

# ---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:

President: Jeri Thornsberry  
Vice-President: Eric Wessels  
Treasurer: Jack Boyer  
Secretary: Mary Ellen Miller  
Past President: Ramona Nitz

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**From: President Jeri Thornsberry**

#### **A Heartfelt Welcome and a Resounding Thank You!**

Welcome to all of our newly sworn-in commissioners, and a HUGE thank you to those who continue to serve with unwavering dedication. The impact you make, whether on your own farming operation, in your local community, or through your advocacy at the state and national levels, cannot be overstated.

Our conservation community is strong, and each of us plays a vital role in Iowa's future. Whether it's lobbying our local legislators or volunteering at the national stage, *all of our voices are needed*. Now, more than ever, we are in the midst of the fight to improve soil health and protect our precious water sources. Every effort you make is a step toward a better, more sustainable Iowa. **For that, I offer my deepest thanks.**

#### **Important Opportunities for Commissioners:**

To help **onboard** our new commissioners and refresh the knowledge of our current ones, CDI is offering a **Commissioner Orientation** program via Zoom. It's scheduled for **Wednesday, February 5**, from **6:00 pm to 8:00 pm**. An email has already been sent to your respective CAs with the Zoom link—be sure to ask them for it! **Pro tip:** Email is the quickest way to grab the link, and if you don't have Zoom on your device yet, it's a breeze to download at [support.zoom.com](https://support.zoom.com).

#### **Get Ready for Spring Regionals!**

The Spring Regionals kick off **February 25** in **Harrison County**, and these meetings offer you a chance to connect with fellow commissioners and learn about the latest in conservation efforts. **Elections** will be held in **Regions 3, 6, and 9** for Regional Directors and Alternates. Stepping up to serve in one of these roles is an incredible way to ensure your region's voice is heard and help govern the direction of CDI. – **Continued on Page 2**

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And here's where it gets really exciting: Your service as a Regional Director puts you on the front lines during our **Conservation Partnership Day at the Capitol, March 11, 2025**. This is a chance to meet with legislators, share our message, and make sure conservation stays front and center on their radar. Did you know only **nine** farmers are currently in the State House, and just **12** list farming as their occupation in the Senate? Our job is to **educate** our elected leaders about why conservation is critical—not just in rural Iowa, but in urban areas as well. Protecting our water and improving soil health is an issue that impacts *all of us*.

**In Times Like These, We Need Leaders Like You**

Now, more than ever, we need leaders who are committed to both **promoting** and **improving** conservation practices. It's about more than just talking the talk—it's about **taking action** to protect Iowa's soil and water. Your work is vital, and I'm grateful for everything you do to move us toward a sustainable future.

Together, we are making a difference. Let's keep up the great work!

**Executive Director Report – Dien Judge**

January has flown by, as we prepare for some of the most important events of the year for CDI. As you'll see in this issue of **Connections**, CDI is preparing for several events, like Spring Regionals, Conservation Partnership Day, Envirothon and more.

We also continue to monitor the ongoing Iowa Legislative Session, and will work to advocate for conservation programs for Iowa landowners that protect our precious soil and water.

CDI continues to fill important positions in our three programs. If you or any of your partners know of someone looking to work in the field of soil and water conservation, please send them our way. There are job opportunities in these programs, and we're looking for qualified applicants. Please check <https://www.cdiowa.org/who-we-are/job-openings/> for more information about job opportunities with CDI.

**Commissioner Orientation set for Feb. 5**

***Online Zoom event is open to all Iowa SWCD Commissioners***

Details have been sent out to all districts for the online Commissioner Orientation event organized by CDI. This event will provide lots of useful information for newly elected commissioners, or commissioners who'd just like to learn more about the roles, responsibilities and expectations of Iowa Soil & Water Conservation District commissioners.

Please plan to join in on the Zoom, for this fun and educational evening. For those who cannot participate on Wednesday, Feb. 5, the session will be recorded and linked on the CDI website afterwards.

The event will be held via Zoom from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM on Wednesday, Feb. 5. Just click this link to join:  
Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88944459150?pwd=Zq54j1HakJTzx0v2Qjh4D6A80vL03s.1>

Meeting ID: 889 4445 9150

Passcode: 527724

## CDI Job Opportunities:

[Conservation Wetland Specialist – Thompson, IA](#)

[Wetland Engineering Technician – Atlantic, IA](#)

[Wetland Engineering Technician – Fairfield, IA](#)

[CDI Administrative Support Position – Winterset](#)

If you know of any qualified candidates for these positions, please share these job postings!

# 2025 Envirothon competition is a great learning experience for Iowa youth

## *Winning team at state event goes on to compete in Calgary*

Teams of young conservationists will compete this spring in the 2025 Envirothon competition, organized by Conservation Districts of Iowa.

CDI Program Manager Carlee Sabus heads up the organization and planning of the competition, and she said it's always a lot of fun to see so many young Iowa scholars participate in this annual event.

"We're looking forward to another great year of challenging young conservation minds! We are privileged to host such a fun and educational event, and we love to see so much passion for conservation from Iowa's youth," she said. "Don't miss out on this unique opportunity to have your students learn more about conservation in Iowa and all of the wonderful natural resources it offers."

Teams **must be registered by February 28** to participate in the event. Virtual regional testing will be held between March 17 and March 28. The state Envirothon competition will be held on April 28, 2025 at Jester Park Nature Center in Granger, IA.

### Resources for 2025 Envirothon competition:

- [2025 Iowa Envirothon Rules and Regulations](#)
- [2025 Iowa Envirothon Study Guide](#)
- [Sample tests and answer keys!](#)

Please register your 2025 Envirothon team [HERE!](#)

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The National Conservation Foundation (NCF) Envirothon is an environmental and natural resource conservation problem-solving, team-building, and leadership experience and competition for 9th – 12th grade students across the U.S.

Iowa Envirothon challenges students statewide to hone critical thinking skills and create inventive solutions to the complex local environmental and natural resource issues facing Iowans today. Through regional testing and the state competition, teams of Iowa high school students earn a chance to deep dive into valuable environmental and natural resource problem-solving, team-building, and leadership experiences. In Iowa, the Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) manage this competition. Starting in 2024, the [Iowa Conservation Education Coalition](#) (ICEC) is partnering with CDI to promote this program! In Iowa, teams of students sign up for a regional, on-line exams. The teams with the top 15 scores at the regional level are invited to the state competition at a central Iowa location in the spring.



## Conservation Partnership Day is March 11

Soil & Water Commissioners, Partners to gather at the Iowa Capitol

Conservation Districts of Iowa is once again organizing Conservation Partnership Day, which will be held on Tuesday, March 11 at the Iowa Capitol. All SWCD Commissioners are invited to attend and meet with legislators. The day will begin with a gathering at the Wallace Building to visit with CDI’s lobbyist Jim Obradovich, and representatives from our partner organizations. Then commissioners and partners will gather in the rotunda of the Capitol to meet with Iowa legislators in person during the 2025 Iowa Legislative Session.

It’s important to have a large group of commissioners in attendance, so please plan to attend!



### *Boyer among seven farmers honored by PFI*

Congratulations to Conservation Districts of Iowa Treasurer, Jack Boyer, who was recently

honored for his extensive contributions to on-farm research and knowledge-sharing by Practical Farmers of Iowa.

Seven farmers, Jill Beebout, Rob and Tammy Faux, Dave and Meg Schmidt, Dick Sloan, and Boyer were awarded the PFI’s Master Researcher Award.

The award was established in 2013 to honor those who have conducted at least 20 on-farm research trials through PFI’s Cooperators’ Program, and hosted at least five fields days with PFI.



# Iowa plays host to NACD North Central Regional Meeting

Conservation state association presidents, NRCS state conservationists, and NACD senior staff gathered in Des Moines in early January, as Iowa hosted the National Association of Conservation Districts North Central Region’s annual meeting.

NACD North Central Region includes Iowa, Missouri, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana and Ohio, and this annual meeting rotates every year to a north central state.

Delegations heard updates from NACD CEO Jeremy Peters, as well as Curtis Elke, NACD Regional Conservationist – Central.

The group heard a presentation by Iowa State Climatologist Justin Glisan, as well as a presentation by Iowa State University Iowa Nutrient Research Center Director Dr. Matt Helmers.

The group voted in support of several resolutions from various north central states that will be forwarded on to the NACD annual meeting in February.



*Conservation Districts of Iowa President Jeri Thornsberry, right, CDI Vice President Eric Wessels, center, and Iowa State Conservationist John Hubbert were among those participating in the NACD North Central Regional annual meeting in Des Moines.*



*State conservation association officers and NRCS State Conservationists were among those who gathered in Des Moines in early January for the NACD North Central Regional annual meeting.*

# Scholarship Applications due in district offices February 7

Conservation Districts of Iowa’s 2025 scholarship applications are now available, and have been distributed to SWCDs around Iowa. Scholarship applications should be turned in to the student’s local SWCD office by February 7. Applications should be turned in to the office of the district in which the student resides.

Iowa high school class of 2025 students pursuing programs of study in any field of conservation or agriculture qualifies for the CDI scholarship. The application is available at [www.cdiowa.org](http://www.cdiowa.org) and can be downloaded from the website.

Applicants must submit their scholarship applications to the SWCD office in the county in which they reside. Each local SWCD will choose a county application to forward to their CDI Regional Director. The regional director will choose an application to forward on for consideration at the state level.

In April, 2025, a judging team of CDI officers, regional directors and alternates will make the final decisions. Scholarship applications are judged based on the following criteria: 20 points for Involvement, Leadership and Character; 20 points for Career; 30 points for Scholastic Achievement; 30 points for Conservation Message.

CDI will make the announcements about the winning applicants on Friday, May 2. After the final selections, the top three scholarships will be awarded at the state level in the amounts of \$3,000, \$2,000 and \$1,000. Winners from the remaining six regions will each receive \$500.

First, second and third place awards will be paid directly to the applicant’s school of choice in two equal installments, one upon enrollment at the beginning of the year and the second at midterm. The six other scholarships will be paid directly to the applicant’s school of choice in one installment

## CDI Poster Contest rules released for 2025

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 –Continued on Page 7 -----



**CDI Program Manager Carlee Sabus helped promote CDI programs, including the annual Poster Contest, at the Practical Farmers of Iowa Conference Jan. 10-11.**

-Continued from Page 6- 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 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 NACD Annual Meeting and individual donors – sponsor prizes at the national level.

# Resolutions due Friday, March 28

The 2025 Call for Resolutions was sent out to all Conservation Districts of Iowa offices last week. This process provides every member of Conservation Districts of Iowa the opportunity to make your voice heard by bringing issues and concerns to the attention of state and federal decision-makers.

Throughout the 2025 Resolutions Process, all resolutions will be properly reviewed by the broader conservation community before being submitted for action.

This year, the deadline for submitting resolutions is Friday, March 28, 2025. Resolutions submitted after this deadline will not be considered for the 2025 cycle. In prior years, some resolutions submitted could have been handled with conversations and/or negotiations with one of our partner agencies. CDI encourages districts to work with the appropriate agency first. If the district is not satisfied with the outcome of those discussions or negotiations, then submit the resolution for consideration.

If multiple districts submit similar resolutions, CDI may combine them into one unified resolution. This strategy will strengthen the position of the districts and provide a clearer, more cohesive argument when presenting the resolution. We once again offer pre-conference resolution voting by mail for commissioners. The goal is to have all 500 commissioners from Iowa’s 100 districts to participate in the voting process. Last year, there were close to 400 pre-conference pre-conference ballots cast – this year, CDI hopes to surpass that number.



## *Incentives available for landowners in Climate-Smart Commodities Horizon II program*

Through an \$80 million USDA Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities grant awarded to a partnership of 13 public and private entities led by Roeslein Alternative Energy, Horizon II will provide owners of highly erodible land significant income to participate in the project.

See the full project:

<https://prairieprophets.com/usda-climate-smart-commodities-grant/>



# Locations set for CDI 2025 Spring Regionals

## *Annual meetings a great way for commissioners to network*

Conservation Districts of Iowa has announced the schedule for 2025 Spring Regionals, so please mark your calendars and save the date of your Spring Regional Meeting.

The first regional meetings will be held the last week of February, beginning with Region 5 on Tuesday, February 25, hosted by Harrison SWCD at 10:00 AM, followed by the Region 8 meeting hosted by Page SWCD at 4:00 PM.

On Wednesday, February 26, Lucas SWCD will host the Region 9 regional meeting in the morning at 10:00 AM, and Polk SWCD will host the Region 6 meeting at 4:00 PM.

The Region 7 meeting will be held on Thursday, February 27 at 10:00 AM hosted by Louisa SWCD.

The following week will kick off with the Region 1 meeting hosted by Cherokee SWCD. On Wednesday, March 5, Hamilton SWCD will host the Region 2 meeting at 10:00 AM, followed by Hardin SWCD hosting the Region 3 meeting at 4:00 PM.

We wrap up the Spring Regionals with the final meeting in Region 4, hosted by Allamakee SWCD at 10:00 AM.

CDI Spring Regionals 2025			
Region	SWCD Host Location	Proposed Date & Time*	Location
1	Cherokee	3/4/2025 (10:00 AM)	Cleghorn Community Center, 102 W. Grace St., Cleghorn
2	Hamilton	3/5/2025 (10:00 AM)	Briggs Woods Conf. Ctr., 2501 Briggs Woods Tr., Webster City
3	Hardin	3/5/2025 (4:00 PM)	Maynes Grove, 946 US Hwy. 65, Hampton
4	Allamakee	3/6/2025 (10:00 AM)	Old Rossville Store, 851 Volney Rd., Waukon
5	Harrison	2/25/2025 (10:00 AM)	Willow Lake Nature Ctr., 2725 Easton Tr., Woodbine
6	Polk	2/26/2025 (4:00 PM)	Kirkendall Public Library, 1250 SW District Dr., Ankeny
7	Louisa	2/27/2025 (10:00 AM)	Oakville Community Ctr., 103 Ash St., Oakville, IA
8	Page	2/25/2025 (4:00 PM)	St. Paul Lutheran Church, 2463 IA-2, Clarinda, IA
9	Lucas	2/26/2025 (10:00 AM)	Pin Oak Lodge, 45996 Hwy. 14, Chariton