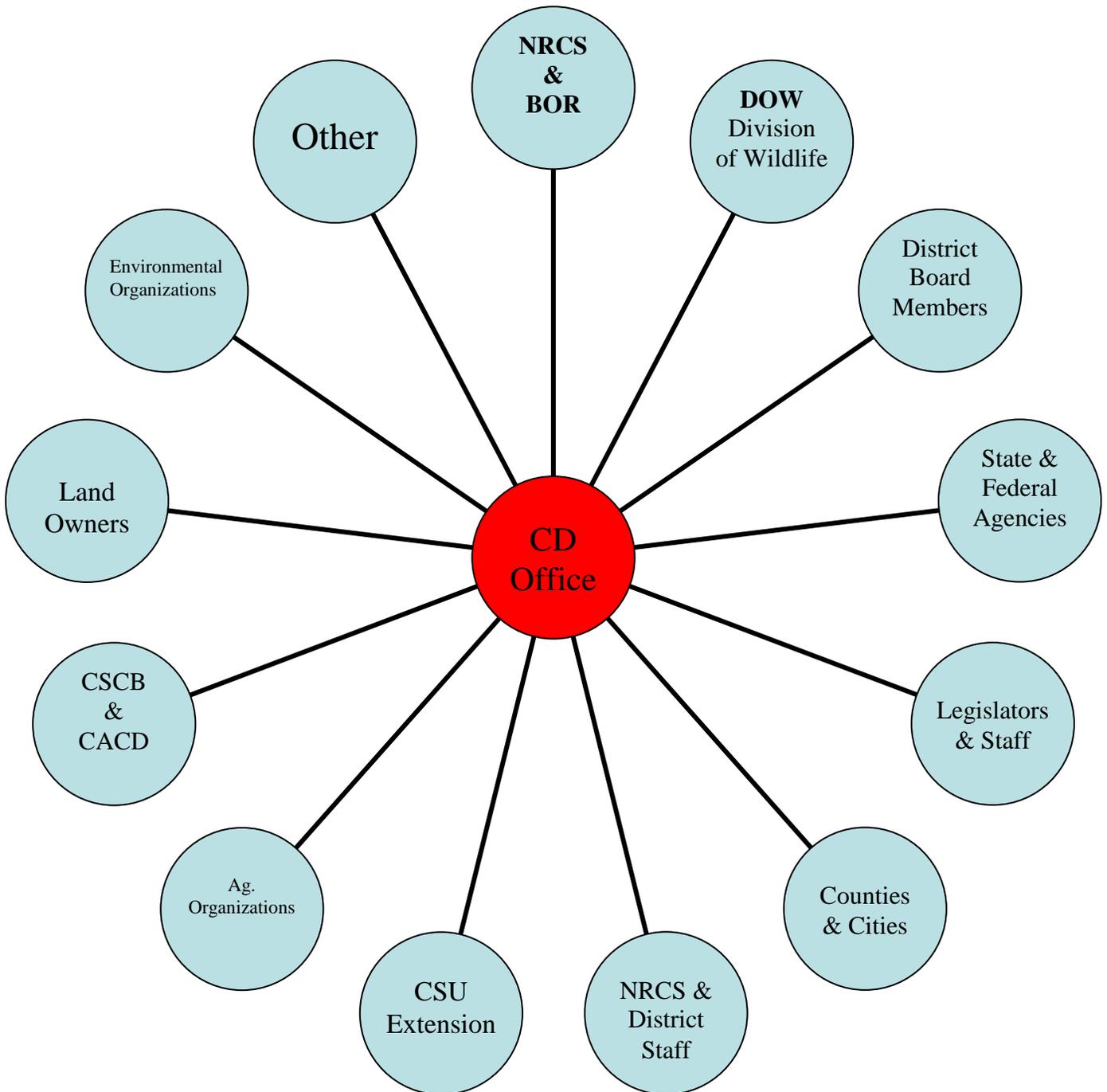


Communications

Communication is vital to all aspects of an effective organization. Conservation Districts (CD) are the hub for communications regarding the natural resources within the boundaries of the district. Therefore, communications to and from the district should be the basis for all activities.



Communication Channels:

Given the large number of entities and individuals who may partner with a district, good communications are vital to the success of all districts. Let's look at several specific lines of communication examples.



- District ↔ NRCS: With so many opportunities for communication breakdowns, it is important for the District and NRCS to develop and annually review a [Local Operating Agreement \(LOA\)](#) which may include an organizational chart so everyone understands the communication channels. The goal is the best partnership possible to assist landowners in understanding and implementing conservation. A strong partnership is critical for effective and efficient service to the landowners.

The process of developing and reviewing the LOA is as (or more) valuable than the document itself. The *process* provides an opportunity for individuals to discuss what is or is not working within the office. The *document* provides guidance for anyone new to the organizations and guidance if/when an issue/problem develops. We have all heard the cliché “actions speak louder than words” so it is important that all parties’ actions are congruent with the agreement to work together and support each other in the office and in the field.

- District Board Members ↔ Staff: The District Manager (DM) works for and with the Board. Because it is difficult to work for multiple “bosses”, it is important that the Board designate one member as the personnel contact for any issues or concerns. This is typically the President. All other Board Members should communicate issues/concerns directly to the designated member who would then work with the employee on personnel matters.

It is essential for the Board President (or designee) and District Manager to “touch base” with each other once or twice a week. The extent of direction will depend on the DM’s experience and self motivation. Weekly communication will prevent most miscommunications and misunderstandings which could become problematic in the future.

Each Board will develop their own protocol. Some may choose that all direction to the DM is to come from the President. However, if each Board Member is to be responsible for a portion of the Long Range Program and/or Annual Plan of Work, they will need to work directly with the DM to accomplish their portion of the plan. Therefore, it is important that all board members, staff, and NRCS staff develop, discuss, and understand the expected protocol.

In order to be an effective Board, each member must commit to reviewing information (minutes, financial report, and other important information) that is sent to him/her from the District Manager via email or mail prior to the board meeting. Email correspondence is also a simple way to stay informed between meetings.

- Board Member ↔ Board Member: Due to the Open Meeting and Sunshine Laws, three or more board members may not meet to discuss official district business without properly posting notice of such meeting. However, it is important for board members to regularly communicate with each other or at least with the DM so they are up-to-date on activities and issues within the district. To be an effective board member, one must regularly attend board meetings and be engaged with district activities/projects/issues between meetings. Communication provides information and knowledge which leads to more efficient and effective decisions at board meetings.
- District staff ↔ District staff: If a district has staff in addition to the DM, it is important to have a chain of command established in an organizational chart, job descriptions, and/or employee handbook. It will provide employees guidance on who to take direction from and how to handle any concerns they may have in the future.

- District ↔ Legislators: Districts have a unique voice with state and federal legislators as representatives of your local landowners. Developing good communications and relationships with your elected officials and staff is exceptionally valuable. If you become known as the voice of reason for on-the-ground conservation, your local district can truly “make a difference” at the state and national levels. It may also lead to great visibility opportunities for the district.



- Board Member and/or Staff ↔ Public or Agencies: Board members and staff will have differing opinions from time to time and it is important for the board to “hash out” their differences within the board meetings. However it is important that no board member or staff person act outside the final decision or policy made by the board. If a board member acts on his/her own behalf and the decision/action taken by an individual is not the Board decision/action recorded in the minutes, the individual is personally liable. Additionally, individual messages that contradict the official message of the district weakens the district’s credibility. Each board member has an ethical duty to abide by the decision of the Board.
- District staff ↔ NRCS staff: Most district offices are housed in the NRCS offices. The partnership between the District and NRCS is unique and poses great opportunities and challenges. It is important that all parties understand and support each other’s roles and programs. With good communications, District and NRCS staff will have a basic understanding of all the services available to landowners through the office regardless of which entity is the lead. There is no room for territorial or personality conflicts in a true partnership where everyone focuses on the goal of providing the best technical, financial and educational resources possible to the landowners for conservation of natural resources. Partnership development and cooperation should be a part of district staff job descriptions and evaluations to emphasize their importance.
- Landowner ↔ District staff: District staff are typically on the front line working with landowners and are the face of the District. Therefore, it is important for staff to be very customer service oriented as landowners look for information and assistance via phone, email, and/or in person. One of the greatest services provided to landowners is good solid information about programs and services available and who to contact for more specifics.
- Landowner ↔ Board member: Board members are the eyes and ears of the District. It is their responsibility to gather and share natural resource information with your neighbors and other constituents throughout the year. Board members are in perfect position to be role models and encourage other landowners to implement conservation practices. Knowing the District’s and NRCS’s roles and responsibilities and sharing that information with your constituents is a great service to them.
- Landowner/General Public ↔ District: Districts frequently want to be everything to everyone but with limited district resources and preoccupied public, it is important to identify landowners’ specific issues of concern and how the district will address them. This is accomplished by the district hosting a local input session and developing their Long Range Program (LRP) based on the landowners issues and concerns. Then the district should report their LRP effort and successes to the landowners at the district’s annual meeting. This is one of the most valuable processes in communicating with your landowners. See the [Public Relations section](#) of the Reference Book for more information on communicating with landowners and the public.



Communication Protocol with State Level Boards

Conservation districts elect a representative to both the Colorado State Conservation Board (CSCB) and the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD). All district supervisors and managers are encouraged to know the process in which these members are elected and to regularly communicate with them regarding district activities, successes, challenges, issues, concerns, etc. so they can represent your district based on a good understanding of your district.

First, it is important to understand the function of the Colorado State Conservation Board and the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts. Below is a summary of each board's duties and functions. Please study the information below to better understand the roles of each board and which board you should contact for specific issues or concerns.

Remember, your district has elected members to both boards so it is important that you develop a good working relationship with them so they are familiar with your district's issues and concerns.

Colorado State Conservation Board (CSCB)

CSCB has statutory responsibilities based in CRS 35-70, Colorado Soil Conservation Act and is a division within the Colorado Department of Agriculture.



The CSCB is an agency located within the Department of Agriculture. State Board members serve voluntarily on the State Board and are elected by the conservation districts within each of the ten major watersheds in Colorado. The Board is made up of the following:

- White-Yampa and North Platte river watersheds – one member
- San Juan basin – one member
- Arkansas river watershed – two members, one from the upper Arkansas river watershed and one from the lower Arkansas river watershed
- Rio Grande watershed – one member
- Republican and South Platte river watersheds – two members, one from the upper South Platte river watersheds and one from the Republican river and lower South Platte river watersheds
- Colorado, Gunnison, and Dolores river watersheds – one member
- At large – one Governor appointed member

Board Members are elected through the following process:

- All districts within the respective watershed are notified of election from the CSCB State Office with a request for nominations
- Nominations are sent to the CSCB State Office
- If two or more candidates are running, each district receives a mail-in ballot to return to the CSCB Office where ballots will be counted and districts notified. If there is an uncontested candidate, the districts are notified that individual will serve the next term.

Colorado State Conservation Board (CSCB) cont.

Below is a very brief synopsis of the CSCB's duties and functions based on the CRS. (Note: See CRS 35-70-103 for specifics)



- **To act in an advisory capacity with the board of supervisors of each conservation district (CD)**
 - Delegated to staff.
 - Long Range Program
 - Annual Plan of Work
 - Budgeting & Accounting
 - Elections
 - District staff training
 - Supervisor training
 - Capacity Building – Leadership
 - Program administration
- **To coordinate programs of all CDs**
 - CSCB approves LRP and APW
- **To act as the state board of appeals**
 - CSCB acts on landowner appeals
- **To prepare a uniform and adequate system of accounting for districts**
 - Delegated to staff
 - System development
 - District staff training in accounting system and skills
 - Board supervisor training of financial management based on system
- **To administer and disburse any funds that may be made available to the CSCB**
 - Request staff to administer CSCB decisions
 - Direct Assistance
 - Matching Grants
 - Basin States Program (Salinity)
 - Conservation District Technicians
 - Other funding and/or grants
- **To undertake studies of watershed planning and development of watershed flood prevention and underground water storage projects**
 - Request staff to apply and administer grants identified by CSCB

Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD)



CACD is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization established in 1945 to represent the 76 conservation districts of Colorado. The mission of CACD is to be the guiding force directed by the Conservation Districts of Colorado to educate, promote, help obtain funds, and provide information on issues and programs aimed at enhancing and protecting our natural resources.

CACD's duties and functions are identified in their Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, and Policy. Below is a synopsis of CACD's duties and functions.

CACD Board Members are elected on a three year term by their respective watershed at the Watershed's Annual Meeting.

Below is a very brief synopsis of the CACD's functions.

- **Information/Education**
 - Public
 - Camp Rocky Youth Camp
 - Teachers' Conservation Education Workshop
 - Poster Contests
 - Photo Contests
 - Colorado Conservator Publication
 - Districts
 - CACD Annual Meeting
 - Elected Officials & Government Agencies
 - CACD provides information and education based on CACD policy regarding natural resource conservation

- **Conservation District Advocacy**
 - CACD advocates for conservation of natural resources based on CACD policy developed through the resolution process
 - CACD advocates for funding of conservation districts and programs administered through the districts

- **CACD Financial Structure**
 - Colorado districts become members by paying dues set by CACD each year
 - Individuals can support CACD by paying individual membership
 - Entities may sponsor/support CACD through donations and/or sponsorships
 - As most non-profits, CACD operates through grants for specific deliverables

- **Policy Development**
 - CACD policy is developed through the resolution process that comes from the local districts. See Resolution Process below.

Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD) cont.

CACD Resolution Process

Conservation districts in Colorado have various opportunities to make changes in local, state and national laws and policies that impact the natural resources. One of the tools available to each district is the resolutions process. If there is a natural resource issue your district believes needs to be addressed at the state or national level, you can bring a resolution forward.



The development, support, and passage of a resolution have a number of steps including:

1. The conservation district drafts the resolution wording and sends a copy to the other districts within their respective watershed.
2. At a watershed meeting, the sponsoring district explains the background for their resolution(s) and requests the approval of the other districts present. The resolution may be defeated, amended and/or approved. If approved, it is forwarded to CACD.
3. CACD distributes all watershed approved resolutions to the conservation districts prior to the CACD Annual Meeting.
4. At the CACD Annual Meeting, each resolution is assigned to a particular committee for discussion. The resolution may be defeated, amended and/or approved.
5. If the resolution is approved, it then comes before the general session where it can be defeated, amended and/or approved.
6. CACD has the responsibility to insure that each approved resolution receives the necessary follow-up to carry out the desired intent. It is extremely important that the originating district work with CACD to ensure its success.
7. If a resolution has impact at the national level, it will be taken to NACD Annual Meeting for action. Again, the resolution can be defeated, amended and/or approved.

Contact CACD for more information and resolution format.

Districts are encouraged to contact their watershed representative to the CACD Board to communicate issues or concerns regarding policy, information & education, and CACD programs.

See www.cacd.us for more information.