



Montmorency Conservation District  
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## **What is a Conservation District?**

Michigan's Conservation Districts are special purpose local units of State Government that utilize state, federal and private sector resources to solve today's conservation problems. The guiding philosophy of all Conservation Districts is that decisions on conservation issues should be made at the local level, by local people, with technical assistance provided by government. Created to serve as stewards of natural resources, Michigan's Conservation Districts take an ecosystem approach to conservation and protection.

Conservation Districts have their origins in the early 1930s. Along with the Great Depression, came an equally unparalleled ecological disaster known as the Dust Bowl. Huge black dust storms that stretched across the nation blotted out the sun and swallowed the countryside. In 1935 on Capitol Hill, while testifying about the erosion problem, soil scientist Hugh Hammond Bennett drew back the curtains to reveal a sky blackened by dust. Congress immediately declared soil and water conservation a national policy and priority.

Since about three-fourths of the land in the U.S. is privately owned, Congress realized that only active support from landowners would guarantee the success of conservation on private land. The idea of soil and water conservation districts was born. Today, there are nearly 3000 Conservation Districts nationwide – one in almost every county.

In their early beginnings, Conservation Districts focused their programs on rural America; assisting farmers and ranchers in conservation measures to prevent their soil from blowing and washing away. In recent years, land use patterns have changed dramatically. The land is continuously being divided, creating new landowners who have little or no knowledge of land and resource management. It became clear to the Conservation Districts that their role must evolve in order to serve this new and expanding clientele, in addition to serving their agricultural customers.

Programs carried out by Conservation Districts are as diverse as the landscape in Michigan. In southern Michigan, many of the programs deal with conservation needs of the farm community, while in northern Michigan, there is more emphasis on forestry, wildlife, water quality, and recreation. Conservation Districts continue to expand into diverse areas of natural resource management, rising to meet the environmental challenges of their local communities.

Whether for wildlife habitat, timber, recreation, aesthetics or similar uses, District personnel help make property owners more fully aware of the complexity of the resources they own and the relationship they have to the land around them. So if you hunt, fish, hike, garden, farm, eat, or do anything else involving natural resources, then you benefit from the work of Michigan's Conservation Districts.

For more information:

[www.macd.org](http://www.macd.org) This is the website of the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts. From here you can connect to the website of each district office in Michigan.

Websites of a few of our partner agencies:

<http://www.mucc.org/> Michigan United Conservation Clubs

<http://www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov/> Natural Resource Conservation Service provides programs and cost shares for Michigan landowners.

<http://michiganclimate.org/> Information on carbon credits.

[http://www.michigan.gov/mda/0,1607,7-125-1567\\_1599\\_1608---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mda/0,1607,7-125-1567_1599_1608---,00.html) Michigan Department of Agriculture, Water Stewardship Program

[http://macd.org/local\\_districts.html](http://macd.org/local_districts.html) What is a Conservation District