, orders, contracts, forms and other documents as they shall adopt or employ, and such other information as may be required.
- The supervisors shall provide:
 - for the execution of surety bonds for all employees and officers who shall be entrusted with funds or property. (See RSA 432.15)

- an annual audited financial report, submitted to the State Conservation Committee.

Annual Reports

The State Conservation Committee requests that districts prepare an annual report on a calendar year basis. One copy should be submitted to the SCC and to the State Conservationist in Durham. Other copies should be distributed to:

- County officials
- County extension office
- U.S. Senators and Congressmen
- Members of the state legislature
- County and other state officials
- Newspaper, radio, and television stations
- District cooperators and other supporters of the program
- District files

The annual report is an effective method of informing the public about the organization, and the work, objectives, and accomplishments of the conservation district. The report should also contain a financial report for the past year.

Powers of Supervisors

NH RSA 432:16 defines the powers of districts and supervisors. Some of these powers are summarized below. (Please see original legislation for the full text.)

1. To conduct surveys, investigations and research relating to the conservation and development of natural resources, the control and prevention of soil erosion, the prevention of erosion, floodwater and sediment damages, and the conservation, development utilization and disposal of water, and the preventive and control measures needed, to publish the results of such surveys, investigations or research, and to disseminate information concerning such preventive and control measures.
2. To conduct demonstrational projects within the district on lands owned or controlled by this state or any of its agencies, with the cooperation and consent of the agency, and on any other lands within the district upon obtaining the consent of the occupier, in order to demonstrate by example the means, methods, and measures by which soil and soil resources may be conserved, how soil erosion may be prevented and controlled, and how land may be drained and floodwater and sediment damages may be prevented; and how other works of improvement for the conservation of our natural resources may be carried out.

3. To carry out preventive and control measures within the district, with the cooperation of the agency having jurisdiction, and on any other lands within the district at the request or with the consent of the occupier of such land or the necessary rights or interests in such land.
4. To cooperate or enter into agreements with any agency, governmental or otherwise, or any occupier of lands within the district in the carrying on of measures for any of the purposes mentioned in paragraphs 1-3.
5. To acquire and to make available necessary machinery, equipment and materials to assist such land occupiers to carry on operations upon their lands for any of the purposes mentioned in paragraphs 1-3.
6. To construct, improve, operate and maintain such structures as may be necessary or convenient for the performance of any of the operations authorized in this subdivision.
7. To develop comprehensive plans for any of the purposes mentioned in paragraphs 1-3 which shall specify the acts, procedures, performances and avoidances which are necessary or desirable for accomplishing such plans.
8. To accept contributions or appropriations in money, services, materials, or otherwise, for carrying on their operations from federal agencies, or from the state or any political subdivision thereof, or from any person, firm, or corporation.



Duties of Supervisors

As a supervisor, you are responsible for administering your district's programs. These duties are summarized below:

- **Take an active part in your district.**
- Participate in overall development of the district program.
- Help to establish the district's priorities.
- Help to establish district office policies.
- Manage district personnel.
- Monitor the progress of district programs.
- Be available to your employees for advice and guidance.
- Be willing to serve on local, state and national committees.
- Attend monthly board meetings, other special meetings as needed, as well as regional and national meetings to insure the district is attaining its goals.
- Interact with other agencies and organizations.



Assistance Available through Conservation Districts

Any land occupier, whether a farmer, a local unit of government or a non-farm landowner who resides on or owns land within the district is eligible to receive assistance. The district, as a public body, cannot discriminate against any person requesting assistance on the basis of race, color, religion, age, ancestry, marital status, sex, language, sexual preference, disability, or national origin.

Each district board sets their own criteria for all persons to follow in requesting assistance. Before a board provides assistance, they should require that the person or unit of government become a **district cooperator**. In becoming a cooperator, the landowner agrees to comply with certain principles of conservation on their own land and to operate and properly maintain measures installed with district assistance.



Districts have three major sources from which they can provide assistance:

- Supervisors
- District employees
- Cooperating agencies, such as NRCS, UNHCE, FSA, etc.

There are no established limits on the amount or type of assistance that a district can provide. The district can only provide assistance that relates to the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources. It is up to each board to interpret and decide which requests fall within their areas of responsibility.

Some common types of assistance include:

- Conservation planning
- Implementation of planned practices
- Wildlife habitat management
- Open space planning
- Forestry management
- Invasive plants and insects
- Wetlands identification and inventory maps
- Soils information
- Environmental education materials and conservation field days for school children
- Educational workshops

Districts are authorized to charge reasonable fees or ask for contributions in exchange for assistance. However, districts cannot charge for any services that NRCS or other cooperating public agency provides at the request of the district.



Conservation District Special Programs

Conservation districts have established many special programs that have made significant contributions to the health of our natural environment and understanding of conservation issues. Below are descriptions of a few of these projects and they vary from district to district.

Plant Sale

Most of the districts hold a Conservation Plant Sale every spring offering plants selected for environmental benefits such as reforestation, wind protection, shade, bank stabilization, pollinator and wildlife food and cover. The program provides a service to the public by which an economical source of seedlings and other plants is available for forest and Christmas tree farm plantings, landscape beautification and wildlife improvement.

Typically, districts buy large quantities of trees, shrubs, ground cover and bushes at wholesale prices from the state nursery and sell them at retail prices. The plants are usually sold as bare-root stock or in small pots. Healthy, hardy plants adapted to our growing conditions are chosen for sale. Supervisors donate their time to manage the sale, re-package and distribute the plants. Some districts offer a fall Bulb Sale in addition, and others provide rainbow and brook trout for pond stocking.

For many districts, the Plant Sale is the biggest fundraising activity of the year. Profits made from the sale are used to support district programs and educational activities, including providing stewardship materials to schools.

New Hampshire Envirothon

The New Hampshire Envirothon is an annual statewide environmental competition and educational program for high school age students and their advisors. Envirothon offers both in-class curriculum and hands-on field experiences focused around ecology, natural resource management and current environmental issues. Envirothon students work in teams to solve real-life environmental and natural resource problems.

The New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts (NHACD) manages the NH Envirothon while NRCS employees and NH conservation district employees and supervisors provide education, information, and support for all the teams and the competition. An Envirothon Coordinator is contracted by NHACD to work with an Envirothon committee and coordinate the program each year. Conservation districts support the Envirothon through participation

on the committee, marketing the program to local high schools, making financial contributions, and/or volunteering at the annual Envirothon event.

Winners from the New Hampshire competition may enter the national competition, called the North American Envirothon (NAE). Unfortunately, however, is currently in trouble and the NAE was officially closed in March 2014, due primarily to a lack of funding.

In 2013, the National Conservation Foundation (NCF), created by NACD, agreed to take on this challenge and opportunity by becoming the home of the North American Envirothon. The NAE approved the merger in 2013 and it was quickly determined that it was presently not feasible to conduct a successful competition in 2014 because of the inadequate funding. For now, the Envirothon Operating Committee is taking on the charge to re-launch the Envirothon by 2015 with a focus on fundraising for both the short and long-term success of the program. In the meantime, many states are coming together to create alternative activities to the in-person national competition, with some forming regional Envirothons.



Keene, New Hampshire high school students placed fourth nationally at the 2013 North American Envirothon competition and first in the soils category.

Soil Judging Contest

The Soil Judging Contest is another program to help motivate youth groups to carry out conservation activities through district-sponsored activities. The program provides students with an awareness of the common characteristics of soil, how these characteristics affect selected uses of the soil, and how some land uses may be 'judged' to be better than others based on soil features. The primary goal of this program is to provide students with a team-based educational opportunity to learn about soils and to test their understanding; the competitive aspect of the contest is secondary.

The Soil Judging Contest is open to teams in grades 9 through 12, and home schooled students of comparable scholastic achievement. This program is sponsored by NHACD with additional funding provided through donations and grants. Coordination and staffing of the event is made possible by the participation of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, county conservation districts, event location managers, and natural resource professionals from the private sector who generously volunteer their time.



Relationship with NRCS

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the federal agency that helps farmers and other landowners improve and protect their natural resources. NRCS provides landowners with technical and financial assistance to plan and implement conservation practices on our nation's private farm and forest lands.

Landowners and NRCS technical specialists work together on a voluntary basis to identify and address natural resource concerns. The agency's conservation staff includes soil conservationists, soil scientists, resource conservationists in agronomy and ecology, biologists, foresters, and engineers to assist with conservation planning and implementation.

History of the conservation partnership

After the devastating Dust Bowl years, new bills were introduced to Congress in 1935 to create a permanent agency for soil erosion control. A bill by Representative Marvin Jones of Texas, Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, specified that the new agency be in the Department of Agriculture. Shortly afterwards, another bill introduced by New Mexico became the Soil Conservation Act of 1935, Public Law 46, and was approved by President Roosevelt on April 27, 1935. The Act both created the Soil Conservation Service (SCS---later NRCS) and established a national policy. The Secretary of Agriculture was then armed with broad authority to carry out a national program of soil and water conservation.

One of the challenges was to educate people to the need for erosion control, and convince them that practical measures to combat it were available. It was said then, and bears repeating: government programs and government employees do not apply soil conservation practices to private land. Farmers, foresters, homeowners, and all kinds of citizens do. The question was and is still today, how are those people going to know how to do good soil conservation management, and be encouraged to take the extra time and effort, or make the extra investment, that such management demands?

The idea of establishing local special-purpose districts to bridge the gap between federal technicians and private landowners had gestated for about 3 years. After conservation district enabling acts began to spread across the country, from 1937-1945, the Soil Conservation Service shifted from their previous focus on demonstration projects to placing emphasis on technical assistance to landowners who cooperated with their conservation districts.

As district officials were not usually trained in the technical sciences of conservation---a role carried out by the SCS serving the district---the question often asked was: "Why a district?"

The answer put forth by many of the pioneering district officials is that the districts have provided the guiding hand, the practical touch, that mediated between the technical orientation of SCS and other agency technicians, the often-confusing methods of operation common to government agencies and programs, and the pragmatism of farmers. District officials over the years have carried this notion further, extending the concept of the district toward the fuller potential embodied in the enabling legislation---that is, a locally-operated “department of natural resources and conservation,” seeking help from a variety of sources and coordinating a program that results in maximum benefit to the people and the land of the district.

An evolving conservation partnership

The traditional relationship between NRCS and conservation districts has been evolving since the 1930's. Historically, a conservation district was a landowner's first contact for addressing conservation concerns and the primary means of obtaining technical assistance from NRCS.

Districts identified local natural resource concerns and priorities by employing both technical and personal knowledge of the land and their communities. Districts helped to coordinate and guide federal and state resources to put conservation on the ground, exactly where their communities needed it the most.

Since then, NRCS and conservation districts have worked together to deliver land conservation knowledge and practices. This partnership was carefully designed and continues to be a model for providing Federal resources at the local level. That the relationship has not only survived, but prospered, in some challenging times is both a tribute to the insight of the original creators of the district concept and to those pioneering lay people who put the concept into action.

The Farm Bill has somewhat changed the way that NRCS and districts work together. The Farm Bill authorizes NRCS to deliver a number of conservation programs that provide financial assistance to landowners. NRCS is mandated by law to provide both technical and financial assistance directly to citizens who request help from the agency. Districts play a role in Farm Bill conservation program outreach and landowner education.

The 2008 Farm Bill added Local Work Groups (LWG) as formal subcommittees to the State Technical Committee, which advises the NRCS State Conservationist on statewide program priorities. Local Work Groups mirror the State Technical Committee on a local level, advising the local NRCS District Conservationist on how best to prioritize local needs and the Farm Bill programs that help address them.



New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts (NHACD)

NHACD is a private, non-profit, non-governmental association of the 10 county conservation districts, operating under its own constitution and by-laws. Its primary concern, as identified in Article I of its constitution is “the conservation and orderly development of New Hampshire’s land and water resources through local, self-governed Soil Conservation Districts.” The purpose of NHACD is to represent districts on legislative issues, develop statewide policy recommendations, and to serve as an information exchange.

Conservation district supervisors found that the efforts of all districts, when coming together, were more effective than the fragmented exercises of each district acting separately. Working together toward a common goal enables districts to achieve greater recognition from, and access to, both the legislature and governmental agencies as well as from people in the private sector.

All districts should be an active member of, and strongly support, NHACD by attending board meetings, serving on committees, and actively assisting in directing the affairs of the Association. As the Association has no authority under New Hampshire law as a regulatory or governing body of the state, its existence is solely dependent on support by and from conservation districts.

NHACD is dedicated to the task of providing leadership to the individual districts in carrying out their long-term program and objectives. The Association’s objectives are:

- to provide a medium through which individual districts can meet and exchange ideas, work together cooperatively on common problems and objectives, and reach decisions on desired courses of action.
- to develop resolutions outlining the Association position and to present them to both regional and national meetings.
- to cooperate with the State Conservation Committee in coordinating activities among the districts.
- to promote a better understanding and acceptance of soil and water conservation in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary school curricula.

- to better inform legislators, both state and national, of the objectives and needs of conservation districts, and inform them of needed legislation.
- to assist districts in developing guidelines for types and amounts of assistance and priorities to the many different types of cooperators and others requesting assistance.
- to establish the necessary committees required to study district problems and to provide, as possible, financial resources to help them in carrying out their assignments.

Membership

All conservation districts in New Hampshire are considered to be members of the Association. Each district is entitled to five voting members. Delegates can be supervisors or associate supervisors.

Each member district is assessed annual membership dues, the amount set by the Board of Directors, and payable by January 15th for the ensuing year.

NHACD Board of Directors and Officers

NHACD activities are governed by a Board of Directors. The officers of the board consists of four elected NHACD officers---President, 1st Vice-President, 2nd Vice-President, and Secretary-Treasurer---and, together with the immediate Past President, comprise the Executive Committee. The election of officers takes place at the annual meeting.

The Board of Directors consists of the officers of the Association and the Chair or the supervisor or associate supervisor designated by each of the member districts. Each district has one vote.

Duties of the Officers and Directors

- The President presides at all executive committee meetings and at meetings of the Board of Directors. The 1st or 2nd Vice-President, in that order, performs the duties of the President in his absence. The Secretary-Treasurer is charged with keeping minutes of the meetings and shall receive, disburse, and account for all funds of the Association.
- The President appoints standing and special committees, and the Chair of each committee, as deemed advisable.
- The Executive Committee represents the Association in conducting and supervising its current activities within the framework of policies and procedures established by the Board of Directors.

Duties of the Board of Directors are to:

- guide the Executive Committee and coordinate activities of the

Association with member districts.

- designate the time, place and agenda of meetings.
- fill all vacancies on Executive Board, other than that of President.
- execute contracts for NHACD
- engage any employees and fix the compensation for such employees.
- acquire, hold, and manage the fiscal and real property of NHACD
- advise every new member of the conflict-of-interest policy.
- perform such other duties as NHACD directs.

Meetings

A regular annual meeting is held in the last quarter of each calendar year at a place selected by the Executive Committee. In 1981, it was resolved that these meetings would be held on a rotating basis in each of the ten counties of the state. All supervisors can vote on issues raised at the annual meeting provided their district has paid its dues by the time of the meeting.

Special meetings may be called by the President, with the consent of the Board of Directors.

At regular or special meetings, 6 conservation districts and 13 or more of the voting delegates of the Association shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.



Contact NHACD:

**P. O. Box 2311
Concord, NH 03302**

603-224-1586

Contact Information

Belknap County Conservation District

2 Airport Road
Gilford, NH 03249
(603) 527-5880
www.belknapccd.org

Carroll County Conservation District

73 Main St.
P. O. Box 533
Conway, NH 03818
(603) 447-2771

Cheshire County Conservation District

11 Industrial Park Drive
Walpole, NH 03608
(603) 7456-2988, ext. 116
www.cheshireconservation.org

Coos County Conservation District

4 Mayberry Lane
Lancaster, NH 03584
(603) 788-4651
www.cooscountynh.us

Grafton County Conservation District

Orford Ridge Business Park
19 Archertown Road, Suite 1
Orford, NH 03777
(603) 353-4652, ext. 103
www.graftonccd.org

Hillsborough County Conservation District

Chappell Professional Center
468 Route 13 South
Milford, NH 03055
(603) 673-2409, ext. 100
www.hillsboroughccd.com

Merrimack County Conservation District

The Concord Center
10 Ferry Street, Suite 211
Concord, NH 03301
(603) 223-6023
www.merrimackccd.org

Rockingham County Conservation District

110 North Road
Brentwood, NH 03833
(603) 679-2790
www.rockinghamccd.org

Strafford County Conservation District

264 County Farm Road
Dover, NH 03820
(603) 749-3037
www.straffordccd.org

Sullivan County Conservation District

95 County Farm Road
Unity, NH 03743
(603) 542-4891
www.sullivancountynh.gov



Related Agencies and Organizations

There are many other agencies which can provide help to districts, and to which districts, in turn, can help as well.

Federal Agencies

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

www.usda.gov

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

www.nrcs.usda.gov

Farm Service Agency (FSA)

www.fsa.usda.gov

Rural Development (RD)

www.rurdev.usda.gov

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

www.aphis.usda.gov

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)

www.usgs.gov

U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

www.epa.gov

U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service

www.fws.gov

U. S. Forest Service

www.fs.fed.us

State Agencies

New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food

www.agriculture.nh.gov

University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension (UNH CE)

www.extension.unh.edu

Department of Resources & Economic Development (DRED)

www.dred.state.nh.us

New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES)
www.des.nh.gov

New Hampshire Department of Fish & Game (F&G)
www.wildlife.state.nh.us

New Hampshire Division of Forests and Lands
www.nhdfl.org

New Hampshire Agricultural Experiment Station (NHAES)
www.colsa.unh.edu/aes

New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions
www.nhacc.org

Conservation District Associations

New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts (NHACD)
www.nhacd.org

National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)
www.nacdnet.org

Other Organizations

North Country and Southern NH Resource & Development Council
www.nhrcd.net

New Hampshire Audubon
www.nhaudubon.org

Connecticut River Watershed Council
www.ctriver.org

Northern Forest Center
www.northernforest.org

