

SOIL

&

WATER

OVERVIEW

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## Key Issues for Legislative Support

- The ADNR Conservation and Development Board, the 12 officially recognized Soil and Water Conservation Districts under its jurisdiction, and the non partisan Alaska Association of Conservation Districts stand for responsible natural resource development on state and private lands.
- The Board, with paralleling status in all of the lower 48 states and Hawaii, is Alaska's natural resource conservation agency required by Public Law 46, established by A.S. 41.10, and as such provides a substantial linkage for USDA and other federal programs earmarked and implemented in Alaska.
- On June 14, 1991 then Commissioner Harold Heinze recognized the significance of the Conservation and Development Board and its service as a linkage to private land owners and natural resource users in Alaska. As a result the Board and its Executive Director were elevated to the Commissioners Office and ADNR cabinet level status. This relationship must be supported and preserved.
- In FY 2000 / 2001 Congress appropriated \$2,000,000 directly to Conservation District programs and the Alaska conservation initiative. Not including millions in direct program funding for flood and erosion control measures, the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service contribution has been in excess of \$10,000,000. The State of Alaska's contribution for the same two year funding period; \$232,102.
- *The ADNR Conservation and Development Board established in 1948 under A.S. 41.10 receives less than 00.1% of the national average for state contributions.*

**ACTION REQUIRED:** The Alaska Legislature and the Administration must recognize the unique and significant contribution of the ADNR Conservation and Development Board. Over the next three years the Alaska Legislature and the Administration must initiate incremental appropriations of \$250,000 annually to achieve a static funding level of \$750,000 by the year 2003.

FORM FOR RESPONSIBLE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

**Alaska Department of Natural Resources  
Conservation and Development Board  
FY 2001 Request for Legislative Support**

**FY 2001 ADNR Conservation and Development Board (current budget request)  
Identified in ADNR Div. of Agriculture / Ag Development BRU)**

▪ 7100	Personal Services (PCN 10-0087 / 9.6 months)	\$71,851
▪ 7200	Travel (Board and Commissioners Office)	\$19,000
▪ 7300	Contractual Services (District Stipend)	\$24,000
▪ 7400	Supplies (Commissioners Office)	\$ 1,200
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$116,051</b>

**NOTE: Current funding is:**

- 62.5% Div. of Agriculture ARLF
- 37.0% Interagency receipts

**FY 2001 ADNR Conservation and Development Board (amended budget request)  
Identified in ADNR Commissioners Office**

▪ 7100	Personal Services (PCN 10-0087 / 12 months)	\$89,814
▪ 7200	Travel (Board and Commissioners Office)	\$30,000
▪ 7300	Contractual Services (District Stipend)	\$24,000
▪ 7400	Supplies (Commissioners Office)	\$ 5,000
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$148,814</b>

Dick Zobel, Chairman  
Wasilla Susitna Soil and Water Conservation District  
P. O. Box 872288  
Wasilla, Alaska 99687

Dear Dick:

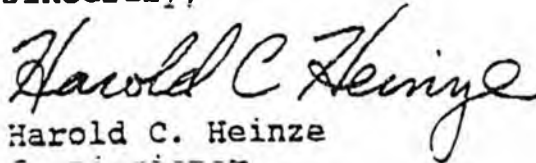
I agree that the Alaska Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Board should have a larger role in solving several key issues that are important across Alaska. Certainly the boards are well equipped to help conduct public hearing processes and they should be an integral part of important land management projects like wetlands determination and our Statehood land selection.

In support of this view, I am transferring the executive director's position for the Alaska Soil and Water Conservation Board to the Department of Natural Resources Commissioner's Anchorage Office. This week I've appointed Cheryl Boren as a Special Assistant to the Commissioner and she has been assigned this responsibility.

By copy of this letter to the Department of Natural Resources Division Directors and to other State departments, I am initiating a review of the utilization of SWCB expertise and how we might improve upon it.

I look forward to your continued work and involvement. If you have any questions, please ask.

Sincerely,

  
Harold C. Heinze  
Commissioner

**This letter is to serve as an introduction of what we feel is one of**

**Alaska's best kept secrets. Conservation Districts nation wide function as the key link between state, federal, and local agencies and your constituency; the private landowners and natural resource user groups throughout Alaska. The partnership in Alaska was initiated in 1948 with the passage of A.S. 41.10. A.S. 41.10 was modeled from draft documents sent in 1936 to every state in the union asking legislators to provide for local units of government. More explicitly, locally led grassroots organizations to be known as Conservation Districts. The framers of this model legislation intended Districts and their locally elected leadership to be the link between government land and resource management agencies and private landowners / natural resource users.**

**A.S. 41.10 provides for certain duties and authorities; some assigned directly to the Alaska Conservation and Development Board and some as delegated to the Board by the Commissioner of the Dept. of Natural Resources. The Board is appointed by the Governor to advise the Commissioner on land and resource issues, but more importantly to provide for and guide the orderly settlement of land by Alaskans.**

**For many years now, the Board has struggled to be recognized by state leaders as a legitimate private sector link with legal authority. Although we have made some strides with regard to the attitude / understanding of our sister state agencies, the battle from time to time becomes quite frustrating. As often time is the situation, our ability to perform is directly tied to personnel and fiscal limitations.**

**We appreciate you taking the time during your busy schedule to listen to our concerns. As settlement of state lands escalates and pressure for the use of state resources increases, our mandate is to provide guidance in the transition from public to private ownership. The guidance and/or support we seek is not an immediate short term remedy, but permanent long term solution.**

**Sincerely;**



**Mike Swan; President**

**Alaska Association of Conservation Districts**

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# The Cooperative Relationship Between USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Alaska's Soil and Water Conservation Districts

## Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

..... provides leadership in the conservation, development, and productive use of the nation's soil, water, and related resources.

Such leadership encompasses soil, water, plant, and wildlife conservation; small watershed protection and flood prevention; resource conservation and development; and other programs.

Through local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, NRCS assists individuals, groups, and units of government, who are seeking help to conserve and develop soil, water and related resources.



## Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD)

..... are subdivisions of state government organized and run by local people.

Each district has responsibility for developing a district-wide conservation program directed at solving local soil, water, and related resource problems.

The district assists land managers plan, apply, and maintain appropriate land practices and uses.

The District governing board helps set direction and priorities for the NRCS field offices and technical support staff.

### *THE LINK*

NRCS staff and District board members work together to carry out District programs.

Assistance is provided to the public and government agencies on conservation issues.

Pat

# An Introduction to USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Alaska's Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Many individuals, groups, and agencies in Alaska are relatively unfamiliar with U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service and its local partners, the Alaska Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a federal agency that collects information and provides technical assistance related to natural resources. NRCS programs help both public and private land managers conserve, improve, and sustain natural resources.

A primary goal of NRCS efforts is to help land managers achieve a level of natural resource protection that prevents degradation and permits sustainable use.

Soil information, collected nationwide by NRCS soil scientists and published in soil surveys, is probably the most familiar kind of NRCS technical assistance known.

In addition to soil surveys, NRCS specialists collect and interpret a wide range of data for use by diverse land managers.

These specialists include foresters, range conservationists, engineers, biologists, agronomists, archaeologists, hydrologists, geologists, economists, and land architects. Each specialist works to assist land managers in protecting our resources.

NRCS efforts are focused to work in partnership with local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).

Each SWCD has a volunteer board composed of landowners from within the district's boundaries.

SWCD boards help NRCS staff with their efforts on resource issues and concerns of local and regional significance. SWCDs also help familiarize local landowners and managers with NRCS assistance.

NRCS is a *technical assistance and information* agency and its effectiveness must be measured through the actions of others. In particular, NRCS information and programs are effective only if they lead others to manage natural resources wisely and in sustainable ways.

The more NRCS programs help land managers to conserve, improve, and sustain the resources in their care, the more effective those programs can be.

## Districts help NRCS:

- ◆ identify types of resource information and planning assistance needed by others
- ◆ reach those resource managers most likely to apply for NRCS assistance

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