

2023 MCDEO SET

August 28th, 2023

CD Authority

*Karl Christians
LCCD Supervisor*

AGENDA

- CD Background
- Supervisor Responsibilities
- Financial Management
- District Authority
- Projects/Programs

History of Conservation Districts

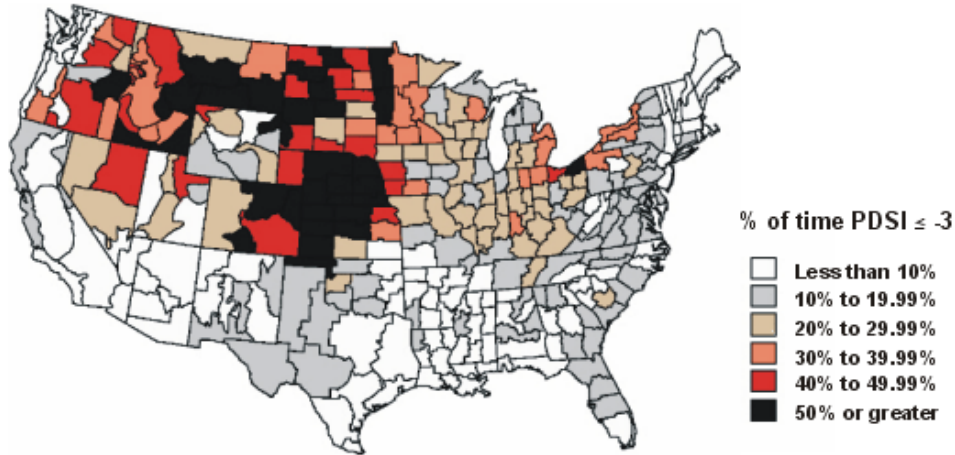
- Early 1930s, the Dust Bowl.
- Severe and sustained drought, soil began to erode and blow away
- Huge black dust storms blotted out the sun and swallowed the countryside.
- Thousands of “dust refugees” left the black fog to seek better lives.



Palmer Drought Severity Index

1930–1939

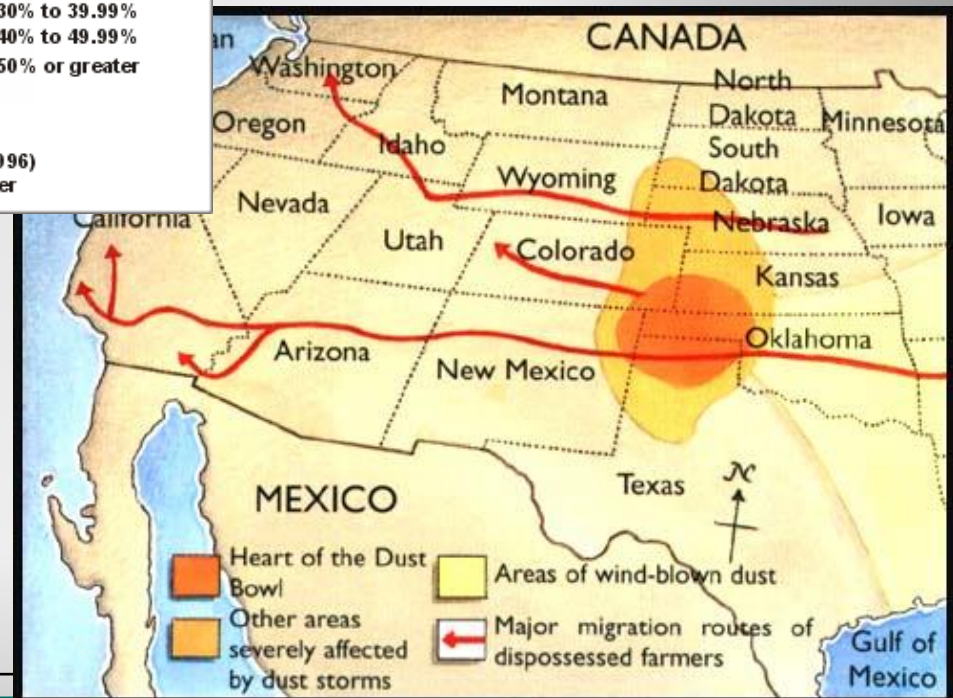
Percent of time in severe and extreme drought



SOURCE: McKee et al. (1993); NOAA (1990); High Plains Regional Climate Center (1996)
Albers Equal Area Projection; Map prepared at the National Drought Mitigation Center

Montana was also in a severe drought during the dust bowl days (1930's).

Many farmers moved west during this time frame we know as the great depression.



- Storms stretched across the nation .. south to Texas and east to New York.
- Dust sifted into the White House and on the desk of President Roosevelt.
- Dust traveled as far as 200 miles out to sea
- In 1934, the term “dust bowl” was born.

Hugh Hammond Bennett,
the “Father of Soil Conservation”.



On May 12, 1934, a major storm hit the plains, later to be described by Bennett as a turning point in the battle to get public attention to the erosion problem:

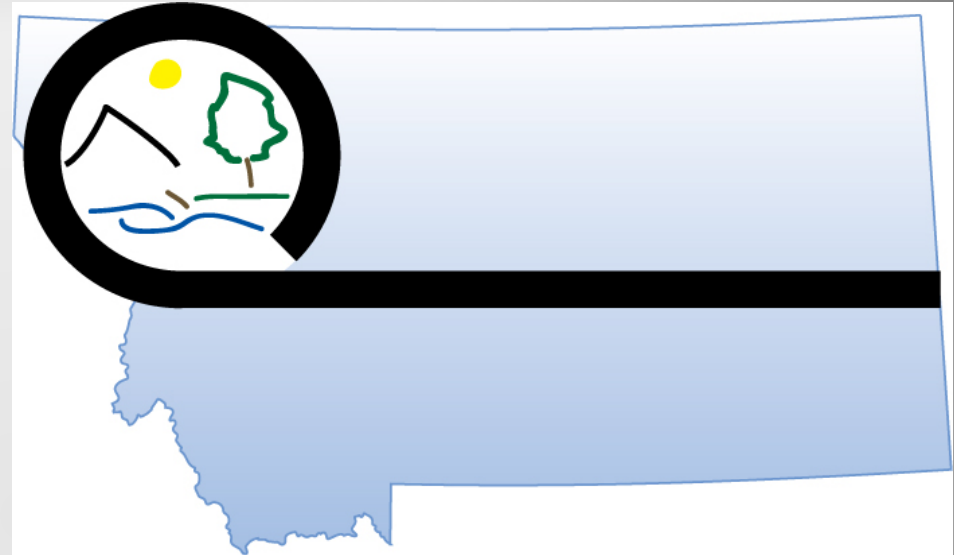


Congress unanimously passed
Soil Conservation Act of April 27, 1935.

The Key to Success:

- **Three-fourths of the continental United States is privately owned, and 59% in Montana.**
- **Congress realized that only active, voluntary support from landowners would guarantee the success of conservation work on private land.**
- **1937, President Roosevelt wrote the governors of all the states recommending legislation that would allow local landowners to form soil conservation districts.**

CD's become reality in Montana



- Montana passed the Montana Conservation District Law (Section 76-15-101, MCA) in 1939.
- Wibaux CD & Sheridan CD were the first CD's formed in Montana on Jan 15, 1940.
- Today, there are 58 conservation districts in MT.

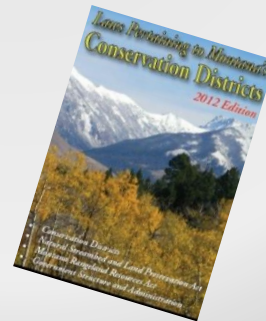
- Conservation Districts (CD's) are subdivisions of state government, public bodies with certificates of organization issued by the Secretary of State.
- Each district is governed by a board of supervisors.
- Five supervisors are elected in the general public election.
- Supervisors are elected on a county-wide basis to a four year term.
- Supervisors have roles and duties.



Supervisors Roles

76-15-311-316

- **are** public officials
- **may** employ staff
- **shall** determine staff duties and compensation
- **may** delegate authority
- **shall** provide records of all proceedings
- **shall** provide for an annual audit
- **Follow** rules of conduct for public officers and public employees .. 2-



“Personnel”

- Hire and supervise district employees
- Establish workload priorities for employees and assisting agencies
- Evaluate district employees' performance
- Create and maintain Personnel Policy Manual
- Establish training and development program for all employees
- Timesheets/Travel Expenses

“Personnel Cont’d”

- Employees work without direct supervision
 - Set clear goals and directions for them
 - Check in regularly - more than just board meetings
- Miscommunication is the main cause of employee problems
 - good communication is the solution
- If you have personnel issues -get on them
 - Molehills not mountains

- Supervisors have legal and ethical considerations
 - Legal - As subdivisions of State Government District Employees have rights. - You must follow them. It is different than:
 - Private Industry
 - Hiring a ranch hand
 - Ethical - Follow good protocol for personnel management
 - Treat someone as you wish to be treated
 - Develop employees as a district asset



“Administration”

- Know powers, authorities & responsibilities
- Set district policy
- Code of ethics
- Manage funds, facilities and equipment
- Opens Meetings
- Meet regularly - quorum required for any official business (majority)
- Enter agreements for assistance
- Adopt technical guidelines and minimum standards (approval authority)

“Planning”

- This can simply be a month-by-month calendar showing the activities necessary to accomplish your goals
- Prepare and keep current a **comprehensive long-range program** recommending the conservation of all the renewable natural resources of the district.
- Think of this as a list of reminders to help you keep moving toward your vision
- Track your progress with your month-by-month calendar
- Periodically review and revise your values, vision, mission, goals, program areas, priorities and monthly calendar

“Information/Education”

- Identify groups needing information
- Create messages and information to be delivered
- Conduct demonstrations, workshops, tours and public meetings
- Distribute information

“Supervisor Participation”

- Identify your resource issue
- Come up with a way to address that issue
 - On the ground individually
 - demonstration project
 - education workshop
 - CD/resolution process

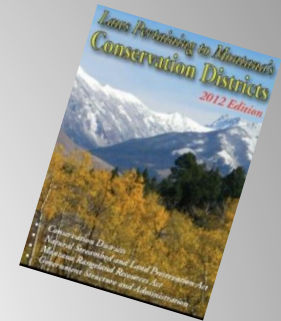
“Supervisor Participation”

- Be diligent about attending District meetings
- Be active in activities and programs.
- Represent your district in front of:
 - state and national associations
 - local, state, Tribal and federal government
 - Land occupier groups and organizations, environmental groups and other interested citizens
- Help pave the way for district employees to be successful

Questions so
far?!??

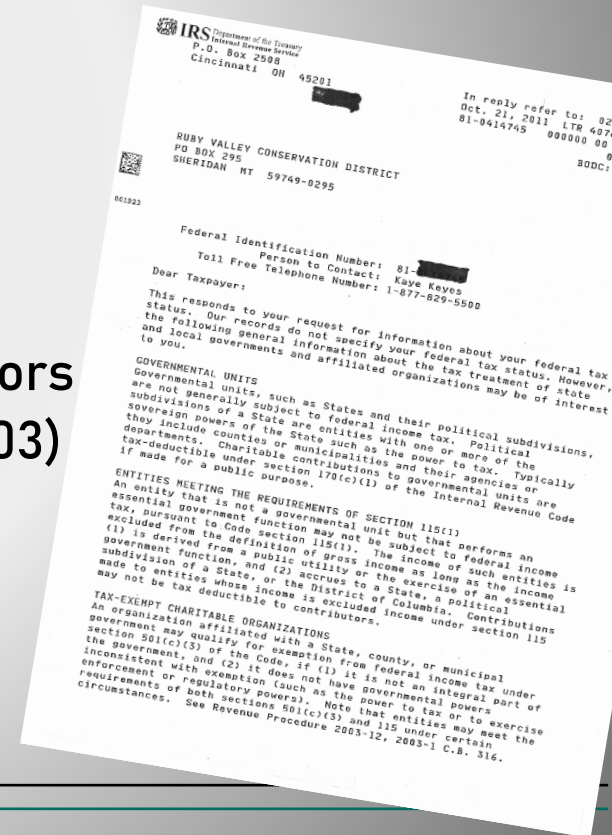
“Finances”

- County Mill Levy
- Special Project Areas (76-15-601) Assessments
- Grants (223, mini grants, 319, WPAG, CD Op, 310,)
- Budgets
- Fiscal Records Management
- Financial Reports/Audits



Financial Management

- Money (savings accounts unallocated)
 - Plan for \$\$
- Planning/emergencies
 - Plan for..
 - Permissive Levy
- Proper use of taxpayer money
 - It's your money... spend it wisely.
- Donations (given or asked for)
 - Ethics come into play for supervisors
 - CD can accept donations (76-15-403)



Questions on
the money
end!?

District Authority



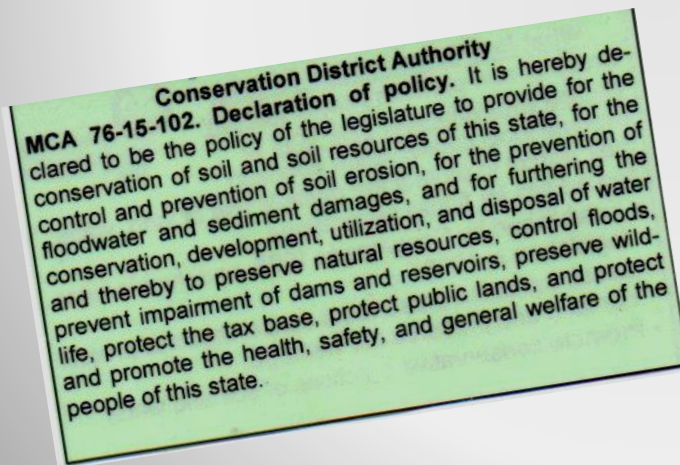
The Function of the Conservation District

To take available technical, financial, and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land user for conservation of soil, water, and related resources.

Adapted from Pete Nowak's "the Conservation District Official..."

Montana State Law Title 76, Chapter 15

- **76-15-102. Declaration of policy.** It is hereby declared to be the policy of the legislature to provide for the conservation of soil and soil resources of this state



Authorities:

Legal status of district - Immunity (76-15-320)

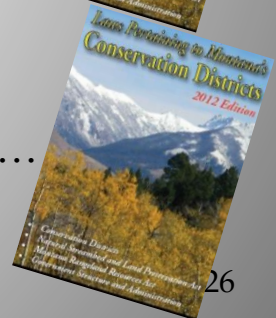
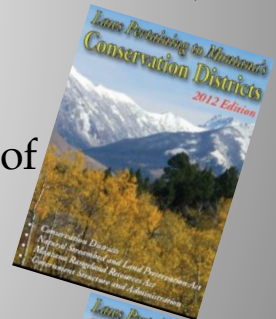
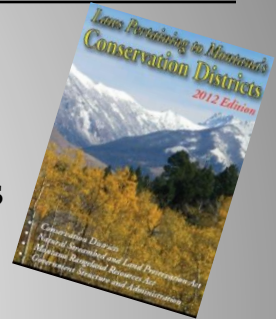
- A CD, district employee or supervisor is immune from suit for any liability..., unless the act or omission constitutes **gross negligence**, was committed in **bad faith**, or was committed with **malicious purpose**.

Rulemaking Authority (76-15-321)

- ... power to make ...rules to carry into effect the purposes and powers of this chapter (CD's) ie. 310 rules

Land use Regulations (76-15-701)

- ... formulate regulations governing the use of lands within the district ... ie. Rosebud CD CBM rules, Sod Busting ordinance, bison ordinances.



Authorities:

□ Natural Streambed and Land Preservation

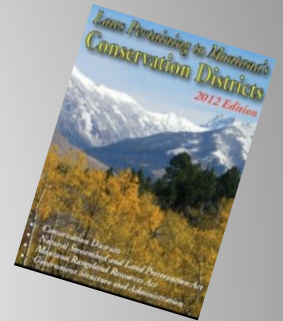
Act of 1975 (310 Law) (75-7-102):

Purpose of the law:

. . . That natural rivers and streams and lands immediately adjacent to them are to be protected and preserved to be available in their natural or existing state . . .

Further . . .

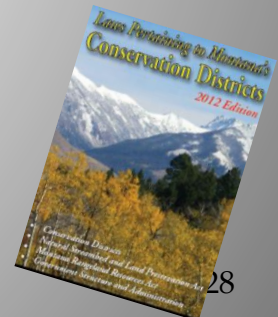
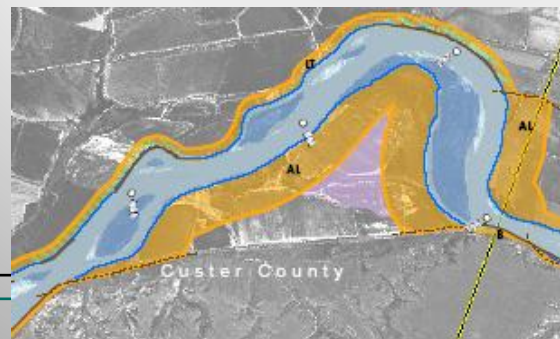
. . . minimize erosion and sedimentation . . . The policy recognizes the needs of irrigation and agricultural uses and the need to protect the use of water for any beneficial purpose guaranteed by the constitution .



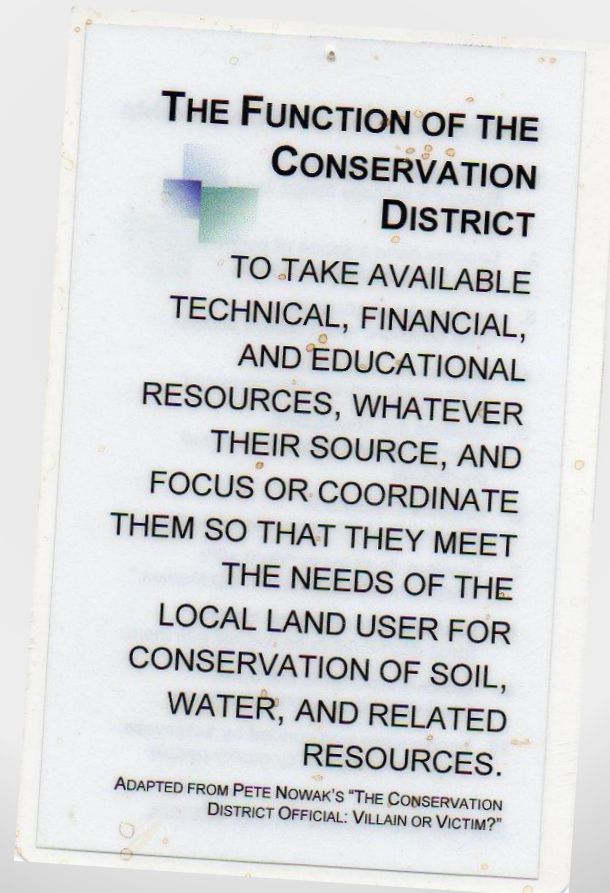
Authorities:

□ Study of problems relating to soil and water conservation (76-15-401):

- soil erosion;
 - flood water and sediment damages;
 - land drainage;
 - conservation and development of soil, water, related natural resources . . .
 - All in cooperation with state and federal agencies
-
- Smith River hydrology Study Meagher CD
 - CMZ mapping by CD's
 - Photo Riparian base-line Mineral CD



District Programs/Projects



Authorities:

- **Development of soil and water conservation plan** (76-15-402):
- **Operation of Projects & Works** (76-15-403): page 213
- **Cooperate, or enter into agreements** (76-15-403(3)) with and to furnish financial or other aid to, any agency, governmental or otherwise, or any occupier of lands within the district.
- **Acquisition and management of property.** (76-15-404 & 405)
- **Furnishing of Supplies and Equipment.** (76-15-406)
- **Selection and acquisition of water storage sites.** (76-15-407)
- **Funding of storage reservoirs.** (76-15-408)

Demonstration Projects

CD's promote, sponsor and lead Demonstration projects to learn and educate producers, agencies and general public.

- Sponsoring projects such as::
 - Soil Health/Cover Crops
 - Bale Grazing demonstrations
 - Grazing Management Pilot Projects
 - Weed control demonstrations/projects
 - Willow lift stream stabilization projects



Canada Thistle Gall

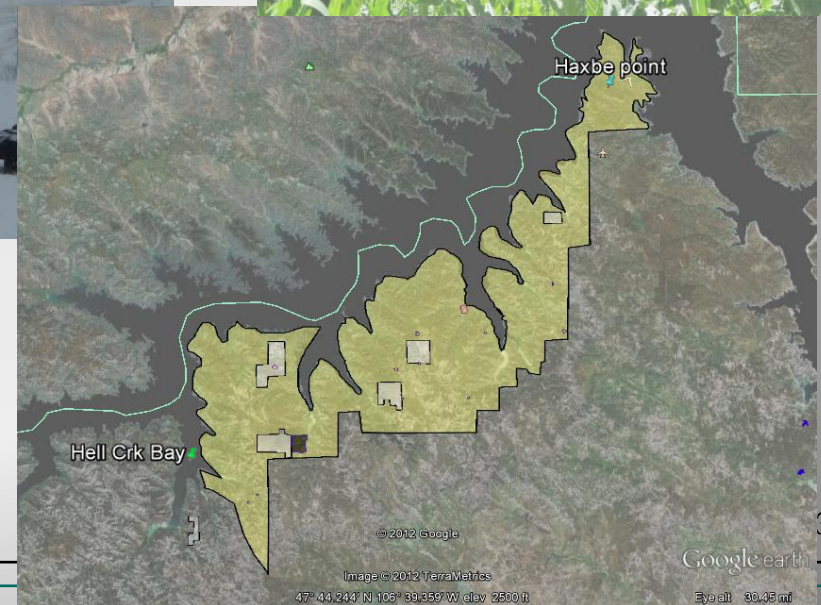
Flies create galls to lay eggs in.



Larvae develops over the Winter months. In the spring the flies will emerge from the galls and begin the reproductive process again



← note the distinctive wing pattern



Conservation Education

CD's address conservation issues to both youth and adult audiences by:

- Sponsoring **kids'** conservation field days and annual camps. Some of these include:
 - Creek & Critters
 - Montana Envirothon
 - Flood awareness
 - Ag Days
 - Ag Appreciation Week
- Sponsoring **adult** education such as:
 - Realtor Workshops
 - Governors Range tour
 - WGS
 - Conservation days
 - Spring Crops Tour
 - Irrigation Tour
 - Irrigation Efficiency workshop



Magic of Thinking Big...

- **Resolutions...**
- **Review/respond to Agency proposals**
- **NRCS TAC...**
- **Urban Conservation & Small Acreage**
- **RCD Farm**
- **Water Projects (Regional Water Projects)**
 - **Dry Redwater**
 - **Fort Peck Dry Prairie Regional Water**
- **LCCD Conservation Center**
- **Winnett ACES**
- **Share what have other CD's done?!**

Have discussions of what's a current or upcoming concern (that burr under the saddle) and envision what you could do about it. Don't be afraid to stand up and try something new.

HAVE A VISION OF CONSERVATION

Questions/discussions?!

Enjoy the rest of the week. You are in the drivers seat.. Run with it!

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