

Keep Supporting the Kansas Conservation Partnership as the Leaders in Local Program Implementation!

Collaboration is what we do!

Conservation districts work with adjoining counties in shared watersheds outside of county boundaries. This includes working with local **Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS)** groups and Watershed Districts. Conservation Districts also have a long history of working with non-governmental entities such as the **Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams (KAWS)**, **KSU Research and Extension** and many others. Districts are involved in State water planning activities such as the Kansas Water Authority, Regional Advisory Committees and the Governor's Water Vision. Collaboration is more important than ever with increased resources forecasted in the Governor's Water Vision.



What the Kansas Conservation Partnership needs from state leaders:

1. Increase State Aid to Conservation Districts funding

- What will it cost? Up to an additional \$600K annually depending on county match
- How will it be funded? Restoration of cuts to the State Water Plan, Governor's Water Vision funding

2. Increase state cost-share funding from the State Water Plan (currently lowest in the 28 years of SWP)

- What will it cost? \$4 million annually to restore cost-share to historical averages (Additional funding will be requested through the Governor's Water Vision funding initiatives to address state priorities)
- How will it be funded? Restoration of cuts to the SWP, Governor's Water Vision funding

3. Recognize and support the Kansas Conservation Partnership as the past, current and future leaders of natural resource program implementation at the local level

- What will it cost? No additional cost as a proven and trusted implementation structure already exists in every county

4. Encourage state agencies and non-governmental entities to partner and use Kansas Conservation Partnership technical assistance, outreach and automated contracting

- What will it cost? No additional cost as a federal and state program delivery structure exists with an investment of over \$70 million annually in buildings, staff and equipment

The Kansas Conservation Partnership consists of: -The Kansas Association of Conservation Districts (KACD) with five board of directors representing 525 elected conservation district officials -The 160 district employees of the KACD Employees Organization -The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) providing technical design services statewide -The Division of Conservation (DOC), Kansas Department of Agriculture administering state cost-share funds to districts -The State Conservation Commission (SCC) is a conservation program policy board made up of five elected and four ex-officio members.

Why support the Kansas Conservation Partnership as the leader in natural resource program delivery in Kansas?

- ⇒ K.S.A. 2-1901 et seq: Conservation districts are directed by Conservation District Law to implement state conservation programs
- ⇒ 79 Year history of success
- ⇒ Locally elected county officials to guide program implementation
- ⇒ All counties served by local offices
- ⇒ Projects designed, built and certified according to tested standards and specifications
- ⇒ Local management and program implementation accountability through state and federal audits
- ⇒ Successful history of partnering with multiple agencies and non-governmental entities
- ⇒ Measurable improvements in water quality and water conservation and reduction in soil loss
- ⇒ Proven delivery system to implement additional resources available from the Governor's Water Vision
- ⇒ Proven and effective automated financial management and contracting
- ⇒ Non-regulatory agencies implementing voluntary programs equals success!

Our Business Model ✓

- Targeted cost-share based on KDHE guidance
- Prioritized application approval based on state and local needs
- Comprehensive project planning and design according to engineer approved standards and specifications
- Automated contracting procedures
- Project maintenance agreement signed by applicant to ensure compliance
- *Inspection and audits of projects and documents by state and federal field staff*



The Function of the Conservation District ✓

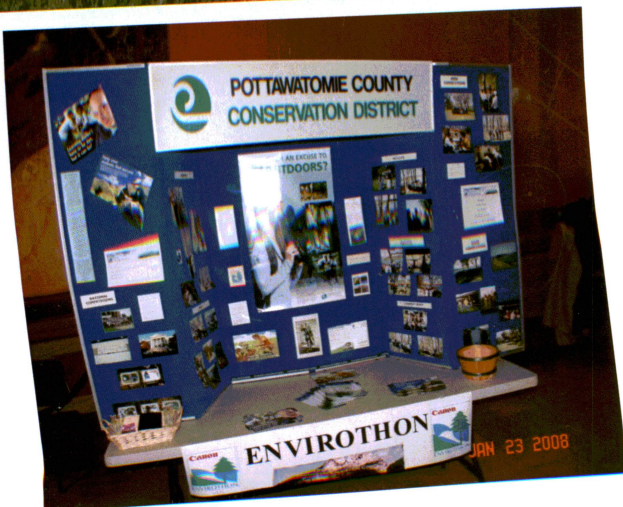
To take available technical, financial, and educational resources, whatever their source and focus, and coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land user for conservation of soil, water, and related resources.

State Aid to Conservation Districts

- Provides matching funds for a county match (up to \$25,000 per district) to conservation districts. Match provides incentive for the county commission to match support to receive full state aid (K.S.A. 2-1907c). This statute was revised in 2012 by the Kansas Legislature.
 - ⇒ At this time KDA-DOC is not able to fully match due to state budget restrictions.
- These funds assist the 105 county conservation districts to effectively deliver local, state, and federal natural resource programs as prescribed under the Conservation District Law (K.S.A. 2-1901 et seq.).
 - ⇒ Hire administrative and technical staff.
 - ⇒ Coordinate various conservation programs.
 - ⇒ Implement state financial assistance programs at the local level.
 - ⇒ Carry out information and education campaigns promoting conservation.
 - ⇒ Provide technical and clerical assistance to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, to continue meeting our Local Operation Agreement.

State Aid Received from the State Water Plan

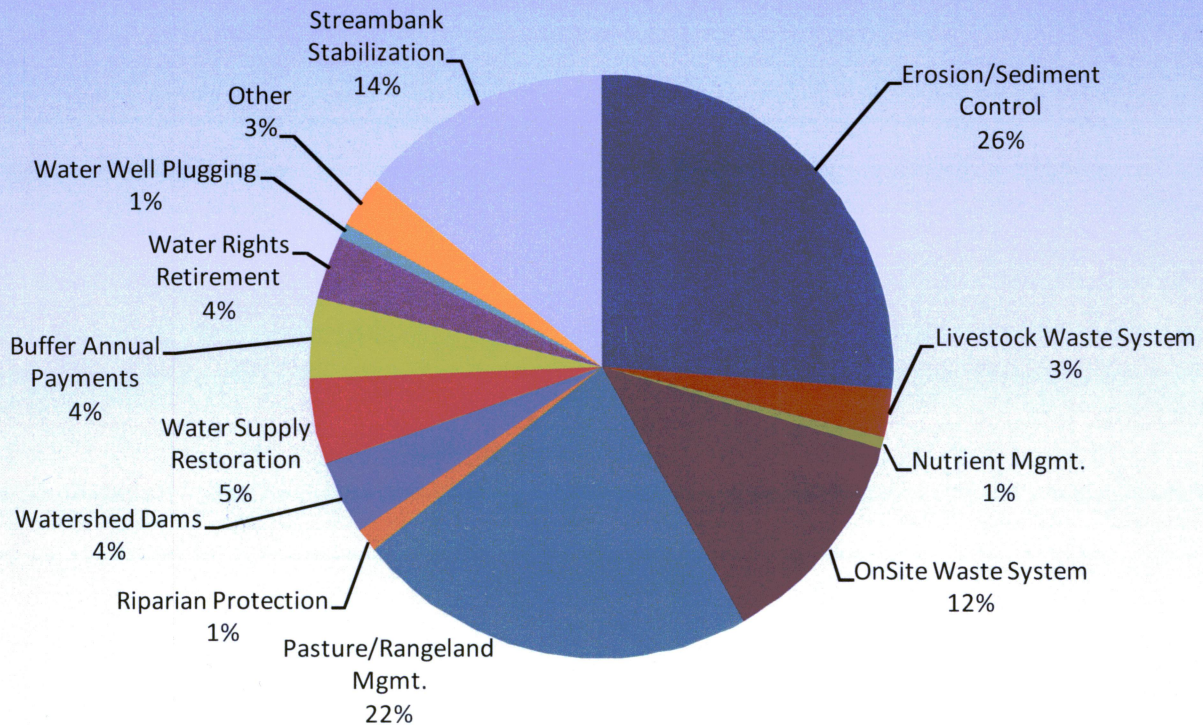
- \$2,092,637 appropriated in FY 2015 and FY 2016.
- \$2,625,000 per year is needed to fully fund each district.



Locally Elected Officials

A local five-member board, known as district supervisors, governs each conservation district. District supervisors are elected public officials who serve without pay. The 525 district supervisors donate nearly 50,000 hours per year establishing local priorities, setting policy, and administering programs to conserve natural resources and protect water quality.

FY 2015 State Water Plan Cost-share Implementation by Conservation Districts



Why is Conservation Important?

- Protect productive farmland
- Protect water supplies
- Protect infrastructure
- Foster environmental stewardship
- Preserve quality of life and economic growth
- Protect water quality



Steps in a State Cost-Share Contract

Conservation district and NRCS staff implement a methodical approach to state cost-share implementation based on state water planning priorities and local needs. Districts also assist the NRCS in implementing federal programs using similar methods.

Landowner **contacts the conservation district and NRCS-USDA** service center/conservation district office regarding a resource concern.

This may be in response to district ad, field day or word of mouth.

Landowner is greeted by conservation district staff and begins the process of working with district staff and NRCS to address the **resource concern**.

District employee works with NRCS and landowner to determine **best program for them. Could be state, federal, WRAPS or a combination.**

If a state program is selected, the district employee works with NRCS and assigns "**ranking**" to the project. This ranking **determines priority for available funding and is based on state and local resource needs.**

Example ranking questions can include information about:

- Location of project in Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) priority area –close to registered stream, etc.
- Type of project and its ability to meet state water plan goals and Governor's Water Vision
- In the drainage area of a public water supply reservoir

Once project is approved by local district board, the district employee enters all project and landowner information into **Cost Share Information Management System (CSIMS)**. Then a state DOC employee will approve the contract or ask for adjustments.

Once the project is state approved, the district employee prints a custom landowner agreement out of **CSIMS**. This **landowner agreement** informs the landowner of the terms, such as the years the practice must stay in place, and the technical standard that must be followed. Once the landowner signature is obtained, work may begin!

Once the project is completed, NRCS or the conservation technician will provide the district with a physical "checkout". This checkout allows DOC to know that the **project was completed to NRCS technical standards**. The landowner will then provide the bills to the district.

The district employee will then **submit** the contract for **final payment in CSIMS**. A DOC employee will approve the payment or ask for adjustments.

Once final payment is approved, the Kansas Department of Administration will send the landowner a check for the cost share amount. The State of Kansas will send any required tax reporting documents to the landowner.

Political Subdivisions of State Government

A Conservation District is the primary local unit of government responsible for the conservation of soil, water and related natural resources within the county boundary. Kansas conservation districts are political subdivisions of state government charged with this vital role. Funding comes from county and State Water Plan allocations, with some districts generating funds by providing conservation goods and services or pursuing other grant opportunities.



The district's governing board is comprised of five elected local citizens known as supervisors. They establish local priorities, set policy and administer non-regulatory conservation programs during monthly board meetings. The supervisors, although serving as public officials, do not draw a salary. Conservation District employee(s) are hired by the supervisors to provide day-to-day coordination of district activities.

Each conservation district has an annual meeting in January or February where the public is invited to hear about the accomplishments of the district and to learn more about the programs offered in the county. Also, an election is conducted for the positions of supervisors to fill three-year terms. In this election, every qualified elector residing in the county is eligible to vote.



Grass Roots Leadership

Because conservation districts are citizen-directed organizations, they are practical partners to coordinate local, state and federal initiatives to protect natural resources.



A county conservation district field office co-located with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Getting it done!

Conservation districts address a wide range of environmental concerns. These include both agricultural and urban erosion and sediment control, water quality, water quantity, range and pasture management, fish and wildlife habitat, and other natural resource management issues. Conservation districts work cooperatively with local citizens to solve local conservation problems. This benefits both the agricultural community and society as a whole. Clean water and productive soil are basic to our quality of life - now and in the future!

Example benefits from FY 2015 projects		
<i>Over 80 practices are available for state cost-share</i>		
Funded by State Water Plan and Implemented by		
Conservation Districts	<u>State Wide</u>	<u>WRAPS Priority HUC's</u>
Tons of Soil Saved	133,200 Tons	51,971 Tons
Acres Protected (Cropland)	27,298 Acres	5,624 Acres
Pasture Acres (Alternative Water Supply)	66,299 Acres	3,873 Acres
Average Pasture Size	127 Acres	77 Acres



Information/Education and Services

Conservation districts provide information and education to landowners, schools and the general public about soil and water conservation issues. Some districts offer conservation-related items for sale such as grass seed and trees. Many districts have equipment available to rent that promote conservation by preventing erosion and improving water quality. This equipment may include grass drills, tree planters and no-till seeders.



The Kansas Conservation Partnership

The Kansas Conservation Partnership represents a federal, state, and local collaboration that has existed in Kansas for more than 70 years. The three entities that make up the partnership are (1) the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts, (2) the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and (3) the Division of Conservation, KDA.



Kansas Association of Conservation Districts (KACD) The Kansas Association of Conservation Districts is a voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit, 501(c)(4) organization that was established in 1944. It's 525 members are the supervisors of the conservation districts located in the state's 105 counties. The KACD Board of Directors is composed of five elected members, each of whom represents one of five geographical areas of the state. KACD Employees Organization is comprised of 160 employees statewide and co-located with the NRCS.

KACD's mission is "to promote the establishment of and give support to programs designed to advance the conservation and orderly development of Kansas land, water, and related resources." The primary activity of KACD is its annual convention, held each year in November. The event features keynote speakers and informative breakout sessions. Apart from the Board of Directors, the association has nine standing committees with specific areas of emphasis ranging from Conservation Education and Youth to District Operations and Resolutions.



For more information, please visit www.kacdnet.org or contact KACD at (785) 479-1369.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) NRCS is an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture. Since the "Dust Bowl Days" in the thirties, NRCS has worked with conservation districts and others to assist landowners, as well as federal, state, tribal, and local governments and community groups. Locally based NRCS staff members work directly with farmers, ranchers, and others to provide technical and financial conservation assistance, such as the development of conservation plans and advice on the design, layout, construction, management, operation, maintenance, and evaluation of recommended voluntary conservation practices. NRCS offices and staff serve every county in Kansas.



For more information, please visit www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov or contact Kansas NRCS at (785) 823-4500.

Division of Conservation (DOC) The Division of Conservation in the Kansas Department of Agriculture was formerly the State Conservation Commission (SCC), a stand-alone agency of state government. In 2011, Governor Sam Brownback issued an executive order to reorganize the SCC and two other agencies and place them within the Kansas Department of Agriculture. The SCC board continues as a conservation program policy board.

The DOC administers programs to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, conserve water, reduce flood potential, provide local water supply, and assure that aggregate mining sites are reclaimed. This effort is achieved in cooperation with 105 local conservation districts and the more than 85 organized watershed/drainage districts, as well as with state, federal and nonprofit entities. The DOC is assigned responsibilities for administering provisions of the Conservation District Law, the Watershed District Act, the Surface-Mining Land Conservation and Reclamation Act, and other statutes.



For more information, please visit www.agriculture.ks.gov or contact DOC at (785) 564-6620.

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