

I. Commission Responsibilities

A. Commission Organization

The Soil and Water Districts Commission is made up of six farmers and four ex-officio members. The six farmer members must be appointed by the governor of Missouri. Three of the farmer members must live north of the Missouri River, and three of the farmer members must live south of the river. Members cannot be from the same senatorial district. Not more than four of the farmer members can be from the same political party. Ex-officio members are the directors of the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, Department of Conservation and the dean of the College of Agriculture of the University of Missouri.

B. State Cost-Share Policy

1. The Soil and Water Districts Commission establishes state level rules and policies governing the state cost-share program according to state law. The commission establishes the rules and reviews them as needed or requested by the Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
2. The commission directs the Soil and Water Conservation Program staff to carry out the rules and policies of the state cost-share program. Staff assistance and support is available to the districts upon request. The program staff is available for training, district requests, information, etc.

3. Statute, § 278.080, RSMo:

The state soil and water districts commission shall formulate policies and general programs for the saving of Missouri soil and water by the soil and water conservation districts, and shall give consideration to the districts' needs based on their character; it shall receive and allocate or otherwise expend for the use or benefit of the soil and water conservation districts any funds appropriated by the general assembly for the use or benefit of such districts, including a soil and water conservation cost-share program...

4. The commission has the following responsibilities in regard to the state cost-share program (§ 278.080, RSMo):

To promulgate such rules and regulations as may be necessary to effectively administer a state-funded soil and water conservation cost-share program...

C. Allocation of Cost-Share Funds

1. **Apportionment of Funds**

The funds authorized for cost-share assistance on erosion control and water quality practices will be allocated to soil and water conservation districts in accordance with the Cost-Share Rule, 10 CSR 70-5.010. The rule states that apportionment of funds will be based on the character of the district's needs, as determined by criteria developed by the commission. No funds will be physically transferred to the district. Payment is issued directly to the cooperator.

2. **Special Projects**

The commission may hold a portion of the allocation for the funding of special projects. The projects will be designed by the commission, incorporate the

cooperative assistance of the local district(s), and implemented with the technical assistance available to the district(s) and the commission. The district may submit requests for special projects to the commission for consideration.

D. Needs Assessment Process

1. Needs Assessment Tool

The Soil and Water Districts' Commission is authorized to allocate cost-share funds to districts based on a district's needs. The needs assessment is a tool to assist the commission in carrying out their statutory obligation. The process provides district boards the ability to communicate needs directly to the commission by requesting funds based on resource concerns that address soil erosion and/or water quality. The process provides more definitive performance measures to support the budget request through the appropriation process. The needs assessment allows districts to gather input from cooperators, board members, district staff, NRCS, MDC and others on soil erosion and water quality concerns within their district. Needs assessment requests will be presented to the commission annually. The commission will develop an allocation formula to distribute cost-share funds within resource concerns based on the needs assessment and other available resources.

2. Advance Allocation

The commission has approved an advance cost-share allocation process in an effort to allow districts to continue conservation efforts seamlessly across fiscal years. This process allows districts to request a portion of next year's allocation to continue practices through the end of a fiscal year.

The advance allocation allows:

- a. Districts to complete seeding practices when pH conditions require lime to be applied six months prior to seeding.
- b. Structural practices to begin when weather conditions are favorable and fields do not contain a crop.
- c. Approval of practices that will be started but will extend beyond the current fiscal year.

E. Eligible Practices

The commission approves eligible practices. The commission considers the current usage of each practice and the relative need for the practice. The approved practice policies and requirements are included in this handbook.

F. Developing New Practices

The commission can direct program staff to develop new cost-share practices based on need and/or requests from districts. These practices are then reviewed and must be approved by the commission as eligible practices prior to their use.

G. Requests

1. The commission will consider a district's or cooperator's request regarding the cost-share program. A formal, written request asking to be placed on the agenda for the commission meeting must be submitted to the district's coordinator at least 15 business days prior to the next commission meeting. Program staff will present the request to the commission based on the information provided by the district. District supervisors and staff or cooperator may attend the meeting and discuss the cost-share request in more detail.
2. District supervisors, staff, and/or cooperators may attend meetings and present personally. Those who wish to address the commission with a brief, informal presentation that does not require a decision or relates to an item being discussed may do so by filling out a presentation card at the meeting.

H. Cost-Share Appeals

1. Contracts for cost-share are denied when they do not comply with program policy. The commission will consider a district's or a cooperator's appeal concerning policy related to a cost-share contract. If new information becomes available following a commission decision on an appeal, a second appeal may be presented.
2. A formal, written request asking to be placed on the agenda for the commission meeting must be submitted to the district's coordinator at least 15 business days prior to the next commission meeting. Program staff will present the appeal to the commission based on the information provided by the district. District supervisors and staff or cooperator may attend the meeting and discuss the cost-share appeal in more detail.
3. District supervisors, staff, and/or cooperators may attend meetings and present personally. Those who wish to address the commission with a brief, informal presentation that does not require a decision or relates to an item being discussed may do so by filling out a presentation card at the meeting.

I. Audit and Evaluation of the Cost-Share Program

1. The commission can use the Department of Natural Resources' auditing program to administer cost-share program audits if needed.
2. Program Staff will conduct a periodic review of cost-share practices.