"There can be no greater issue than that of conservation in this country."
President Theodore Roosevelt, August 6, 1912

NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION & NATURAL RESOURCES

NEVADA CONSERVATION DISTRICTS PROGRAM

For Additional Information:
Joe Locurto, Program Coordinator
Telephone: 775-684-8600
Email: jlocurto@dcnr.nv.gov
Facsimile: 775-684-8604
Address: 201 S Roop St., Ste. 101, Carson City, NV 89701

A Guide to Conservation Districts

Nevada State Conservation Commission

Nevada Association of Conservation Districts

and

National Association of Conservation Districts

History of Conservation Districts

In the early 1930s the Dust Bowl in the southern Great Plains created huge black dust storms that spread to Washington, D.C. and even sifted into the White House and onto the desk of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. On Capitol Hill, while testifying about the erosion problem, soil scientist Hugh Hammond Bennett threw back the curtains to reveal a sky blackened by dust. Congress unanimously passed legislation declaring soil and water conservation a national policy and priority, recognizing that only active, voluntary support from landowners would guarantee the success of conservation work on private land. Local leadership was needed to coordinate agency efforts and tie them into local conditions and priorities.

Congress developed a model Conservation District law in 1937 that President Roosevelt encouraged all the states to adopt. In his recent book, The Worst Hard Time, Timothy Egan states on page 311, “In 2004, an extensive study of how farmers treated the land before and after the great dusters of the 1930’s concluded that soil conservation districts kept the earth from blowing…what saved the land, this study found, was what Hugh Bennett had started: getting farmers to enter contracts with a soil conservation district and manage the land as a single ecological unit… His legacy, the soil conservation districts spread throughout America, is the only New Deal grassroots operation that survives to this day.”
Conservation Districts (CDs) are locally led entities in Nevada since 1937 that work for the conservation and proper management of the state’s natural resources by taking available technical, financial and educational resources, and coordinating them to meet the needs of landowners and land users both in rural and urban areas. They often cooperate with counties, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and other public and private agencies for the conservation of soil, water and related natural resources. Unlike any other organization, Conservation Districts are the entity in Nevada and the United States that can cross boundaries and unite people and groups working for conservation and planning under local leadership and with the authority to get the job done.

The Nevada Conservation District Program is housed within the Director’s Office of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Information on the Nevada Conservation District Program may be found at: [http://dcnr.nv.gov/conservation-district-program/](http://dcnr.nv.gov/conservation-district-program/)

Nevada CDs are organized by area:

AREA 1 – Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander and Pershing counties.

AREA 2 – Carson City and Churchill, Douglas, Lyon, Storey and Washoe counties.


Conservation Districts are an entity of state government and meetings are subject to the Open Meeting Law. Each district is governed by a Board of Supervisors who are locally elected residents who serve without pay though they may be reimbursed for expenses. District Boards consist of five elected supervisors, and some appointed members; this number can vary greatly depending on the geo-political boundaries of the district. CD’s submit budgets, Annual Work Plans and Annual Reports to the State Conservation Commission and they must hold at least three meetings in a year. CDs may support the Nevada Association of Conservation Districts and the National Association of Conservation Districts by paying dues. Some Nevada CDs are a whole county and some are smaller geographic units within a county.

Conservation Districts and the Nevada State Conservation Commission are governed by Chapter 548 of the Nevada Revised Statutes: [http://www.leg.state.nv.us/nrs/NRS-548.html](http://www.leg.state.nv.us/nrs/NRS-548.html).

The many authorities of CDs are listed here:

- Coop Cooperate with, and give assistance to, cities, counties, irrigation districts and other special purpose districts on USDA programs on watershed and flood protection; and
- Amend, divide or consolidate district areas.

Commissioners are recommended by the Nevada Association of Conservation Districts from each Area and the Governor of Nevada appoints from those nominations. A primary duty of the SCC is to determine if a CD is in “good standing” and therefore eligible for the annual grant from the State. Currently CDs receive $2500 from the State to assist with dues, insurance and other operating expenses.

The SCC is subject to the Open Meeting Law and information concerning it is available at: [http://dcnr.nv.gov/conservation-district-program/conservation-commission/](http://dcnr.nv.gov/conservation-district-program/conservation-commission/)

The Nevada Association of Conservation Districts (NvACD) is a nongovernmental organization of the 28 CDs in Nevada. NvACD is made up of three area groups of CDs and serves as a state voice for conservation districts on state policy, legislation, communication, and funding for conservation activities. NvACD can lobby, unlike CDs or the SCC. It also provides forums to inform, train and educate supervisors and recognize outstanding district individuals and programs. It has standing committees and meets annually around Election Day. It is wholly supported by dues paid by Nevada CDs and is served by volunteer officers. An elected Council member participates with the National Association of Conservation Districts to represent Nevada and support their activities.

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) represents America’s 3,000 conservation districts and the 17,000 people who serve on their governing boards. Among other national scope activities, NACD lobbies for federal conservation legislation and funding in Congress and provides training and education. They work closely with federal agencies, communicating the needs of CDs on a national and regional level. Additional information regarding NACD and its other national scale activities is available at: [http://www.nacdnet.org/](http://www.nacdnet.org/).