

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR DISTRICT OPERATIONS

WHEREAS, Kansas conservation districts need sustainable funding for district operations to meet the responsibilities charged to them by the Kansas Conservation District Act; and

WHEREAS, projected state budgets show decreased funding for Kansas conservation districts' operations;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts seeks to develop a subcommittee/working group to revisit current and future funding mechanisms for conservation district operations, program funding for voluntary incentive-based efforts, and to outline/define the five greatest conservation priorities for the next 50 years and for this committee to report back at the 2014 KACD Convention to insure a long term funding source for Kansas conservation districts' operations.

Above is the resolution adopted by the association at the 2013 KACD Convention. It directs the KACD Board of Directors to appoint a committee to review funding of district operations and programs as well as try to define five conservation priorities in the state of Kansas for the next 50 years.

This committee is to be created by the KACD Board of Directors and will answer to that body. Several KACD member supervisors volunteered to serve on this committee at the convention but are subject to approval of the KACD Board of Directors. The members that volunteered to serve on this committee were not part of the resolution, and while they may have input in interpreting the resolution's purpose and meaning, it is ultimately the sole responsibility of the KACD Board of Directors.

The committee should consist of a chairperson appointed by the KACD Board of Directors. The chair should be a KACD director, thereby insuring accountability to the KACD Board of Directors. A vice chair, preferably another KACD director, is recommended in order to insure continuity and accountability to the KACD board in the event the chair of the committee is unable to attend a committee meeting.

The membership of this committee is not limited to those that volunteered to serve. The KACD Board of Directors may appoint as many committee members as they choose in order to fulfill the purpose of the resolution. To date, these are the KACD member supervisors that have volunteered to serve on this committee: Chairman William Simshauser, Kearney County [620 272 3953](tel:620-272-3953); Vice Chairman Bevin Law, Clay County [785 447 1908](tel:785-447-1908); Rod Voorhees, Wilson County [620-692-3621](tel:620-692-3621); Wayne Lukert, Shawnee County [785-256-6229](tel:785-256-6229); Alan Roth, Ellis County [785-625-4319](tel:785-625-4319); Brad Shogren, McPherson County [785-227-2520](tel:785-227-2520); and Tommy Barrett, Ottawa County [785-488-3657](tel:785-488-3657).

Again, the KACD Board of Directors may appoint anyone they feel necessary to this committee to carry out the purpose of the resolution.

The KACD Board of Directors will determine the best way for the committee to proceed with implementing the resolution. The resolution is broad and covers many aspects that are difficult to get a handle on for a small committee. It is recommended that the KACD Board of Directors break the resolution down into manageable parts that the committee can address.

The resolution consists of three main parts:

- funding of conservation district operations
- funding of voluntary incentive-based conservation programs
- outline and define the five greatest conservation priorities for the next 50 years

The resolution directs that this committee report on its recommendations at the 2014 KACD Convention. The resolution could also be interpreted such that this committee could drag on and on and not accomplish anything. It is in the interest of the association to complete the purpose of the resolution in a timely manner.

The resolution directs the committee to “revisit current and future funding mechanisms” of conservation district operations and conservation programs. Funding of current programs and operations is not difficult. It is already defined and would not take long to complete. Future funding of operations and programs will be more difficult.

The committee is charged with making recommendations to KACD on where funding for operations and programs should come from. KACD will then need to persuade the Kansas Legislature to support those recommendations.

While funding of operations has its basis in the Conservation District Act and can be funded from county general funds or from the state general fund (though in reality district operations have not been funded from the state general fund for decades), this association is being asked to determine how all conservation programs, from cost share of terraces and waterways to dredging sediment from reservoirs to any program affecting water use in the Ogallala Aquifer, be funded.

Is it the responsibility of KACD to make such determinations?

This is why the committee must address these issues in three parts. While solutions for some may be found, it may be impossible to determine a solution for all three parts.

Further, it is the responsibility of conservation districts to seek funding to insure operations of the district. A conservation district cannot administer its own programs or those of the state of Kansas, or federal government, if it does not have funding to support the technical, educational and local administrative aspects of a particular conservation program.

Conservation programs may come and go, but conservation districts need adequate and reliable funding of their local operations to support any conservation program.

As for the five greatest conservation priorities, there are two that should top the list:

- **Sediment and erosion control.** This is a conservation district's strength. This is why conservation districts were created. Sediment and erosion control protect the property tax base by keeping productive land from turning into wasteland. Sediment and erosion control keep reservoirs from filling up with soil. Sediment and erosion control keep nutrients and pesticides where they can do the most good and out of drinking water supplies.
- **Water quality and quantity.** All water in Kansas is affected by the negative impacts of sediment and erosion in both urban and rural areas. Having adequate ground and surface water for irrigation, livestock, and other uses is a major concern, exacerbated by the continued drought conditions that have plagued much of the state.

Other top priorities will be identified by the committee. A valuable resource for those efforts is the "Report on the 2012 KACD Resource Planning Process," which details an initiative undertaken by Kansas conservation districts. The report, which can be found on the KACD website at http://www.kacdnet.org/Resource_Planning_Report.pdf, includes an overview of the conservation priorities districts wish to address.