



# MONTANA'S CONSERVATION DISTRICTS



## About Conservation Districts

### Local, Common Sense Conservation

Conservation districts work with landowners to develop tailored solutions for soil & water conservation. Conservation districts serve their communities through a variety of restoration projects, education, demonstration, and research that conserve Montana's natural resources.

### How Conservation Districts Benefit Montana

#### A Long History of Conservation

Conservation Districts are Montana's legislatively mandated local soil and water conservation authority. Conservation districts are governmental subdivisions of the state with broad responsibility to carry out programs that conserve soil and water, protect streams and rivers, and improve wildlife habitat.

1939



MCA Title 76, Chapter 15 established the responsibility for Montana's conservation districts.

1975



Montana enacted the Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act (MCA Title 75, Chapter 7, Parts 101-125). The 310 Law gave conservation districts the responsibility to administer permits for work in Montana's streambeds.

### Conservation District Services

Soil Health Improvements

Tree Planting and Shelterbelts

Soil Health Research for Farms Application

Water Quality Projects

Weed Control

Conservation Education

Envirothon

Fire and Flood Restoration

Irrigation Efficiency

Pollinator Habitat Installations

Rangeland Management

Saline Seep Restoration

Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention



In 2018, the Garfield CD ran the local AIS inspection station. This is just one of the many ways districts assist other agencies.



Many conservation districts have developed citizen science water quality monitoring programs.

### By The Numbers

104,135

Supervisor hours donated annually

58

Conservation Districts

472

Elected and Municipality-Appointed Supervisors

# Funding Shortfall

## CD Operational Funding

### MACD Goal: \$80k per Conservation District for Basic Operations Funding

The following table shows the funding needed to bring districts up to the \$80k of basic operational funding. DNRC provides administrative grants to help shore up local district funds, but there is still a shortfall.

#### Conservation District Operations Funding Shortfall

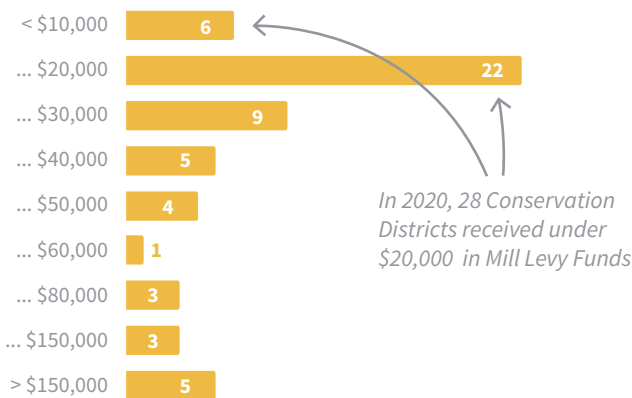
<b>Funds Needed</b>	<b>\$2,782,065</b>
<b>Funds Currently Available</b> <i>DNRC Admin Grants Base Budget for FY2020</i>	<b>\$568,000</b>
<b>Shortfall</b> <i>Remaining funds needed for minimum \$80k operating budget</i>	<b>\$2,214,065</b>

Note: DNRC also provides grants for project specific funding, not included in this table

### 2020 Mill Levy Funding for Conservation Districts

Funding is a major source of concern for conservation districts. They are funded through local mill levies, but many do not receive enough money annually to employ even one full-time employee.

#### Conservation Districts Receiving Mill Levy Funds



## Stream Permitting: 310 Mandate

Conservation districts process an average of 1,315 permits statewide annually.

State statute requires CDs to manage permitting for construction along waterways, referred to as the '310 Mandate.' The average cost to process a permit is \$250, not including additional funds required for emergencies (ex. floods and fires), complaints, and violations processing. Unfortunately, this continues to be an **unfunded mandate**.

Conservation district supervisors spend an average of 19,175 unpaid hours per year on 310 permits.

**Estimated time value = \$958,750 annually**

#### 310 Program Administration Funding

<b>Total 310 Program Cost</b>	<b>\$363,000</b>
<i>Permit Processing cost to districts</i>	<i>\$263,000</i>
<i>Legal/Technical Support Cost</i>	<i>\$100,000</i>

<b>DNRC Base Budget</b> <i>310 Reimbursement Program</i>	<b>\$108,500</b>
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<b>Shortfall</b>	<b>\$254,500</b>
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This is the cost of administering the 310 program. Donated supervisor time is an added value improving the program's cost effectiveness.

### Disaster 310 Permit Processing

During the floods of 1996, 1998, and 2011, permits jumped an average of 564 applications annually and stayed elevated for 2 to 3 years. There are no additional funds for disaster permit processing requirements, so districts must rely on current administrative funding and donated time.

# MACD

MONTANA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

### Contact



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