

10 Minute Supervisor Trainings



February 2026

Kentucky's Watershed Conservancy Districts

Kentucky's watershed program includes approximately 200 dams, which were constructed between the mid-1950s through 2009. These were primarily constructed under the authority of PL 566 to provide benefits such as flood control, stabilizing rural water supplies, recreational uses, and sustaining wildlife habitat. In many instances in Kentucky, watershed conservancy districts are the sponsors (owners) of watershed dams. Watershed conservancy districts are subdistricts of conservation districts and are under the direct supervision of the conservation district's board of supervisors.

There are 38 watershed conservancy districts in Kentucky and approximately one quarter of the conservation districts are affiliated with at least one of them. A watershed conservancy district's boundary can be contained within one conservation district or can reach into multiple counties. While a conservation district board always has 7 supervisors, watershed conservancy district boards will have differing numbers of directors based on how many counties the district is in. If a watershed conservancy district is entirely in 1 county, then it will have 5 directors. If the watershed conservancy district is in multiple counties, the board will be made up of 5 directors from the county with the most acres in the district and 3 directors from each additional county.

In order to be a director, a person doesn't have to live in the watershed conservancy district. But they must own property in the watershed conservancy district and must live in the county that they would be representing. Just like conservation district supervisors, they also have to gather signatures to be on the board. People who sign the petition must own property in the watershed conservancy district. How many signatures are required is dependent upon how many landowners there are. If there are more than 50 landowners, then 25 signatures are required. If there are fewer than 50 landowners, then a majority of the landowners must sign the petition.

Watershed conservancy districts and/or conservation districts can request landowner information from the local PVA's office to determine who is eligible and how many signatures are required.

Legislation passed in April of 2024 revised how vacancies on a watershed conservancy board should be addressed. According to KRS 262.742 (1) "Within thirty (30) days of the effective date of any vacancy on a board of directors of a watershed conservancy district, the board of the soil and water conservation district where the vacancy occurs shall publish a notice of the vacancy in a newspaper of general circulation in the area served by the watershed conservancy district pursuant to the requirement of KRS Chapter 424. The notice shall include information on the nominating petition process to fill the vacancy established in KRS 262.740. The board of the soil and water conservation district filling the vacancy shall also advertise the vacancy on any website or social medial account it may control."

When a vacancy occurs, the conservation district has to advertise that vacancy. If it is a watershed conservancy district that is in multiple counties, only the county that has the vacancy has to advertise. The advertisement should include the term of the vacancy, who is eligible to be a director, where an interested party can get a petition, who is eligible to sign the petition, how many signatures are required on the petition, and when petitions are due. After the due date for the petitions, the watershed conservancy district will review the petitions that were received and will vote to recommend to the conservation district one of the petitioners to fill the position. Then the conservation district will consider all the petitions received and vote to fill that vacancy.

Watershed conservancy district directors are required by statute to prepare an itemized budget in the first quarter of each calendar year (January-March). Budgets should include all perceived revenue and expenditures necessary to meet the needs of the district. Watershed conservancy district budgets must be submitted to all affiliated conservation districts for approval. It is illegal to spend funds that have not been approved in a budget. Budgets should be reviewed and/or revised quarterly. Once budgets are approved by the conservation district(s) they are submitted to all affiliated county clerks, Division of Conservation and the Department for Local Government per KRS 65A.020.

NOTE: This is not a complete listing of requirements for watershed conservancy districts. Further information can be found in KRS 262.700-262.795.