

AACD Policy Manual

(Extracted from approved resolutions of the past 25 years)

DRAFT

Purpose and Mission

The purpose and mission of the Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts is to assist the conservation districts of the state of Arkansas in their efforts to serve the soil and water conservation needs of the people of Arkansas. This policy manual is to provide guidance and direction to the AACD Executive Board and Board of Directors.

History

Conservation districts are political subdivisions of the State of Arkansas. They are a creation of popular vote of resident landowners for the purpose of conserving our land and water resources as authorized by Act No. 197 of the Arkansas General Assembly of 1937; the Nation's first conservation district law.

Conservation districts are local governments at work and their specific responsibility is management of our soil and water resources. The idea behind their formation is to keep decision making on soil and water conservation matters at the local level. Each district is governed by a board of five directors who serve without pay. Two directors are appointed by the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission and three are elected by resident landowners.

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Acronyms & Definitions

- 1) AACD – Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts
- 2) ANRC – Arkansas Natural Resources Commission
- 3) NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Service
- 4) ADEQ – Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality
- 5) ACP – Arkansas Conservation Partnership
- 6) E.P.A. – Environmental Protection Agency
- 7) HEL – highly erodible land
- 8) AGFC – Arkansas Game & Fish Commission
- 9) BMP – Best Management Practices
- 10) CRP – Conservation Reserve Program
- 11) EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentive Program
- 12) CSP – Conservation Stewardship Program
- 13) FIP – Forestry Incentive Program

Policy Inclusion Process

All proposed resolutions must follow the AACD Resolution Process and be approved at the AACD Annual Meeting Business Session prior to being included in the AACD Policy Manual.

AACD RESOLUTION PROCESS TIME LINE

May - September

Each district may develop resolutions following the outlined resolution process attached below.
A district may present proposed resolutions for discussion at its area meeting
Area committees may propose resolutions for consideration at the area meeting

October 30

Deadline for district resolutions to be discussed at area meetings and if adopted submit to AACD
Final deadline for submission of all resolutions and any changes in resolutions after discussion at Area meeting to AACD

November 15

Packet containing all submitted resolutions and Annual Conference rules will be sent to districts, please discuss resolutions packet at district meeting

February

Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting

PLEASE NOTE: If you want to present your resolutions at the area meeting please be prepared to discuss your rationale. However, if you do not have a resolution prepared to discuss at the area meeting, you may still submit it on or before December 1st. This will provide adequate time to mail out proposed resolutions to districts prior to the annual meeting. Approved resolutions with national implications will be forwarded to NACD.

All resolutions will be reviewed by the resolutions committee and may be returned with suggested modifications. You are encouraged to work with your NRCS and ANRC staff, or other appropriate agency in developing a good resolution.

AACD POLICIES

Partnerships

P1.) AACD is committed to working harmoniously with our partners in conservation; ANRC, ADEQ, NRCS, AGFC, AFC, **AAES**, County Governments, and other agencies and organizations for the wise use of the resources available to support conservation efforts in all of our Districts.

P2.) We believe that Arkansas' 75 Conservation Districts are the best possible partner for delivery of conservation programs and technical assistance to private land owners.

P3.) We oppose outsourcing of conservation technician activities, soil survey activities, and conservation engineering activities.

P4.) We believe that NRCS field office consolidation could potentially inhibit delivery of conservation practices.

P5.) We urge NRCS to involve AACD in any decision to consolidate field offices.

P6.) We request AACD to work for additional monetary support for conservation districts.

P7.) We consider the farmers and the general public to be a part of our conservation team.

P8.) We recommend and urge our partners involved in development of rural water supply use no less than 6 inch main water lines to allow for further development and to meet insurance service organization criteria for rural fire protection.

Water Related Issues

W1.) We support and encourage the use of reservoirs to provide water for agriculture and for recovery and re-use of agricultural water discharge.

W2.) We support the use of reservoirs without counting the reservoir acreage against the crop allotment acreage, thus effectively reducing the crop allotment acreage.

W3.) We support the allowance of reservoir acreage to be used as "set aside" acres for Government programs.

W4.) We support the allowance of double "set aside" credit (two acres for one), for reservoir acreage within designated "critical water areas.

W5.) We support accelerated depreciation on the cost of constructing reservoirs, with no top limit.

W6.) We believe that construction of a reservoir within areas designated as wetlands should be considered on a case by case basis, not simply prohibited.

W7.) We support further research and improvement of septic tank systems.

W8.) We support continuing research on municipal and private waste systems which use surface waste disposal on created wetlands.

W9.) We believe that voluntary programs, with incentives, are the best for achieving conservation goals on private lands.

W10.) We believe that farm ponds are valuable resources, and that local NRCS staff are competent to evaluate the value of such ponds under 5 acres, without outside consultation. We support having their determination to be the final authority, thus irrevocable except for the appeal right of land owners.

W11.) We believe that there are some areas which could be designated “wetland” which are of insignificant value as wetlands, and as such should not be saved.

W12.) We believe that landowners have the right to remove sand and gravel from streams on their own property, within the law. It is our responsibility to keep landowners informed on such rules and regulations within each district.

W13.) We support funding for education and monitoring for water management and quality near oil and gas exploration and extraction sites.

W14.) We support the efforts to restore the natural flow of the Cache River by environmentally friendly means.

W15.) We support the work of irrigation districts.

W16.) We support the development of a statewide watershed coalition

W16.) We believe that land rendered unsuitable for farming by flooding and sand deposits should be eligible for CRP.

Nuisance Animal Issues

NA1.) We support beaver control.

NA2.) We support funding an armadillo eradication program, similar to the existing beaver program.

NA3.) We urge the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to designate the armadillo as a nuisance animal.

NA4.) We support efforts to eradicate fire ants.

Soil and Cropland Issues

SC1.) We support using average field slopes rather than maximum slope in calculating management requirements where cotton is produced on highly erodible land.

Livestock and Poultry issues

LP1.) We support continuing education in grazing land issues through the use of publications such as Arkansas Grazing and Forage. We support the use of field days to demonstrate conservation practices such as electric fencing and rotational grazing.

LP2.) We support the NRCS efforts to have a grazing land specialist in each area.

LP3.) We support the “Discovery Farms” program.

LP4.) We support programs of cost sharing for pipes and materials for livestock watering such as the 319 grant program and EQIP.

LP5) We support the development and distribution of a statewide poultry litter vendor list.

LP6.) We support continued development of low cost dead animal and waste management systems.

LP7.) We support continued research to develop management for warm season grasses.

LP8.) We support continued research to lower the cost of weed and brush control.

LP9.) We support the requirement of a filing fee to file an objection to new swine or poultry operations which will be forfeited if the appeal fails.

LP10.) We support cooperative efforts with other conservation oriented groups, such as the Arkansas Cattleman's Association to promote education on grassland management.

LP11.) We support rotating the Arkansas Forage and Grasslands conference around different parts of the state twice per year.

LP12.) We support the inclusion of weed control as an approved EQIP practice.

Forestry Related Issues

F1.) We support the establishment of "dry hydrants" to improve fire protection in rural areas.

F2.) We support the development of forestry management demonstrations for use in each district.

F3.) We support removal of minimum acreage restrictions for CRP and FIP.

F4.) We encourage every district to participate in forestry contests and competitions.

F5.) We support the efforts of the Arkansas Forestry Commission to control wildfires and destructive insects.

F6.) We support the Forest Incentive Program (FIP).

F7.) We encourage the AFC to provide a forester specializing in hardwoods for the Northern counties of the state.

F8.) We support efforts to inform forest land owners concerning forest carbon sequestration.

F9.) We support making general forestry a required course for all agriculture teaching majors in Arkansas.

F10.) We support the development of pellet mills to utilize sawdust and other wood by-products.

F11.) We support the efforts of rural fire departments and recognize them as valuable tools in suppression of wildfires as well as residential fires.

F12.) We support and encourage research in the use of chicken litter in forestry management.

Information and Education Related Issues

IE1.) We believe that conservation education for young people is a top priority.

IE2.) We support District, Area, and State level conservation scholarships. (The Dave Ferguson Scholarship) The contest is for tenth, eleventh, or twelfth graders. To be eligible for the district level a student must:

- A) Be a district resident.
- B) Plan a college course of study in a conservation related field.
- C) Must present a minimum 500 word paper in an oral presentation on a conservation topic.
- D) Must have a GPA of 2. Or better on a 4 point scale.
- E) Must have at least 3 letters of recommendation.
- F) Have a personal interview.
- G) Show economic need.

To participate in the area contest the student must be an area resident and a district winner.

To participate in the State contest the student must be an area winner.

State contest winners cannot enter the state contest again, but may enter the local competition a second time if they still meet other qualifications.

IE3.) We encourage all districts to participate in the “Envirothon” program.

IE4.) We encourage all districts to participate in the Auxiliary poster contest.

IE5.) We support vocational-agriculture in all high schools.

IE6.) All districts are encouraged to get involved with schools to promote conservation.

IE7.) We support the use of funds from fines collected by AGFC for conservation education, and we encourage every district to be involved in the use of those funds.

IE8.) We are committed to education of urban residents about their influence on the environment, and about sources available to them for assistance in solving problems.

Legislative Issues and Funding Issues

L1.) We support the **current** Farm Bill

L2.) We support voluntary participation conservation programs, and that they be incentive based rather than punitive.

L3.) We encourage active participation by all districts to direct the attention of political leaders to the value of, and the financial needs of conservation districts.

L4.) We support sharing in the revenue from the 1/8% conservation sales tax for funding conservation districts.

L5.) We support a statewide conservation tax to help fund the 75 conservation districts.

L6.) We support continuation of a non-point source pollution abatement program with funding by state and industry sources which includes technical assistance to producers through conservation districts.

L7.) Conservation districts seek funding in a number of ways. We support these efforts, including the following successful ideas:

- a. County voluntary tax
- b. Sale of useful items
- c. City council support
- d. Equipment rentals
- e. Office building extra space rental
- f. Quorum court appropriations
- g. State conservation tax

L8.) We oppose re-organization of any agency in our partnership unless we and other affected partners have major input in such a plan.

L9.) We support the make-up of the ADEQ commission which includes the directors of six state agencies.

L9.) We support the repeal of federal and state estate taxes.

L10.) We support legislation to protect the resource base during exploitation of our gas and oil resources, and to restore affected area to an environmentally condition when drilling and development work are complete.

L11.) We support funding for the upgrading of the watershed structures which were built under PL 566 funding.

L12.) We support increased staffing and funding for developing stewardship plans to help assure that harvesting of cellulosic materials for the bio-fuel industry is done without permanent environmental damage.

L13.) We support immediate adjustment of values for EQIP procedures to reflect more current prices, when significant changes occur during the course of the contract.

L14.) We support funding for increased education for rural fire departments to help them meet the training requirements set by legislation and regulating agencies.

L15.) We support an evaluation toward development of a fact sheet defining the impact of the current resources based formula.

L16.) We support the establishment of an endowment, funded by donations from districts and other interested parties, to serve as an emergency fund for districts in financial need.

L17.) We believe that no "taking" of property, rights or privileges of land owners should occur without adequate compensation.

L18.) We support the use of environmental credits.

L19.) We support the CRP and WRP.

L20.) We believe that NRCS should not be involved in regulation enforcement.

L21.) We believe that the Farm Bill should include no mandates without providing funding for those mandates.

L22.) We believe that the minimum size for an area to be designated a “wetland” should be one acre.

L23.) We believe that economic impact should be considered when designating a species as “endangered”.

Research Issues

R1) we believe that in conservation of natural resources few things are final, never to change, and because of this continuing research is needed on many issues.

R2.) We support research on methods of fire ant control.

R3.) We support research to update best management practices for use of animal waste as fertilizer.

R4.) We support research on the feasibility of transporting large volumes of animal waste or litter for use as fertilizer in nutrient deficient areas.

R5.) We support research on the use of artificial wetlands for disposal of animal waste to allow natural filtration and absorption of nutrients.

R6.) We support research on various plants and their efficiency in nutrient uptake and suitability as natural wastewater purification agents.

R7.) We support research on the feasibility of using refrigeration to facilitate collection and recycling of animal carcasses.

R8.) We support continuing research on acceptable levels of phosphorus and other nutrients in soils.

R9.) We support research on the effects of beaver activity.

Internal Affairs

IA1.) We believe that training for district directors and staff is essential for the operation of the conservation delivery system.

IA2.) We support the standardization of record keeping, including budgeting and accounting, consistent across all districts.

IA3.) The AACD executive board is responsible to all districts, to keep them informed about issues and programs which might be relevant in their districts, including regulations and enforcement of water use and well registration rules, and the legislative process.

IA4.) We believe it is our duty to keep legislators apprised of conservation activities.

IA5.) We encourage all districts to promote and support the sale of conservation materials and goods.

IA6.) We believe it is our duty to be involved with ANRC and other regulatory agencies in the formulation of regulations which are conservation related.

IA7.) We support a committee consisting of past state presidents, to assist in strategic or long term planning.

IA8.) We prefer to have all district offices open every day of the work week.

IA9.) We encourage every area president to meet periodically with all of the district chairmen, or their designated representative to help assure that the executive board members are in tune with the needs of the districts in their respective area.

IA10.) We support increasing the reimbursement for district board members from \$15 per board meeting up to the same level, but not to exceed the amount that board members of ANRC receive.

IA11.) Resolutions passed in the general business session at the annual state meeting will be used to develop policy and position of AACD. The disposition of each resolution passed will be reported to the districts and to the general business session the following year.

IA12.) We encourage all districts to submit resolutions to the AACD executive office thirty days prior to the annual state meeting.

IA13.) We encourage district and areas to share their resolutions with other areas so they can consider them at their subsequent area meetings.

IA14.) We encourage all districts to pay their dues on time to support their organization.