

COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (CDA) RESPONSIBILITIES TO CONSERVATION

Overview and History

Conservation districts were born from the devastation of the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. In the early 1930s the Dust Bowl brought massive dust storms to the Great Plains. As the soil began to erode and blow away due to the drought and farming practices of the times, huge black dust storms blotted out the sun and covered the countryside. These storms stretched across the country and dust even sifted into the White House and onto the desk of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. On Capitol Hill, while testifying about the erosion problem, soil scientist Hugh Hammond Bennett dramatically threw back the curtains to reveal a sky blackened by dust. Without a dissenting vote, Congress passed Public Law 46 in 1935 which declared soil and water conservation, along with wise land, use a national policy.



***A black blizzard over Prowers Co., Colorado, 1937.
(Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma)***

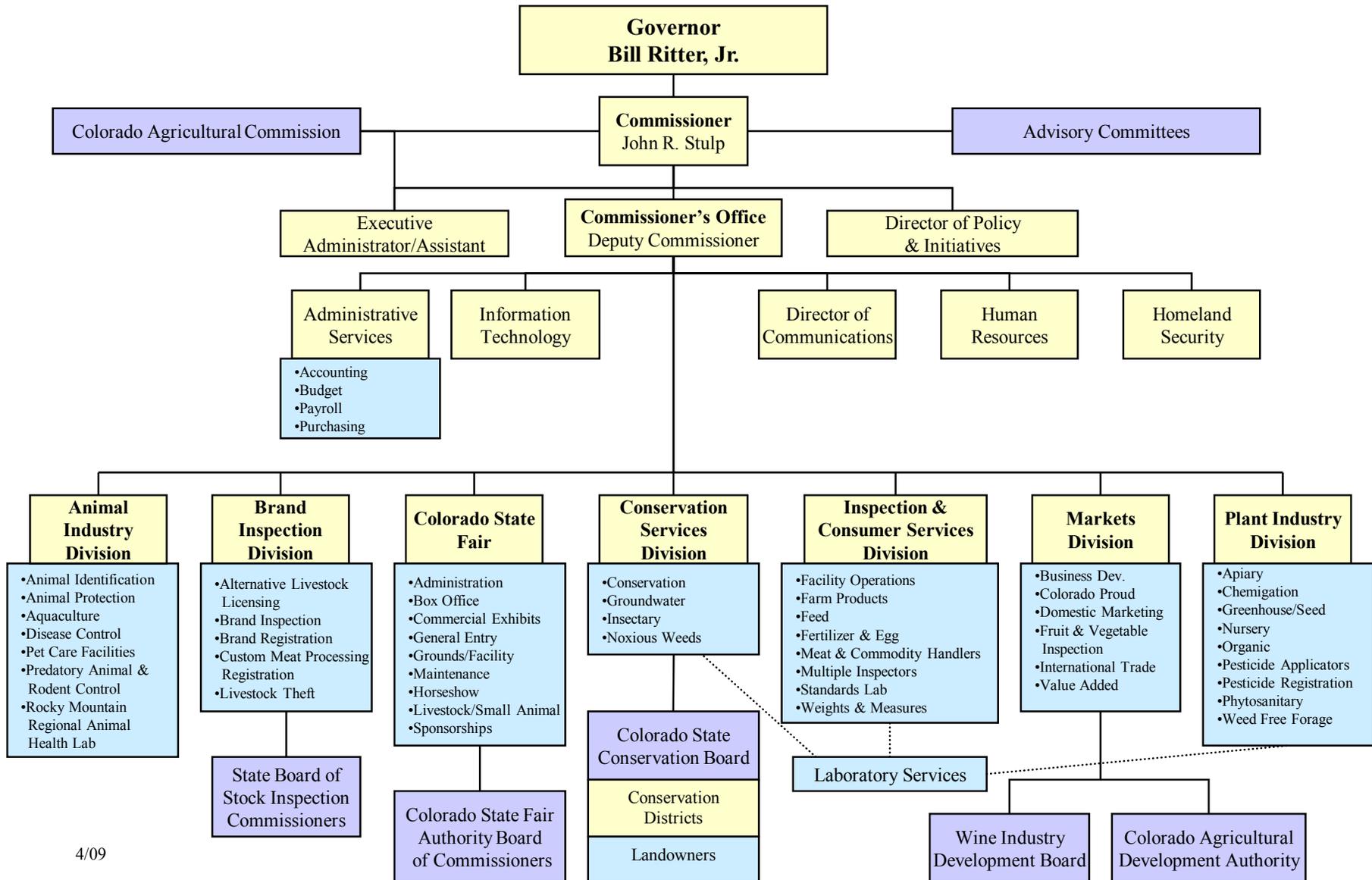
Agencies ranging from Land Grant Universities to the Federal Emergency Relief Administration researched and implemented conservation practices throughout the nation. Eventually, the Soil Conservation Service, now named Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), was created under the Soil Conservation Act of 1935 to develop and implement soil erosion control programs. The Federal Government began to formulate programs to provide technical and financial assistance to farmers and ranchers.

Sometimes agencies working with conservation ended up competing with each other. Since about three-fourths of the continental United States is privately owned, local leadership was needed to coordinate efforts and tie them into local conditions and priorities.



However, there was a missing link - organized voluntary support from local landowners to guarantee the success of conservation work on private lands across the United States. In an effort to create a local link to landowners and citizens, President Franklin D. Roosevelt developed

Colorado Department of Agriculture Organization Chart



4/09

Colorado Agricultural Commission (Ag Commission)

Commonly referred to as the “Ag Commission”



The Colorado Agricultural Commission is a group of nine agricultural leaders appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate. They are responsible for making recommendations to the Commissioner, the Governor and the General Assembly regarding agricultural issues within the state; developing policies for preparing and enforcing rules and regulations related to agriculture; reviewing and approving all rules and regulations prior to adoption by the Commissioner; developing general policy for managing the agriculture department; and approving and monitoring the agriculture department's budget.

Please [click here](#) to be directed to the CDA website page for the Ag Commission to find a list of the current members of the Commission.

The powers and duties of the Commission are conferred in Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S) Section 35-1-106.

Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.)



Colorado Revised Statutes

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The [Lexis Nexis](#) web site is the only official source of the Colorado Revised Statutes.

[Instructions for using Lexis-Nexis](#) 

Conservation Services Division (CSD)

The Conservation Services Division collaborates with public and private landowners across Colorado to enhance the stewardship of natural resources related to agricultural practices and lands. The division is comprised of the following four programs: Agricultural Chemicals & Groundwater Protection Program, Biological Pest Control Program, Colorado State Conservation Board, and the Noxious Weed Management Program. More information about Division programs is available [here](#).



Colorado State Conservation Board (CSCB)

The CSCB is created in C.R.S. 35-70-103 and consists of nine members. One member is a qualified elector of the state appointed by the governor from the state at large for three-year terms. The remaining eight positions on the Board are filled by elections held within the watersheds as listed below for three-year terms. A candidate for the Board shall be or shall have been an elected supervisor of a local conservation district. The number of members to be elected and the watershed from which they are to be elected are as follows:

- The White-Yampa and North Platte River Watersheds, one member;
- The San Juan Basin, one member;
- The Arkansas River Watershed, two members, one from the Upper Arkansas River Watershed and one member from the Lower Arkansas River Watershed;
- The Rio Grande Watershed, one member;
- The Republican and South Platte River Watersheds, two members, one from the Upper South Platte River Watershed and one member from the Republican River and Lower South Platte River Watersheds;
- The Colorado, Gunnison, and Dolores River Watersheds, one member.

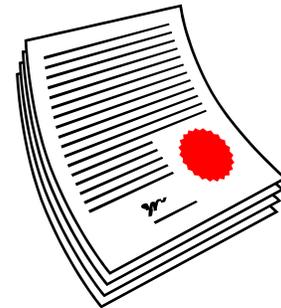
Any vacancies occurring in the elected positions on the Board are filled by the Board appointment of a person who would be qualified to stand for election for the board and who is from the same area in which the vacancy occurred, and the appointee holds office until the expiration of the term of the office to which he/she was appointed. Members of the CSCB serve without pay except for their actual traveling and living expenses while on official state board business.

The Board provides administrative and financial assistance to Colorado's 76 conservation districts. It also coordinates various programs with state and federal agencies on natural resource issues, provides guidance and assists districts on various water and energy programs. One board member serves as a representative on the Colorado Mined Land Reclamation Board.

The Director of CSU Extension, the Director of the State Experiment Station, the Commissioner of Agriculture, and the Executive Director of the Department of Natural Resources serve in an advisory capacity to CSCB. The Board also works in partnership with NRCS and the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD).

The CSCB has the following powers and duties: (see CRS 35-70-103 for more details)

- To promote and assist in the organization of conservation districts in any section of the state where erosion damage exists or is threatened;
- To accept petitions for the organization of conservation district;
- To prepare and present to the qualified voters uniform bylaws for the conduct of the business of such district;
- To act in an advisory capacity with the board of supervisors of each district and to coordinate programs of all conservation districts;
- To act as the state board of appeals;
- To prepare a uniform and adequate system of accounting for districts, which may be adopted and used by all districts within the state;
- To administer and disburse any funds that may be made available to the state board for the purpose of assisting conservation districts in the conservation of soil and water resources of the state of Colorado and to defray expenses of the state board and its duly appointed or employed agents in carrying out the provisions of this article;
- To loan money to conservation districts to assist such districts in furthering the purposes of this article;
- To undertake studies of watershed planning and to undertake development of watershed flood prevention and underground water storage projects, both on its own initiative and in response to requests submitted to the board by one or more soil or water conservation districts, flood prevention or control district, boards of county commissioners, municipalities, drainage or irrigation districts, or other legally constituted bodies having authority under state law to carry out, maintain, and operate works of improvement;
- To hold public hearings at any point within or without each proposed watershed for the purpose of determining the extent of public interest, the degree of anticipated cooperation, and any other data and information needed by the state board in making decisions as to each project;
- To plan, in cooperation with the United States government or any of its agencies, the state of Colorado or any of its political subdivisions, and private individuals or corporations, conservation districts, and others, watershed improvement, underground water storage and flood prevention projects, conservation and erosion control practices, and other projects not inconsistent with this article;
- Within the limits of available funds, to administer, direct, and operate such watershed improvement, underground water storage and flood prevention projects, conservation and erosion control projects, and other similar activities;
- To administer and expend funds made available to the state board by the United States government or any of its agencies or by the state of Colorado or any of its political subdivisions or funds practices and projects undertaken in accordance with this subsection;
- To obtain options upon and to acquire, or acquire control of, by purchase, exchange, lease, gift, grant, bequest, devise, or otherwise, any property, real or personal, or rights or interests therein; to maintain, administer, and improve any properties acquired, to receive income from such properties, and to expend such income in carrying out the purposes and provisions of this article: and to sell, lease or otherwise dispose of any of



its property or interests therein in furtherance of the purposes and provisions of this article;

- To erect suitable structures and maintain any facilities, so as to arrest or prevent the erosion of soils or lands, to improve the watershed and prevent floods, and to increase underground water reserves, with due consideration to establish water rights;
- To accept grants, services, and materials and to borrow money from the United States or from any corporation or agency created or designed by the United States to lend or grant money, or from the state of Colorado or any of its subdivisions;
- To report annually to at such times and on such matters as the commissioner of agriculture may require;
- To place any funds it receives pursuant to paragraph (e) of this subsection (6) into a trust and to administer and expend any moneys in such trust.

CSCB Program Staff implement and deliver technical, administrative, and financial assistance under the direction and guidance of the CSCB and CDA. The CSCB, Staff and districts work in a cooperative effort to offer assistance to landowners and citizens of the district to help solve natural resource problems including soil erosion, water quality and quantity, noxious weed control, wildlife habitat, and much more.



Photo Courtesy of Nathan Trout, Wiggins, Colorado 2003

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Conservation 101

For the key to answering the following important questions about conservation districts, check out [insert link to the PP Presentation and link to the name Conservation 101 Power Point Presentation](#). on CSCB Program's Forms and Publications website page available [here](#).

Who?
What?
When?
Where?
Why?
Significance?



This presentation provides a comprehensive background on the history, purposes, and importance of Conservation Districts in Colorado. It is an excellent orientation tool for new supervisors, managers and anyone unfamiliar with districts.



CSCB Web Site

The CSCB maintains a website on the CDA's internet site. This site includes a variety of forms, grant opportunities, information, and educational materials for districts. The home page for the site is <http://www.colorado.gov/ag/CSCB>.

District Directory

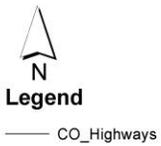
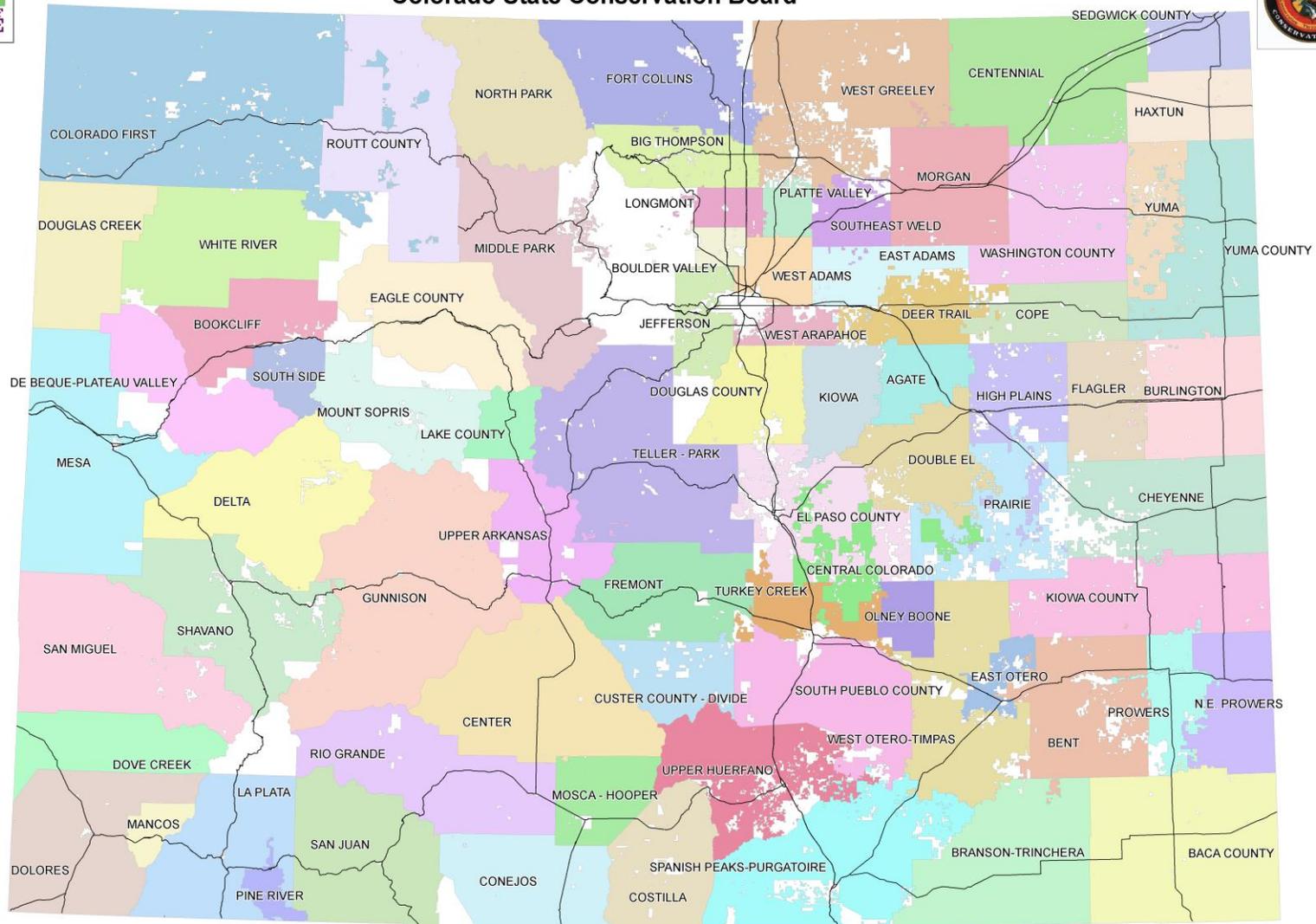


Conservation Districts On-line Directory

A valuable part of the website is the Districts Directory available at <http://www.ag.state.co.us/ccdd/>. A limited directory with contact information for the 76 districts is available to the general public. An expanded directory with secured log-in access is also available to conservation districts and CSCB on this page. Log-in codes and names are issued by the CSCB state office. Keeping this directory updated and accurate is very important and districts assist by reporting any changes to the CSCB State Office.

District Map

Colorado's Conservation Districts Colorado State Conservation Board



Watershed Map

Conservation Districts and Watershed Associations

The ten watershed associations distribute pertinent information regarding district activities; report natural resource concerns common to their localities; develop resolutions to be presented at the annual CACD meeting; sponsor training sessions for district supervisors and employees within the area; and elect the directors of CACD. The majority of the watershed associations only meet in the fall of each year but others meet on a quarterly basis.



Colorado Conservation Districts & Watershed Associations

