



## Conservation District Operations

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Michigan's conservation districts are local units of government that utilize local, state, federal, and private sector resources to deliver conservation programming designed to solve today's agricultural and natural resource problems. Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's (MDARD) Conservation Programs staff work to empower conservation districts to sustain, protect, and enhance Michigan's natural resources so they can be recognized as a trusted resource for local conservation solutions supported by stable funding and a network of collaborative partners. Conservation districts are also the primary mechanism by which MDARD conservation programs are delivered to private landowners.

### IMPACT FOR MICHIGAN:

Michigan's agriculture and forest products industry is a \$104.7 billion sector of the state's economy. The sustainable use of our soil, water, and forest resources is critical to ensuring the future of our agriculture and forest products industry. Conservation programming is most effective when delivered at the local level, by local people, with local technical assistance. MDARD relies on conservation districts to provide local delivery of the following programs that help protect and conserve Michigan's natural resources:

- Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program
- Forestry Assistance Program
- Conservation Technical Assistance Initiative
- Michigan Produce Safety Program

### 2021 ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Re-establishment of base operations funding for all 75 conservation districts.
- Implicit bias training was provided for and taken by 165 directors and staff.
- Statewide implementation of a new operations review and grant progress review process.
- Development of tools and resources to support Conservation District operational capacity.
- 156 instances of operational development assistance to conservation districts.
- Assistance with 44 conservation district employee search and selection events.
- Grant program delivery support to 55 conservation districts that collectively received more than \$6.6 million in grant funding for the delivery of MDARD programs.

## MEASURING SUCCESS:

Metric	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of conservation districts	75	75	75	75	75
Number of district managers	69	70	70	70	70
Total district staff	199	282	241	282	284
Number of districts receiving ESD grants	62	57	52	55	55
Total number of ESD grants to districts	135	127	94	100	98
Value of ESD grants to districts	\$6.2M	\$6.65M	\$8.08M	\$6.9M	\$6.69M
ESD grant program progress reviews	692*	383	501	417	224
Conservation district board meetings attended	127	163	152	183	172
Conservation district employee search and selection assistance	35	40	27	24	44
Conservation district capacity building assistance	135	52	79	193	156
District employee development assistance	51	36	20	49	35

\*Includes financial evaluations from the last quarter of fiscal year 2017 typically counted towards the following fiscal year.

## 2022 PROGRAM GOALS:

- Assist with the successful implementation of operations grants to conservation districts.
- Provide support to all districts to ensure successful completion of local conservation needs assessments.
- Continue to pursue the development of a formal Michigan Conservation Partnership.
- Strengthen collaboration within the division and department to better meet grantees' needs.
- Finalize a training plan and development of additional training for conservation district directors and staff.
- Continued implementation of Conservation Programs Unit's five-year strategic plan for working with conservation districts.
- Further develop and implement the operations review process to help conservation districts build operational capacity and enhance grant delivery.
- Continue to provide support to help conservation districts through the COVID-19 pandemic.



### KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- Conservation district directors and staff
- Michigan landowners
- Federal and state partnering agencies
- Users of Michigan's natural resources

### LEGAL AUTHORITY:

- Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, Public Act 451 of 1994, Part 93 (Soil Conservation Districts), as amended