Chapter 1 Welcome and Introduction

Congratulations on your election or appointment as a Soil Conservation District (SCD) Supervisor and welcome to the SCD organization. SCDs have been working with landowners to conserve soil and improve water quality for over 70 years in Tennessee. As a SCD supervisor, you will help administer the program for soil conservation in your district. The State Soil Conservation Committee of Tennessee has compiled this handbook with the assistance of the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, the Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts, the US Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Tennessee Conservation District Employees Association to help you understand your role as a SCD supervisor and give you important information about the organization you will be representing. **The primary purpose is to give you, the supervisor, information to understand and fulfill your duties.** We hope you will find this handbook useful. As a companion to this handbook, each District will receive a SCD Reference Manual, which contains copies of current statutes, policies and materials mentioned in the handbook. We look forward to working with you as a SCD supervisor.

As a district supervisor, you play an important role. The success of each district and the goals accomplished are up to the district supervisors. Simply put, as a district supervisor, you must be aware of the natural resource concerns in your community and seek solutions through new and existing partnerships, funding opportunities, and the creation and implementation of conservation plans. Our soil and water resources will remain finite. The work district supervisors do today to protect these resources will ensure they are here for future generations.

History of the Tennessee Conservation Districts

The Dust Bowl of the 1930's was a time of unprecedented hardship in America, but nowhere quite like the area of northern Texas, eastern Colorado, western Kansas and the Oklahoma panhandle. The drought experienced in this area, along with unsustainable farming practices, caused a calamity unlike the nation had ever seen. This prompted action by the federal government, led by Dr. Hugh Hammond Bennett, to establish the Soil Conservation Service, and for Congress to pass and send to the states a model soil conservation law. Tennessee passed the original act in 1939, and began the process of establishing Soil Conservation Districts across Tennessee, with public hearings and referenda held in all 95 counties. This activity was slowed in the Tennessee Valley, due to prior agreements between TVA and the USDA. Creation of new districts was also slowed during the early 1940's, because of World War II. Table 1 lists all the Tennessee Districts and their dates of organization.

The primary purpose of this Handbook is to give you, the Supervisor, information to understand and fulfill your duties.

Table 1: Tennessee Counties and SCD Organization Dates

(From: The Soil Conservation District Movement in Tennessee, by T. Matthews et al, August, 1972)

County	Beginning Date	Original District Number
Anderson	11/17/1958	93
Bedford	07/07/1952	59
Benton	01/10/1958	90
Bledsoe	06/28/1951	43
Blount	11/06/1953	72
Bradley	03/07/1952	52
Campbell	12/06/1957	89
Cannon	02/24/1943	19
Carroll	06/29/1950	32
Carter	02/04/1959	94
Cheatham	08/20/1944	24
Chester	02/17/1951	36
Claiborne	06/18/1956	88
Clay	01/17/1945	27
Cocke	07/06/1953	65
Coffee	03/07/1952	54
Crockett	09/24/1941	13
Cumberland	10/12/1955	84
Davidson	01/30/1946	29
Decatur	04/28/1952	55
DeKalb	08/19/1941	9
Dickson	02/27/1952	48
Dyer	10/14/1941	15
Fayette	10/30/1950	35
Fentress	03/24/1955	82
Franklin	04/10/1951	38
Gibson	02/19/1941	5
Giles	02/27/1952	51
Grainger	08/17/1953	68
Greene	12/28/1954	78
Grundy	11/03/1953	70
Hamblen	07/03/1954	75
Hamilton	06/28/1951	41
Hancock	05/01/1956	86
Hardeman	08/19/1941	11
Hardin	06/18/1952	58
Hawkins	06/20/1952	57
Haywood	03/13/1942	17
Henderson	04/20/1951	37
Henry	06/28/1951	44
Hickman	07/18/1951	47
Houston	06/28/1951	45
Humphreys	05/11/1953	64
Jackson	08/20/1944	22
Jefferson	06/03/1958	91
Johnson	09/29/1954	77
Knox	10/20/1952	60
Lake	09/09/1959	95
Lauderdale	06/13/1940	2
Lawrence	02/25/1952	50
Lewis	03/13/1953	62
Lincoln	07/06/1951	46
Loudon	06/11/1956	87
Macon	02/13/1946	30
Madison	07/10/1941	10
Marion	06/28/1951	42
Marshall	05/12/1952	56
Maury	07/02/1951	39
McMinn	12/29/1954	79
McNairy	06/29/1950	33
Meigs	02/25/1952	49
Monroe	04/27/1955	83
Montgomery	08/20/1944	23
Moore	06/04/1954	73
Morgan	12/30/1952	61
Obion	07/09/1940	3
Overton	01/17/1945	26
Perry	11/25/1953	69
Pickett	04/26/1945	28
Polk	01/09/1956	85
Putnam	02/19/1941	6
Rhea	03/07/1952	53
Roane	06/04/1958	92
Robertson	06/25/1941	7
Rutherford	06/25/1941	8
Scott	04/16/1954	74
Sequatchie	06/28/1951	40
Sevier	08/06/1954	76
Shelby	09/02/1947	31
Smith	08/20/1944	21
Stewart	03/18/1953	63
Sullivan	08/20/1953	67
Sumner	06/13/1940	1
Tipton	10/14/1941	14
Trousdale	01/17/1945	25
Unicoi	03/10/1955	81
Union	06/30/1953	66
Van Buren	11/24/1942	18
Warren	09/24/1941	12
Washington	02/17/1955	80
Wayne	12/16/1953	71
Weakley	02/19/1941	4
White	11/07/1941	16
Williamson	01/08/1951	34
Wilson	07/24/1943	20

Why Are Soil Conservation Districts Important Today?

Simply stated, Soil Conservation Districts are important today because many areas of Tennessee are still experiencing excessive soil erosion. Controlling erosion of farmland lessens agricultural impact to waters and improves on-farm profits. The adoption of no-till or other minimum tillage practices have had and continue to have the effect of greatly reducing erosion rates, and making crop production more profitable and sustaining for future production. Sediment is the number one water pollutant in Tennessee, so programs that provide an improved vegetative cover to the soil will lessen the movement of soil into our waterways.

Encouraging conservation measures can improve farm income. No-till practices on cropland can be less expensive than traditional tillage programs. Improvement of pastures with cross fencing and rotational grazing lessens erosion, and may provide other profit-increasing benefits.

Another important function of the Soil Conservation District is to serve as a bridge between the agricultural and urban communities. In many areas that surround large urban centers, large farms are sold and turned to subdivisions or small-acreage home sites. These new landowners may not have the knowledge to manage their land properly to prevent soil loss. Soil erosion from any and all land uses should be addressed locally by the Supervisors.

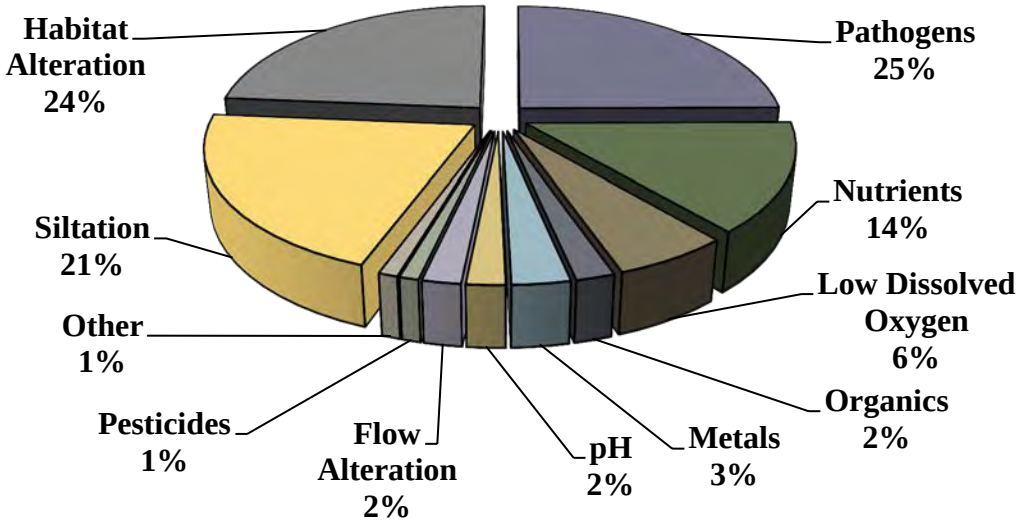
Also, the SCDs work should be of interest to local water utilities. The more soil erosion is controlled, the cleaner the source water is for the utility, which could translate into lower costs of treatment and lower water bills for their customers.

There are many streams in Tennessee that are polluted because of too much sediment, a lack of stream-side (riparian) tree canopy and excessive numbers of pathogenic (disease-causing) microorganisms. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) regularly checks stream health for pollution sources, and publish summary reports. Figure 1 is from the latest "305(b)" Report of Water Quality in Tennessee. The listed causes of pollution come from private agricultural uses, other private land and homeowner uses, municipal impacts, industrial and business impacts, natural effects and other uses. This increases the need for SCDs to consider all uses of natural resources in the District when developing the natural resources plan.

> *"Good farmers, who take seriously their duties as stewards of Creation and of their land's inheritors, contribute to the welfare of society in more ways than society usually acknowledges, or even knows. These farmers produce valuable goods, of course; but they also conserve soil, they conserve water, they conserve wildlife, they conserve open space, they conserve scenery."*
> —*Wendell Berry, Bringing it to the Table: Writings on Farming and Food*

Figure 1: Causes of Pollution in Streams and Rivers

(From: 305(b) Report, TDEC, 2012)



Links to Local Water Quality Data

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation has eight regional field offices and personnel that are tasked to perform assessments of streams, creeks, rivers and lakes to determine if they are polluted. District Supervisors should make a point to contact the Division of Water Resources manager in the respective field office and invite them to Board meetings, as they have similar goals as the District.

TDEC's 303(d) List

This document is produced by TDEC staff every two years and lists the streams and other waters in Tennessee that are "polluted"; that is, not meeting one or more of the designated uses established in state regulations for those particular waters. Soil erosion from nonpoint source runoff is a major contributor to the problems in Tennessee's waters. Soil Conservation District Supervisors and the partners need to be familiar with this document, as it points to where restoration is needed. Prioritizing conservation practices in these areas can result in measurable successes.

http://www.tn.gov/environment/water/water-quality_publications.shtml

TDEC's Assessment Database

This online tool gives the user current information about the health of streams. The information provided is updated as new stream assessments are performed. District Supervisors and staff should make use of this information when setting goals and making plans.

http://tnmap.tn.gov/wpc/

The Soils of Tennessee

All conservation practices have at their core, and are developed through, soils and their study. The solutions to soil erosion problems since the Dust Bowl era and all natural resources issues since have been centered on an increase in the understanding of soils and how to better manage and maintain them. Hugh Hammond Bennett, the "Father of Soil Conservation", understood and talked about the integral part that science-based soil survey information must play in the successful implementation of Soil Conservation.

The study and mapping of soils in Tennessee has a long history as a part of soil conservation. Hugh Hammond Bennett co-authored one of the oldest soil survey reports in Tennessee which was made for Davidson County and published under the Bureau of Soils in 1903. Since then SCDs have partnered with USDA-NRCS, other federal and state agencies, including University Agricultural Research and Extension Services to publish and update soil surveys for every part of Tennessee, including the National Parks. Most of these Tennessee soil survey publications are archived and can be viewed or downloaded at:

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/surveylist/soils/survey/state/?stateId=TN

In addition, the most current soil survey information for Tennessee is maintained in a National database that is served to the public for viewing, query, printing, and downloads via the Web Soil Survey application at:

http://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/

Information and contacts for getting help using these soil survey applications or about understanding the use and limitations of the soils of Tennessee can be found at:

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/tn/programs/?cid=nrcs141p2_016553