

---CONSERVATION DISTRICTS OF IOWA (CDI)---

CONNECTIONS

The Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) informs, educates, and leads Iowans through our local soil and water conservation districts to promote conservation of natural resources.



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CDI EXECUTIVE BOARD:

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CDI President's Report

By President Jeri Thornsberry

CDI staff and officers are hard at work planning our **79th Annual Conference**, and we're excited to invite every one of our 500 elected commissioners and all appointed assistant commissioners to attend this vital event. It's more than just a meeting—it's a chance to have your voice heard, connect with peers, and shape the future of conservation in Iowa.

We understand how busy everyone is, but we can't stress this enough: your participation truly matters. We're fortunate to get about 90 of you each year—but imagine the energy and progress we could make with twice that number—or even more.

Why You Should Join Us

Dates: Monday–Tuesday, August 25–26, 2025

Location: Gateway Hotel and Conference Center in Ames

Cost to you: \$0

This **all-expense-paid** two-day conference is made possible thanks to support from IDALS. Your registration, hotel, and meals are covered. Mileage is reimbursable through your district's Commissioner Expense Fund (1M).

What Makes This Conference So Important

Day 1 (Monday, August 25):

We'll handle the official business of the association—voting on key resolutions, amending bylaws, approving the budget, and electing officers. The direction you help set here guides our work statewide.

We'll also host learning sessions to dive into today's most pressing conservation issues and emerging opportunities. This is your chance to bring questions and ideas to the table.

Day 2 (Tuesday, August 26):

We'll engage directly with our major partners: IDALS, NRCS, DNR, and FSA. These open-dialogue sessions offer a unique opportunity to get clarity on decisions that impact your work and future farm operations.

Why Your Attendance Matters

You were elected to represent your fellow citizens in your county. This conference is your annual opportunity to represent them on the statewide stage. The decisions made at this event influence conservation policies, funding, and initiatives across Iowa.

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Your voice matters. Your presence strengthens CDI's work and ensures that we move forward together, not in silos.

We hope you'll register as soon as conference details are released and join fellow commissioners in making this the most impactful conference yet. Together, we're stronger—and your participation is the key.

Upcoming Deadlines

Poster Contest

- June 20: Winning posters from each SWCD must be submitted electronically to your CDI Regional Directors.
- July 19: Regional Directors select top posters in each category to represent Iowa at the 2026 NACD Annual Conference. Full details at cdiowa.org.

Pre-Conference Resolutions Ballot

- July 1 at 4:00 PM: Ballots must be received at the CDI office. Full details at cdiowa.org

As I write this on Memorial Day, I'm reflecting on those who gave their lives in service to our country. Their sacrifice reminds me why our work matters—protecting the land, communities, and freedoms they fought for. I hope you also had a meaningful Memorial Day.

Looking forward to seeing you in August!

CDI Executive Director's Report

By Executive Director Dien Judge

As Iowa Legislative Session concludes, conservation funding remains steady

REAP Program extended into 2028

The Iowa Legislature was adjourned on May 15 in the early hours of the morning, after passing a budget of \$9.452 billion for fiscal year 2026.

The budget had been delayed following a push to limit the use of eminent domain for carbon capture pipelines.

Funding for conservation programs remains steady, with strong support from the Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriations bill, and the Infrastructure Appropriations bill, which were both approved by the Iowa House and Senate.

Appropriations of interest in these bills include: **\$1 million** for the CREP Program; **\$900,000** for Watershed Protection; **\$900,000** for the Conservation Reserve Program; **\$8.2 million** for Soil and Water Conservation (from Enviro First); **\$3.8 million** for Soil and Water Conservation Administration; **\$2.375** for the Water Quality Initiative (from Enviro First); \$12 million for REAP; \$525,000 for Forest Health Management; \$150,000 for Iowa State University Extension private lands forester; \$200,000 for IGS Groundwater Assessment; \$8.2 million for the Water Quality Initiative (from RIIIF); \$9.6 million for the Lake Restoration program.

The REAP (Resource Enhancement and Protection) program has been extended for three years, as a result of the passage of this legislation as well, which will ensure funding for REAP until June 30, 2028.

Conservation Districts of Iowa represents you, and supports your priorities, at the Iowa Capitol. During the annual legislative session, CDI employs the services of Jim Obradovich and his team at the Capitol Group firm to promote our official Conservation Districts of Iowa Resolutions and monitor any legislation that would be detrimental to our mission in soil and water conservation.



The west side of the Iowa State Capitol the morning of the final day of the 2025 Legislative Session. (Photo by the Capitol Group).

- **CDI Annual Conference – Aug. 25-26**

CDI staff are back on the job after federal funding ‘pause’

Many CDI staff members have returned to their positions following the unfortunate layoffs that were caused in February by the Trump Administration’s “pause” in federal payments for grant programs. The pause in payments has ended, and all staff members were offered the opportunity to work for CDI once again.

Grant funded program staff began returning to work over the course of the last three months. This includes CDI program staff in the Conservation Planning Program, the Private Lands Conservation Partnership Program, and the CDI Administrative Support Program.

CDI Executive Director Dien Judge said it



CDI Poster Contest announced

Rules for the CDI 2025 Poster Contest have been released, and are available at this [link](#). The annual NACD and NACD Auxiliary Poster Contest provides students from kindergarten through 12th grade the chance to have their art displayed as part of a national conservation outreach initiative. Each year, the winning posters highlight the work of conservation districts and their state conservation associations, auxiliaries and agencies to protect and enhance natural resources. The contest starts at the district level; winners advance to the state level, and then to the national level, where they receive recognition at NACD’s annual meeting. The poster contest is open to public, private and home-schooled students. The top three posters in each category of the national contest will receive monetary prizes. First-place winners will receive \$200; second place winners will

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receive \$150 and third place winners will receive \$100. For all those who entered, local sponsors may offer each a special Participation Certificate to recognize their participation. The NACD Auxiliary – through their quilt project proceeds, the Country Store at the Meeting and individual donors – sponsor prizes national level.



NACD Annual
at the