

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Washington, D.C. 20250

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| <b>DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION</b>                          |  | <b>NUMBER:</b><br>1340-001 |
| <b>SUBJECT:</b> Cooperation with Conservation Districts | <b>DATE:</b><br>July 7, 1983                                       |                            |
|   | <b>OPI:</b> Conservation Planning and<br>Application Division, SCS |                            |

### 1 PURPOSE

To encourage all agencies of the Department to cooperate with conservation districts in carrying out their district programs for soil water, and related resource management.

### 2 SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS/CANCELLATIONS

The following Secretary's Memoranda are superseded by this regulation and are hereby rescinded:

- a Secretary's Memorandum 1488, Cooperation with Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- b Secretary's Memorandum 2006, Conservation Assistance to Indians on Tribal Lands

### 3 BACKGROUND

The primary responsibility for soil and water conservation rests with the people who own and/or operate the land. USDA provides assistance through conservation districts as part of a nationwide soil and water conservation program on private and Indian lands. The districts, organized under State enabling laws, stimulate local initiative and are governed by elected or appointed local citizens.

Since 1937, various States, territories, and Indian tribal governments have enacted conservation district legislation. There are in existence under State, territorial, or tribal laws some 2,930 local conservation districts organized through the democratic procedures of petition and referendum. They encompass a total area of 2,215,000,000 acres of land. They include 95 percent of the Nation's privately owned agricultural and forest land and 94 percent of the farms and ranches. More than 17,000 local citizens are members of the boards that govern these districts.

Enabling laws provide for State conservation committees (or boards or commissions), the members of which are either named in the act by their position or are appointed by the Governor. As agencies of State government, they guide the organization of districts and facilitate in their functioning.

Each district has responsibility under law for developing a districtwide soil and water conservation program and for carrying it forward by helping private land owners and operators to plan, apply, and maintain technically sound conservation programs for their land. Each district is autonomous and self-governed. It has the authority to enter into working agreements and arrangements with any agency, governmental or otherwise and with any person to carry out its program to accomplish its purpose.

#### 4 POLICY

It is USDA policy to cooperate with conservation districts by:

- a Encouraging local citizens to organize districts for the privately and Indian owned land in the entire United States and its territories;
- b Entering into working agreements and other appropriate arrangements with districts and States to provide assistance in carrying out their programs
- c Encouraging land owners and operators to cooperate with their local districts;  
and
- d Providing assistance through research, education, technical assistance, financial assistance, and credit to individuals and groups of farmers, ranchers, other land users, and units of government to help them carry out their soil, water, and related natural resource programs.

The Secretary of Agriculture has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with each district. The various agencies of USDA are encouraged to enter into supplemental Memoranda of Understanding or other appropriate working agreements with these districts to help implement the district program.