

---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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From: CDI President Dennis Carney

As spring approaches, I hope you and your families have remained warm and healthy through this unusual winter.

As a reminder, it is **important you watch the series of informational videos** that was produced by CDI and [published on the CDI website](#) for Commissioners. Please take time to learn from this valuable resource. The information in these videos is **especially relevant for new commissioners**, but all of us will learn something new.

Currently, **CDI is participating in NACD's Virtual Fly-in event for 2021.** Since we are not going to Washington, D.C. this year, we have arranged virtual meetings with all four of our congressional representatives and two senators. Last week John Whitaker, Tim Palmer, Ramona Nitz, and I had a very productive 30-minute session with Congressman Feenstra. In these meetings, **we will primarily be supporting increased funding for NRCS offices, staff, and programs across Iowa.**

As the new administration in Washington D.C. focuses on climate change mitigation, it puts **the Soil and Water Conservation Districts on the frontlines** of delivering technical assistance and funding to landowners interested in soil health practices. The role of agriculture and forestry in carbon sequestration will be paramount and is becoming a major concern with the consumers of our products. **To get these practices on the ground, districts need sufficient funding, staff, and programming.**

Please stay safe and have a successful spring.

Envirothon teams prep for April online competition

The **2021 Envirothon** is ready again to challenge young Iowa minds with an environmental and natural resource conservation problem-solving, teambuilding and leadership experience and competition. **The event – to be held online this year – is scheduled for April 26th** for high school students (grades 9-12 or ages 14-19). CDI will be creating an online series of tests (similar to the regional events) that will focus on four subjects: Forestry, Aquatics, Soils, and Wildlife. Teams of 5 can work together on the tests. **CDI is waiving the registration fee**, so this event will be free for the participants.

[Click here to register your local teams!](#)



Executive Director Report – John Whitaker

Call your Legislator! I know that you hear that often this time of year when the Iowa House of Representatives and Iowa Senate are in session, but **we do have important legislation up for consideration this year**. HF 801 is modernization language for Iowa code chapter 161 which governs several issues relating to SWCDs. Along with modernizing the current language in 161, such as changing ‘*water condition*’ to ‘*water quality*’ as it relates to SWCD work, **this bill adds soil health to the code** for districts to work on. In the 2020 resolution process, commissioners overwhelmingly passed a resolution calling for soil health to be added to this chapter, so **please contact your legislators**, and let them know you support this important bill.

There are times when our resolutions do not see legislative action, such as the CDI resolution supporting buffers on streams in Iowa. This resolution passed in 2019 but so far, we have not had legislation introduced to do this, so we have not had the chance to support buffers legislatively.

Scam alert! In the past few weeks, you may have received an email from CDI President Dennis Carney or me asking you to send gift cards for a special project. Another email circulating lately asks you to respond to Dennis or me as we have a ‘special project’ for you and need your help right away. Please know that these are **fake** or **scam** emails and you should not respond to them. We are not certain when it happened but somehow scammers have the email lists for conservation organizations and are trying to gain access to your computer. And we are not the only victims. I recently spoke with a congressional aide that I have known for many years and he told me that they had been hit by a scam similar to this and he was receiving 4,000 such emails each week. There are many of these going around! **Again, if you receive one of these emails, please delete it right away, and even delete it from your computer trash file right away.**



Iowa Soil and Water Conservation Week is celebrated in conjunction with Stewardship Week, sponsored by the National Association of Conservation Districts.

<https://iowaagriculture.gov/soil-and-water-conservation-week>

Five-Year Soil & Water Resource Conservation Plan (SWRCP): A Process Primer

Five CDI Planning Coordinators are responsible for helping every SWCD in Iowa create conservation plans, required by Iowa code (161A Chapter 27.22). Here's a basic overview of how that works!

Planning Coordinator (PC) meets with SWCD Board at regular Board Meeting.

Introductions. Discuss the purpose and process of putting together the 5-year plan (SWRCP), set first public meeting date – the Public Brainstorming Meeting (PBM) – plan for publishing legal notice 14 days before the PBM in local newspaper of record.

*“The time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining.”
– John F. Kennedy*

“The changes and priorities I hear commissioners working toward are significant. These challenges we face won't be solved in the next few months. A long-range planning process gives us an opportunity to outline a blueprint for that future. When we plan for the short-term we are naturally limited. The opportunity really expands when we ask, 'What could we accomplish in three or five years?' In the process the districts actively engage their community and work to find folks who want to collaborate or provide input. I've seen relationships built and partnerships developed on the spot to address a goal. Even with the challenges of not being able to meet personally, people show up and show they care by the dozens.”

– CDI Southwest Planning Coordinator Jonathan Hendricks

Planning Process Begins

Hold Public Brainstorming Meeting to establish priorities and solicit public input regarding local resource issues and concerns. From this meeting, the board should note who participated and would be potential candidates for the Local Work Group (LWG). PC meets with SWCD Board at regular Board Meeting. Determine Local Work Group invitees. Determine how each invitee will be contacted (letter, e-mail, call, postcard) and by which member of the board or staff (letter template provided; amend). Determine the place (online or on location), date, and time of the LWG meeting and who will arrange, plan for publishing legal notice 14 days before the meeting. Discuss the format and content of the meeting, how Commissioners will facilitate, etc.

Local Work Group Meeting (Commissioners facilitate; PC keeps records, notes)

Gather input from participants concerning potential solutions, barriers, and ways to overcome obstacles to achieve district goals.

“Always plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.” – Richard Cushing

Development of the Plan

PC meets with SWCD Board at regular Board Meeting. PC consolidates input of public and LWG meetings, reports summary to commissioners. Commissioners develop objectives, goals, and actions (prioritized) for their Board for the next 5 years with PC. Given the Objectives, Goals, and Actions determined by the Board, the PC assembles a draft of the SWRCP, sends draft of SWRCP to Board and staff. They reply with revisions. If necessary, PC meets with Board at regular Board Meeting to discuss revisions, issues. Board presents plan at public meeting for feedback. (This would simply be an agenda item at a regular Board meeting.)

“A good plan today is better than a perfect plan tomorrow.” – George S. Patton

Conclusion of the Process

SWCD Board approves plan by motion at regular Board Meeting. SWCD submits completed plan to State Soil Conservation and Water Quality Committee (SSCWQC) for approval. If found to meet the content requirements, SSCWQC approves the plan at their regularly scheduled meeting. SWRCP is filed with recorder in SWCD's county and filed with the division (IDALS) as part of the state SWRCP. SWCD Board provides notice of filing and may provide copy of approved SWRCP to county board of supervisors and any interested parties.

Follow-up

SWCD Board shares SWRCP with LWG members and forms partnerships on goals, projects. SWCD Board use the SWRCP as a resource when developing.

“Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.” – Warren Buffett

Iowa districts encouraged to participate

NACD seeks baseline activity in nationwide forestry survey

In an effort to gain a more robust understanding the forestry work done by district membership, NACD has developed a short survey that focuses on four overarching themes. According to NACD Natural Resource Policy Specialist Mary Scott, **the survey will help NACD gauge members' capacity for forestry related projects**, no matter how big or how small.

“We’re trying to gain a baseline of what our districts are doing on the ground,” says Scott. “The survey helps capture a time stamp of what’s going on right now. We don’t really have anything like that currently at NACD – we don’t have a solid picture of what’s going on across the country, so we’re trying to establish that baseline of where folks are at and where some of the holes are that we can help with.”

The survey intends to **establish a baseline for NACD in four topics**: current projects, capacity for future projects, familiarity and involvement with state and federal forestry programs, resources NACD could provide to help with forestry project engagement. The survey gages involvement in state and federal forestry programs and initiatives such as State Forest Action Plans and Shared Stewardship. “We have districts that are engaged and very aware of what’s going on and having great conversations with their state’s forester, and some districts that aren’t as familiar – they haven’t done any work there, and not aware they can be part of those conversations. So we’re trying to get a feel for where the gaps are.” **District staff and commissioners are encouraged to participate** in the survey.

Please complete this [survey](#) by April 19, 2021.

PFI video offers ideas and strategies for Field Day success

“Field Day Training for Farmers”

Former CDI Vice President Jack Boyer leads viewers through a fifty-five-minute training video focusing on **successful strategies for sponsoring and conducting critical Field Days targeting farmers**. Highlights of the video, produced and distributed by Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI), include:

- Farmers learn best from other farmers; let the farmer host lead the field day
- Start planning early; take planning cues from the field day host
- Include contingencies in your planning; be ready to be flexible
- Don’t try and do too much; leave space for conversations and networking



Former CDI Vice President Jack Boyer

To view, click [Field Day Training for Farmers](#)