

## **History of State Conservation Boards in Wisconsin**

**Compiled by DATCP, October 2007**

### **1937 - Wisconsin Soil Conservation Committee (SCC)**

**Creation:** Created by the Wisconsin Soil Conservation Districts Law, effective July 3, 1937. The SCC's responsibilities were identified in Chapter 92 of Wisconsin State Statutes.

**Membership:**

- Assistant Director of the Wisconsin Agricultural Experiment Station
- State Director or Associate Director of Agricultural Extension
- Two farmers (appointed by Governor); 1 (added 1939); 1 (added 1957)
- Appointee of the United States Secretary of Agriculture
- Director of State Conservation Department (1958)

**Responsibilities:**

- Legal creation of soil conservation districts; accept petitions for establishment of districts through hearing and majority vote of land occupiers in a referendum
- Approve, coordinate and supervise the programs of the districts or projects, apportion funds from state and federal sources, be the sole agency through which government aid in erosion control can be extended to private lands, and accept contributions of money to fund erosion control work
- Provide education and information on soil conservation activities
- Powers over personnel including determination of compensation for district supervisors and the members of the board of adjustment; hire staff to serve the Board
- Make surveys, conduct evaluations and do soil erosion control work outside of established districts
- Promote and provide assistance to watershed programs under P.L. 566 (1954); including administrative activities including review and approval authority of work plans under P.L. 566

### **1961 - Wisconsin Soil and Water Conservation Committee (SWCC)**

**Creation:** Soil Conservation Committee is changed to the Soil and Water Conservation Committee by state law on April 29, 1961. The SWCC's responsibilities were identified in Chapter 92.

**Membership:** Same as SCC

**Responsibilities:**

- Maintains SCC responsibilities
- Administration of a new cost-sharing program, Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Act Program (ORAP) assigned to the SWCC (AB 616, Chap. 427, Laws of 1961)
- Administration of a state aid program (Chapter 511, Laws of 1965) created under section 92.20 to provide an annual appropriation to districts

### **1967 - Soil Conservation Board (SCB)**

**Creation:** The Wisconsin Soil and Water Conservation Committee was changed to the Soil Conservation Board by in 1967. This change attached the Board to the University of

Wisconsin – Extension, which became responsible for the Board’s budget and program coordination. The SCB’s responsibilities were identified in Chapter 92.

Membership:

- Four farmer members
- Representative of the Dean of the College of Agriculture
- Staff of the College of Agriculture engaged in extension work
- Representative of the soil and water conservation district supervisors
- Representative of the Wisconsin Conservation Department
- Appointee of the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture as advisor

Responsibilities:

- Retained the functions prescribed in Chapter 92 including rule making, policy making and regulation
- Maintained responsibilities with respect to approval and coordination of soil and water conservation district programs and projects, allocation of funds from state and federal sources to the districts, and to accept contributions of money to carry on erosion control work
- Maintained responsibilities to assist supervisors of districts and facilitate information transfer between supervisors, and to secure cooperation and assistance of any governmental agency
- Maintained supervisory responsibility over programs provided by P.L. 83-566, as amended related to the planning and carrying out of works of improvement for soil and water conservation and other purposes
- Added the responsibility to advise the university in carrying out its educational functions
- Eliminated authority to employ staff
- Transferred the function for creating artificial lakes to the DNR (component of the ORAP)

**1972 - Board of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (BSWCD)**

Creation: The Soil Conservation Board was changed to the Board of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (BSWCD) in 1972. The BSWCD’s responsibilities were identified in Chapter 92.

Membership:

- Four farmer members appointed by the Governor
- Four area representatives (district supervisors)
- Six advisors from federal and state agencies including UW College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (USDA) and the Soil Conservation Service (USDA), UW-Cooperative Extension, DNR, DATCP

Responsibilities:

- Provide assistance to districts through coordination of statewide activities, and dissemination of information and education to enable the local districts to craft their own policy
- Distribute state funds available for administration and cost-sharing
- Initiate local efforts to identify sources and causes of water quality problems and solutions and coordinate these local efforts statewide as part of the State Water Quality Management Program
- Assist the DNR and SWCDs in planning and coordination of the priority projects selected through the Wisconsin Nonpoint Source Water Pollution Abatement Program.

Other:

- During 1981, the BSWCD worked with others on the major revision to Chapter 92 which established the current system of LCC and LCDs.
- The Legislative Audit Bureau conducted an audit of the BSWCD in 1980 recommending the Board's role in solving the state's soil erosion problems be expanded to include additional staffing and funding, requiring mandatory soil erosion control, and prioritizing areas of severe erosion in which to focus current and future state programs. If the Board's role is not expanded, the audit recommended repealing this Board.
- In December of 1980, the BSWCD endorsed attachment to DATCP. The ATCP Board also endorsed this move, but on the condition that they would set policies for the program.

Abolished: The BSWCD was abolished in 1982 by Chapter 346, Laws of 1981.

### **1977 - Agricultural Lands Preservation Board**

Creation: The Agricultural Lands Preservation Board in Wisconsin was created in 1977. This Board was attached to DATCP for administrative purposes and was separate from the BSWCD. The Board's responsibilities were identified in Chapter 91 of Wisconsin State Statutes.

Responsibilities: The Board's responsibility was to direct the Farmland Preservation Program.

### **1982 - Land Conservation Board (LCB)**

Creation: In 1982, the Land Conservation Board was formed, consolidating the roles and responsibilities of the former Board of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (BSWCD) and the Agricultural Lands Preservation Board. The LCB was attached to DATCP for administrative purposes. The LCB's responsibilities were identified in Chapter 92 of Wisconsin State Statutes.

Membership:

- Secretary of DOA
- Secretary of DATCP
- Three members of county LCCs elected at annual conference
- Two public members appointed by the Governor
- Secretary of DNR (through later amendment 1982)

Responsibilities:

- Advise the Board of Agriculture and DATCP on issues related to soil conservation
- Administer the state soil conservation program established through the revisions to Chapter 92
- Administer the Farmland Preservation Program
- Recommend approval by DATCP of animal waste management plans
- Recommend approval of the allocation of state funding

## **1993 - Land and Water Conservation Board (LWCB)**

**Creation:** In 1993, the Land Conservation Board (LCB) becomes the Land and Water Conservation Board (LWCB). The LWCB's responsibilities are identified in Chapter 92 of Wisconsin State Statutes.

### **Original Membership:**

- Secretary of DOA
- Secretary of DATCP
- Three members of county LCCs elected at annual conference
- Two public members appointed by the Governor
- Representative from a governmental unit involved with river management appointed by the Governor
- Representative from a Lake Management organization elected by the Lake District Association
- Secretary of DNR

### **Current Membership:**

- Secretary of DOA or designee
- Secretary of DNR or designee
- Secretary of DATCP or designee
- Three members of county LCCs elected at annual conference
- One member nominated by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate
- Four members nominated by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. One must be a resident of a city with a population of 50,000 or more, one must represent a governmental unit involved in river management, one must be a farmer, and one must be a member of a charitable organization devoted to natural resource preservation

### **Responsibilities:**

- *Nonpoint Source Pollution Program (Priority Watershed and Lake Program)*
  - Approve project designation and establish priority for funding allocations
  - Review lists and reports related to impaired watersheds and lakes and select priority projects. (Last selection made in 1995)
  - Advise DNR on appropriations for the program and funding priorities
  - Recommend changes to improve the efficiency or effectiveness of the program
- *Land and Water Resource Management Planning and Soil and Water Resource Management Program*
  - Review and advise DATCP on the approval of county LWRM plans
  - Review and advise DATCP and DNR on annual grant allocations to counties
- *Farmland Preservation*
  - Certify county agricultural preservation plans (a county must have a certified plan in order for farmers to claim tax credits)
  - Certify county and local exclusive agricultural zoning ordinances (farmers may claim tax credits if they are covered by a certified ordinance). A certified ordinance must be consistent with the certified county plan
  - Approve county soil and water conservation standards (farmers claiming tax credits must comply with these standards)
  - Approve and grants releases from farmland preservation agreements in certain special cases
- *Rule-Making.* The LWCB has authority to promulgate rules to implement its powers and duties under Chapter 91 (Farmland Preservation). The LWCB has the authority to review, but not promulgate rules under Chapter 92 and Chapter 281.65