



The Conservation Partnership in North Carolina

North Carolina has a proud history on the world's stage of conservation. Dr. Hugh Hammond Bennett, a native of Anson County, was instrumental in creating authorizing legislation at the federal and state levels during the Dust Bowl era. The first Soil and Water Conservation District in the nation was formed in 1937 in Anson County, coined the Brown Creek Soil and Water Conservation District. North Carolina has continued to lead the way in the grass roots conservation movement by maintaining strong Districts that are held in high regard nationally. In the late 1990s Districts in North Carolina identified the issue that the need for conservation across the landscape far exceeded existing county, state, and federal funding levels. A vision developed to form a nonprofit that could help to bring additional resources to the conservation partnership.

The **North Carolina Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation (Foundation)** is a North Carolina incorporated 501(c)(3) public non-profit tax-exempt organization. The Foundation was created in 1999 to promote wise use and treatment of North Carolina's natural resources leading to an enhanced natural environment and healthy economic growth and development of our State. The Foundation carries out its work as a member of the conservation partnership and in direct support of local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and their statewide NC Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Local **Soil and Water Conservation Districts (Districts)**, legal subdivisions of the state, are responsible under state law for planning and conducting comprehensive natural resources conservation programs in their respective districts. Districts combine local, state, and federal resources to put voluntary conservation programs on the land and educate the general public regarding natural resource management. A five-person board of supervisors (elected/appointed) administers each District, placing local priorities on the programs.

The **North Carolina Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (Association)** is an independent, nonpartisan conservation organization created in 1944 to represent the interests of the 96 local soil and water conservation districts and the 492 district supervisors who direct the Districts' conservation programs. Specifically, it; (a) promotes soil and water conservation through its member Districts, cooperating agencies, and organizations as well as the media, (b) represents the interests of member Districts in the creation, cultivation, and full realization of locally led conservation programs with state and federal agencies, interested organizations, and the public, and (c) coordinates the conservation partnership work for the common interests of all Districts.

The **North Carolina Soil and Water Conservation Commission (Commission)**, a body created by state statute, is charged by law with carrying out a comprehensive statewide campaign to promote the conservation of soil, water, and related resources. The Commission is responsible for keeping local Districts organized according to the State's general statutes. The Commission also has responsibility for implementing specific state programs such as the state's Agricultural Cost-share Program, Agriculture Water Resources Assistance Program and the Community Conservation Assistance Program. A seven-person board governs the Commission.

The **Division of Soil and Water Conservation (Division)**, in the state's Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, administers a comprehensive statewide program for conserving soil and water resources.

It serves as staff for the Commission and assists the 96 Districts and the Association in providing technical, financial, and educational assistance to the public.

The **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** provides technical and financial assistance to Districts and their cooperating land users. NRCS assistance includes helping land users plan and install conservation systems, collecting natural resources information, and helping communities reduce flood damage and enhance economic opportunities. NRCS also works to improve water quality and the natural environment through voluntary programs and technical assistance.

County governments across North Carolina are major contributors to their Districts' conservation programs. Various special interest groups also help Districts with specific issues and projects as applicable.

Other organizations collaborating with the Conservation Partnership include:

Conservation Trust for North Carolina

Environmental Defense Fund

North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Agriculture Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund

Agronomics Division

Division of Soil and Water Conservation

North Carolina Forest Service

North Carolina Department Environment and Natural Resources

Division of Energy, Mineral and Land Resources

Division of Land and Water Stewardship

Division of Water Resources

North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

North Carolina Farm Bureau Federation

North Carolina State Grange

North Carolina State University

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

College of Natural Resources

NC Cooperative Extension Service

UNC School of Government

US Department of Agriculture

Farm Service Agency

Natural Resources Conservation Service

US Forest Service

US Fish and Wildlife Service

US Department of Defense

Many farm, agricultural, natural resource, environmental, and associated organizations and advocacy groups add value to the work done by the conservation partnership and in support of Foundation efforts. The Foundation brings the private sector to the partnership as a new player at an elevated level on the statewide basis. This new involvement makes the investment in natural resource issues and programs a more complete picture as it relates to soil and water conservation programs and the natural environment.