

10 Minute Supervisor Trainings



April 2021

How To Have A More Active Conservation District

Conservation districts are an important part of each community in Kentucky and do really great things across the state. However, they often go unnoticed in many communities because they may not promote themselves well and they may not be doing enough. In this training we are going to talk about some things that you can do in your community to make a big difference. We are also going to be asking questions to measure the success of what you are currently doing. An active conservation district equals success.

Not sure how your county measures up? Start by answering these questions:

- Is participation in our programs increasing?
- Has our district had the same programs for 20 years?
- Is our district promoted adequately?
- Are we providing programs for urban residents?
- Do at least 50% of the public know who we are or what we do?
- Are we visible in the school system?
- Have you identified concerns in your community and some ways to address them?
- Have you polled your landowners and see what their needs are?
- Are you reaching out into the community and tackling issues such as water quality, recycling, composting, land preservation etc.?

If you answered no to several of these, then chances are you could use some change.

Now that you have identified some areas to grow in, it's time to gather ideas. There are many conservation districts that have websites, Facebook pages and newsletters that are available that will give you some ideas. Your field representative also has a wealth of information about what other counties are doing and how to help. If the problem is funding – there are tons of ways to get more involved if your board is willing to spend some time and do the footwork.

Thinking Outside of the Box

Obviously you have heard that in order to grow you **MUST** think outside of the box, and try new things. First you must be seen and heard and then you can build partnerships and build platforms for new programs. There are many ways to start with this on the next page.

Local Government

Fiscal Court or Local Government: Does the Judge and every magistrate know who you are and what you do? If you said no, then this is an essential starting point. A very common misconception that we often see is that local governments can't distinguish between conservation districts, Farm Bureau, and extension (especially since many members are on both boards). What to do: Put together a very short packet of district information and HAND deliver it to each member. Better yet, invite a couple of members to each board meeting you have until you have met with them all.

Developing a good relationship with local government is essential to the success of your district. If they see the good things you are doing they will be more willing to support you with any needs you may have and promote you in a positive light in the public eye. Every conservation district is funded by taxpayers, and it's vital that they know who you are.

City Councils: A lot of conservation districts tend to overlook city government, but they are just as important. Citizens in cities pay taxes too and are often the first to scrutinize conservation entities due to lack of education about what the conservation district does. Forming a good relationship with city government can open many new doors and can aid in informing citizens about your importance.

Local Groups

Look into local groups that you can partner with. There are many entities in every community that can have the same goals as your district, including, but not limited to: extension, stores and ag retailers, feed stores, veterinarians, lenders, plant stores, local growers, farmers markets, Cattleman's Association, Farm Bureau, etc.

Promotion

- Have someone "tech savvy" set up a Facebook page with good information and pictures and start sharing and connecting. You can reach 1000's of traditional and non-traditional customers. Websites are also a great idea. The key – keep it updated and post often.
- Have you tried a newsletter? A monthly or quarterly update on all types of programs can go a long way. Can't afford one? Ask to do an insert with Farm Service
- Agency or Extension.
- Publish news articles in the local paper about different topics or programs.
- Set up displays whenever you can and be present for community activities. Conservation is important to every single citizen in your county but most districts have the habit of only reaching out to the agricultural community. Now more than ever – it's time to cover some of the urban area of your community. Set up at festivals, schools, chamber of commerce events, etc. Contact city hall and see if you can partner on events held in your town.
- Do you have a local TV or radio station in your town? How about asking for 5 minutes of radio time to talk about education, programs or other important topics? What about a "did you know" segment? A little bit of information can go a long way.
- Host at least 2 district sponsored public events each year
- Visit your schools and get to know teachers. Find out how you can support the school system or what programs they need.

Now that you have the tools to improve, it's time to start planning. Ask your Field Representative for some new ideas. The implement them throughout the year. Your Annual Plan of Work can work like a guide for new programs. Don't be afraid of trying new things or failing. If a program doesn't work in your community you can always try something different next year.

WHAT YOU DO IS IMPORTANT – NEVER BE AFRAID TO SHOW THAT TO YOUR COMMUNITY!