

Michigan Association of Conservation Districts

Policy Handbook FISCAL YEAR 2020

MACD
3001 Coolidge Rd., Suite 250
East Lansing, MI 48823

517-324-5274 Office
517-324-4435 Fax

Table of Contents

1. BASIC POLICIES AND PRINCIPLES	1
2. AQUATIC NUISANCE SPECIES	3
3. COASTAL AND SHORE RESOURCES	4
4. DISTRICT OPERATIONS	5
5. DRAINAGE	12
6. ECONOMIC INCENTIVES	13
7. EDUCATION AND INFORMATION	15
8. ENVIRONMENT	17
9. FEDERAL AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS	22
10. EMERGENCY PLANNING AND EMERGENCY TUBES	26
11. FISH AND WILDLIFE	27
12. FORESTRY	30
13. FUNDING CONSERVATION PROGRAMS	32
14. GREAT LAKES	35
15. INVASIVE SPECIES	37
16. LAND USE MANAGEMENT	38
17. MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES	40
18. MICHIGAN AGRICULTURE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSURANCE PROGRAM (MAEAP)	41
19. MINERALS AND MINED LAND RECLAMATION	43
20. NATURAL RESOURCE DATA	44
21. OUTDOOR RECREATION	45
22. PERMIT FEES	47
23. PUBLIC LANDS	48
24. RESEARCH AND EXTENSION	49
25. RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (RC&D) PROJECTS	50
26. RESOURCE PLANNING	51
27. SANITARY SEPTIC SYSTEM MANAGEMENT & SEWAGE OVERFLOWS	54
28. TAXATION	55
29. TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS	56
30. SOIL EROSION AND SEDIMENTATION CONTROL ACT	58
31. NATIONAL STEWARDSHIP WEEK	59
32. URBAN CONSERVATION	60
33. WATER RESOURCES	63
34. MICHIGAN ENVIROTHON - YOUTH PROGRAMS	65

1. BASIC POLICIES AND PRINCIPLES

Effective work for the conservation and development of natural resources and for the improvement of the environment can be done best by those who live on the land and use it. Beyond that, all citizens share in the responsibility for stewardship of the resources upon which everyone depends.

The Michigan Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) is guided by a number of basic principles:

1. Conservation Districts serve their communities as "Gateways" to Natural Resources Management. Districts provide linkages between land managers and conservation service providers. Districts also continuously scan the needs of their local communities, work in partnership with others to develop local priorities, and develop action plans to solve natural resource problems.
2. Effective support for the 75 Conservation Districts is necessary - in government, industry, labor and commerce; in farm, civic and conservation organizations; among educators, publishers and the clergy; and in all other segments of American society.
3. We supply reliable information about the purposes and activities of Conservation Districts to the press, radio and television; to national, state and local legislative bodies; and to all responsible organizations, agencies and leaders concerned with these purposes and activities.
4. We work closely with and assist public agencies concerned with the conservation, use and development of renewable natural resources to provide more effective service to the people of Michigan. Managing Our Natural Resources
5. We seek assistance for conservation work that is in the public interest and which landowners and land users cannot perform adequately with their own capabilities or authorities. We encourage all people to participate in programs of Conservation Districts.

FOCUS ON STATE NATURAL RESOURCES AGENDA FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

MACD, representing the Conservation Districts of Michigan and the District board members who guide their daily actions, offers a Natural Resources Agenda for the future. These statements represent what remains to be done in conservation, and the unfinished business that is most urgent. We present it to the people of the state in the hope that it will inspire new debate, new policy and new action to effectively manage our resources.

1. There must be a higher state priority for the conservation of Michigan's natural resources. Conservation is essential to maintain the resource base to meet our long-term food and fiber needs.

2. The state of Michigan should establish a special dedicated revenue source to provide stable, adequate and continuing financing for Conservation District programs.
3. Natural resource conservation programs must be designed to take advantage of the willingness of private land users to voluntarily carry out needed conservation measures. New and better systems of economic incentives for conservation are needed to amplify the private land users' capability to manage their resources in the long-term interest of all people.
4. We need stronger state and local leadership to develop new policies and programs to encourage balanced rural and urban growth. Prime and unique production lands need special protection to prevent their permanent conversion and loss to other uses.
5. State natural resource programs should maximize the role of local governments and landowners in defining priorities and carrying out action programs. Federal programs should, to the extent possible, provide grants or matching funds to state and local entities in order to maximize local support for, and management of, natural resource programs.
6. National agricultural programs must be coordinated so that food, agriculture and natural resource conservation policies will be linked together and provide appropriate private incentives to produce while still protecting resources.
7. More effective procedures for resolving conflicts over resource use are needed to reduce the paperwork, controversy, litigation and delay that have become common during the last decade.
8. Through effective environmental education programs, every citizen - both youth and adult - should have opportunities for classroom and field study to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to protect and improve the environment.

FUNDING FOR CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

MACD recommendations for conservation programs are based on the assumption that new program authorities and directions will be accomplished with corresponding increases in funding. Without such increases, MACD and Conservation Districts cannot support expansion of current program authorities. MACD believes that it is time for Congress, the President, the State Legislature, and the Governor to clearly state that resource protection is a national and state priority and to provide the funding necessary to carry out this priority effort.

MACD supports federal and state governments' efforts in promoting programs to address water quality concerns. We also believe that government has a clear responsibility to provide funding for programs it authorizes.

2. AQUATIC NUISANCE SPECIES

BACKGROUND

Since aquatic nuisance species--harmful, waterborne, non-native organisms that threaten diversity or abundance of native species--are found throughout Michigan and the entire United States, their impact is widespread, and their effects on the environment and the economy is profound. Aquatic nuisance species cause significant ecological problems where there are no controls, which leads many times to an exponential growth rate. Recent cost examples of controlling aquatic nuisance species such as Eurasian Milfoil, Purple Loosestrife, and Zebra Mussels have reached well into the billions of dollars nationally. The introduction of harmful nonindigenous aquatic species, also known as exotics, into the Great Lakes region causes ecological, economic, societal and public health impacts that threaten the value of the region's water resources. The recently passed aquatic nuisance species laws of neighboring Wisconsin and Minnesota which prohibit launching a boat with aquatic vegetation attached and the transportation of aquatic vegetation, respectively, are less effective without similar laws in Michigan.

POLICY STATEMENT

MACD will work towards the passage in Michigan of the same or similar aquatic nuisance species regulation(s), prohibiting the transportation and/or introduction of aquatic vegetation to/from water bodies within the state of Michigan.

3. COASTAL AND SHORE RESOURCES

BACKGROUND

Michigan's Great Lakes coasts and inland riparian zones continue to be challenged by development and alteration, causing loss of natural features that negatively impact shoreline habitats, increasing erosion and reducing water quality.

POLICY STATEMENTS

MACD is a partner of the Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership (MNSP) and encourages Conservation Districts to engage with MNSP and promote natural shoreline benefits and techniques through their educational outreach and programs.

We encourage Michigan's legislature to balance environmental protection with landowner rights to provide long term viability and protection of Michigan's coastal and riparian resources.

MACD supports the Conservation District Critical Dunes Partnership (Partnership) and encourages all Districts with areas designated as critical dunes within their District to become an active member of the Partnership.

We encourage the Partnership to continue providing critical dunes vegetative removal assurances to landowners of critical dunes to protect the integrity of Michigan's dune resource.

MACD will work with the Partnership and the Department of Environmental Quality to facilitate a close working relationship between DEQ field staff and Partnership Districts to maintain VRA assistance promotion to all parties involved in critical dune development.

4. DISTRICT OPERATIONS

BACKGROUND

We believe programs to meet oncoming environmental needs should be directed toward:

- a. preventing waste, pollution and damage to natural resources; and (2) improving the quality of the resources.
- b. In achieving these purposes, we urge that resource programs be authorized and conducted in such a manner as to maximize: (1) voluntary action; (2) local participation and decision; (3) private enterprise; and (4) partnership between private and public interests at all levels of government.
- c. Conservation Districts have already made substantial progress toward resource conservation objectives in accordance with these principles, but their capabilities in terms of authorizations, legal responsibilities, assistance, staffing and funding need to be expanded. Conservation Districts should serve as the foundation for the larger and more comprehensive efforts that will be required to meet the conservation and resource development needs of tomorrow.

THE GATEWAY APPROACH TO NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Current trends in population and land use patterns throughout Michigan have resulted in many more private landowners managing ever-smaller parcels of land. Many of these landowners do not have the skills or knowledge to adequately manage their natural resources. Staffing and budget trends at the state level do not permit state agencies such as MDNR and MDEQ to meet the growing need for resource management assistance to private landowners. Conservation Districts have a strong tradition in cost-effective landowner assistance and have the potential for meeting the increased need. Districts spend considerable time and energy in obtaining financial resources necessary to maintain the current level of service. Many state agencies and other organizations recognize the Districts' potential to provide objective, uniform, cost-effective and high quality service to private landowners. MACD developed the "Gateway" concept to allow Districts to provide expanded and uniform services to their rapidly increasing clientele using increased stable state funding. Using the Gateway approach will also provide a base platform from which Districts will be able to raise additional funds and support from other sources. Each individual District will work diligently with state decision makers and stakeholders to further develop, refine and implement the Gateway approach.

Many landowners view their property as a source of enjoyment, as well as a source of income, and recognize their land resources are valuable assets to them, their neighbors, and future generations. Many also realize that they need professional advice to make their vision for the land a reality. Attaining their vision through a stewardship philosophy helps provide the country's need for clean water and air, thriving populations of wildlife and fish, healthy forested ecosystems, quality outdoor recreation experiences, and commodity products. Private lands technical assistance provides landowners with the means to realize their personal goals, as well as to fulfill society's needs for natural resource products and other benefits. Conservation Districts act as "Gateways" in their local communities. Districts are links between residents and a host of conservation service providers. They continuously scan the needs of their communities, solving natural resource related problems, and coordinate the local network of environmental resources available to private citizens.

Conservation Districts allow citizens to obtain conservation information on a day-to-day basis. They allow the public a nearby point of access in their local communities to the aspects of natural resource management. They provide convenient, "one stop" customer service, on-the-ground technical assistance, unbiased information and referral services, educational activities, and act as a clearinghouse for the broad range of environmental needs within the community. They are Michigan's experts in private land management, with over 60 years of experience.

Districts currently receive their state funding through the General Fund which is routed through departments of state government. This delivery system has led to frequent irregularities in funding and many District services and programs have suffered from a lack of continuity due to a lack of funding.

Changing attitudes in society has led to an increase in requests for service and more diverse clientele.

MACD supports Michigan Conservation Districts in their efforts to obtain local appropriations from counties and municipalities within their Districts so that they can continue to provide the environmental services needed to conserve and protect the natural resources within their boundaries.

DISTRICT BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

1. The success of local self-government depends on local leadership, so each District should participate in activities that strengthen local leadership. District directors should respond to all their responsibilities as defined in the various statutes.

2. Because the success of each District depends upon directors that understand District roles and responsibilities, participation in strongly recommended training provided by MACD and MDARD and the achievement of a Conservation District Training Certification highly recommended.

3. Because many resource problems that concern Districts involve agricultural lands, many District directors are farmers. Representation should be from all sectors of society on District boards, because all people share in the responsibilities and benefits of resource conservation.

4. All voters are eligible to serve as District directors. The participation of minority groups, women and young people should be encouraged.

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

1. Conservation Districts are local subdivisions of state government. District directors are officials of local government. In their capacity as public servants fulfilling public responsibilities, District leaders should constantly strive to improve the administration of District affairs. Districts should:

a. Give major attention to writing Resource Assessments using stakeholder input that summarizes major resource concerns and identifies priority issues.

b. Develop 3-5 year implementation plans using the resource assessments as primary tools. Additionally, an annual plan of work should be developed to identify actions that will be taken to address the priority issues.

c. Accomplish partnership objectives through development of memorandums of understanding.

d. Actively exercise their authorities to review and approve plans upon which cost-sharing assistance is made available to landowners under local, state, and federal programs.

e. Develop District websites to better address the public's concerns and to be more accessible after hours for customers who cannot get to the office between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm.

f. Have up-to-date materials and handouts for all District and partnership activities available for walk-in customers.

g. Participate in business and technical training opportunities to maintain high level of expertise. Maintain Conservation District Training Certification for all directors and staff.

2. Over the years, Districts have been asked to provide a wide range of services and products unavailable from the private sector. This includes technical assistance, seeds, trees and special equipment. Districts should cooperate with those in the private sector who are providing these products and services, and provide these services to the public when they cannot be obtained or are not readily available through a commercial service.

3. District conservation programs will be delivered to cooperators without regard to race, religion, creed or sex.

AREAS OF CONCENTRATION

1. The wise use of land for all human purposes has been at the core of the District movement since its inception. Conservation Districts should focus their work even more closely on land-related problems in the years ahead.
2. Conservation Districts should concentrate their efforts in the following fields in order to protect and develop our land and other natural resources for sustained use:
 - a. The prevention and control of non-point source pollution, including the prevention of soil erosion and the control of pollution from sediment, storm water runoff, pesticides and herbicides, fertilizer nutrients and animal wastes.
 - b. Comprehensive resource management on a watershed basis, including the utilization of all techniques, both structural and non-structural, to preserve, conserve and develop soil, water, forest and wildlife resources within watershed units for all beneficial purposes.
 - c. Reclamation of areas disturbed by mining for all minerals and the reclamation of previously mined lands, as well as those now being mined.
 - d. Improvement in the management of the state's private, nonindustrial forest lands.
 - e. The incorporation of conservation and environmental education in school curriculums, including both classrooms and outdoor education.
 - f. The preservation and enhancement of prime and unique agricultural, horticultural and forestlands.
 - g. Land use planning, by participation in the land use decision-making process; making available resource inventories, soils information and interpretations and technical assistance; and by utilization of District regulatory powers where no other alternatives are available.

LONG-RANGE PLANS

1. Each Conservation District should have a long-range plan, setting forth its objectives for resource conservation and environmental improvement over a period of time, and how it proposes to achieve these goals.
2. These long-range plans are key instruments in the operation of Districts, charting overall direction and areas of emphasis. They should be reviewed and modified regularly to recognize changing trends and needs.

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

1. Conservation Districts should sign cooperative working agreements with all public agencies that can help in carrying out District programs.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

1. NRCS technical assistance has been reduced during a time when both NRCS and Districts were given new authorities. The complexity of resource management decisions has also increased dramatically during this time.
2. The employment decrease occurs primarily at the field level, where conservation assistance and programs are delivered to land users and where the technical quality of the work must be sustained.
3. MACD believes this reduction must be reversed.
4. We also urge that the allocation formula be changed to bring about a more equitable distribution of financial and technical assistance to Districts. MACD recommends that USDA:
 - a. Recognize water quality and management as concerns of vital importance to the nation.
 - b. Consider the effects that high animal densities have on a District's need for technical assistance to deal with animal waste management.
 - c. Recognize the problems and needs of urban and developing areas.
7. The tremendous respect land managers have for Conservation Districts is due to the professional and technical expertise of local, state and federal conservation employees. Land managers are willing to commit time and funds to implement conservation practices because they know that their conservation plan was developed by a properly educated and trained conservation professional. Conservation Districts will continue to accept only those conservation plans that are in accord with the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide.

STATE CONSERVATION AGENCIES

1. The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) Environmental Stewardship Division provides invaluable services in the advancement of the objectives of Conservation Districts. The capabilities of this Division should be strengthened so they may make their maximum contribution. In particular, adequate staffing and funding are essential.
2. MACD encourages the state MDARD to place a high priority on supporting training programs; providing background information to District directors; and improving arrangements for financial oversight of Conservation Districts in accordance with state laws.
3. MACD also encourages MDARD to review audit requirements in light of the business and financial requirements instituted by MDARD over the last several years.

COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

1. The future of Conservation Districts is tied to the future of county governments. Most Districts have boundaries coterminous with those of counties, and their resource goals should be the same. In recent years, county governments have increasingly looked to Districts for assistance in community and recreation planning, highway development and the conservation of county properties. They have become sponsors, with Districts, of watershed and RC&D projects.

2. An increasing number of counties are appropriating funds to Districts and establishing the District as a service agency for the county in performing certain resource functions. Together, Districts and county governments have developed cooperative programs to: (1) reduce sediment pollution in rural and urbanizing areas; (2) create new water supplies for agriculture, towns and industries; (3) provide a sound basis for waste disposal in developing areas; and (4) harmonize zoning policies with the facts about natural resources. 3. Most importantly, District directors should extend and improve their relationships with county governments.

DISTRICT EMPLOYEES

1. Today, over 200 District employees including executive directors, administrators, managers, secretaries, resource professionals, foresters, wildlife biologists, watershed project managers, groundwater technicians, equipment operators, and others provide continuity to local programs in Michigan. These employees are vital to the conduct of District programs as mandated by federal, state and local laws. They provide Conservation Districts with a technical and professional capability never envisioned when the program began in the 1930's.

2. MACD expects continued growth in Districts as they successfully demonstrate their ability to conduct a wide range of resource management programs. This growth will require a staff of highly skilled District employees.

3. Because the success of each District depends upon well trained staff, participation in strongly recommended training provided by MACD and MDARD and the achievement of a Conservation District Training Certification highly recommended.

4. MACD recommends that Districts and MDARD Environmental Stewardship Division cooperate to constantly review their personnel needs and strive to provide for these needs.

5. MACD recommends that MDARD Environmental Stewardship Division and NRCS continue to work with MACD in developing training programs to maintain and improve District employee capability.

6. Further, MACD supports the District employees' association which is an important vehicle for furthering District employees' development, increasing employee capability and helping retain these valuable employees.

7. MACD further suggests that Conservation Districts conduct District personnel programs as an equal opportunity employer without regard to race, color, creed, sex or handicap.

VOLUNTEERS

1. One of the major problems facing Districts is the lack of assistance needed to carry out their programs. Congress has granted USDA agencies the authority to recruit volunteers to assist in their programs. MACD recognizes the potential value of these volunteers to District efforts and urges Districts to assist NRCS with the Earth Team Program.

5. DRAINAGE

BACKGROUND

1. In areas of the state, drainage is an essential part of agricultural production. Little scientific data has been accumulated concerning the total environmental impact of such drainage activities.
2. MACD does not advocate drainage for the purpose of bringing new land into cultivation. However, in some counties and in some communities, drainage on existing cropland is a continuing conservation need. In farm areas where drainage is needed, adequate drainage systems must be in place before other needed conservation practices can be installed.

POLICY STATEMENTS

1. It is NRCS policy not to provide technical assistance to landowners in the drainage of wetland types 1-20 as described in Circular 39 of USDI Fish and Wildlife Service (F&WS). Landowners are, however, continuing to drain certain types of wetlands without technical assistance and the result may be more serious environmental and conservation problems than if they were assisted in doing the job properly. MACD recommends that types 1 and 8 wetlands be excluded from present regulations.
2. MACD supports a technically accurate and equitable definition of water management to include drainage as well as irrigation so that the objective to make better use of soil moisture can be realized.

6. ECONOMIC INCENTIVES

BACKGROUND

1. The proper conservation of Michigan's land and water is largely dependent on the ability of private resource users to economically carry out conservation measures within the context of their private business operations. There are many programs conducted by the federal government that directly affect the economic profitability of private resource-using operations. In the past, many of these programs have had the effect of penalizing those producers who voluntarily applied proper conservation to their lands.

2. Michigan needs federal policy that will provide economic incentives rather than economic penalties to Conservation District cooperators in order to achieve the maximum private, voluntary effort in resource conservation.

3. There is increasing interest in sustainable agriculture. However, little research information is available on the impacts that could occur by the adoption of sustainable techniques by a large sector of American agriculture. MACD believes that Congress should direct USDA to provide for research on sustainable agriculture techniques. At a minimum, this research should address technology issues, impacts on water quality and farm profitability. MACD also urges Congress to authorize a program to provide incentives for the establishment of sustainable demonstration farms in various parts of the country.

CONSERVATION INCENTIVES PROGRAM

1. MACD has determined that there is a need for increased incentive programs to encourage landowners to be conscientious soil and water conservationists. We endorse the following concept that has been proposed as a means of encouraging landowner participation in conservation programs. It would reward landowners who voluntarily install and maintain needed conservation practices by providing economic incentives such as property or income tax relief, preferential treatment of federal, state and local conservation and pollution control cost-sharing programs, low interest loans and reduced crop insurance premiums.

2. Conservation Districts would be the local agencies to certify those landowners who voluntarily install and maintain the practices prescribed in their conservation plan.

TAX INCENTIVES

Tax policies have an important, though often unintended, affect upon the way in which land is used and treated. Real estate property in Michigan is taxed in accordance with Michigan Compiles Laws 211.34C, being Act 381 of the Public Acts of 1978. Traditionally, idle farmlands and timber/ cutover lands have been managed for growing trees, soil/water conservation, and wildlife habitat. However, when purchases of timber/cutover lands are made the classification is changed to residential/recreational. The Michigan State Tax Commission (STC) systematically ignores the "Timber/Cutover" classification in northern Michigan. The STC uses the tax law 211.34C paragraph (f) to classify timber/ cutover lands as residential property (hence more tax revenue) at the expense of the environment. Some of the property being converted is swampland suitable only for growing trees and wildlife. Past attempts to convert this land to agricultural and residential uses have proven costly to the owners and detrimental to the environment. Owners of this type of property have made appeals to local boards of review and the STC to no avail.

Opportunities exist to encourage the voluntary conservation and protection of land resources through the application of tax laws in ways that encourage such wise use. MACD therefore recommends that:

- a. Agricultural lands should be assessed for tax purposes on the basis of their agricultural use, rather than on the basis of speculative or potential value for commercial or residential development.
- b. A change or a reclassification to Michigan tax laws is needed in order to provide a taxing system which is compatible with conservation practices inherent with sound forest management practices.

7. EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

1. The major purpose of MACD is to stimulate, foster and support effective programs of natural resource conservation and environmental improvement carried out by people in every community in Michigan. To accomplish this purpose, each Conservation District should have a continuing conservation education and information program to help people understand and act on basic principles of rational use and care of their environment.
2. Through effective conservation education programs, every citizen - both student and adult - should have opportunities for classroom and field study to acquire the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and commitment needed to protect and improve the environment. A clear understanding of the economic, social, political and ecological interdependence between urban and rural areas is needed. Programs should make certain that conservation education essentials are provided, that there is coordination of effort and reduction of duplication, and that public and private organizations provide needed support.
3. The Michigan Envirothon Program, is the means by which MACD provides environmental education to Michigan's youth through Michigan Conservation Districts. Michigan Envirothon (ME) has been inspiring and training the next generation of Michigan's natural resource leaders since 1994. A competition-based program, ME provides natural resource and environmental science education to high school students by using the outdoors as a classroom and providing interaction and training with natural resource professionals in the field. Community Outreach is a critical component of the competition, with student teams working together to identify and address a natural resource issue in their community through hands-on problem solving and community education.

EDUCATION

1. Conservation Districts have a major responsibility to help promote both formal and informal learning opportunities in conservation education for people of all ages as they relate to natural resources.
2. MACD urges all Conservation Districts to take an active role in promoting resource education. This includes promoting educational programs, and encouraging their citizens to become actively involved in community education programs.
3. Each Conservation District should have an education committee that carries out a planned program of conservation education assistance to schools and adult and youth groups.
4. Conservation Districts, working cooperatively with other groups, should encourage and assist schools and communities to use school sites and other available lands as outdoor classrooms for conservation studies.

5. All public and private schools and colleges should place a high priority on carrying out effective conservation education as an integral part of pre-kindergarten through graduate levels. Natural resource information and concepts should be integrated into existing courses whenever possible.
6. Pre-service preparation of all teachers to teach conservation education is an urgent need. All teacher education institutions should be encouraged to incorporate conservation education into their standard curricula.
7. The Michigan Department of Education should strengthen its capabilities for providing professional conservation education assistance and teacher in-service training by directly employing at least one full-time conservation education program director or consultant.
8. Elementary and secondary school Districts should employ conservation education specialists to coordinate activities and assist teachers in this field.
9. In-service workshops and seminars in conservation education should be readily available to all teachers. Non-government organizations and government agencies should provide assistance in conducting such workshops under the leadership of competent educators.
10. MACD will support: 1) the Michigan Department of Education endeavors in seeking support for businesses, industry, organizations and civic groups to assist with the development and promotion of agricultural, environmental and natural resources literacy for all of Michigan's residents; and 2) the strengthening and broadening of educational programs which enhance future economic development in the agricultural, food systems and natural resource related industries of the state.

INFORMATION PROGRAMS

1. Intelligent and supportive action by every citizen in behalf of effective conservation and environmental improvement is a major goal of MACD.

Therefore:

- a. MACD, every Conservation District and cooperating state and national agencies should have a continuing, creative, dynamic, public information program.
- b. Conservation Districts should regularly conduct, with the aid of cooperating organizations and agencies, conservation tours, field days, forums and programs that expand public understanding of local conservation and environmental problems, as well as the progress of District programs in dealing with them.

8. ENVIRONMENT

BACKGROUND

1. It is the policy of the federal government, in cooperation with state and local governments and other concerned public and private organizations, to use all practicable means and measures to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony and fulfill the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations.
2. We share the concern for environmental quality and will continue to work for improved management of resources, control of pollution and the productive harmony of man and nature.

ROLE OF DISTRICTS

1. For over 70 years, Conservation Districts have been concerned with the conservation of natural resources. Soil erosion, land fragmentation, loss of wildlife habitat, poor timber management, and surface and groundwater pollution, are but a few of the problems that affect the environment with which Districts are concerned.
2. We believe the functions of Conservation Districts should be broadened and District directors should provide leadership in environmental planning at the local level.
3. We urge Districts to conduct surveys to assess the environmental problems and compile a central source of information concerning the District's resources, problems, needs and potentials for improvement of environmental quality.
4. Long-range District plans should provide emphasis on enhancement of water quality, farmland protection, wildlife and forest management, improvement of environmental health, and education of the public.
5. We urge District leaders to enlist the efforts of youth groups, governmental agencies, county and city officials, civic clubs, garden clubs, industrial leaders and others in activities directed toward improvement of the environment.

ENERGY

1. We support stringent requirements for protection of our natural resources when producing and transmitting energy, and urge every consideration is taken to use existing corridors.

2. MACD will facilitate the organization of a committee to focus on renewable energy as a growing land use. The committee will engage Michigan's Power companies, legislature and Conservation District staff, both environmentally and educationally to raise awareness of the link between renewable energy and the sustainability of land and water resources. Water quality, pollinator, agriculture, forestry and manure specialists will be considered to be well matched to this role. Grants to cover expenses and possibly funds to build demonstration projects will be explored with the goal of being self-funded.

3. State agencies and Conservation Districts should work with landowners and energy development companies to encourage proper resource planning and soil and water protection in connection with energy developments. This should include a capability for the landowner to plan the locations and construction methods so as to minimize soil erosion, water pollution and other long-term damage to the environment and to his agricultural operations.

4. MACD requests that elected public representatives and governmental agencies take action to prepare a comprehensive State Energy Policy which will address: energy efficiency, conservation, diversity and reliability; alternative fuel supplies; generating concepts, and delivery systems. The policy shall also cover tax incentives, environmental protection, public health, energy assistance, emergency preparedness and other items related to meeting the state's energy requirements.

AIR QUALITY

1. We support all responsible efforts undertaken to improve air quality and will participate in educational work designed to inform people of the hazards and remedies of air pollution. We will support research, legislation and other appropriate actions directed toward the solution of air pollution problems.

2. Acid precipitation is a serious problem, which affects water quality, dams and other concrete structures, fish and wildlife habitat, forest production and agricultural soils. MACD urges state and federal enforcement of clean air standards to reduce acid precipitation to acceptable levels.

SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL

1. We support the development of techniques for solid waste disposal with added emphasis on the potential of recycling of solid wastes. Further, we encourage changes in other laws and manufacturing procedures that will make recycling practical.
2. MACD will:
 - a. Encourage Districts to participate in development and revision of countywide solid waste management plans.
 - b. With state agencies, provide guidance to each Conservation District so they are in a position to counsel county commissioners and other municipal decision-makers in solid waste management.
 - c. Support legislation providing funds for proper solid waste management in the state.
 - d. Encourage Districts to publicize the need for solid waste disposal programs.
 - e. Initiate plans for educational programs in the grade schools to make them cognizant of the need for programs.
3. MACD is opposed to the use of prime or unique farmlands for the disposal of dredged materials from waterways, rivers and harbors because of the possible reduction to their productivity.
4. MACD is opposed to the location and/or development of any nuclear waste depository for nuclear wastes from other states or nations within the state of Michigan and within the Great Lakes watershed basin.
5. We support rigid enforcement of state and local laws against littering. We encourage all Districts to join in campaigns to stop littering.

EXPANSION OF MICHIGAN'S BEVERAGE CONTAINER LAW (BOTTLE BILL)

For over 25 years, Michigan's Beverage Container Law has been extremely effective at achieving economic, social, and environmental goals. It has produced a recycling rate of up to 95% for glass, aluminum, and plastic containers. However, individual water, juice, tea and sports drink bottles were not sold when Michigan's bottle bill was developed.

Now citizens from across the state are concerned about litter from non-carbonated, single-serve beverages on highways, in neighborhoods and in natural areas. Michigan has limited landfill capacities and an expansion of the bottle bill would greatly increase recycling volumes. The Beverage Container Law already supports thousands of jobs and an expanded law would result in further economic development.

MACD fully supports an expansion of Michigan's bottle bill and urges the legislature to pass legislation that increases the recycling rate of non-carbonated, single-serve beverages and reduces unwanted litter from these bottles and cans.

PESTS AND PESTICIDES

1. MACD recognizes the need to use environmentally acceptable means to manage pests and undesirable plants.
2. We urge those governmental agencies involved with the assignment of registration labels for insecticides and herbicides to accept the inputs of public research agencies to expedite the granting of labels for agricultural use.
3. Many farmers of this country have stored on their farms chemicals whose uses have been prohibited. These farmers are now faced with the problems of what to do with these chemicals. MACD encourages MDARD continue pesticide and hazardous waste collections, which is a means by which these chemicals can be disposed of without harming the environment or the farmer.

REGULATIONS

All meetings pertaining to rules and regulations should be held in the locale affected, in order to give local people an opportunity to review and comment on them.

WATER QUALITY

1. Pollution comes from many sources, including agricultural and forestlands, surface mined areas, road banks, stream banks, urban areas and all other areas where soil is disturbed and vegetative cover destroyed. MACD encourages Districts to participate as necessary in regulatory and other programs for the control of non-point pollution, especially the control of sediment.
2. In many counties, salt is applied to highways in winter. Damaging side effects include the pollution of adjacent wells and waterways. We call on those responsible for salt application and for location of salt stockpiles to devote more attention to this problem. Where hazards exist, surface water diversion structures should be provided, as well as waterproof covers for stockpiles.
3. We also urge continued research and monitoring on the polluting effects of highway salt applications, and alternatives to salt applications.

WETLANDS

1. We support appropriate restrictions on dredging and filling operations that would destroy these unique, highly productive areas.
2. We support providing state and local governments with tools necessary to implement and manage wetlands protection programs.
3. We support expanding the uses of government incentives to encourage private landowners to protect wetlands resources on private lands.

GLOBAL WARMING

1. Many experts believe that the world's current problems with the "Greenhouse Effect" and with global warming stem from a worldwide reduction in forest resources. MACD supports the efforts of the Global Releaf program to address this loss of forest resources and urges Conservation Districts to become involved at the local level. We believe that this program provides Districts with an excellent opportunity to promote planting of trees and other permanent vegetation.

2. President Bush has acknowledged that global warming exists, but no plan exists in the State of Michigan or in the U.S. with respect to the issue of global warming and its effects on management and conservation of our forests, other flora, fisheries, other fauna, Great Lakes water levels, water resource management and other natural resources. A scientifically sound plan is needed on the issue of global warming and its effects on conservation and management of our natural resources. MACD expects the U.S. Congress to take steps necessary to ensure that a scientifically sound plan be developed with respect to the issue of global warming and its effects on the management and conservation of our natural resources in Michigan and the United States of America.

9. FEDERAL AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS

AGRICULTURAL POLICY

1. Continuous conservation treatment of private lands involves time and expense of the part of private land users. Part of this is within the inherent obligations that attend the rights of private land ownerships, but many expenses borne by the land user produce benefits that only aid the general public.

2. The conservation job, if it is to be done, will be done by people, on land they own, rent or manage, using information and technical skills at hand and the money, machines and labor that they command, for reasons that make sense in their own private situations. The goal of public programs is not to manage or conserve land and water, but to help those people who will do so.

3. Public programs and public policy must help people understand the reasons for conservation so they believe it is necessary. Public policy must also create a climate of "permanence" so that individuals have confidence in the future of the land, of agriculture and of themselves and their children. Only when there is such an aura of confidence in the future will people see the logic in protecting and conserving resources.

4. Individuals must see that their private economic interests will not be threatened as a result of their voluntary conservation efforts. This requires agricultural policies that protect conservation efforts. This requires agricultural policies that protect conservation managers from damage wrought by farm programs, as well as provide economic incentives for carrying out those conservation measures that cost the private producer money, but provide mainly public benefits. People who feel that their conservation actions will result in economic losses are reluctant to take those actions. Any situation that creates added economic stress in agriculture makes that situation worse.

5. We urge adoption of a vigorous, creative agricultural policy that incorporates all measures necessary to ensure a quality standard of living for future generations. All policy decisions of the U.S., both domestic and foreign, should be continuously weighed against our need for sustained production of required food and fiber while preventing natural resource degradation.

6. MACD will be progressive in the development of a strategy to assist the small farmer in the State of Michigan.

USDA – FARM BILL

Title II of the Farm Bill (Farm Security and Rural Investment Act) provides important environmental benefits and also economic benefits to producers. The Act specifically provides funding for technical assistance within each program enacted in Title II, including Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), Farmland Protection Program (FPP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Security Program (CSP), Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).

The Farm Bill is renegotiated every five years. MACD supports the development of a strong Farm Bill and advocates for the following principles:

- opposed to potential farm bill budget cuts
- supports for conservation technical assistance and conservation planning
- encourages flexibility in implementing the farm bill across the country based on local conditions and locally-led incentive models
- encourages farm bill education and outreach, especially to beginning, limited resource and socially disadvantaged farmers
- recommends that Congress simplify and minimize the paper work needed for access to farm bill cost share, specifically eliminating the need to use the SAMS and DUNS systems which are cumbersome, frustrating and time consuming hurdles

Conservation Districts and many other stakeholders worked hard to help members of Congress understand the need for the Farm Bill programs to pay their own technical assistance costs so that the limited funding in NRCS's Conservation Technical Assistance Program (CTAP) would not be diverted from the agency's critical non-Farm Bill work. Failure to release technical assistance funds for WRP, FPP, EQIP, CSP, GRP and WHIP directly undermines this law and seriously deprives many customers across the country of conservation assistance. Such action will also seriously threaten implementation of the Technical Services Provider initiative and other activities conservationists across the country have expected.

MACD will work together with NACD to strongly urge the Office of Management and Budget to reconsider their decision and immediately release technical assistance funds for these important programs: Wetlands Reserve Program, Farmland Protection Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Security Program, Grassland Reserve Program and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.

CONSERVATION DISTRICTS' ROLE IN FARM BILL

In the new Farm Bill, Congress has provided Districts an historic opportunity to provide leadership. There is an extensive menu of new and enhanced programs including: CRP, FPP, EQIP, WHIP, Forest Lands Enhancement Program (FLEP), CSP, and WRP. There are numerous public benefits to be achieved through these programs, including clean water and air, healthy soils, improved forests, grasslands, wetlands, and wildlife habitat.

MACD and its member Conservation Districts will take advantage of the Farm Bill's new conservation programs by discussing with partners the roles each can play. Topics will include:

- District and others' roles in establishing local objectives and priorities.
- Development of working agreements.
- Use of these federal programs to address local natural resource concerns.
- District leadership role in convening working groups.
- Holding stakeholder meetings with cooperators and others.
- The District role in helping communicate information to producers and other customers.
- Capitalizing on increases in funding for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), Farmland Protection Program (FPP), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) and other future programs. Working out arrangements now to carry out the roles mentioned above.
- Organizing or reorganizing each local work group.
- Keeping federal legislators informed of conservation progress in each Conservation District.

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM and CONTINUOUS CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM

1. MACD encourages the USDA Farm Service Agency to allow cropland adjacent to County Drains in Michigan to be enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program and the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program programs.

CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM

The Conservation Security Program was designed to reward farmers for practicing good environmental stewardship during past years and continuing those practices into the future. There is currently pressure being brought upon the United States to move away from the commodity related programs for farmers and therefore it is likely that we will see an increase in environmental stewardship programs. The current Conservation Security Program stipulates that the producer have control of the land for at least the next 5 crop years and there is some confusion over the eligibility of rented cropland. In many areas cash rents are common and many contracts are renewed annually.

1. MACD supports that the National Association of Conservation Districts should work to encourage changes in this and future programs to include those farmers who are practicing good environmental stewardship on the lands that they cash rent. Eligibility for the programs could be shown by the producer proving compliance with the requirements at the beginning of the enrollment and annually showing proof of cash rent contracts.

10. EMERGENCY PLANNING AND EMERGENCY TUBES

Local municipalities have begun charging farms a fee for emergency preparation inspections. These inspections are completed by a local fire department to comply with requirements set upon them by the Michigan Occupational Safety & Health Act (MIOSHA). Inspection fees have been levied as high as \$210.00 annually.

We believe that municipalities should consider the following:

Farms already provide for fire protection service through the levy of property taxes. The Emergency Tube (E-tube) is a detailed emergency plan including locations and quantities of flammable and/or hazardous materials and any other pertinent information. The plans are located on site, at the first responder fire department, and with the county emergency planning committee. The E-tube planning program is financed through a surcharge on each unit of nitrogen fertilizer and administered by the Groundwater Stewardship Program. The Michigan State Police Emergency Planning Commission was a partner in the development of the E Tube.

Firefighters are welcome to visit farms to be prepared for emergency planning but at their own expense.

POLICY STATEMENT

We support policy that disallows local municipalities and fire authorities from charging for a "Right to Know" Inspection. The Emergency Plan shall suffice as an appropriate level of information. Any fee charged for this inspection is unwarranted.

11. FISH AND WILDLIFE

BACKGROUND

Fish and wildlife are important components for a healthy and functioning ecosystem. They contribute to the quality of the human environment, and have multiple functions and values. There is a need for a balanced program of sustainable resource conservation and development.

Soil and water conservation work has been of tremendous benefit to the protection and propagation of wildlife. District directors and all agencies associated with the Districts should help everyone understand that we can have both efficient farming and wildlife habitat.

WATER RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Projects for the control and management of water resources often affect fish and wildlife resources, sometimes beneficially and sometimes adversely. All project planning, whether for water storage, flood control, pollution abatement, land treatment, irrigation, drainage or other water purposes, should evaluate the probable effects of a project on fish and wildlife.

COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

1. Conservation Districts should seek cooperative working arrangements with state and local agencies having fish and wildlife management responsibilities.
2. Cooperation between Conservation Districts and sportsmen's clubs should be expanded to improve conditions and facilities for hunting, fishing and other appropriate recreational activities.
3. One area that calls for increased cooperation is the implementation of natural reproduction and population reestablishment programs. Reintroduction of a wildlife species can have an adverse impact on landowners in the area. MACD urges state and federal wildlife agencies to work with the local Conservation District in developing a plan for management of reestablished species.
4. MACD urges state and federal agencies to work with each local Conservation District in developing plans for the management of exotic, and threatened and endangered species.
5. MACD supports state and federal programs that provide funding and technical assistance to landowners for the purpose of improving fish and wildlife habitat.

FARM PONDS

1. MACD recommends that Districts emphasize the development of areas around ponds for wildlife and protect such areas from grazing and burning.
2. We also feel that stocking of farm ponds from federal fish hatcheries should be continued where it is requested and where state and/or private fish hatchery facilities cannot meet the demands.

FERAL HOGS

1. The feral hog population in Michigan continues to increase and has the significant potential to negatively affect Michigan's agricultural production, swine herd health and the natural resources of the state.
2. MACD and Michigan Conservation Districts advocate for a strong feral hog eradication program, including a bounty system, administered by MDARD and delivered through Michigan Conservation Districts.

THE NORTH AMERICAN WATERFOWL MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. The North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) is designed to increase waterfowl populations on the North American continent. The plan, signed by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and Canada's Prime Minister of the Environment in 1986, is a blueprint for cooperation between all parties interested in the conservation of wetlands and other waterfowl habitat.
2. MACD endorses NAWMP and Conservation Districts should participate in the work of the plan involving the F&WS, MDNR and private conservation organizations to enhance private lands for greater waterfowl production through the use of sound conservation practices.

MANAGING WILDLIFE POPULATIONS

1. MACD supports efforts to provide native food, cover, and water in a sustainable quantity and quality for fish and wildlife populations.
2. MACD supports management for fish and wildlife that is ecologically functional, sustainable, socially acceptable, and financially feasible.
3. With regards to Michigan's wildlife, MACD supports the following goal: To manage Michigan's wildlife using management practices based on scientific research to:
 - a. Maintain healthy populations and keep the populations within limits dictated by the carrying capacity of the range and by its effect on native plant communities, agriculture, horticulture, and silviculture crops and public safety.
 - b. Maintain an active public information program designed to acquaint the public with the methods of wildlife management and the conditions needed to maintain healthy and vigorous populations.

WHITE-TAIL DEER

1. Michigan has an overpopulation of the white-tail deer. This overpopulation alters ecosystems, causes significant damage to food crops, horticulture and landscape plants, and are the cause of over 60,000 car deer accidents per year.
2. The Michigan Association of Conservation Districts believes that in some areas white-tailed deer have become a resource concern for Conservation Districts within these high population areas.
3. The Michigan Association of Conservation Districts encourages Conservation Districts to support the more aggressive white-tail deer management effort by the MDNR by helping to advertise the availability of additional licenses.

12. FORESTRY

BACKGROUND

Michigan's forests encompass 19.3 million acres and provide for a multitude of uses including recreation, watershed protection, fish and wildlife habitat, scenic values and forest products.

The demands placed on Michigan's forests from various user groups, increase the need for better management of all forests, public and private. Michigan's forest resource is a vital asset to be wisely used and managed.

POLICY STATEMENTS

MACD believes that forests need to be actively managed to promote the long term health and viability of the resource and to assist in balancing the demands placed on the resource by all user groups.

We strongly support the role of Conservation Districts in providing programs and services to the non-industrial private forest landowners to bring to bear the tools and programs, including the federal Farm Bill, to assist landowners in managing their forest lands.

We believe that Conservation Districts are an unbiased, trusted delivery system for nonindustrial private landowner programs and are well positioned to assist landowners with their personal land ownership goals and objectives, encouraging active management thereby moving landowners to the private sector to engage in habitat improvement, woodlot management and other activities.

MACD strongly supports the Forestry Assistance Program (FAP) and the delivery of the program through Michigan Conservation Districts.

MACD encourages the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to expand the program, delivered through Conservation Districts, to the entire state to address Michigan's abundant forest resource held by non-industrial private landowners.

We strongly support the Michigan Legislature's funding of the FAP while the Private Forestlands Enhancement Fund becomes fully funded and encourage the continued supplementation of funding if necessary to support coverage of FAP state wide.

MACD supports the forest products industry and encourages them to continue cooperation with Conservation Districts by working together to encourage nonindustrial private forest landowners to actively manage lands by providing referrals to Conservation District Foresters as well as woodlot management guidelines, timber pricing, and marketing and distribution information.

MACD supports Conservation District's promotion of FAP, the Qualified Forestry Program (QFP), woodland conservation practices and information and educational programming on the challenges and threats to Michigan's forest resource.

We encourage federal and state agencies, universities and other organizations to work cooperatively with Conservation Districts in the delivery FAP and QFP assistance by providing forest management and health information and education for the ultimate benefit of non-industrial private forest land owners.

13. FUNDING CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

BACKGROUND

1. Every reliable forecast of our state's future is a forecast of growth. In addition to growth in population, we foresee a continuing and very substantial growth in demand for food, wood products, water and other necessities of life.

2. Nevertheless, there is little evidence that budgeting for resource management is related in any deliberate or scientific way to state needs. Instead, the annual requests for appropriations to finance the resource management programs appear to be based more nearly on past budget history and on departmental personnel ceilings than on any overall appraisal of resource requirements.

3. We believe the fundamental nature of natural resource problems demands more effective overall coordination of resource programs, more realistic financing and positive leadership in relating the efforts to the state's oncoming resource needs.

4. The state should be able to make reasonably accurate forecasts of oncoming needs for resources - including water, cropland, recreation, wood products and space for highways and metropolitan expansion. We should be able to define, within reason, the necessary quality of these resources as well as quantities. It would be good business, as well as good government, to finance conservation and resource development programs toward meeting the state's oncoming needs on time.

5. The majority of forest, grassland, wetlands and open spaces are owned by private landowners. This land is being further fragmented every year, which impacts the production of forest products, wildlife habitat, water quality and rural communities. These lands support local economies through forest harvest, hunting, fishing, and tourism. Less than 10% of these private landowners have exposure to natural resource and land management techniques and are therefore unprepared to make informed land-use decisions on their land. The Cooperative Resource Management Initiative (CRMI) was created to provide a statewide approach to unbiased professional private land assistance delivered through local Conservation Districts.

6. MACD will aggressively seek a dedicated source of funding (earmarked/restricted) for Conservation Districts which will allow them to provide necessary services and plan long-term, knowing that funding is secure.

STATE AND OTHER FUNDS

1. Significant conservation accomplishments have been made using funds provided by the state legislature. Both urban and rural people have benefited by the accelerated installation of conservation measures, and we urge an immediate increase in state funding for the work of Conservation Districts.
2. All grants received from state government will contain a negotiable percentage of funds to be used for administrative support to oversee and insure success of the grant project.
3. MACD will work towards developing a broad based coalition to support stable funded programs by pursuing a restricted or earmarked funding source.
4. Districts are adding programs, which often do not match state or federal priorities. Conservation Districts should seek alternative sources of funding, to meet these local priority needs.
5. MACD supports the distribution of the real estate transfer tax based upon the sale of property within a county, that a minimum portion be specifically dedicated to fund the operations and programs of Michigan's Conservation Districts.

FUNDING FOR MICHIGAN CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (CREP)

The Michigan Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) was established through a negotiated agreement between the State of Michigan and the United States Department of Agriculture in September 2000, providing farmers and landowners financial incentives to establish and maintain conservation practices on the land. These practices were specifically designed to improve water quality and enhance and restore wildlife habitat.

The program has assembled a unique partnership of federal, state and local agencies, and conservation organizations that provide landowners with combination of resources for the program's development and implementation.

Through a committed partnership and overwhelming farmer-landowner participation, the Michigan CREP successfully enrolled over 62,000 acres into conservation cover in the first 21 months. Included in the total acreage is over 16,000 acres of wetlands that will provide excellent habitat for migratory and resident waterfowl, shorebirds and upland birds; over 2,743 miles of 100-foot wide filter strips will protect aquatic habitat and water quality on drains, streams, and rivers; and over 1,300 acres of trees for field windbreaks will intercept winds that erode soils and damage plants while providing wildlife travel corridors, nesting sites, food and refuge for many wildlife species.

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2014 (Farm Bill) provides for the continuation of state CREPs. MACD supports the goals and objectives of the Michigan CREP. MACD further supports the allocation of state funding to realize the goals of the original agreement to protect the waters of the state and enhance the state's wildlife habitat. MACD also supports the future inclusion of additional critical agricultural watersheds into the Michigan CREP agreement.

14. GREAT LAKES

DIVERSION

Proper management of the waters of the Great Lakes, both ground and surface water, is critical to the states and provinces surrounding them. It is imperative that the Great Lakes states and provinces maintain and strengthen authority over these waters. There is a need for a common conservation standard to be used in making decisions regarding water resource management. This standard should be applied to all new water withdrawals and diversions, and any proposed increases in existing withdrawals and diversions of both surface and groundwater. There is a need for scientific information on water withdrawals and diversions of both ground and surface water, their impacts, and their relationship to ecosystem health. The waters of the Great Lakes are an important and limited resource.

MACD encourages the Great Lakes governors to limit water withdrawals and diversions from the Great Lakes, and strongly supports the implementation of the Great Lakes Charter Annex of 2001.

NAVIGATION SYSTEM REVIEW

The existing commercial navigation system on the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River has led to permanent ecological damages including introduction of exotic species, lower water levels, wetlands degradation, stress on fish populations and destruction of aquatic habitats. Previous efforts to operate vessels in the Upper Lakes during the winter months caused damages to shoreline vegetation, shoreline structures, dispersal of contaminated sediments, and ice jams in the connecting channels that cause flooding to sections of the Great Lakes basin.

Previous U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Feasibility Studies found that replacing the existing locks on the St. Lawrence River with larger locks, and the associated need to deepen the St. Lawrence river and connecting channels to accommodate large ships could not be economically justified.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is once again proposing another feasibility study to evaluate "improvements" to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Navigation System that would at a maximum build a channel 35 foot deep and up to 60 feet wider from Montreal to the North and West shores of Lake Superior.

Deepening the connecting channels and the St Lawrence River as much as 9.5 feet below the authorized depth would necessitate the dredging and disposal of hundreds of millions cubic yards of spoils, some of which could lead to public health and wildlife impacts because of contamination of those sediments. Such improvements will increase the risk of additional exotic species entering the Great Lakes, thereby wreaking havoc on water dependent industries, including the \$4 billion commercial and recreational fish industry.

The Great Lakes Navigation System Review conflicts with ongoing efforts by the states, provinces, federal agencies, nongovernmental organizations and segments of the public to restore the aquatic habitat integrity of the Great Lakes.

MACD calls on the U.S. Congress to immediately stop the Great Lakes Navigation System review, and calls on the Canadian Government to withhold financial or administrative support to said study.

15. INVASIVE SPECIES

INVASIVE PLANTS

BACKGROUND

The U. S. federal government established an Executive Order in 1999 regarding invasive plant species in which the USDA recognized certain exotic plants as invasive to Michigan. Cooperating conservation agencies have also established lists of plants that are considered to be invasive to Michigan. Invasive plant species can displace native plant species resulting in plant communities that have lower species diversity, provide poorer overall wildlife habitat, and do not reflect Michigan's heritage.

SELLING OR PROMOTING INVASIVE PLANTS

Michigan's Conservation Districts will not sell or promote the use of invasive plants. Discussions with clients regarding the use of invasive plants may include their attributes, but must also include the risks of their use. Exceptions may include the use of certain listed plants for intensive agricultural management or erosion control, where there are no alternatives.

Conservation Districts will adhere to the Executive Order on Invasive Plants, and will use "Michigan's Lower Peninsula Weeds" and "Michigan's Upper Peninsula weeds" as guides in determining plants to exclude for conservation use and sale.

16. LAND USE MANAGEMENT

BACKGROUND

Land-based and resource-based industries such as farming, timber management, tourism, and others are critical elements of the state's economy. The long-term success and viability of these industries is dependent on the degree to which the natural resources upon which they rely are managed in a sustainable manner. The ability to manage many of the states privately owned resources are being diminished by the fragmentation of large parcels into many smaller parcels owned by large numbers of individuals with disparate management goals. It is the mission of Michigan's Conservation Districts to ensure that privately owned natural resources are properly managed in a manner that supports a healthy environment and sustained economic growth.

RESOURCE-BASED PLANNING

MACD encourages local governmental units to identify areas with sparse development, important or unique natural resources and/or little existing infrastructure within their jurisdiction and to adopt official maps or master plans, which direct development away from these areas. If development does occur in resource areas, MACD encourages the use of cluster development techniques to maximize the amount of land that can remain in production.

USE-VALUE ASSESSMENT

Property taxes based on the "highest and best use" standard present a disincentive to retain farm and forest lands in their current uses. MACD supports assessing farm and forestland based on their current use, not on their speculative future use.

CONVERSION FEES

MACD supports assessing a conversion fee on agricultural and forested lands that are converted to residential, commercial, or industrial uses. The conversion fee should be assessed at the time the land is actually converted to another use, not when the land is sold. Revenues generated by the conversion fee should be placed in the state's Agricultural Preservation Fund, which should be expanded to include provisions for protecting forestlands, and be used to support local programs for purchasing development rights on farm and forestlands.

FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM

MACD supports and encourages the establishment of the Forest Legacy Program in Michigan. The program is a means of utilizing federal funds to purchase development rights on important forestlands and natural areas in the state. Conservation Districts should provide assistance to MDNR in compiling information necessary to apply for this program. Districts should also participate in the identification of "Legacy" areas throughout the state.

LOCAL LAND PROTECTION BOARDS

MACD supports the establishment of local county farm and forestland protection boards to oversee purchase of development rights programs at the local level. Conservation Districts should take the lead in establishing these boards and should be represented on them.

AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS

MACD supports enabling legislation that would authorize local governmental units to establish Agricultural Districts to protect contiguous tracts of agricultural land. Larger blocks of preserved farmland will enhance the opportunity for the economic viability of agriculture, decrease land use conflicts, help sustain associated agricultural businesses and preserve the rural character. Agricultural Districts should be designed to protect land through a voluntary incentive-based contract between the landowner, local governmental unit and the state. Incentives could include such benefits as: use-value assessment, greater right-to-farm protection, mandatory buffers on adjoining non-agricultural lands, and others. Farms enrolled in agricultural Districts should be operated according to all Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices.

TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

MACD supports enabling legislation authorizing local Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs. A TDR program allows for local implementation of a voluntary, market-based sales and transfer of development rights from willing sellers within a sending zone (farm or forest land) to a willing buyer who is building homes in a receiving area. Transferring development rights has the potential to voluntarily preserve farmland, forestland, and/or natural areas, where they are needed or desired, and develop land which is best suited for development, without using public funds.

URBAN REVITALIZATION

MACD recognizes that we cannot save Michigan's farmland, if we fail to save our cities. MACD supports efforts to improve urban land use policies in order to make urban areas attractive places to live, including strengthening urban school systems.

17. MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

BACKGROUND

Management of Michigan's plant communities including forests, wetlands, grasslands and brush lands relies on making decisions about landscape succession. Succession may need to be pushed forward or set back to achieve management goals and landowner objectives. Modern management techniques mimic natural disturbances, but in a controlled setting.

POLICY

MACD supports the responsible use of management techniques that help private and public landowners manage natural resources in an ecologically sustainable manner including, but not limited to: prescribed fire; pesticides; planting trees, shrubs, and herbaceous vegetation; and timber harvesting.

18. MICHIGAN AGRICULTURE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSURANCE PROGRAM (MAEAP)

BACKGROUND

Agriculture is Michigan's second-largest industry, with over 56,000 farms spread over about 10 million acres. Conservation practices on agricultural operations are extremely important to the protection of Michigan's natural resources and quality of life for our citizens.

Michigan Conservation Districts are very successful in promoting the voluntary adoption of conservation practices, by bringing a host of conservation tools, including incentive-based programs, technical and financial assistance to their local producers and landowners.

The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) is a signature program for Michigan Conservation Districts. Delivered exclusively through Conservation Districts, MAEAP's voluntary, proactive approach provides a robust template that formalizes assistance to farms of all sizes and all commodities. The MAEAP is designed to reduce farmers' legal and environmental risks through a three-phase process: 1) education; 2) farm-specific risk assessment; and 3) on-farm verification that ensure the farmer has implemented environmentally sound practices.

POLICY STATEMENT

MACD believes that as local units of government responsible for the delivery of conservation programs, Michigan Conservation Districts have the important role of providing programs, services and technical assistance to Michigan's farmers, providing the tools for individuals to make environmentally and financially sound decisions on conservation issues.

We strongly support the role of Michigan Conservation Districts as the unbiased, trusted delivery system for land owners and managers and we encourage the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) to continue utilizing Conservation Districts to deliver agriculture programs, including the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP).

MACD supports MAEAP and its approach as a proactive and voluntary program that helps farms of all sizes and all commodities voluntarily prevent or minimize agricultural pollution risks and we support MAEAP's goal to reach 5,000 MAEAP verifications by 2015. MACD will support this goal by encouraging farmers to engage in the program through participation in Phase I meetings and working through the appropriate A*Syst tools with their local MAEAP Water Stewardship Technician to better understand their environmental risks and the tools available for addressing those risks, with the ultimate goal of MAEAP verification in the systems applicable for the farmers operation.

MACD supports Conservation District's promotion of MAEAP and the active participation in the program by board members to serve as leaders and MAEAP advocates in their local communities.

We encourage legislators to expand funding for the MAEAP program to address the need to provide MAEAP grants to cover the entire state at a grant level of a maximum of two counties per grant to better serve Michigan's agriculture community and the goal of 5,000 verifications by 2015.

19. MINERALS AND MINED LAND RECLAMATION

OIL FIELD BRINE DAMAGE

1. Oil production sometimes results in oil and brine spills that are toxic to vegetation. This loss of vegetative cover can cause serious erosion where not corrected.
2. MACD encourages:
 - a. Districts in oil producing areas to provide assistance to landowners.
 - b. Districts to support efforts to carry out public education on the different kinds of leases and how those leases can be used to provide protection for soil and water resources, as well as reclamation where damage has occurred.
 - c. The state to support the necessary personnel for inspection and pollution control.
 - d. The state to provide consistent application of oil and gas regulations pertaining to brine damage on land and consistent follow-up for landowner complaints.

ABANDONED MINES

Abandoned mines can cause acid mine drainage into surface and groundwater. The result of this is a lower pH in water that causes a precipitate of "yellow-boy". The "yellow-boy" coats substrate, thus reducing aquatic habitat, fish reproduction and drinking water quality. An associated problem is the thousands of mine spoil piles scarring the countryside. The piles, due to this low pH and fertility, are unable to produce vegetation. Again, the result is a formation of "yellow-boy" in water bodies receiving low pH surface runoff from the mine piles.

2. MACD encourages:
 - a. Mine companies to be contacted to initiate remedial action of their abandoned sites.
 - b. The state to provide grants to affected Districts to identify impacted waters and locations of spoil piles.
 - c. The state to provide grants to establish demonstration projects for revegetation on mine spoil piles.
 - d. Districts to carry out information campaigns to downstream landowners, environmentalists, sportsmen and concerned citizens about acid mine drainage and surface runoff from spoil piles.

MONITORING OF MINING INDUSTRY

Michigan Conservation Districts are empowered to review environmental permits and are encouraged to comment and communicate with the local DEQ and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. There is a need to create a protective clause within the State of Michigan's body of environmental law for the oversight and monitoring of the mining industry.

MACD supports that Michigan's environmental laws be modified to include an oversight monitoring clause for mining activities, both proposed and on-going, which will include review by Michigan's Conservation Districts.

20. NATURAL RESOURCE DATA

SOIL SURVEYS

1. Accurate soil surveys, properly interpreted, are needed to provide the facts required for all types of land use planning; including not only agricultural and watershed uses but metropolitan development. Planning and zoning authorities need this basic data to help prevent the misuse of land and to help regulate development in a planned and orderly way. MACD supports the Soil Survey Program and recommends continued federal and state funding for soil research, digitalization and computerization of soils information.
2. At present, however, soil surveys are available for only a portion of the state. Also, the older published surveys do not contain the non-agricultural interpretations so useful in areas of current development.
3. MACD urges that:
 - a. Soil surveys, with proper interpretation, be completed and published in an efficient and rapid manner.
 - b. Such surveys include all major factors relevant to all types of land use, and areas of current or projected development be given priority in such a program.
 - c. Older published surveys, not containing nonagricultural interpretations, be revised and updated to include such interpretations.
 - d. Soil-woodland correlations should receive attention.
 - e. Soil surveys of forestlands should be given an equal priority with soil surveys of lands devoted to other agricultural uses.
 - f. Areas willing to help themselves by contributing funds toward the completion and publication of these surveys should be given priority in this program.

INVENTORY DATA

1. Federal agencies cooperate periodically with interested state and county groups in making inventories of soil and water conservation needs on the privately owned lands of the county.
2. We encourage Conservation Districts to make full use of the inventory data in modernizing their long-range programs and in keeping their annual work plans current. We also recommend that agricultural and natural resource agencies and resource planning groups take full advantage of the inventory data in their program planning.
3. We urge each District to publish the conservation needs of its District as a means of improving local understanding of resource issues.

21. OUTDOOR RECREATION

BACKGROUND

1. Recreation is a human need that contributes to human happiness, is essential to the well being of all people and is necessary for the fulfillment of each individual. The desire for outdoor recreation is fundamental to us as a people, because of our desire to remain close to the basic natural resources of soil, water and clean air, as well as the wonder of evolving plant and animal life.

2. We support responsible programs for the expansion of outdoor recreational facilities on public and private lands.

3. We recognize the need for continued protection and sound management of public recreational lands, including those of unique qualities, at the national, state and local levels. The availability of these lands should be assured to every person regardless of race, creed or economic station. Many areas of unusual beauty or historical interest should be acquired for public use.

4. We consider outdoor recreation as a marketable product of privately owned lands that should be regarded as an alternative land use, along with the production of food and fiber, in multiple-use farming operations.

5. Conservation Districts can be effective in assisting farmers and other landowners who may want to develop income-producing recreation enterprises. We, therefore, recommend that each District:

- a. Keep current inventory of existing and planned public recreational establishments and existing privately owned recreational enterprises.
- b. Appraise the potential for each type of outdoor recreational enterprise within its boundaries.
- c. Solicit the help of sportsmen's organizations and other appropriate groups in making surveys of the types of recreational facilities desired.
- d. Include appropriate provision for the development of income-producing recreation in the long-range program for use of the lands within the District.
- e. Provide District cooperators with information on the possible economic benefits and hazards involved in incorporating recreational alternatives into his land use and business operations.

6. In addition, we request and recommend that:

- a. Universities and government agencies with recreation responsibilities make available more information and skilled personnel to assist District cooperators in the management of privately owned recreational facilities.

7. MACD opposes legislation that would restrict the activities at public access sites. MACD supports legislation and policy that provides ample opportunities for the citizens of Michigan to experience the recreational benefits of dedicated public access sites.

ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES

1. All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are useful tools for farmers, loggers and others who live or work in remote places. ATVs are also a legitimate form of recreation when used in a proper and responsible manner.

2. However, ATVs are causing serious damage in critical areas such as dirt roads and trails, streambanks and water courses, when carelessly used. This results in accelerated erosion, increased flooding, and damage to conservation structures and improvements. Liability to private property owners increases as does theft and vandalism.

3. Current promotional advertisements by retailers primarily encourage the misuse of these ATVs by showing their use along steep slopes, through water courses and along unmarked trails. MACD urges the manufacturers of all forms of ATVs to take the lead in an intensive national campaign to promote the environmentally sound use of the vehicles and respect for both public and private property.

4. In addition, we support state actions that address the problem of environmental damage, vandalism, theft and irresponsible advertising of ATVs.

22. PERMIT FEES

BACKGROUND

Conservation Districts acquire grants from federal, state and local agencies to engage in work toward conservation and restoration of natural resources. Districts either have the expertise to do this work, or they enlist the help of other agencies who have expertise in designing engineering plans and in practice implementation. Districts are units of government with limited funds.

POLICY STATEMENT

Conservation Districts support exemption from paying MDNR or MDEQ permit fees for Conservation District projects, when cooperating with local, state or federal agencies or using funds from local, state or federal agencies, or to pay a reduced and minimal filing fee, when installing conservation practices.

23. PUBLIC LANDS

BACKGROUND

1. Public lands are held in trust, to be devoted to the highest possible use for the good of all the people. Recognizing sustained yield and multiple use of renewable and nonrenewable natural resources, is a basic principle of public land use and management.
2. Non-renewable resources must be harvested in an efficient manner and not in a way to damage renewable resources and esthetic qualities.
3. Water rights established under state laws must be taken into full account in all planning concerned with conservation and development on public lands.
4. Each acre of public land, as well as privately owned land interspersed or directly associated with public lands, should be treated in accordance with its need for protection against damage under sustained use; and managed and developed with its scientifically determined capabilities for use.
5. We urge the completion, as rapidly as possible, of land capability and resource inventories on all public lands as well as on privately owned lands, and we favor adequate funds and personnel to accomplish this.

MANAGEMENT PLANS

1. Multiple-use management plans on the national forests establish coordinating measures for timber sales, road construction, range improvement, wildlife and wildlife habitat management, recreation and fire protection.
2. We believe local Forest Service authorities should review forest land management plans with local Conservation District boards, and Districts should be encouraged to make such suggestions for improvement or modification as may appear necessary to assure maximum long-time benefits from these public resources and from the related private resources of the area.
3. Because of a resurgence of mining activities and other uses on public lands, the need for more intensive soil and water conservation is more important than ever. MACD feels that MDNR should carefully examine its policies relative to soil and water conservation to assure the proper protection of the public lands.

24. RESEARCH AND EXTENSION

BACKGROUND

1. Programs for the conservation and protection of land, water and related natural resources must be based on a sound foundation of scientific knowledge that can be gained only through research. MACD believes that a higher priority for natural resource research is essential.
2. MACD will maintain a close relationship with the land grant college experiment state so that District needs for conservation research will become known to Michigan State University Agricultural Experiment Station (AES).
3. MACD supports federal and state budget requests of the AES and of Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) at such levels as will enable them to support Conservation Districts with research information and MSUE education assistance.
4. MACD will work with cooperating agencies to develop a model Memorandum of Understanding for use between Conservation Districts and MSUE regarding their respective roles in local resource management.

DISTRICT INVOLVEMENT

1. Knowledge by Conservation District directors of the extent and scope of ongoing research efforts in their areas is essential. MACD recommends to Michigan State University (MSU) that they sponsor annually a statewide program bringing together District leaders with representatives of the land grant college experiment stations and others engaged in research important to conservation efforts.
2. These sessions should present as wide a review as possible on ongoing research programs in Michigan.

25. RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (RC&D) PROJECTS

BACKGROUND

1. RC&D Councils provide the means whereby local people, Conservation Districts and local units of government can organize on a county or multi-county basis for the purpose of identifying and dealing with a wide range of economic, resource and development related problems and opportunities that cannot be dealt with successfully on a farm-by-farm or small community basis.
2. Beneficial measures include projects related to economic development and rural revitalization and flood prevention projects, sanitary landfills, roadside stabilization projects, timber stand improvement and improved use of land and water resources.
3. MACD has consistently supported a viable RC&D program as a proven means of supplementing Conservation District programs, assisting rural communities with resource-related problems and helping stabilize rural economies.
4. MACD supports efforts to improve the rural economy. We also firmly believe that a comprehensive rural development strategy should contain a component promoting utilization of renewable natural resources currently found in rural communities. However, this must be coupled with a strong resource conservation program to ensure that renewable natural resources are not exploited or degraded.

26. RESOURCE PLANNING

BACKGROUND

1. MACD is concerned about inefficient and wasteful use of Michigan's lands, wherever it occurs. Even with the best husbanding of our resources, there is increasing evidence that the rising demands of the state may be drawing too heavily on natural resources and that we may be jeopardizing their capability to sustain the supply of materials and the quality-of-life Michigan's citizens desire.

2. We believe there is need to seek a balance between population and industrial growth on the one hand, and the capability of natural resources to support such growth on the other.

3. We believe the conservation and management of soil and water resources should be an integral part of the state's natural resource program.

4. Economic considerations are very often critical in decisions affecting land use, the adoption of conservation practices and programs, and the protection of environmental values. We support a sustained program of research designed to ascertain the economic probabilities associated with various kinds of conservation and resource management programs, including those that are primarily agricultural, industrial, recreational and environmental.

5. We advocate strengthening local involvement in resource management affairs by broadening the authorities and improving the capabilities of county governments and Conservation Districts and their partners to carry out comprehensive programs of resource development.

PLANNING POLICY

1. Prime and unique agricultural lands are being converted to other uses at an alarming rate. We are concerned about the conversion and potential reduction in the supply of these agricultural lands. MACD supports PA 116 of 1974 and encourages Conservation Districts to promote local participation.

2. As Michigan undertakes greater consideration of its land use policies and problems, we urge that provisions be made for the maximum practical participation by local jurisdictions, Conservation Districts, sub state planning regions and other units of multicounty governmental organizations.

3. We urge Districts to offer their natural resource information, as well as their experience in land use, to help guide policy and decision-making in local land use planning and regulations.

4. We urge District directors to become familiar with the duties and purposes of county planning agencies functioning within Conservation Districts. We also recommend that District boards arrange regular meetings with county planning agencies to exchange information and arrive at mutual understandings beneficial to all concerned. We favor the designation of at least one District director as a member of each county planning agency associated with a District.

5. We believe that:

- a. Land use laws should provide a proper balance of state and local governments and that proposals for land use changes be open to public input.
- b. Utilization should be made of the standard soil survey and other natural resource data in determining proper land use.
- c. Just compensation should be made for the loss of property rights by land owners.
- d. Ample time and opportunity should be given for public debate and input prior to the establishment of policies and regulations.
- e. Land use management and development plans prepared by federal agencies for lands under their control and/or supervision should be made available to all local, regional or state land use planning commissions of the state in which such lands may be located.
- f. Social and economic impacts of proposed public actions, as well as environmental impacts, should be carefully assessed and weighed in the decision-making process.

6. We urge Conservation Districts located around expanding metropolitan areas to develop cooperative working arrangements with each other as a means of working together more effectively on common problems involving assistance to landowners, metropolitan and county agencies of government, conservation and civic organizations, commercial and housing developers, and others with responsibilities or concerns about the affected resources.

7. We urge Districts to encourage planning agencies and organizations to consider the watershed as a planning unit because of the natural relationships that exist within drainage areas.

8. We believe every farm should have a conservation plan fitted to its resources. As a matter of good business, an operator can do a better job with a conservation plan than without one. Piecemeal and uncoordinated conservation efforts cannot be fully effective.

9. In our judgment, conservation plans should be the vehicles for government conservation help such as technical assistance, credit and cost-sharing. This would produce maximum accomplishments in conservation and resource development over the longest time.

10. MACD urges all Conservation Districts to involve themselves in rural development activities, to make their views known on such development and further to assist rural development efforts by providing information on the condition and potential of soil and water resources and to recognize this in the development of District plans and programs.

27. SANITARY SEPTIC SYSTEM MANAGEMENT & SEWAGE OVERFLOWS

SANITARY SEPTIC SYSTEM MANAGEMENT BACKGROUND

Water quality for human health and economic development is critical to Michiganders health and quality of life. Currently, there are about 1.3 million on-site septic systems in Michigan with estimates that 10 to 20 percent may be failing and releasing human sewage, which has been identified as a pollutant in watershed water quality assessments for 319 and other conservation District grant projects as well as university research.

Currently, Michigan is the only state in the United States without a statewide septic system management statute to establish minimum standards for septic system design, installation and management.

POLICY STATEMENT

MACD supports the passage and implementation of a state statute to set minimum uniform standards for septic system design, use, assessment (evaluation), and maintenance.

SEWAGE OVERFLOW BACKGROUND

Municipalities within the Great Lakes watershed discharge untreated sewage into the lakes during storms and other times of high water flow. Such discharge of untreated sewage results in significant pathogenic and nutrient/ chemical pollution of the Great Lakes. It also impacts drinking water and public health. Such discharge of untreated sewage is a severe threat to the ecosystem of the Great Lakes with pronounced damage to fish and aquatic life. The technology now exists to stop such sewage pollution.

POLICY STATEMENT

MACD supports that all government regulatory bodies having jurisdiction within the Great Lakes watershed impose stringent penalties upon municipalities and sewage Districts responsible for sewage overflows into the Great Lakes and its tributaries. All government bodies having jurisdiction within the Great Lakes watershed are urged to approve legislation to completely eliminate untreated sewage overflows into the Great Lakes and its tributaries.

28. TAXATION

BACKGROUND

USDA recognizes tree farming and forest stewardship as agricultural practices supported through federal cost-share dollars designated in current and past Farm Bill programs. Certified tree farms work with industry and government to insure healthy woodlands that produce forest products for the future. The practice of forest stewardship on private lands provides immense economic benefit to the state in the form of timber products, wildlife habitat, renewable energy resources, and protection of land and water resources. The state has property tax assessment guidelines that do not recognize working tree farms as agricultural land and has increased the tax burden to working tree farms.

POLICY STATEMENT

MACD regards active tree farms as the “highest and best use” of the resource and supports the use of Tree Farm Certification as the guideline for assessing the agricultural status of private forested lands for the purpose of assessing property tax designation.

29. TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS

BACKGROUND

1. The state continues to devote more and more land to roads and highways. In some instances, these roads and highways are being built through rich agricultural areas with no apparent consideration of the food production capability. We urge the Michigan Department of Transportation to give greater consideration to the agricultural values involved in the location of roads and highways financed in whole or in part with federal for state funds.

ROAD CONSTRUCTION

1. We recommend that Conservation District boards annually request a list of proposed road construction projects from county and state government agencies and be alert to identify potential drainage problems through proposed roads and highways. Districts may also want to inform landowners, through public hearings, of the possible need for citizen action before construction plans are completed.

2. To the extent practical, we recommend that NRCS land capability information be used in locating roads and highways.

ROADSIDE DRAINAGE

1. The generation of additional surface water and the subsequent addition of silt and debris to waterways from highway construction often cause major runoff problems. We recommend that highway construction involving federal funding be designed as multi-purpose structures, incorporating dry flood control dams, desilting and debris basins where practical and feasible.

2. We request agencies responsible for planning and construction of roads and highways to notify Conservation Districts of proposed construction or reconstruction plans. Such notification early in the planning stage would permit adequate investigation and consultation pertaining to the drainage requirements of adjacent farmlands, as well as the inclusion of runoff control structures or recreational ponds.

ROADSIDE STABILIZATION

1. State and county highway officials recognize the need for vegetating bare and eroding road banks. We encourage Conservation Districts and NRCS to help these officials to obtain complete stabilization and beautification of critical road banks.

2. We ask state and county highway officials to seek designs for new construction that will provide minimum slopes on cuts and fills and thereby promote successful establishment of vegetation.

3. We further urge that specifications for roads and bridges conform to the standards and specifications for soil erosion control as developed by NRCS and Conservation Districts.

MINIMIZE THE USE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND IN HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

1. The construction of public highways often involves the over use of agricultural land, through excessively wide medians and roadsides, as well as large earthen overpass structures built of soil removed from adjacent agricultural lands.

2. MACD urges the State Highway Department to take prompt and adequate measures to ensure the utmost economy in the use of agricultural land for highway construction by: (1) in the fullest possible construction of medians and roadsides consistent with reasonable safety standards; and (2) the fullest possible use of concrete overpass structures, where feasible, in lieu of earthen structures created at the expense of agricultural land.

30. SOIL EROSION AND SEDIMENTATION CONTROL ACT

BACKGROUND

Part 91 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA) provides for soil erosion and sedimentation control. In Part 91 of NREPA, there is outlined a process for the administration and enforcement of rules to prevent soil erosion, and within this process, the county boards of commissioners each designate a county agency as the County Enforcing Agency or CEA. The CEA issues permits, reviews soil erosion plans, inspects the sites where earth movement is scheduled to take place, and works with developers and contractors to insure that adequate conservation measures are taken to prevent sedimentation of the waters of the state. Currently there is a multitude of county agencies serving as CEAs in their counties, including road commissions, drain commissions, building inspectors, health departments, and Conservation Districts. Some of these agencies have a direct conflict of interest in serving as CEAs, since they are doing earth movement work in the course of their duties. Under the present system, enforcement of the Act is very inconsistent throughout the state. Currently, in eight Conservation Districts in Michigan, the District serves as the CEA. In Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Iowa, this responsibility is assigned solely to the Conservation Districts in each state.

POLICY STATEMENT

All Michigan Conservation Districts should serve as CEAs in their respective counties.

31. NATIONAL STEWARDSHIP WEEK

NATIONAL STEWARDSHIP WEEK

1. We encourage widespread participation in the annual observance of National Stewardship Week, beginning each year with the last Sunday of April and continuing through the first Sunday of May.
2. We express our gratitude to the clergymen of all faiths for their participation. We encourage farm, youth, civic and other groups to join in spreading an understanding of the values and importance of resource stewardship by participating in National Stewardship Week.

32. URBAN CONSERVATION

BACKGROUND

1. Pressures of urbanization are causing increased conversion of farm and forestlands to other uses. These uses are frequently accompanied by increased water runoff, loss of associated wildlife habitat, surface and groundwater pollution and severe soil erosion. Sediment transported from eroded lands frequently causes severe environmental and economic hardship for present and future landowners and public agencies situated downstream from development sites through reduction of water quality, silting of reservoirs, drainage systems and streets.
2. The following additional urban issues have been identified:
 - a. Lack of an increase in mobile home taxation to help with natural resource improvements.
 - b. Need for better maintenance of roads, ditches and streambanks, to reduce runoff and improve water quality.
 - c. Need for assistance on erosion control of urban streambanks.
 - d. Need for management practices that protect soils from urban activities that cause degradation and focus on urban soil compaction.
 - e. Need for protection of urban wetlands impacted by urban growth.
 - f. Need for natural resources education.
 - g. Need to properly close abandoned homeowners' wells.
 - h. Lack of inventoried wet lands and brownfields.
3. MACD supports the urban work of Conservation Districts in providing conservation technical assistance and information materials targeted to urban audiences.

REGULATION OF DEVELOPMENT

1. MACD urges all city, township and county governments to adopt and enforce ordinances requiring developers to prepare and apply a plan of soil and water conservation during construction of urban-related private developments. These governments should avail themselves of the services available from Conservation Districts in carrying out this effort.
2. MACD urges all agencies, groups and individuals responsible for land development and the regulation thereof, to accomplish this development in a manner that will minimize soil erosion, sedimentation, water pollution and other adverse environmental effects.
3. Conservation Districts should work with developers to guide them in incorporating good soil and water conservation practices into their plans.

URBAN SOIL SURVEYS

MACD encourages state, county, metropolitan, local and other planning groups, both public and private, to use soil surveys and soil interpretations as one of the tools to evaluate alternative land uses to fit the capabilities of the soil in the most efficient and harmonious patterns.

STORM WATER MANAGEMENT

1. The control and management of storm water is an integral part of the needed resource management system in an urban area. Carrying out an effective storm water management system requires the involvement and cooperation of all levels of government and a capability to work with developers so that soil erosion and sedimentation control structures can be thoroughly integrated with the long-term needs for storm water management facilities.

2. Conservation Districts are encouraged to work with local, county and state governments to make urban storm water and watershed management an integral part of erosion and sediment control programs. Districts are further encouraged either to develop the capability or to assist other agencies to provide the technical assistance and training of professional engineers needed to implement local storm water management programs.

GROUNDWATER STEWARDSHIP

1. MACD encourages legislators to cost-share on abandoned well closures in urban areas to reduce the potential for groundwater contamination.

2. Conservation Districts should work together with Health Departments and Michigan Association of Conservation Districts, Extension offices on the Groundwater Stewardship Program to keep the public informed of this stewardship program.

3. Conservation Districts should help protect the water supply by encouraging buffers, closing abandoned wells, and participating in Clean Sweep Programs as part of the Groundwater Stewardship Program.

4. Conservation Districts should participate in the Wellhead Protection Program in cities.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

1. Conservation Districts should increase their contact with local townships, county government, city planning departments, watershed councils, road commissions, and public works offices so these entities can refer the public to the Districts for assistance with natural resource management.
2. Conservation Districts should take an active part in the review of public notices that impact wetlands.
3. Conservation Districts should educate the public on native plants and wildlife habitat through signage along rails to trails and other urban parks.
4. Conservation Districts should work with townships, villages and cities on changes to ordinances that affect natural resources and the environment.
5. Conservation Districts should work with landscapers to incorporate native plants into their designs.
6. Conservation Districts should encourage counties to inventory brownfields and wetlands sites.

33. WATER RESOURCES

BACKGROUND

1. MACD believes useful, wholesome water is a state treasure and its integrity must be maintained.
2. Abundant quality water supplies are essential to the well being of our citizens. Continued federal concern, leadership and support are necessary to maintain and expand state and local efforts to achieve water quality goals. Conservation Districts play an important role in the development and implementation of these goals.
3. Small watersheds and river basins are the natural units for water resource development and management. We believe that planning in these units in anticipation of future water needs must be intensified. There is a need for a coordinated effort from all stakeholders within a watershed to maintain and improve water quality.
4. Water pollution complaints are handled by the MDEQ with great disparity in both the speed and the manner in which they are handled. The severity of the penalty is sometimes very different for similar spills in different geographic areas, however, protection is important in all areas of the state.
5. Many public water bodies are not tested on a regular basis. It is difficult to measure the long-term effects of spills on watersheds without regular testing and good initial baseline data.

POLICY STATEMENTS

1. MACD supports the adoption of an overall water resources policy for Michigan.
2. MACD supports immediate development of alternatives to present pipelines under the Great Lakes and their tributaries, before there is an environmental emergency.
3. MACD encourages use of farm management practices that do not degrade either surface or groundwater.
4. MACD supports the use of irrigation scheduling utilizing the latest weather and computer scheduling programs.
5. Stream and drain improvement should be completed with a minimum of bank disturbance.
6. MACD supports the planned and regulated land application of municipal wastes.
7. MACD strongly supports regulations for preserving the integrity of dams.
8. MACD supports increased funding for non-point source pollution Best Management Practices (BMPs), with local implementation through Conservation Districts.

9. MACD supports increased funding for Conservation District technicians to assist land users to integrate non-point source pollution BMPs into their land management.

10. Streambank erosion is recognized as a conservation concern. It occurs naturally in many areas, but it is also accelerated by the actions of man. Sediment produced from streambank erosion contributes directly toward degradation of lakes and reservoirs and has deleterious effects on riparian cropland and other riparian land uses.

a. MACD supports efforts to protect waterways from man caused streambank erosion and to mitigate naturally occurring streambank erosion.

b. MACD supports the process of allowing stream-bank stabilization work to be done in an economically feasible manner and in a realistic time frame.

11. MACD will engage in communication with MDEQ to encourage that all pollution complaints and penalties be processed uniformly in a prompt and efficient manner.

12. MACD supports the practice of developing comprehensive watershed management plans as a vehicle for bringing community resources together to improve water quality. MACD further encourages local governments to establish a lead agency for watershed management. In areas where Conservation Districts have the capacity and resources, MACD supports that they are designated the lead agency.

13. Conservation Districts will work Michigan Association of Conservation Districts with MDEQ, the U.S. Geological Survey, their local county health departments, and others, to encourage regular and timely collection and analysis of baseline water quality data for all water bodies in Michigan.

GROUNDWATER STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

The Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program (MGSP) was developed to help the State of Michigan protect its drinking water supply. MGSP is funded by monies collected based on fertilizer and pesticide sale throughout all of the state. Some of the local programs are administered by Conservation Districts through agricultural producers in the form of Farm*A*Syst and Field*A*Syst for the implementation of environmentally sound agricultural practices. Continuation of the existing local programs is vital to protection of the rural groundwater supply.

The cost-share portion is a vital part of the program. Each area is unique in its cost-share needs, and a one-size fits all approach does not meet every local program's needs.

MACD will actively pursue a way for individual Districts to choose and prioritize additional cost share practices, and determine cost share rates through the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program

34. MICHIGAN ENVIROTHON - YOUTH PROGRAMS

BACKGROUND

1. Michigan Envirothon, is a national program that was adopted as a program of MACD in 1994 with Conservation Districts and partners. Michigan Envirothon (ME) is an experiential and challenging way to provide natural resource and environmental science education to high school students throughout the state of Michigan.
2. Young people of today, as stewards of our resources tomorrow, will make the decisions as citizens that determine the quality of our environment. Their judgments on resource use will be valid or irresponsible depending on the depth of their understanding of conservation as the judicious development and use of land, water and related resources - all of which affect the health, security and well being of the people.
3. MACD and Michigan Conservation Districts seek opportunities to educate youth about natural resources and conservation through programs at the state and local level. Young people should come to understand the vital necessity for proper care and use of natural resources in a constantly changing world and comprehend the ways in which human beings bring about changes in their environment. Finally, they should begin to accept a personal commitment toward the intelligent use of resources within their own community.

POLICY STATEMENTS

1. When fiscally feasible, Conservation Districts should support Michigan Envirothon (ME) programs locally and/or similar youth conservation and natural resources programs. Similarly, MACD will support ME when fiscally possible and when not financially possible will work to find funding.
2. Districts should work closely with the leadership of all youth groups, as well as those that are affiliated with churches, lodges or simply neighborhood and recreation department groups in urban areas. The latter frequently have only local structure and leadership but could develop practical conservation learning programs with responsible guidelines. In every community there are also many young people not affiliated with youth groups who could be motivated to carry out conservation action programs through such activities as District-sponsored conservation clubs.
3. All youth groups should be encouraged to integrate special emphasis on conservation of natural resources into their continuing programs and activities. The goal for a comprehensive program should be a learning process designed to help young people develop an awareness of the natural environment; recognize their own and all other creatures' complete dependence upon natural resources for comfort and survival; and appreciate the intricate, interdependent relationships among natural resources.

4. Youth groups should be encouraged to incorporate conservation-oriented programs, exhibits, tours and projects into their organizational events and meetings; give emphasis to conservation in their periodical and special-purpose publications; and also in their service awards or recognition programs at all levels.
5. Many youth organizations own camps, study areas or other properties of varying size and in varying stages of use and development. District officials and state association leaders should give high priority to aiding in the conservation development of such properties. The opportunity for young people to play and learn in an environment that they are surrounded by conservation practices in action helps to motivate a concern for prudent use and care of natural resources.
6. Every opportunity should be explored to provide practical outdoor learning situations on camp properties and other natural areas. Conservation oriented demonstrations of intelligent use of all natural resources will lead to broadened understandings. Even small areas can be planned to accommodate miniature living demonstrations that teach a conservation lesson and at the same time add to the attractiveness of the property.