

COMMISSIONER

DEVELOPMENT

PLAN

Thank you for serving our state as a Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner. It can take a few months, and sometimes years, to get comfortable with SWCD commissioner duties and responsibilities. This plan includes some activities which will help you develop your knowledge, skills and abilities in your commissioner role. Many of these activities could be discussed during monthly district meetings. In this way, the knowledge of all Commissioners and staff is increased and some great discussion on these various topics is likely to result.

Development Level	Number of Activities in Each Category
Basic Awareness	One (9 total)
Understand Expectations	Two (18 total)
Improve Effectiveness	Three (27 total)
Becoming an Expert	Four (36 total)

Mentoring is another valuable development tool. Think about becoming a mentor to other commissioners, or seeking someone out who could mentor you. If interested, please contact your District Conservationist, the CDI Executive Director, or DSC Field Representative.

1 History of the Conservation Movement.

Date Completed

- Read *Conquest of the Land Through 7,000 Years*. _____
- Spend an hour visiting with the longest serving district commissioner. _____
- Read *Iowa Soil Conservation 1939 to 1979* by Don Muhm. _____
- Read *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold. _____
- Read *The History of Soil and Water Conservation* by Helms and Fladen. _____
- View the PBS video, "Surviving the Dust Bowl." _____
- Review the poster, "In the time it took to form 1" of Soil." _____
- Read *With One Voice: The National Association of Conservation Districts* by R. Neil Sampson _____
- Watch The Weather Channel's *When Weather Changed History, Dust Bowl* _____

2

Discover your SWCD’s critical natural resource concerns and the methods/practices used to address them.

Date Completed

- Arrange a plane ride over the district to view natural resources and concerns.
- Read the section of your district’s Soil and Water Conservation Plan that identifies priority concerns.
- Spend a day with the DC in the field looking at resource concerns.
- Spend a day with a technician in the field looking at and applying solutions to resource concerns.
- Request local DC to provide maps which describe SWCD resources.
- Watch the “Creating a Culture of Conservation” video series. What resource concerns discussed are key for your SWCD?
- Visit the local coffee shop and learn what your neighbors feel about resource concerns in your SWCD.
- Spend time with Regional Watershed Coordinator to learn about available watershed-based planning assistance.

3

Partnering with others to build SWCD capacity. The core partners include SWCD, NRCS and IDALS-DSC. Many additional opportunities are available.

Date Completed

- Read the Mutual Agreement and the Cooperative Working Agreement between your SWCD and other core partners.
- Learn more about your core partners by reviewing information available on the SWCD, CDI, NACD, NRCS and IDALS web pages.
- Spend time with the SWCD Chair and NRCS DC discussing current partnerships, such as agreements with the Co. Board of Supervisor.
- Attend the local monthly RC&D meeting with your county representative.
- Attend local partner group meetings, such as the County Conservation Board, FSA County Committee and the local PF Chapter.

4

Advocating for conservation

Date Completed

- Install a conservation practice or backyard conservation practice on your land and hold a tour or field day to discuss it.
- Visit someone who is teaching conservation and learn about the curriculum and what the SWCD could do to supplement it.
- Show the “Creating a Culture of Conservation” video series to FFA chapters, local 4-H clubs, schools, Rotary clubs, Chambers of Commerce and Kiwanis.
- Introduce yourself to elected officials serving a common constituency.
- Learn about local, regional, and state awards and recognition programs available to the SWCD.
- Assist your local district at an Envirothon, or with the local scholarship, essay or poster contest.

5

**Commissioner’s roles and responsibilities include:
Know and understand your SWCD purpose.**

Date Completed

- Review your district’s mission statement and determine its relevance for today.
- Read last year’s annual report and decide how to contribute to the next year’s report (i.e. an article).
- Read *The Conservation District Official: Villain or Victim* by Pete Nowak.
- Read for content Division II of Iowa Code chapter 161A Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the Commissioner Handbook, Section G. Give special attention to 161A.7 Powers of Districts and Commissioners.
- View the video “Conservation District Commissioner.”
- Visit with your district chairperson about your mission.
- Review and understand your Commissioner’s Handbook.
- Visit your IDALS-DSC Field Representative for advice and consultation on this and other topics.
- Arrange a time to visit your regional director.
- Invite CDI Executive Director to a regular SWCD meeting.

6

**Financial assistance programs for applying
conservation practices (local, state and federal).**

Date Completed

- Spend a half day with the state secretary learning about guidelines and processes for state and local financial assistance programs, including an overview of FARMS.
- Spend time with NRCS DC discussing NRCS conservation programs.
- Review *A Guide to Conservation Programs for Iowa Landowners* and give a report at a board meeting.
- Spend two hours with FSA Conservation Program Assistant learning about CRP.

7

**Legal and administrative guidelines and accountability,
including the following**

Date Completed

Understanding that your district is an employer

- Review the SWCD Employer’s and Employee’s handbooks (CDI web page).
- Visit with the most long-term SWCD employee for an hour.

Budget and account for expenditures

- Review the SWCD’s various accounts and budgets with the DSC state secretary and SWCD co-treasurer.
- Review the most recent SWCD annual audit.

Communication with customers, open meetings and public information

- Review the Iowa Open Meeting Law information in the SWCD Policy and Procedures Manual under District Operations 7-1 and 7-1-1.

Conflict of interest

- Review Chapter 68B Conflict of Interest of Public Officers and Employees of Iowa Code.

8

Planning for success to achieve your goals and objectives

Date Completed

- Review the SWCD Soil and Water Resource Conservation Plan to learn goals and objectives and how you have planned long-term to achieve them.
- Review the annual work plan and most recent annual report to compare results achieved with the planned activities for the previous year.
- Look at a SWCD watershed project annual work plan and budget and compare with project annual report.
- Gain an awareness of the purpose and contents of the SWCD Policy and Procedures Manual.
- Ask to see and review your NRCS field office business plan. Discuss with your DC.
- Review your local Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council's Area plan. Review it with your district representative to the RC&D council.

9

Continuing education is a must

Date Completed

- Make training a standing agenda item at each monthly board meeting.
- Attend a neighboring district's SWCD meeting once per year.
- Attend a conservation-related field day, tour or meeting. Make this an annual event.
- Attend the CDI Annual Conference.
- Attend Regional meetings.

Signature of Commissioner

Date

Signature of SWCD Chair/Vice Chair

Date