



10-Minute Supervisor Trainings

Kentucky Soil and Water Conservation Commission

JANUARY 2019

A CHALLENGE FOR 2019

Do people come into your office, call you or just during casual conversation say “I have never heard of your Soil & Water Conservation District,” “I never knew our county had a Soil & Water Conservation District,” “I never knew I could get help like that from the programs that the local Soil & Water Conservation District offers!”? If you answered yes to any of these questions, your district is probably a “best kept secret” in your county. If you answered yes, then you are now realizing that you and your staff need to work on marketing methods so your district may become more effective in promoting your conservation district objectives/goals in your county. Each of the seven board members and staff need to take advantage of every opportunity available or given to provide detailed outreach efforts of how your district protects the natural resources, provides conservation education, conservation cost share programs and promotes your Soil & Water Conservation District mission and goals through your district office in your county.

A lot of Kentucky’s conservation districts may fall under a stigma umbrella of being a Best Kept Secret in Kentucky, this is not a reputation that we want or should have. This training hopes to CHALLENGE each supervisor and district employee to take a hard look at your actions or lack of as a whole and adopt more proactive approaches to ensure that your landowners, county and city governments, schools, civic groups and organizations, partner agencies, businesses, planning, zoning and utility companies, etc. know who you are and what you do, but most importantly that you and your staff are dedicated and vested in promoting conservation on urban and suburban land as well as rural and farm land.

Remember you work for all tax paying citizens in your county. You should realize that no matter what the land use in Kentucky is, it deserves your efforts as elected officials who have taken an oath to faithfully discharge the duties of the office of conservation district supervisor, and your dedicated staff to provide and promote some type of conservation on every acre of land in the state.

There are many different ways and approaches to “Market” your conservation district, assistance and environmental programs you have to offer. Below list some recommendations that you should consider incorporating into your routines that may improve and increase your district notoriety.

DEVELOP COMMITTEES WHOSE MEMBERS SHOULD BEGIN WITH THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AND DISTRICT STAFF. Once committees are established and the participants are committed, each member should make every effort to participate and attend any and all functions whether they are within your board, other agencies, businesses or partnerships within your county or state. They will probably be of no benefit if you do not dedicate the time to participate, learn or provide valuable information or input your board and committee member has to offer or seeks. Conservation district committees should include at a minimum:

1. Legislative Committee-attendance to local, state and federal government meetings that are of interest to your conservation mission goals is vital. Be very vocal on what your district does, and wants to do for your county in protecting the natural resources. Pay particular attention to aspects that could have positive or negative impacts on your district, programs, land use and or environment. Keep a good, open and positive communication line with all local, state and federal elected officials, and as always remember to personally invite them to your conservation district meetings and events so they have knowledge and a good understanding of what you are all about.
2. Public Relations/Marketing Committee-This is a vital committee for your district to ensure that you and your activities are well known in your county. Members should attend any and all public events representing your district. Attend other agency, organizations, local government, school and business meetings and events. Volunteer to help with their events, set up displays and be guest speakers. Take advantage of any opportunity given to let your citizens know who you are.
3. Education Committee-Take an active role in educating the youth to provide them opportunities to understand, enjoy and grow into the future stewards of the land. Promote all conservation contest, environmental education programs and competitions, host environmental education field days, establish junior boards and other projects and programs that will encourage their understanding and commitments to protect the natural resources. Make sure you have a good open line of communication with the teachers, superintendents and board of education members. Hosting events and inviting the education personnel highlighting the events your district has to offer in environmental education and competition is an excellent opportunity to gain their support and participation from the students.
4. Cost Share Program Committee—Participate in promoting all federal, state and local cost share opportunities for your county landowners. Take an active role in training opportunities, listening sessions, promotional events and suggesting methods to improve or increase participation in these programs.
5. Grants and Scholarships Committee—Ensure active participation and establishment of any and all grants or scholarships that will aid students in furthering their education in environmental or natural resources education.
6. Financial & Budget Committee—These committee members are essential in attaining and maintain funding resources for the conservation district activities. Always look to find new monies that can be utilized to promote conservation. Members need to ensure that your district is always responsible, and transparent with all taxpayer monies that your district is entrusted with.

7. Executive Committee—These members need to be responsible for ensuring the district annual and long range plans are current with the district goals, activities and are being addressed as outlined. Ensure that all memorandum of agreements is reviewed, up to date and developed for all partnering agencies. Ensure that employee agreements, job descriptions and evaluations are developed, up to date and carried out.
8. Land Use Committee-This committee should be a vital component of your district obligations with particular attention given to land use changes. Inclusion, efforts, input and environmental impacts, should be made and considered with the leadership of your district land use committee when developers, transportation/highway departments, Corp. of Engineers or others seek to encroach or make significant land changes within your district boundaries.

This is by no means a complete list of committees that conservation district could develop and use, each district can include other committees as needed. Committee members are expected to attend meetings of importance and provide valuable information or reports back to the full board for possible action that may need be taken by conservation district boards. If you are charged with serving on a committee to represent your conservation district, carry out that responsibility and be a valuable voice and asset to your district and county taxpayers.

MEDIA OUTLETS — Make sure you incorporate all or as many outlets as possible so that you have the possibility of reaching all facets of lifestyle within your county. Board members need to promote and encourage the use of all outlets to better promote environmental awareness and your conservation district's programs.

1. Social Media—Facebook & Twitter accounts—Let's face it, this is the outlet that a majority of people go to for updates and information today. Another really good attribute about those outlets is they are FREE to use whenever you want or need to, and the publication is immediate. If you have not already dedicated someone to maintain an account for your district it would be an excellent way to gain significant exposure for your conservation district.
2. TV/Radio—If available and the expense is reasonable, these are excellent resources to promote your district mission, goals and programs. Use them often!
3. Newsletter/Newspaper—Some KRS requirements for conservation districts have to be met with publications in the local newspapers; however, don't neglect the circulation that is available from your local newspaper and the development and mailing of district newsletters. Many folks still like to pick up a piece of paper and read about something rather than going to the computer or internet. Some counties have a local government publication and usually are more than happy to have your participation, so join them.
4. Reports from your district staff, local government, civic groups & partners—board members need these detailed reports to be informed of what is going on, what is available and how objectives for the conservation district are and can be met within their county. District staff need to provide an office report and reports necessary from partner agencies requested and made available for board review as well as invitations to individuals requesting their attendance to personally provide updates. So get those reports or give them an invitation.

IMPORTANT DATES OF INTEREST — This is an important item that should be added to each monthly conservation district board meeting agenda, if not already. This information will provide the supervisors and committee members of local and state meetings or events that can be of interest and value to promoting your district and conservation programs. If events require an RSVP make sure those are submitted timely to ensure that function can accommodate your attendance. Provide dates and time so board members and staff can attend events such as:

1. County government/ business organization meetings
2. Fairs
3. Field days & tours
4. Safety events
5. Legislative rallies
6. Festivals
7. Customer appreciation
8. Business grand openings
9. Any event that draws a crowd be there for your district!

Look outside of the box and make attempts to attend non-traditional meetings or events to give detailed overviews of what you do, what you have to offer, and how valuable you are to your county in protecting the natural resources. Many agencies and civic organizations seek professionals from agencies to provide insight and information on what they do and have to offer citizens within their county. Stand up & get involved be a volunteer to speak or represent your district at these events - you might be surprised how much exposure and support of your non-traditional cliental you may gain.

Public Relations —Make every effort to attend your fiscal court, planning and zoning and other board meetings within your county, and likewise invite and encourage them to attend your conservation district meetings. These county boards are an excellent source when it comes to looking for additional funding and support.

CHALLENGE

We encourage district board members and conservation district employees to incorporate additional promotional ideas or some of the recommendations provided in this training this year and accept the challenge. There are many means of marketing your district to become a more active and proactive board who focuses more on promoting your district with efficiency and effectiveness and hopefully we can all reduce the stigma of the “**Best Kept Secret.**”