

# The Conservation District Board

District Teams Training  
May 2025

# What is the Conservation District Board?

- Governing body responsible for the operation and management of the district
- Composed of public officials (**NOT** volunteers)
- Responsible for
  - Coordinating efforts to address local conservation issues
  - Implementing and administering programs and initiatives
- Authorities are conveyed through the Conservation District Act (Title 27A)



The success or struggle of a district is often determined by the actions its board takes.

# Structure of the Conservation District Board

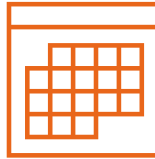
- Directors are duly elected or appointed public officials
  - They are **NOT** volunteers
- Each district board is composed of five (5) members
  - 2 appointed members
  - 3 elected members
- Districts may also have associate members

# Director Records

Maintain  
permanent  
records of all  
directors who  
have served



Name



Month/Year Service Began & Ended



Number of Years Served



Position Type

· Appointed or Elected, including position number

## Board Members: Appointed & Elected

- Appointed directors serve 2-year terms
  - Must attend 75% of regular board meetings during their term
  - One appointed term expires each year
- Elected directors serve 3-year terms
  - Must file candidacy forms/participate in the election process
  - One elected term expires each year

# Board Members: Appointed & Elected

- Requirements to serve
  - Be a registered voter within the district boundaries
  - Have a cooperator agreement with the district
  - Take the oath of office and loyalty oath
- Additionally, directors should
  - Sign the Conservation District Director Position Description
  - Familiarize themselves with the Conservation District Handbook
    - Sign the acknowledgement form

## Board Members: Appointed & Elected

- If a director resigns or chooses not to serve another term, they continue to serve until their successor is duly appointed or elected
  - Filling vacant positions in a timely manner should be a priority
- A resigning director should provide a written resignation to the board, a copy should be provided to OCC
- If an elected position becomes vacant, an individual will be appointed to finish the term; however, the position remains an elected one
- If an officer position becomes vacant, the board may re-elect officers at any time



## Board Members: Associate Directors

- A district is not required to have associate directors, but associates can be of great service to the district
- If a district has associates, the board should take official action to:
  - Establish a term of service
  - Assign official roles and responsibilities
- Common roles for associates include
  - Training for becoming a district director
  - Retaining a retired director for assistance with historical items
  - Serving on event or other special project committees

# Board Members: Associate Directors

- Generally, associates should:
  - Attend board meetings, events, and other activities related to their responsibilities
    - Associates serving with the intent to become board members should attend MOST meetings and events
  - Provide regular updates regarding their activities as associates
- Remember:
  - Associates have no voting authority
  - Associates have no legal authority
  - Associates may not receive reimbursement for expenses from the Commission; they may be reimbursed from local funds

# Responsibilities of the District Board

Ensure that the Conservation District Act and all applicable laws are followed while doing the best possible job to ensure resources, including public funds, are put to the best use to meet the conservation mission.

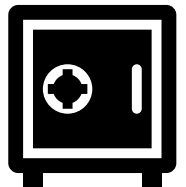
# Responsibilities of the District Board - Administrative

- Ensure meetings and district business are efficiently conducted
- Know and abide by the Open Meeting Act, Open Records Act, and all other applicable laws/regulations/policies
- Set district policy
- Maintain full and accurate records of district business



# Responsibilities of the District Board - Financial

- Ensure long-term financial stability of the district
- Determine methods to finance the district
- Oversee, and when necessary, complete the day-to-day general and financial operations of the district
- Know district fund balance(s), understand expenditures and income, and budget to meet the needs of the district
- Expend public monies (and they are **ALL** public monies) according to law and best practices
- Ensure an audit is completed every three years
  - A compilation review in other years



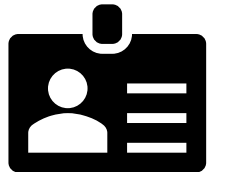
# Responsibilities of the District Board - Programs

- Make efficient use of technical & financial resources
- Promote sound land/water use
- Maintain a technically sound conservation program
- Administer & fulfill responsibilities for programs
- Carry out requirements of watershed structure sponsors
- Cooperate with other groups to promote conservation



# Responsibilities of the District Board - Personnel

- Identify necessary personnel needs
  - But be prepared to carry out staff duties if vacancies or attrition occur
- Hire, discipline, and fire
- Provide supervision
- Ensure that personnel policies meet all required laws and regulations
- Understand payroll, benefits, and payroll taxes



# Prohibitions of the District Board

- Using public office for personal gain or advantage
- Selling or contracting services to the district
  - Relatives of board members are also prohibited from selling to contracting with the district
- Hiring a relative
- Serving in any other County or State **ELECTIVE** office, except serving on the school board

\*If it looks like the director could benefit or profit, it's likely prohibited.  
Exercise caution.







OCC assists in helping boards meet their legal and ethical responsibilities.

# Compensation of the District Board

- Unpaid public officials
  - Not volunteers!
- May receive:
  - Meeting expense reimbursement for attending regular meetings
  - Actual expense reimbursement for expenses incurred in performance of official duties
- May participate in the state dental and health plans at their own expense



# Organization of the District Board

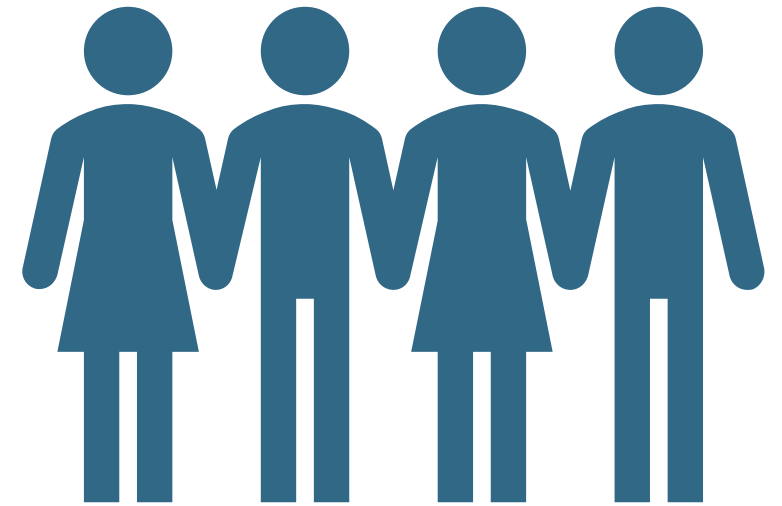
- Reorganization and election of officers must occur at least once every year at the July board meeting
  - May occur at the June board meeting if all members are duly seated
- Each year, boards must elect a:
  - Chair
  - Vice-Chair
  - Treasurer
- Form 3A – Notice of Newly Elected Officers must be provided to the Commission by August 1

# Organization of the District Board

- Boards choose how to rotate positions
  - Officers should change to provide leadership opportunities to all
- Reorganization is required to occur in July, however, if an office position becomes vacant the district will want to consider reorganizing at that time
  - New member(s) may not be familiar with district operations
  - New member(s) may not feel ready to take on a leadership role
  - If new officers are elected, an updated form 3A should be provided to the Commission

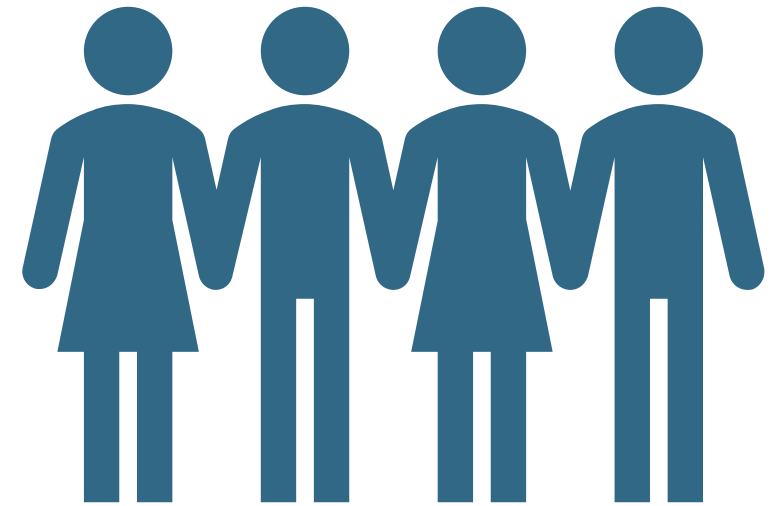
# Board Member Roles: Applicable to All

- Any individual serving as a board member should be prepared to:
  - Serve as the district's public representative
  - Attend and come prepared for meetings
  - Participate in district activities and events
  - Keep confidential matters confidential & exercise discretion in all other matters
  - Foster relationships and cooperate on all district operational items



# Board Member Roles: Applicable to All

- Any individual serving as a board member should be prepared to:
  - Be available to assist and contribute to district operational needs
  - Ask questions & engage in discussions to reach solutions
  - Be informed of local natural resource and other issues
  - Disclose any conflicts of interest



# Board Member Roles: Chair

- Sets the tone for overall leadership of the district
- Key to good meetings
- An individual serving in the chair role should be prepared to:
  - Lead by modeling exemplary board behavior
  - Preside in a neutral manner
  - Forge relationships
  - Encourage attendance & participation of other board members
  - Engage with staff for meeting preparation
  - Ensure meetings are conducted efficiently & remain on track



## Board Member Roles: Vice Chair

- Assumes all responsibilities of the chair in their absence
- An individual serving in the vice-chair role should be prepared to:
  - Take on the role of the chair when needed
  - Ensure seamless continuity of district business, including meetings, in the chair's absence





# Board Member Roles: Treasurer

- Considered the authority on the district's finances
- An individual serving in the treasurer role should be prepared to:
  - Help board members review and understand financial reports
  - Assist district staff with preparation and presentation of the financial statements
  - Help develop the district budget and track expenditures/income



\*The treasurer, district manager, and any other employee or board member entrusted with funds and property must be covered by a surety bond.

# The impossible task...

Recruiting board members.

# What Makes a Good Board Member?

- Interested in conservation and the local community
- Willing to serve (action, not just desire)
- Willing to learn and ask questions
- Communicates effectively
- Willing to help supervise staff and secure financial resources

# What Makes a Good Board Member?

- Also consider what your district needs locally
  - Is a certain area of the district underrepresented?
  - Are there a variety of backgrounds? Viewpoints?
  - A mix of new/beginning conservationists and those that are more seasoned?

# What Makes a Good Board Member?

- Also consider what your district needs locally
  - Is a certain area of the district underrepresented?
  - Are there a variety of backgrounds? Viewpoints?
  - A mix of new/beginning conservationists and those that are more seasoned?
- Keep in mind, recruit for what the district NEEDS, not what is easiest or most convenient



Snacks!



Being a voice for local communities  
and people



Giving time to conserve natural  
resource/making a difference



Providing leadership while also  
gaining new skills and knowledge

## How to Recruit

There's benefits to being a  
director (just unpaid benefits...)

Be honest about  
what is expected of  
a board member



Encourage them to  
explore resources to  
learn more



Invite them to attend  
board meetings and  
district events



Ask them to become  
an associate  
member

## How to Recruit

You found a possible recruit,  
now what?

# Keeping (or Getting) Current Board Members (More) Engaged

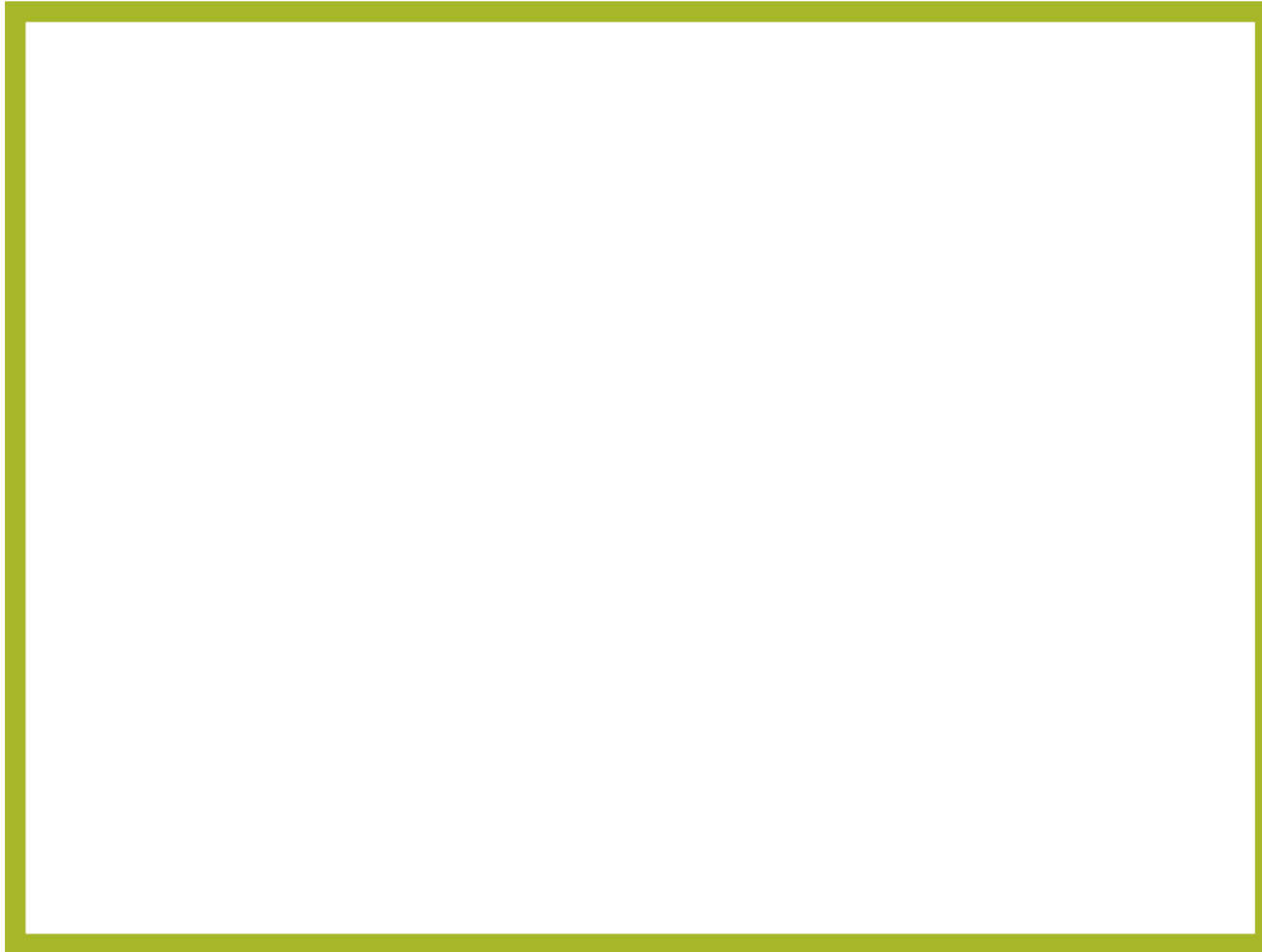
- Board members are understandably busy, but each CHOSE to serve and should be active in their role.
- Staff can make engagement easier by:
  - Sending meeting packets and information in advance
  - Request input and feedback
  - Share information on any activities/events the district is hosting or participating in
  - Give them a task for hosted events/activities
  - Ask for help
  - Let them lead the discussion



# How to Retire

- Board members may decide to end their board service for a variety of reasons.
- Once this desire is expressed, honor it
  - Don't coerce
  - Don't cajole
- Thank them for their service
- Ask if there are ways they would like to stay engaged with the district
  - Events
  - Volunteerism
  - Serving as an associate

A Conservation District  
cannot exist without a  
District Board.



## Questions?

Scan the QR code (or click the link in the chat) to complete today's attendance form.