

PREFACE

Montana's conservation districts (CD's) are political subdivisions of state government, created by the legislature in 1939. A non-paid elected and appointed board of supervisors governs the activities of a conservation district. The 58 conservation districts in Montana are part of national network of over 3,000 conservation districts similarly organized in all 50 states.

Their main function is to conduct local activities to promote conservation of natural resources. The activities vary from district to district, but generally include education, on-the-ground conservation projects, and 310 Stream Permitting. Utilizing local knowledge and expertise, CD's are in the fore front on education. CD's often bring in speakers and presenters to talk about the newest trends in new agriculture practices, range management, urban education, and stream management. In addition to education, CD's sponsor on the ground demonstration projects, or pilot projects to learn firsthand the benefits of a specific project. CD's also administer the Montana streambed and land preservation act, commonly known as the 310 program. This pertains to individuals planning to work in or near a perennial stream or river must first receive a permit from their local conservation district.

CD's have also been given statutory authority to pass land use ordinances if necessary to conserve local their natural resources.

Funding for conservation district operations comes from their authority to levy a tax on real property within their district. For conservation projects and educational activities, conservation districts rely heavily on grants from state and federal governments.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provides the majority of technical assistance for conservation district activities and the two entities usually share office space when their offices are located in the same towns.

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation is required by law to provide the conservation districts with administrative, technical, financial and legal assistance.

For additional information about the Department or conservation district programs, visit our website: www.dnrc.mt.gov/cardd