



The Conservation District Board Training Takeaways

May 2025

This training resource is designed to help conservation district directors and employees stay informed of key points discussed in recent web-based training. The document should be listed on the district's meeting agenda for discussion and review.

What is the Conservation District Board?

- The governing body of the district responsible for the operation and management of the district.
- Composed of public officials, not volunteers, who work to address local environmental concerns and coordinate efforts among entities to solve local conservation issues while implementing and administering programs and initiatives.

Structure of the District Board

- Members of the district board are duly elected or appointed public officials.
- Each district board is comprised of 5 members
 - 2 who are appointed, serving two-year terms
 - 3 who are elected, serving three-year terms
- Board members must:
 - Be registered to vote within the boundaries of the district
 - Have a signed cooperator agreement with the district
 - Take the oath of office and loyalty oath at the beginning of each term
- As unpaid public officials, board members may receive a meeting expense reimbursement for attending regular meetings and may receive reimbursement only for actual expenses incurred in the official duties.
- District boards may also choose to have associate members. Associate members have no legal or voting authority and may not receive reimbursement for expenses from the Commission; however, the district may reimburse them from local funds.

Responsibilities of the District Board

- The authorities of the district board are conveyed through Title 27A, the Conservation District Act.
- Board members have both legal and ethical responsibilities to ensure that the Conservation District Act and all applicable laws are followed while doing the best job to ensure resources are put to the best use to meet the conservation mission.
- Responsibilities of the district board can generally be classified into four categories: Administrative, Financial, Programs, and Personnel.
 - Administrative responsibilities include ensuring meetings and district business are conducted efficiently, knowing and abiding by all applicable laws/regulations/policies, and maintaining full and accurate district records.
 - Financial responsibilities include ensuring the long-term financial stability of the district, securing funding resources, overseeing and undertaking, when necessary, the operations of the district, expending public monies according to best practices and applicable laws, and knowing and understanding the district's financial situation.
 - Program responsibilities include making efficient use of technical and financial resources, administering and fulfilling responsibilities of program delivery, and cooperating with other groups to promote conservation.

- Personnel responsibilities include identifying personnel needs, hiring/disciplining/firing staff, providing supervision of staff, and understanding payroll/benefits/taxes.

Prohibitions of the District Board

- Board members are prohibited from: using their office for personal gain or advantage, selling or contracting services to the district, hiring a relative, or serving any other county or state elective office (except school board).
- Relatives of board members are also prohibited from selling or contracting services to the district.

Organization of the Board (i.e. Officers)

- Boards are required to reorganize and elect officers in July of each year. Boards must elect the following officers each year:
 - Chair
 - Vice-Chair
 - Treasurer
- If an officer position becomes vacant at another time of the year, it is recommended that the board take action to re-elect officers.

Board Member Roles

- Any individual serving on the board 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 and exercise discretion in all other matters
 - Foster relationships and cooperation on all district matters
 - Makes themselves available to assist and contribute to district operational needs
 - Ask questions and engage
 - Be informed of local resource concerns and other issues impacting the district and those who the district serves
 - Disclose any conflicts of interest
- Individuals serving in officer positions should be prepared to assume additional responsibilities of those roles, including providing additional leadership and assistance.

Active & Engaged Boards

- With the important role district board members play in the operation and stability of the district, it's vital to have individuals serving who are interested in serving and who will contribute the necessary time and effort required.
- The district should develop a recruitment strategy for finding qualified individuals to serve on the board.

Additional Resources

- Conservation District Handbook
- 10-Minute Guide Series
- Training Resources section of the OCC website
- District Employees Team on Teams