



Association of Florida Conservation Districts

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"Working to strengthen Florida's Soil & Water Conservation Districts"

Fellow Conservationists,

Congratulations on your election or appointment to your local Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD)! Let me be the first to welcome you as you accept the challenge to provide your unique perspective and background to a conservation leadership role in your community. Locally-led conservation efforts are at the heart of the Association of Florida Conservation Districts (AFCD) as we endeavor to represent agricultural and conservation needs on various advocacy stages and to be the concerted voice of the resource stewards from across the Sunshine State.

Florida is a unique state made up of a diverse array of topographies and natural resources and home to 47,400 farms and ranches working 9.7 million acres of land to provide a safe, abundant source of food, fiber and fuel to the nation. With about 1,650 people moving to the state every day in 2019, competition for our unique natural resources is at an all-time high placing emphasis on the need for effective guidance. Our SWCD's provide the operational leadership in the counties to direct and affect conservation efforts and partnerships within their boundaries to conserve and protect the resources while still maintaining agricultural strength.

Additionally, I believe that along with air, water and soil- the big three ingredients that make life and productivity abound, there are two others- time and people. Without your investment of time, we couldn't stay ahead of the trends that lead our SWCD's towards innovation as we seek to implement solutions to agricultural and natural resources issues every day. Without your engagement and participation, the future of agriculture in Florida would diminish and in your absence, other voices would be heard. Thank you for your willingness to serve and for your dedication of time to this essential and worthwhile pursuit!

"... cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bands." -Thomas Jefferson

Sincerely,

BUCK M. CARPENTER, President

Association of Florida Conservation Districts

Your new role as a conservation district supervisor is an important one. Your main responsibilities will include:

- Setting and scrutinizing the district's mission and overall strategy to achieve it (if applicable).
- Supporting management and staff, assuring they function efficiently and responsibly. They represent the district to the community on a day-to-day basis.
- Developing and conserving the districts resources- both funds and property.
- Serving as a bridge and buffer between the district and its customers and partners; advocating for the district and building support in the community.

Duties:

- Be familiar with Chapter 582 Florida Statutes (F.S.)/ Know the powers, authorities, responsibilities, and limitations placed upon you by law.
- Attend regular and special meetings of the district board.
- Accept the responsibilities of any office to which you are appointed. Serve on committees and present reports on their accomplishments and activities.
- Act as a district representative in communicating district actions, policy, etc. to your local community.
- Attend local, state, national, and other conservation meetings on behalf of the district to stay current with conservation issues.
- Pursue funding for district programs and initiatives.
- Develop an annual budget, assure fiscal responsibility, and provide financial statements.
- Develop a working relationship with local county government, officials and state agencies, legislators, and organizations that do or could cooperate with the conservation district.
- Stay informed on conservation issues in your county and be familiar with important laws, policies, and programs.
- Be familiar with district programs and activities. Be positive, innovative, and action oriented.

HELPFUL HINTS

There are variety of ways you can use your time and talents to be successful in taking on your new responsibilities.

- Attend and participate in monthly board meetings;
- Ask questions. It is most likely you are not the only one who would like clarification. And, it is a friendly reminder to partners that the public may need more information as well;
- Offer your expertise to assist your board and partners with programs and projects;
- Meet with partners that administer programs of interest to you to find out program goals and discuss how you can help;
- Serve on committees where your knowledge and experience can contribute to district programs or operations;
- Be respectfully open and honest in communications with your fellow supervisors, staff and partners;
- Carry your supervisor handbook to board meetings. It is a valuable resource both inside and outside of meetings.

MORE HELPFUL INFORMATION

1. For more information about your conservation district, talk to the following individuals:
 - Fellow supervisors
 - Districts professional staff (if applicable)
 - District conservationist
 - Local FDACS/OAWP representative
2. For more information about conservation districts, try these websites:
 - www.afcd.us- This is the Association of Florida Conservation Districts (AFCD) website. The AFCD serves as the collective voice of Florida's conservation districts and represents districts at the state and national level.
 - www.nacd.us- This is the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD). The NACD is the national voice of America's 3,000 conservation districts.
 - <https://www.fdacs.gov/Divisions-Offices/Agricultural-Water-Policy>- Florida Department of Agriculture/- Office of Agricultural Water Policy website. The Office of Agricultural Water Policy (OAWP) works with agricultural producers, industry groups, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the university system and the Florida water management districts to develop and implement Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) addressing both water quality and water conservation. Agricultural BMPs are practical, cost-effective actions that agricultural producers can take to conserve water and reduce the amount of pesticides, fertilizers, animal waste and other pollutants entering our water resources.
 - [Florida | Natural Resources Conservation Service \(usda.gov\)](http://www.usda.gov)- United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service serves diverse agricultural needs through four area offices, 34 field offices, and a Plant Materials Center.

WHERE TO START

- Sit down with partners (NRCS, FDACS, WMD, UF/IFAS) to hear what your conservation district is all about. Meet with district staff (if applicable).
- Read Chapter 582.
- Ask for copies of your district's annual goals and objectives, annual report, and long-range strategic plan. These documents will give you a picture of what the district is all about and what they are trying to accomplish.
- Ask your local partners and fellow supervisors about regional and statewide meetings and opportunities for training on specific aspects of the conservation district.