

# History of Conservation Districts



Greenville Bench, Beaver CD

# Dust Bowl 1930's

- ▶ Following a severe and sustained drought in the Great Plains, and over tillage, the region's soil began to erode and blow away, creating huge black dust storms that blotted out the sun and swallowed the countryside.
- ▶ The storms stretched across the nation. They reached south to Texas and east to New York. Dust even sifted into the White House and onto the desk of President Franklin D. Roosevelt



# 1935 – Hugh Hammond Bennett

“From every conceivable angle—economic, social, cultural, public health, national defense—conservation of natural resources is an objective on which all should agree.”

- In 1935, Hugh Hammond Bennett testified before Congress to persuade them to fund a permanent agency to heal the land. He proposed local control, with every farm community setting up a soil conservation district. While testifying about America's soil erosion problem, Bennett drew back the curtains to reveal a cloud of dust originating from a storm in the Great Plains.



“And, usually, it takes no more labor or machinery to carry on conservation farming than it does to farm the wasteful way—without consideration of conservation needs”

# 1937 – Conservation Districts created

- ▶ In 1937, President Roosevelt wrote the governors of all the states recommending legislation that would allow local landowners to form soil conservation districts. The movement caught on across the country with district-enabling legislation passed in every state. Today, the country is blanketed with nearly 3,000 conservation districts



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# Mission of Conservation Districts

- Known in various parts of the country as “soil and water conservation districts,” “resource conservation districts,” “natural resource districts,” “land conservation committees” and similar names, they share a single mission: to coordinate assistance from all available sources—public and private, local, state and federal—in an effort to develop locally-driven solutions to natural resource concerns. ([nacdnet.org](http://nacdnet.org))
- “Productive land is neither limitless nor inexhaustible.” HHB

# Utah Conservation Districts

First Utah CD established on October 26, 1937 - Minersville CD (Twin M CD)

- ▶ Utah has 38 Conservation Districts
  - ▶ Each CD elects 5 supervisors (190)
  - ▶ Supervisors are elected from the electorate in their district, majority rule
  - ▶ Elections are held every other year, 2 or 3 supervisors elected
  - ▶ 4 year term
  - ▶ Legal subdivision of the State and Special Service District
- ▶ 7 Zones – boundaries split by County and watershed areas



# Utah Conservation Districts and Zones

Utah Conservation Commission  
Utah Department of Agriculture and Food



March 2007



Map Scale 1:2,851,200 (1 inch = 45 miles)



# Utah Association of Conservation Districts

- ▶ Established in February 1948
- ▶ UACD is the state voice for Conservation Districts
- ▶ The association is a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) corporation with the principal purpose of educating and supporting the work of 190 local elected supervisors
- ▶ The NACD association was founded on the philosophy that conservation decisions should be made at the local level with technical and funding assistance from federal, state and local governments and the private sector. As the national voice for all conservation districts, NACD supports voluntary, incentive-driven natural resource conservation programs that benefit all citizens.



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# Utah Conservation Commission

- ▶ The Utah Conservation Commission (UCC) is authorized under [Title 4, Chapter 18 of the Utah Code](#). The act's Purpose Declaration states that "The Legislature finds and declares that the soil and water resources of this state constitute one of its basic assets and that the preservation of these resources requires planning and programs to ensure the development and utilization of these resources and to protect them from the adverse effects of wind and water erosion, sediment, and sediment related pollutants." With this in mind, the Legislature created in 1937 this unique state government entity and it has been active continually since, evolving to meet new environmental and social conditions. Today this 16 person board strives to protect the natural resources within the state.



# Utah Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission shall be comprised of 16 members, including:

- 1 the director of the Extension Service at Utah State University or the director's designee;
- 2 the president of the Utah Association of Conservation Districts or the president's designee;
- 3 the commissioner or the commissioner's designee;
- 4 the executive director of the Department of Natural Resources or the executive director's designee;
- 5 the executive director of the Department of Environmental Quality or the executive director's designee;
- 6 the chair and the vice chair of the State Grazing Advisory Board, created in Section [4-20-1.5](#);
- 7 the president of the County Weed Supervisors Association;
- 8 seven district supervisors who provide district representation on the commission on a multicounty basis; and
- 9 the director of the School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration or the director's designee.



# Today in Utah Conservation

- ▶ As a newly elected CD Supervisor you stand on a foundation of those that were here before you
- ▶ You are a Conservation Champion
- ▶ You have resources to ensure you are successful and moving forward
- ▶ There are no short-cuts to successful conservation
- ▶ Put conservation dollars on-the-ground
- ▶ Keep the conversation about conservation
- ▶ You have a responsibility to build a more solid foundation for those who will come after you