

---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

I trust that this year's proposed resolutions have spurred some thoughtful discussion at your districts' monthly meetings. The annual CDI resolution process is one of the most impactful things you can do as a commissioner, in that it guides the direction and focus of your state association. Resolutions that are approved each year become part of the mission of CDI and they remain on our to-do list until accomplished. Please reach out to the contact people listed on a specific resolution if you have questions.

CDI also sent out information on our proposed bylaw changes to be voted on at this year's conference. Please read through these documents carefully. Your CDI officers, board, staff, and a special bylaws committee have spent many hours over the past ten months considering all the reasons for making these changes. These proposed changes clarify the eligibility of assistant commissioners within CDI, redefine the duties of the immediate past president, add an affiliate non-voting membership class, and update our quorum requirements.

The most important proposed bylaw change is to redefine CDI membership. Each of Iowa's 100 SWCDs would become "members" of CDI rather than individual commissioners. We believe that the advantages in dealing with clerical issues, voting, quorum requirements, proxies, and encouraging issue discussion on a district level justify this change. These new bylaws will also bring us in line with our surrounding states and NACD. Please study this issue carefully and contact any officer or board member with questions.

Share your local district news and features, personal profiles and awards with your SWCD peers statewide! Contact 'CDI Connections' at joe@cdiowa.org

Executive Director Report – John Whitaker

I would like to thank all commissioners and districts for their participation this past year. It has not been easy dealing with not being able to meet face to face and have the open conversations that occur when we can see each other's facial expressions. We have had 100% of Iowa districts pay their dues for the past several years and at CDI, we are grateful for your support. Your participation in the resolutions process is very high with several good resolutions which have led to changes at the state or national level. We have been more successful with changing policy within our partner agencies than we have had at the legislative level. To achieve greater success at the legislative level, we need local people to speak up about our issues and to just take the lead on these issues. I like the 'blitz' project in Polk and Dallas districts where they are installing water quality practices *en masse*. We need more of these type activities to attract legislative attention to conservation and water quality. Please carefully read the proposed bylaw changes (*see page 3 for overview*). This is your organization and the way it operates is determined by you with your votes.

In most years, we are blessed with abundant rain, unlike many areas of our nation. This year, however, looks to be different. Our focus has always been on water quality, not quantity as it is in western states. There is a proposal by a commercial interest to transport Iowa water to drier areas of our nation and as conservationists, we need to consider the conservation and water quality impacts of doing this. This may be an area to consider future resolutions for CDI.



A typical Taylor Co highly erodible sidehill before and after alfalfa seeding (Photo courtesy PFI and Taylor SWCD)

Taylor SWCD secures Water Quality Initiative grant from IDALS, offers incentives to producers for erosion control

(Special to Connections from PFI)

In 2016, soil and water conservation district commissioners in Taylor County had a problem. They knew that a significant portion of the acres being cropped in Taylor County were prone to erosion or were otherwise unprofitable due to soil quality limitations. Existing conservation programs weren't doing the job or weren't flexible enough to be attractive to producers. The board spent months trying to figure out how to bring more resources to the county—eventually they pursued a grant from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's then-new Water Quality Initiative program. The proposal that the commissioners submitted to the state was simple in concept: instead of cropping those highly erodible or low productivity acres, why not provide financial assistance to farmers to help realize a different system that might make those acres profitable and provide a whole host of benefits in the process. The idea had potential, and IDALS awarded the county a grant to fund the project.

“The program is really focused on seeding down highly erodible side hills,” says project coordinator Erin Ogle. “The idea is to use precision ag software like Profit Zone Manager to focus in on those unprofitable acres and show the economic and environmental benefits of doing something else other than growing corn and soybeans.” That something else is primarily hay or pasture plantings or a small grain crop followed by a summer/fall grazing mix. By converting highly erodible or otherwise marginal corn and soybean acres to a system that provides more continuous living cover, producers can address erosion issues, improve water quality and build soil health all at the same time. There are also benefits to a producer's bottom line: not farming the marginal acres of a field means less money spent on inputs and less time spent in the field, ultimately putting more money back in a farmer's pocket. So far the program has funded the conversion of 3,300 acres of marginal cropland to perennial hayland or pasture or extended rotation systems. Producers can enroll up to 40 acres in the program and receive \$250/ac to seed a hay or pasture mix for five years or \$80/ac to follow a small grain crop with a grazing mix. The program, which is specific to Taylor County, will pay for the seeding and will provide technical assistance to producers to help develop a seeding plan. “When we first started, it was such a new idea that people didn't even realize it was an option,” Erin says. “Now it's taken off and we have word of mouth and other partners collaborating and spreading the word.” Want to learn more? Contact Erin Ogle at Erin.Ogle@ia.nacdnet.net.

Overview: Proposed updates to CDI bylaws

Commissioners set August vote on major changes

During resolution voting at the annual CDI meeting in 2020, commissioners voted to form a bylaws committee to study the CDI bylaws and propose changes to voting, quorum, and any other updates the committee deemed necessary. The committee's proposed changes have been sent to all districts for review and will be **voted on during the 2021 CDI annual conference business meeting on August 23, 2021, beginning at 9 AM**. It is important that all commissioners participate in the annual conference for this vote. Bylaws changes require a vote of 2/3 of those present to pass. Amendments to the proposal can be offered and adopted, and can pass or fail by a simple majority, but the final proposal will need the 2/3s vote in favor.

There are three significant changes in the bylaw proposal; adding affiliate non-voting members, voting procedures at annual conference, and allowing assistant commissioners to serve as alternate regional directors on the CDI board. **Each of these proposed changes is discussed below.**

First, by **adding affiliate non-voting members**, CDI can gather more partners in conservation. In addition, the funds they contribute will enhance soil conservation promotion and water quality improvement. Because they will be paying a fee to be listed as an affiliate member, they will have an investment in our work.

Second, CDI leadership has been concerned for several years now about declining participation in annual conference. Annual conference is one of the best opportunities to communicate with all the membership and our conservation partners. The intent of the change to **one voting delegate for each district** is to simplify the voting procedure. The proposed change is not meant to limit debate on resolutions and other issues. At annual conference, commissioners from each district generally sit together and have a placard identifying the name of their district. With a voting delegate, the district's delegate simply holds up the placard to indicate the district's vote as aye or nay. The proposed change would continue to provide all commissioners and assistant commissioners in attendance the opportunity to discuss the issue and it would help all delegates understand the issue from different perspectives. In addition, this change would allow time during annual conference for partner meetings. Our partners in conservation would not be part of the CDI commissioner discussions or voting; this would allow a time for them to meet during the annual conference.

The other side of this issue is that commissioners might believe this change will limit their opportunity to participate. If a commissioner is opposed to a resolution and the voting delegate from their district is in favor, the opposing commissioner may feel that their voice is not heard as they would be allowed to speak at debate but not allowed to individually vote. This is a concern the committee discussed and all commissioners need to consider when voting on this bylaw change. The committee came to the general conclusion that this change to voting procedures at annual conference would not stifle debate; that all commissioners would still be heard and that each voting delegate's vote would reflect what he/she feels is the consensus of his/her district's commissioners.

Finally, the change to **allow assistant commissioners to serve as alternate regional directors on the CDI board** would codify current practice. It has been the practice of CDI to allow assistant commissioners to serve as alternate regional directors, but it is not specified in the bylaws. The committee discussed the concern that if a regional director moves to a higher CDI office, resigns, or chooses not to run for re-election as a commissioner, the assistant commissioner who is serving as an alternate would not be able to assume the position of regional director. Again, this is an issue you need to study and think about before you vote on the bylaw changes. The committee to study the bylaw changes was appointed by CDI President Dennis Carney and represents a diverse set of opinions on the proposed changes but did come to a consensus on the proposed changes. Your input at the 2021 CDI annual meeting is important. Please study these proposed bylaws changes, discuss them within your district, and come to the annual meeting prepared to discuss and vote upon these proposals.

For Montgomery SWCD:

Even during a dry spell, preparing for the next big rain

Montgomery SWCD commissioners gathered with Montgomery County supervisors for a joint inspection tour of the county’s flood control structures on June 1st – an especially important tour because it was their first face-to-face gathering in nearly a year and the first inspection tour in two years, due to Covid. According to Montgomery SWCD Chair Roger Cerven, the joint tour with county officials emphasizes the partnership between federal, state, county and local districts responsible for maintaining flood control protection.

“It’s a partnership that even local people don’t fully understand, in the sense of what these structures were made for -- overall to control flooding for the city of Red Oak,” says Cerven. “These structures were built with state of Iowa funding; now these have been turned over for maintenance to counties themselves. We had five county supervisors along on the tour so they have an educated understanding of what we’re asking them to look at.”



L to R: L to R: Montgomery SWCD Commissioners Kirk Baird and Roger Cerven; Bryan Shupe (DC), Assistant Commissioner Maggie McQuown; Country Supervisor Mike Olson (All photos courtesy Montgomery SWCD)

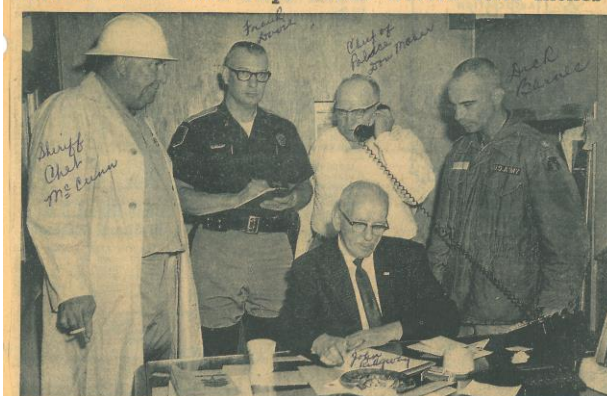


Bryan Shupe, DC, and Dallas Steele, State Technician, check the condition of the overflow outlet at the Anderson Conservation Area flood control basin.

Bryan Shupe, District Conservationist for Montgomery County, says the system includes a number of structures, including 11 dams and a drainage ditch. Describing the inspection tour, Shupe says the inspectors “take a look at the condition of the dam, see if it’s well-vegetated; we look at drainage pipes to make sure they’re adequate, and inspect the spillways to make sure there’s no blockages.” The flood control structures were installed beginning in the early 1960s to protect the city of Red Oak from major flooding from Red Oak Creek, which flows through the center of town into the East Nishnabotna River. “Fifty years into this, we’re starting to get to the point to replace parts of pipe, prioritizing structures, and going ahead with repairing those.”

Cerven remembers well the history of flooding in the Red Oak area. “The creek flows through the town, water gets high enough to flood a fairly large percentage of the area. When I was a young kid, we got over 21 inches of rain in 1967. I remember our neighbor came to our house that night in a boat. These large rain

5.95-Inch Rain Brings Red Oak Flooding; No Injuries, But Damage Toll Is Staggering; Rain 10 of 12 June Days Totals Record 16.11 Inches 1967



events happen more often than you think – every 20-25 years.” With the inspection, the partnership of state, county and district means preparing to avoid future flooding calamities, which should remain a concern even during current dry conditions. “This is a situation that’s kind of unique,” says Cerven. “The county has got to finance maintenance on these structures. So that doesn’t have anything to do with the city of Red Oak, but the city of Red Oak should be very happy that these have been done because of how much flooding can happen in southwest Iowa. NRCS is the office that has the technology and know-how, and the technicians to help the county supervisors carry out what they need to do. So as a partnership, that’s why the tours happen.”