

CHAPTER 103C

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

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GENERAL PROVISIONS

103C.001 CITATION; WATER LAW.

This chapter and chapters 103A, 103B, 103D, 103E, 103F, and 103G constitute the water law of this state and may be cited as the "Water Law."

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 1

103C.005 SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION POLICY.

Maintaining and enhancing the quality of soil and water for the environmental and economic benefits they produce, preventing degradation, and restoring degraded soil and water resources of this state contribute greatly to the health, safety, economic well-being, and general welfare of this state and its citizens. Land occupiers have the responsibility to implement practices that conserve the soil and water resources of the state. Soil and water conservation measures implemented on private lands in this state provide benefits to the general public by reducing erosion, sedimentation, siltation, water pollution, and damages caused by floods. The soil and water conservation policy of the state is to encourage land occupiers to conserve soil, water, and the natural resources they support through the implementation of practices that:

- (1) control or prevent erosion, sedimentation, siltation, and related pollution in order to preserve natural resources;
- (2) ensure continued soil productivity;
- (3) protect water quality;

- (4) prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs;
- (5) reduce damages caused by floods;
- (6) preserve wildlife;
- (7) protect the tax base; and
- (8) protect public lands and waters.

History: *1990 c 391 art 3 s 2; 2003 c 104 s 2*

103C.009 CITATION.

This chapter may be cited as the "Soil and Water Conservation District Law."

History: *1990 c 391 art 3 s 3*

103C.101 DEFINITIONS.

Subdivision 1. **Applicability.** The definitions in this section apply to this chapter.

Subd. 2. **Appropriate agencies.** "Appropriate agencies" means local, state, or federal agencies that possess expertise, involvement, or authority concerning the use and development of land and water resources, but does not include districts or the state board.

Subd. 3. **District.** "District" means a soil and water conservation district.

Subd. 4. **District board.** "District board" means the board of supervisors of a soil and water conservation district.

Subd. 5. **Due notice.** "Due notice" means notice published at least twice, with an interval of at least seven days between the two publication dates, in a legal newspaper, and by posting at three conspicuous places within an appropriate area. Posting must include, if possible, posting at public places where it is customary to post notices concerning county or municipal affairs. A hearing held pursuant to a notice at the time and place designated in the notice may be adjourned, from time to time, without renewing the notice for the adjourned dates.

Subd. 6. **Federal.** "Federal" means the United States, the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, and agencies or instrumentalities, corporate or otherwise, of the United States.

Subd. 7. **Government.** "Government" means the state or the United States, or an agency or instrumentality of the state or the United States.

Subd. 8. **Land occupier.** "Land occupier" means a person, corporation, or legal entity that holds title to or is in possession of land within a district as an owner, lessee, tenant, or otherwise.

Subd. 9. **Nominating petition.** "Nominating petition" means a petition filed under section 103C.305, subdivision 2, to nominate candidates for the office of supervisor.

Subd. 9a. **Resident owner.** "Resident owner" has the meaning given in section 103D.011, subdivision 25.

Subd. 10. **Soil and water conservation district.** "Soil and water conservation district" means a governmental subdivision organized under this chapter.

Subd. 10a. **Soil health.** "Soil health" means the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living system that sustains plants, animals, and humans. Indicators of soil health include water infiltration capacity; organic matter content; water holding capacity; biological capacity to break down plant residue and other substances and to maintain soil aggregation; nutrient sequestration and cycling capacity; carbon sequestration; and soil resistance.

Subd. 11. **State agency.** "State agency" means a political subdivision, agency, or instrumentality, corporate or otherwise, of the state.

Subd. 12. **State board.** "State board" means the Board of Water and Soil Resources.

Subd. 13. **Supervisor.** "Supervisor" means a member of a district board.

Subd. 14. **Watershed project.** "Watershed project" means a project that is approved and authorized to be carried out by the district in a watershed area in accordance with a watershed work plan.

Subd. 15. **Watershed work plan.** "Watershed work plan" means a plan for constructing works of improvement in a watershed area, including structural and land treatment measures for flood prevention or the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water that is developed by the district, with or without federal assistance.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 4; 2003 c 104 s 3-5; 1Sp2015 c 2 art 2 s 13

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

103C.201 FORMING SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS.

Subdivision 1. **Petition.** (a) A petition must be signed by at least 50 resident owners in an area proposed to be organized into a district and filed with the state board requesting that a soil and water conservation district be organized to function in the area described in the petition. The petition must state:

- (1) the proposed name of the district;
 - (2) that there is need, in the interest of the public health, safety, and welfare, for a district in the described area;
 - (3) a description of the area proposed to be organized as a district, which need not be by metes and bounds or legal subdivision, but may be by general description that identifies the area;
 - (4) a request that the state board define the boundaries for the district;
 - (5) a request for a referendum to be held in the defined territory on the question of the creation of a district in the territory; and
 - (6) a request by the state board to determine that a district be established.
- (b) If more than one petition is filed covering parts of the same area, the state board may consolidate the petitions.

Subd. 2. **Hearings.** (a) By 30 days after a petition has been filed with the state board, the state board may give due notice of a proposed hearing, to be held by the state board or a designated agent, on:

(1) the question of the desirability and necessity, in the interest of the public health, safety, and welfare, for the establishment of a district;

(2) the appropriate boundaries of the district;

(3) the propriety of the petition and other proceedings taken under this section; and

(4) other questions relevant to clauses (1), (2), and (3).

(b) Residents in the area described in the petition and in the area considered for addition to the described area and other interested parties may attend the hearing and be heard. If after a hearing, the state board determines it may be desirable to include in the proposed district area outside the area where notice of the hearing was given, the hearing must be adjourned and due notice of the continued hearing must be given throughout the entire area considered for inclusion in the district, and the continued hearing held.

Subd. 3. **Considerations for establishing district.** (a) After the hearing is complete, if the state board determines, on the information presented at the hearing and other relevant information, that there is a need, in the interest of the public health, safety, and welfare, for a district to function in the area considered at the hearing, the state board shall make and record the determination and define the district boundaries by metes and bounds or by legal subdivisions. In making the determination and in defining the boundaries, the state board shall consider the public policy in section 103A.206, and:

(1) the topography of the area considered and of the state;

(2) the composition of its soils;

(3) the distribution of erosion;

(4) the prevailing land use practices;

(5) the desirability and necessity of including within the boundaries the particular lands under consideration;

(6) the benefits the lands may receive from being included;

(7) the relation of the proposed area to existing watersheds and agricultural regions and other soil and water conservation districts organized or proposed for organization; and

(8) other relevant physical, geographical, and economic factors.

(b) The area included in a district need not be contiguous.

Subd. 4. **Petition denial.** (a) If the state board determines, after the hearing and consideration of the information, that there is not a need for a district to function in the area, the state board must make and record the determination and deny the petition.

(b) Subsequent petitions to establish a district in substantially the same area may not be filed until six months after the date of the denial of a petition.

Subd. 5. **Referendum to establish district.** (a) After the state board has made and recorded a determination that there is a need for a district in a particular area and has defined the boundaries, the state board shall consider whether the operation of a district within the boundaries is administratively feasible. To assist the state board to determine the feasibility, the state board shall schedule the referendum at the

next general election and shall cooperate with county election officials to accomplish the election in the most expedient manner.

(b) The question shall be submitted by ballots with:

(1) the words printed "For creation of a soil and water conservation district of the lands described below in the county (or counties) of and" and "Against establishment of a soil and water conservation district of the lands described below in the county (or counties) of and";

(2) a square before each proposition and a direction to insert an X mark in the square before one proposition or the other as the voter may favor or oppose establishment of the district; and

(3) the boundaries of the proposed district.

(c) Only eligible voters residing within the boundaries of the proposed district may vote in the referendum.

Subd. 6. **Hearing and referendum.** The state board shall pay the expenses for the notices and the conduct of the hearing. The state board shall schedule the referendum at the next general election and shall cooperate with county election officials to accomplish the election in the most expedient manner. Informalities in the conduct of a referendum or in a matter related to it do not invalidate the referendum or its result if notice of it has been given substantially as provided by this section and the referendum has been fairly conducted.

Subd. 7. **Determination after referendum.** (a) The state board shall publish the result of the referendum and then determine whether the operation of a district in the defined boundaries is administratively feasible. In making the determination, the state board must consider the policy in section 103A.206, and:

(1) the attitudes of the land occupiers in the defined boundaries;

(2) the number of eligible voters who voted in the referendum;

(3) the proportion of the votes cast in the referendum in favor of establishing the district to the total number of votes cast;

(4) the approximate wealth and income of the land occupiers of the proposed district;

(5) the probable expense of carrying on erosion-control operations and related water quality improvements within the district; and

(6) other relevant economic and social factors. The state board may not determine that the operation of the proposed district within the defined boundaries is administratively feasible unless a majority of the votes cast in the referendum on establishment of the district have been cast in favor of establishing the district.

(b) If the state board determines that the operation of the district is not administratively feasible, the state board shall record the determination and deny the petition. Six months after the date of entry of a determination by the state board that operation of a proposed district is not administratively feasible, a new petition may be filed and a new proceeding started.

(c) If the state board determines that the operation of the district is administratively feasible, it shall record the determination and proceed with the establishment and organization of the district.

Subd. 8. **Application by supervisors to secretary of state.** (a) The district shall be a governmental subdivision of this state and a public body corporate and politic after the actions in this subdivision are taken.

(b) If the state board determines that the operation of the proposed district within the defined boundaries is administratively feasible, the state board must appoint supervisors to act as the district board within 30 days after the district is established. A majority of the supervisors' terms must expire after the next general election following the supervisors' appointments and the remaining supervisors' terms expire after the second general election following the supervisors' appointments.

(c) The appointed supervisors shall sign and present an application to the secretary of state with the following recitals:

(1) a petition for the establishment of a district was filed with the state board;

(2) the proper proceedings were taken relating to the petition;

(3) the application is being filed to complete the organization of the district as a governmental subdivision and a public body, corporate or politic;

(4) the state board has appointed the signers as supervisors;

(5) the name and official residence of each supervisor, with a certified copy of the supervisor's appointment;

(6) the term of office of each supervisor;

(7) the name proposed for the district; and

(8) the location of the principal office of the district board.

(d) The application shall be subscribed and sworn to by each supervisor before an officer authorized by state law to take oaths. The officer shall certify upon the application that the officer has personal knowledge of the supervisors, that they are the supervisors named in the application, and that each supervisor has signed the application in the officer's presence.

Subd. 9. Certified statement of state board. (a) The application shall be accompanied by a certified statement of recitals by the state board, that:

(1) a petition was filed, notice issued, and hearing held;

(2) the state board determined that there is need, in the interest of the public health, safety, and welfare, for a district to function in the proposed area;

(3) the state board defined the district's boundaries;

(4) notice was given and a referendum held on the question of establishing a district;

(5) a majority of the votes cast in the referendum were in favor of establishing a district; and

(6) after the referendum the state board determined that the operation of the proposed district is administratively feasible.

(b) The certified statement shall prescribe the boundaries of the district as defined by the state board.

Subd. 10. Secretary of state's certificate. (a) The secretary of state shall examine the application of the supervisors and certified statement of the state board and, on finding that the name proposed for the district is not identical to the name of another district in the state, and is not so similar as to lead to confusion or uncertainty, the secretary of state shall receive, file, and record the application and statement.

(b) If the secretary of state finds that the name proposed for the district is identical with the name of another district, or so similar as to lead to confusion and uncertainty, the secretary of state shall certify the fact to the state board. The state board shall submit to the secretary of state a new name for the district that does not have the defect. Upon receipt of a new name, free of defect, the secretary of state shall record the application and statement, with the new name.

(c) After the application and statement have been made, filed, and recorded, the district is a governmental subdivision of the state.

(d) The secretary of state shall issue to the supervisors a certificate, under the seal of the state, of the organization of the district and record the certificate with the application and statement.

(e) The boundaries of the district consist of the area determined by the state board but may not include area in another district. The area of a home rule charter or statutory city within the boundaries of a district is included in the district. If there is a question of whether an area is within or outside of a district, the state board shall determine whether the area of a city is included.

Subd. 11. **Certificate of organization as evidence.** In a suit, action, or proceeding involving the validity of, enforcement of, or relating to, a contract, proceeding, or action of a district, the district is considered to have been established in accordance with this section upon proof of the issuance of the certificate by the secretary of state. A copy of the certificate, certified by the secretary of state, is admissible in evidence in the suit, action, or proceeding and is proof of its filing and contents.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 5; 2003 c 104 s 6-11; 2020 c 83 art 1 s 16

103C.205 ANNEXING ADDITIONAL AREA.

(a) Resident owners may file a petition to include additional area within an existing district with the state board. The procedure for a petition to establish a district shall be followed on a petition to include additional area. The state board shall prescribe the form for the petition, which shall be as nearly as possible in the form for a petition to organize a district.

(b) If the petition for an area proposed for inclusion is signed by a majority of the resident owners in the area, a referendum need not be held.

(c) In a referendum to include additional area, all eligible voters within the proposed additional area may vote.

(d) It is not necessary to obtain the consent of the fee owners within the district before the additional area is annexed to a district.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 6; 2003 c 104 s 12

103C.211 CONSOLIDATING DISTRICTS.

(a) One or more districts may petition the state board for a consolidation. The state board shall take action on the petition if signed by a majority of the supervisors of each of the affected districts.

(b) The petition must:

(1) describe with particularity the change requested, the territory affected, and the reasons for the change;

(2) illustrate that the change is consistent with the purpose and requirements of sections 103C.201 to 103C.335;

- (3) identify the proposed name for the consolidated district;
- (4) identify the location of the principal office of the consolidated district;
- (5) identify potential changes to supervisor districts;
- (6) identify changes in supervisors that would result from the proposed consolidation;
- (7) provide a list of nominees for vacant supervisor positions; and
- (8) be accompanied by resolutions of support signed by each district board affected by the change.

(c) Upon the filing of a valid petition, the state board shall give notice that the petition has been filed. The notice must:

- (1) be made by publication in a legal newspaper in each county affected by the petition;
- (2) be made by mail to the auditor of each county affected by the petition;
- (3) describe the actions proposed by the petition;
- (4) invite written comments on the petition for the consideration by the state board;

(5) state that a person who objects to the actions proposed in the petition may submit a written request for hearing to the state board within 30 days of the last publication of the notice under this paragraph. The request must contain 25 or more signatures from resident owners residing in the affected districts; and

(6) state that if a timely request for hearing is not received, the state board may make a decision on the petition at a future meeting of the state board.

(d) If one or more timely requests for hearing are received, the state board must hold a hearing on the petition.

(e) The state board must establish the proposed consolidation, by order, if the board determines the consolidation promotes public health and welfare and the proposed consolidation would advance the purposes of this chapter.

(f) When districts are consolidated, the corporate existence and terms of office of the officers of the old districts expire upon the issuance and recording by the secretary of state of a certificate of organization of the new district. Upon consolidation, the rights, assets, and liabilities of the consolidating districts shall be assumed by the consolidated district.

(g) If nomination districts are changed, the state board shall appoint supervisors to fill vacancies resulting from the consolidation within 30 days after the action is taken. A majority of the supervisors' terms must expire after the next general election following their appointments and the remaining supervisors' terms must expire after the second general election following their appointments.

(h) No sooner than two years after the date of consolidation, the affected districts may petition the state board to have the action reversed through the same procedure outlined in paragraphs (a) to (f). When a consolidation is reversed, the state board shall order the appointments and distribution or transfer of assets and liabilities.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 7; 2003 c 104 s 13; 2014 c 248 s 7

103C.215 CHANGING NAME.

The name of a district may be changed with the approval of the state board, after the adoption of a resolution by a majority of the supervisors stating the new name, by filing a certified copy of the resolution with the secretary of state.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 8

103C.221 CHANGING LOCATION OF PRINCIPAL OFFICE.

The location of the principal office of the district board may be changed with the approval of the state board after the adoption of a resolution by a majority of the district board stating the new location and by filing a certified copy of the resolution with the secretary of state.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 9

103C.225 TERMINATING DISTRICTS.

Subdivision 1. **Petition for termination.** (a) Five years after the organization of a district, a district board may, by resolution adopted by a majority of the board, or resident owners may, by a petition filed with the state board, ask that the operations and existence of the district be terminated. The resident owner petition must be signed by the lesser of:

- (1) at least one percent of the resident owners within the district; or
- (2) 500 resident owners within the district.

(b) The state board may not receive a petition, conduct a referendum, or make a determination on a petition to discontinue a district more often than once in two years.

Subd. 2. **Hearings.** The state board may conduct public meetings and public hearings upon the petition as necessary to assist in consideration of the petition.

Subd. 3. **Referendum.** (a) Upon receipt of a petition, the state board shall provide written notice to the secretary of state and the county auditor of each county in which the district is located no later than 74 days before the state general election. The notice must include the date of the election and the title and text of the question to be placed on the ballot. Prior to the referendum, the state board shall facilitate the preparation of a plan to continue the administration of the powers, duties, and responsibilities of the district, including the functions of the district board.

(b) The question shall appear on the ballot in the following form: "Shall the (name of the soil and water conservation district to be here inserted) be terminated?".

(c) Only eligible voters in the district may vote in the referendum.

(d) Informalities in the conduct of the referendum or matters relating to the referendum do not invalidate the referendum, or result of the referendum, if due notice has been given and the referendum has been fairly conducted.

(e) The state board shall publish the result of the referendum.

Subd. 4. **Determination by state board.** (a) The state board shall determine whether the continued operation of the district board is administratively feasible and give consideration to the public policy under section 103A.206, and:

- (1) the attitudes of land occupiers within the district;
- (2) the number of eligible voters who voted in the referendum;
- (3) the proportion of the votes cast in the referendum in favor of the discontinuance of the district to the total number of votes cast;
- (4) the approximate wealth and income of the land occupiers of the district;
- (5) the probable expense of carrying on erosion-control operations and related water quality improvements within the district;
- (6) the plan to continue the powers, duties, and responsibilities of the district board; and
- (7) other economic and social factors relevant to the determination.

(b) If the state board determines that the continued operation of the district is administratively feasible, the state shall record the determination and deny the petition.

(c) If the state board determines that the continued operation of the district is not administratively feasible, the state board shall record the determination and certify the determination to the district board. The state board may determine that the continued operation of the district is not administratively feasible only when at least a majority of the votes cast in the referendum have been cast in opposition to continuance and a satisfactory plan to continue the powers, duties, and responsibilities of the district board is completed.

Subd. 5. Terminating district affairs. Upon receipt from the state board of a certification that the state board has determined that the continued operation of the district is not administratively feasible, the district board shall promptly terminate the affairs of the district. The district board shall dispose of all property belonging to the district at public auction and pay the proceeds into the state treasury.

Subd. 6. Application to secretary of state. The district board shall then file a verified application with the secretary of state to discontinue the district with the certificate of the state board setting forth its determination that the continued operation of the district is not administratively feasible. The application shall recite that the property of the district has been disposed of and the proceeds paid as provided in this section, and set forth a full accounting of the property and proceeds.

Subd. 7. Certificate of dissolution. The secretary of state shall issue to the district board a certificate of dissolution and record the certificate in the secretary of state's office.

Subd. 8. Effect of dissolution. Upon issuance of the certificate of dissolution, the ordinances and regulations in force in the district are of no further force. All contracts entered into, to which the district or district board were parties, shall remain in force and effect for the period provided in the contracts. The state board shall be substituted for the district or district board as party to the contracts and succeed to the district's rights and duties. The state board may delegate the district's rights and duties to a local government unit, as identified in the plan developed under subdivision 3.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 10; 2003 c 104 s 14-17; 2013 c 131 art 2 s 3

103C.231 COOPERATION BETWEEN DISTRICTS AND OTHER PUBLIC AGENCIES.

Subdivision 1. Cooperation with other agencies. (a) The district boards of two or more districts may cooperate with one another or with appropriate agencies to exercise powers conferred in this chapter or sections 103F.401 to 103F.455.

(b) The district board may make contracts or other arrangements with:

- (1) the federal government;
- (2) persons or public or private corporations; and
- (3) the government of this state or other states.

(c) A soil and water conservation district may join or cooperate by agreement as provided in section 471.59 with another soil and water conservation district or a watershed district, or a governmental unit defined in section 471.59, or with a combination of them in an operation or project in which the soil and water conservation district and the other party have a common interest. For the purposes of this section, soil and water conservation districts and watershed districts are governmental units under section 471.59.

Subd. 2. Cooperation among districts. (a) If the improvement work unit covers two districts, a joint board made up of three supervisors from each of the district boards shall preside. If the improvement work unit covers three or more districts, a joint board made up of two supervisors from each district board shall preside. The individual boards shall appoint the supervisors to represent them on the joint board.

(b) The joint board shall accept and approve initial requests for improvement work units, direct the preparation of preliminary surveys and studies, establish improvement work units, and, at the direction of the county boards, adopt programs and reports, award contracts, supervise construction, and accept completed construction work.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 11

103C.235 STATE AGENCIES TO COOPERATE.

State agencies which have jurisdiction over or administer state-owned lands, and agencies of a county, or other governmental subdivision, that have jurisdiction over or administer county-owned or other publicly owned lands that are in a district, shall cooperate with the district boards to implement programs and operations undertaken by the district board under this chapter and sections 103F.401 to 103F.455. The district board shall have free access to enter and perform work on the affected lands.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 12

103C.301 [Repealed, 2003 c 104 s 32]

DISTRICT BOARDS

103C.305 GENERAL ELECTION OF SUPERVISORS.

Subdivision 1. **Time for election.** Elections must be held at the state general election specified in section 204D.03, subdivision 2. A primary may not be held.

Subd. 2. **Filing for office; affidavit of candidacy.** A candidate for the office of supervisor shall file an affidavit of candidacy with the county auditor of the county in which the district office is located during the period provided for filing affidavits of candidacy for county offices in section 204B.09, subdivision 1. The county auditor accepting affidavits of candidacy shall forward copies of all affidavits filed by candidates for supervisor to the auditor of any other county in which the office is voted on.

Subd. 3. **Ballots.** Ballots shall be prepared by the county auditor. The names of candidates shall be placed on the state general election ballot. The office title printed on the ballot must be either "Soil and

Water Conservation District Supervisor" or "Conservation District Supervisor," based upon the district from which the supervisor is to be elected.

Subd. 4. **Election.** Laws relating to elections for county office shall govern to the extent that they are consistent with this section and section 103C.311. The county auditor shall certify the result to the state board. If the district includes land in more than one county, the county auditor shall immediately certify to the state board the vote, as shown by the report of the county canvassing board, for candidates voted for in more than one county. In the latter case, the state board shall certify and publish the result.

Subd. 5. **Election in areas governed by Indian tribes.** In a district where a supervisor nomination district is entirely within lands of an American Indian tribe or band to which county election laws do not apply, a supervisor to represent the district shall be elected or appointed as provided by the governing body of the tribe or band.

Subd. 6. **Vacancy.** (a) If a vacancy occurs in the office of an elected supervisor more than 56 days before the next state primary, the district board shall fill the vacancy by appointment. The supervisor appointed shall hold office until the first Monday in January following the next general election. A successor shall be elected at the general election following the appointment and hold office for the remainder of the term or for the next regular term, whichever is appropriate.

(b) If a vacancy occurs less than 56 days before the next state primary, the district board shall fill the vacancy by appointment. The appointed supervisor shall hold office until the expiration of the term or until the first Monday in January following the second succeeding general election, whichever is shorter. A successor shall be elected at the general election preceding expiration of the appointed term and hold office for the remainder of the term or for the next regular term, whichever is appropriate.

(c) All terms under this subdivision continue until a successor has been elected and has qualified.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 14; 1994 c 646 s 1; 1997 c 173 s 3; 2000 c 467 s 2; 2003 c 104 s 18; 2008 c 244 art 2 s 1; 2013 c 131 art 2 s 4

103C.311 SUPERVISOR DISTRICTS.

Subdivision 1. **Supervisors elected at large.** (a) The district board shall, with the approval of the state board, divide a district into supervisor districts for purposes of nomination for election. At each election after the division, one or more supervisors shall be nominated from each supervisor district. A supervisor must be a resident of the supervisor district to be elected.

(b) If the boundary of a soil and water conservation district has been substantially changed by a division of the district, the district shall be divided into supervisor districts for nomination purposes.

(c) Except for consolidation under section 103C.211, this subdivision does not disqualify a supervisor during the term for which the supervisor was elected or nominated for election. Supervisors nominated from the supervisor districts shall be included on the ballot for election from the entire area included in the soil and water conservation district.

(d) A certified copy of the minutes or the resolution of the supervisors establishing supervisor districts must be promptly filed by the chair of the district board with the county auditor of the counties where the district is located and with the state board.

Subd. 2. **Supervisors elected by districts.** (a) A district board in the seven-county metropolitan area shall by resolution provide that supervisors will be elected by supervisor districts as provided in this subdivision.

(b) A district board outside of the seven-county metropolitan area, with the approval of the state board, may by resolution provide that supervisors will be elected by supervisor districts as provided in this subdivision.

(c) The supervisor districts must be composed of precincts established by county and municipal governing bodies under section 204B.14. The districts must be compact, include only contiguous territory, and be substantially equal in population. The districts must be numbered in a regular series. The districts must be drawn by the county board of the county containing the largest area of the soil and water conservation district, in consultation with the district board and with the approval of the state board. The boundaries of the districts must be redrawn after each decennial federal census as provided in section 204B.135. A certified copy of the resolution establishing supervisor districts must be filed by the chair of the district board with the county auditor of the counties where the soil and water conservation district is located, with the state board, and with the secretary of state, and the filings must occur within 80 days of the time when the legislature has been redistricted or at least 15 weeks before the state primary election in a year ending in two, whichever comes first.

(d) Each supervisor district is entitled to elect one supervisor. A supervisor must be a resident of the district from which elected.

(e) The district board shall provide staggered terms for supervisors elected by district. After each redistricting, there shall be a new election of supervisors in all the districts at the next general election, except that if the change made in the boundaries of a district is less than five percent of the average population of all the districts, the supervisor in office at the time of the redistricting shall serve for the full term for which elected. The district board shall determine by lot the seats to be filled for a two-year term, a four-year term, and a six-year term.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 15; 1997 c 130 s 1; 1997 c 173 s 4; 1Sp2001 c 10 art 18 s 3; 2003 c 104 s 19,20; 2013 c 131 art 2 s 5; 2014 c 248 s 8; 2014 c 264 s 2

103C.315 SUPERVISORS.

Subdivision 1. **Members.** (a) Except as provided in paragraph (c), the district board shall consist of five supervisors, elected or appointed as provided in sections 103C.201, subdivision 8, and 103C.305.

(b) Supervisors must be eligible voters residing in the district.

(c) In counties where the county board consists of seven members and districts have been divided into supervisor districts, under section 103C.311, subdivision 2, the county board may establish seven supervisor districts, elected or appointed as provided in sections 103C.201, subdivision 8; 103C.305; and 103C.311, subdivision 2.

Subd. 2. **Terms.** The supervisors appointed by the state board upon the establishment of a district serve terms ending as provided in section 103C.201, subdivision 8. Their successors shall be elected for terms of four years commencing on the first Monday in January and until a successor is elected or appointed and has qualified. Vacancies in the office of supervisor appointed by the state board shall be filled by the state board.

Subd. 3. **Quorum.** A majority of the supervisors is a quorum and the concurrence of a majority in any matter is required for its determination except as otherwise expressly provided.

Subd. 4. **Compensation.** A supervisor shall receive compensation for services up to \$125 per day, and may be reimbursed for expenses, including traveling expenses, necessarily incurred in the discharge of duties. A supervisor may be reimbursed for the use of the supervisor's own automobile in the performance of official duties at a rate up to the maximum tax-deductible mileage rate permitted under the federal Internal Revenue Code.

Subd. 5. **Removing supervisor.** A supervisor may be removed from office in accordance with the procedures under sections 351.14 to 351.23 for malfeasance or nonfeasance in office, but for no other reason.

Subd. 6. **Compatible offices.** The office of soil and water conservation district supervisor and the offices of mayor, clerk, clerk-treasurer, or council member in a statutory or home rule charter city of not more than 2,500 population contained in whole or in part in the soil and water conservation district are compatible offices and one person may hold both offices. The office of soil and water conservation district supervisor and the office of town clerk or town supervisor in a town of not more than 2,500 population contained in whole or in part in the soil and water conservation district are compatible offices and one person may hold both offices. A person holding both offices shall refrain from voting or taking any other formal action on any matter coming before the soil and water conservation district board or the city council or town board that has a substantial effect on both the soil and water conservation district and the city or town. This subdivision does not apply to an office located in whole or in part in Anoka, Hennepin, Ramsey, or Washington County.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 16; 1995 c 222 s 1; 1997 c 173 s 5; 1998 c 401 s 35; 2000 c 467 s 3; 2003 c 104 s 21-24; 1Sp2021 c 6 art 2 s 79

103C.321 OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES.

Subdivision 1. **Officers.** (a) The supervisors shall elect or appoint officers for the district and the district board.

(b) A chair of the district board shall be elected from its own members.

(c) A secretary and a treasurer shall be appointed who need not be members of the board.

(d) Officers serve at the pleasure of the supervisors. Officers shall have the powers and duties incident to their respective offices, and other powers and duties expressly prescribed by law or directed by the district board.

Subd. 2. **Employees.** The district board may employ technical experts and other officers, agents, and employees, permanent and temporary, as the board may require. The supervisors shall determine their qualifications, duties, and compensation.

Subd. 3. **Employee and officer bonds.** The district board shall provide for the execution of surety bonds for all employees and officers who are entrusted with funds or property.

Subd. 4. **Attorney.** The county attorney of the county where the major portion of the district is located or one otherwise employed by the board shall be the attorney for the district and its supervisors. The district board may call upon the county attorney for necessary legal counsel and advice and service.

Subd. 5. **Delegating duties.** The district board may delegate to its chair or other officer, to one or more supervisors, or to one or more agents or employees the powers and duties they deem proper.

Subd. 6. **Credit card use.** The supervisors may authorize the use of a credit card by any soil and water conservation district officer or employee otherwise authorized to make a purchase on behalf of the soil and

water conservation district. If a soil and water conservation district officer or employee makes a purchase by credit card that is not approved by the supervisors, the officer or employee is personally liable for the amount of the purchase. A purchase by credit card must otherwise comply with all statutes, rules, or soil and water conservation district policy applicable to soil and water conservation district purchases.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 17; 2007 c 57 art 1 s 105; 2019 c 50 art 1 s 26

103C.325 RECORDS; AUDIT; INFORMATION TO STATE BOARD.

Subdivision 1. **Records.** The district board shall keep a full and accurate record of all proceedings and resolutions, regulations, and orders issued or adopted.

Subd. 2. **Audit.** The state auditor shall annually audit the books of the district and its supervisors, or, at the request of the district board, the state auditor may contract for an annual audit by a certified public accountant. The state auditor may determine that an annual audit of a district is not necessary, in which case an audit shall be made at least every four years.

Subd. 3. **Information to state board.** The supervisors shall furnish to the state board, upon request, copies of the ordinances, rules, regulations, orders, contracts, forms, and other documents that they adopt or use, and other information concerning their activities as the state board requires in the performance of its duties under this chapter.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 18

103C.331 POWERS OF DISTRICT BOARDS.

Subdivision 1. **General authority.** A soil and water conservation district is a governmental and political subdivision of this state, and a public body, corporate and politic, and has the following powers in addition to any others prescribed by law.

Subd. 2. **Advisory assistance.** The supervisors may invite the legislative body of a municipality or county in the district to designate a representative to advise and consult with the supervisors of the district on questions of program and policy that may affect the property, water supply, or other interests of the municipality or county.

Subd. 3. **Surveys, investigations, and research.** A district may conduct surveys, investigations, and research to identify the problems and preventive practices specified in section 103A.206. To avoid duplication of research activities, no district shall initiate any research program except in cooperation with a state agency or an agency of the United States.

Subd. 4. **Publishing information.** A district may publish its comprehensive plan and the results of its surveys, investigations, and research and may disseminate information to the public concerning any of its activities.

Subd. 5. **Demonstration projects.** A district may conduct demonstration projects within the district on lands owned or administered by a state agency, with the cooperation of the administering agency, and on other lands with the consent of the land occupier, to demonstrate practices which implement the state policy specified in section 103A.206.

Subd. 6. **Implementing practices.** A district may implement any necessary practices within the district, including structural measures and works of improvement for any purpose specified in section 103A.206, methods of cultivation, the use of vegetation, and changes in use of land, on:

(1) lands acquired by the district;

(2) lands owned or administered by a state agency, with the cooperation of the administering agency;
and

(3) other lands, with the consent of the land occupier.

Subd. 7. Implementing soil and water conservation policy. A district may cooperate or enter into agreements with and furnish financial or other aid to a land occupier or appropriate agency, to implement the policy specified in section 103A.206, within the district, subject to conditions the district board determines is necessary.

Subd. 8. Acquiring and maintaining property. A district may acquire any rights or interests in real or personal property by option, purchase, exchange, lease, gift, grant, bequest, devise, or otherwise. It may maintain, operate, administer, and improve any properties acquired. It may receive income from the properties and expend the income to implement this chapter and sections 103F.401 to 103F.455. It may sell, lease, or otherwise dispose of any of its property or interests.

Subd. 9. Using machinery and supplies. A district may make available, on terms it shall prescribe, to land occupiers within the district, agricultural and engineering machinery and equipment, fertilizer, seeds, and seedlings, and other material or equipment which will assist land occupiers to implement practices on their land specified in section 103C.005.

Subd. 10. Constructing improvements. A district may construct, install, improve, maintain, and operate structures and works necessary or convenient to perform an operation authorized under this chapter and sections 103F.401 to 103F.455.

Subd. 11. Comprehensive plan. (a) A district may develop and revise a comprehensive plan, specifying practices to implement the state policy specified in section 103A.206, including:

(1) the construction, maintenance, and operation of structural measures;

(2) methods of cultivation;

(3) the use of vegetation;

(4) cropping programs;

(5) mechanical practices;

(6) changes in use of land;

(7) water quality improvement practices;

(8) other land use, soil erosion reduction, and agricultural practices; and

(9) related technical standards and specifications.

(b) The plan shall include a classification of the soil types within the district as determined by the Minnesota Cooperative Soil Survey.

(c) The plan must identify the areas within the district where erosion, sedimentation, and related water quality problems appear most in need of control methods.

(d) The plan shall be consistent with the statewide framework water resources plan, the statewide water quality management plan, and the state board's soil and water program plan.

(e) Each district that applies for cost-sharing funds under section 103C.501 shall submit to the state board an annual work plan for the high priority erosion, sedimentation, and water quality problems in the district. The work plan shall be prepared as required by the rules of the state board. In preparing the annual work plan, the district shall actively identify and seek out land occupiers with high priority erosion problems who have not participated in cost-sharing contracts and encourage their participation in programs to control their erosion problems.

Subd. 12. **Assuming other conservation projects.** (a) A district may take over by purchase, lease, or otherwise, and may improve, maintain, operate, and administer a soil or water conservation, erosion-control, erosion-prevention, water quality improvement, watershed protection, flood prevention, or flood control project in its boundaries undertaken by the United States or by a state agency.

(b) A district may accept donations, gifts, grants, or contributions in money, services, materials, or otherwise from the United States, a state agency, or other source to accomplish the authorization in this section. A board may enter into a contract or agreement necessary or appropriate to accomplish the transfer. A board may use or expend money, services, materials, or other things to accomplish an authorized purpose.

Subd. 13. **Authority to sue and contract.** A district may sue and be sued in its name, have perpetual succession unless terminated as provided in section 103C.225, make and execute contracts and other instruments necessary or convenient to the exercise of its powers, and make, amend, or repeal rules and regulations consistent with this chapter and sections 103F.401 to 103F.455.

Subd. 14. **Compensation for work or projects.** As a condition for extending benefits for the performance of work upon lands not owned or administered by a state agency or the district, the supervisors may require compensation or contributions in money, services, materials, or otherwise, commensurate with the cost or reasonable value of the operations or work conferring the benefits.

Subd. 15. **Agreements for federal assistance.** (a) A district may submit an application and enter into an agreement or contract with the secretary of agriculture or other designated authority to obtain or use federal assistance under any law providing for federal assistance for an authorized purpose of the district.

(b) A district may:

(1) acquire without cost to the federal government any land, easements, or rights-of-way needed in connection with works of improvement installed with federal assistance;

(2) assume the proportionate share of the cost of installing works of improvement involving federal assistance determined by the secretary or other designated authority to be equitable in consideration of anticipated benefits from the improvements;

(3) make arrangements satisfactory to the secretary or other authority to defray costs of operating and maintaining works of improvement in accordance with prescribed regulations;

(4) acquire or provide assurance that land occupiers have acquired the water rights and other rights, pursuant to state law, needed to install, maintain, and operate the works of improvement; and

(5) obtain agreements to carry out recommended soil and water conservation measures and prepare farm plans for owners of not less than 50 percent or other required percentage of the lands situated in a drainage

area above a retention reservoir installed with federal assistance, as prescribed by applicable federal law, and may do any other acts necessary to secure and use federal aid.

Subd. 16. **Budget.** The district board shall annually present a budget consisting of an itemized statement of district expenses for the ensuing calendar year to the boards of county commissioners of the counties in which the district is located. The county boards may levy an annual tax on all taxable real property in the district for the amount that the boards determine is necessary to meet the requirements of the district. The amount levied shall be collected and distributed to the district as prescribed by chapter 276. The amount may be spent by the district board for a district purpose authorized by law.

Subd. 17. **Funds for state and national associations.** A district may appropriate funds to provide membership in state and national associations that have as their purpose the betterment and improvement of soil and water conservation district operations. A district may participate through designated representatives in the meetings and activities of the associations. A district may appropriate funds to defray the actual and necessary expenses of its representatives in connection with the associations' membership. The expenses may be paid only upon the presentation of a verified itemized claim.

Subd. 18. **Liability insurance.** A district may procure liability insurance as provided in section 466.06, automobile insurance on personal cars while used on official business, insurance on the contents of district offices, and workers' compensation insurance, or may require the counties in which the district is located to include the district in the counties' insurance coverage for these purposes.

Subd. 19. **Administering official controls.** A district may accept delegation from the state, a county, or a city of authority to administer soil and water conservation-related official controls, as defined in section 103B.305, subdivision 7, of the county or city. Prior to the delegation, the district and the state, county, or city agreement must include provisions that:

- (1) provide for the source of funding for administering the official controls;
- (2) the district will provide notice and hearing in the same instances that the county or city would; and
- (3) identify who will provide legal advice and support for administration and enforcement.

Subd. 20. **Coordination and cooperation.** In implementing its authorities, a district shall cooperate as far as possible with federal, state, and local agencies and with private organizations in order to avoid duplication and to enhance implementation of public and private conservation initiatives within its jurisdiction.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 19; 1992 c 450 s 1; 2003 c 104 s 25-28

103C.332 SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS; DUTIES AND SERVICES.

Subdivision 1. **Duties.** In addition to any other duty prescribed by law, soil and water conservation districts must:

- (1) respond to and provide technical and financial assistance to landowners to maintain and improve the quality, quantity, distribution, and sustainability of natural resources, including surface water, groundwater, soil, and ecological resources;
- (2) provide technical assistance in implementing the soil erosion law under sections 103F.401 to 103F.48;
- (3) arrange for employees to serve on technical evaluation panels to implement the wetland laws as required under section 103G.2242;

(4) locally administer the reinvest in Minnesota reserve program under section 103F.515 and rules adopted thereunder, using knowledge of local resources to manage each easement to maximize environmental benefits;

(5) participate in administering the Wetland Conservation Act as provided under sections 103G.221 to 103G.2375, either in an advisory capacity or as the designated local government unit administering the program;

(6) participate in the local water management program under chapter 103B, either in an advisory capacity or as the designated local government unit administering the program;

(7) participate, as appropriate, in the comprehensive watershed management planning program under section 103B.801;

(8) participate in disaster response efforts as provided in chapter 12A;

(9) provide technical recommendations to the Department of Natural Resources on general permit applications under section 103G.301;

(10) provide technical assistance and local administration of the agricultural water quality certification program under sections 17.9891 to 17.993;

(11) provide technical assistance for the agricultural land preservation program under chapter 40A, where applicable;

(12) maintain compliance with section 15.99 for deadlines for agency action;

(13) coordinate with appropriate county officials on matters related to electing soil and water conservation district supervisors; and

(14) cooperate to the extent possible with federal, state, and local agencies and with private organizations to avoid duplicating and to enhance implementing public and private conservation initiatives within the jurisdiction of the district.

Subd. 2. **Services provided.** To carry out the duties under subdivision 1 and implement the soil and water conservation policy of the state as stated in section 103A.206, soil and water conservation districts provide a range of services, including but not limited to:

(1) performing administrative services, including comprehensive and annual work planning, administering grants, leveraging outside funding, establishing fiscal accountability measures, reporting accomplishments, human resources management, and staff and supervisor development;

(2) entering into cooperative agreements with the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and other United States Department of Agriculture agencies to leverage federal technical and financial assistance;

(3) providing technical expertise, including knowledge of local resources, performing technical evaluations and certifications, assessing concerns, and providing oversight in surveying, designing, and constructing conservation practices;

(4) providing information and education outreach, including increasing landowner awareness and knowledge of soil and water conservation program opportunities to protect soil and water resources and publicizing the benefits of soil and water conservation to the general public;

(5) facilitating regulatory processes for impacted landowners and providing technical review and comment on regulatory permits and development plans for regulations relating to soil and water conservation;

(6) administering projects and programs, including but not limited to the nonpoint source pollution abatement program; reinvest in Minnesota reserve conservation easements program; disaster response; local water management and comprehensive watershed management planning programs; and projects related to floodplains, lakes, streams and ditches, wetlands, upland resources, and groundwater resources, to maintain and improve the quality, quantity, distribution, and sustainability of natural resources, including surface water, groundwater, soil, and ecological resources;

(7) monitoring and inventorying to collect data that provide a baseline understanding of resource conditions and changes to the resources over time and analyzing and interpreting the data to support program implementation; and

(8) maintaining a modern technology infrastructure that facilitates planning and projects, including geographic information systems, modeling software, mobile workstations, survey and design equipment and software, and other technology for linking landowners with conservation plans.

History: *1Sp2019 c 4 art 3 s 76*

103C.335 TECHNICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANCE TO DISTRICTS.

At the request of local districts, the Agricultural Extension Service of the University of Minnesota, county extension committees, and county extension agents shall:

(1) advise the districts in developing their comprehensive plan amendments and annual work plans;

(2) in cooperation with the districts and the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, provide technical assistance and education to land occupiers about conservation tillage practices and other soil conservation practices; and

(3) participate in training district officials and employees in cooperation with the state board.

History: *1990 c 391 art 3 s 20; 2015 c 21 art 1 s 109*

DUTIES OF STATE BOARD

103C.401 BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES.

Subdivision 1. **Powers and duties.** In addition to the powers and duties of the state board provided by other law, the state board shall:

(1) offer to assist the district boards to implement their programs;

(2) keep the district boards of the state informed of the activities and experience of other districts and facilitate cooperation and an interchange of advice and experience among the districts;

(3) coordinate the programs and activities of the districts with appropriate agencies by advice and consultation;

(4) approve or disapprove the plans or programs of districts relating to the use of state funds administered by the state board;

(5) secure the cooperation and assistance of agencies in the work of the districts and develop a program to advise and assist appropriate agencies in obtaining state and federal funds for erosion, sedimentation, flooding, and agriculturally related pollution control programs;

(6) develop and implement a public information program concerning the districts' activities and programs, the problems and preventive practices relating to erosion control, sedimentation, agriculturally related pollution, flood prevention, and the advantages of formation of districts in areas where their organization is desirable;

(7) consolidate districts without a hearing or a referendum;

(8) assist the statewide program to inventory and classify the types of soils in the state as determined by the Minnesota Cooperative Soil Survey;

(9) identify research needs and cooperate with other public agencies in research concerning the nature and extent of erosion, sedimentation, flooding and agriculturally related pollution, the amounts and sources of sediment and pollutants delivered to the waters of the state, and long-term soil productivity;

(10) develop structural, land use management practice, and other programs to reduce or prevent soil erosion, sedimentation, flooding, and agriculturally related pollution;

(11) develop a system of priorities to identify the erosion, flooding, sediment, and agriculturally related pollution problem areas that most need control systems;

(12) ensure compliance with statewide programs and policies established by the state board by advice, consultation, and approval of grant agreements with the districts;

(13) service requests from districts to consolidate districts across county boundaries and facilitate other agreed-to reorganizations of districts with other districts or other local units of government, including making grants, within the limits of available funds, to offset the cost of consolidation or reorganization; and

(14) develop and implement a state-led technical training and certification program.

Subd. 2. **Using funds.** (a) Funds made available to a district from the state for expenditures necessary for its operations may be used only for purposes authorized by the state board.

(b) A district may designate the board of county commissioners to act as the agent of the district to receive and expend the funds at the direction and with the approval of the district board.

(c) The state board shall, in a manner it prescribes, provide closeout reports to the districts regarding the expenditure of the funds.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 21; 1997 c 109 s 2; 2003 c 104 s 29,30; 2014 c 248 s 9; 1Sp2015 c 2 art 2 s 14

103C.405 PROGRAM PLAN.

Subdivision 1. **Contents.** The state board shall prepare, in consultation with the districts and appropriate agencies, a program plan to accomplish its duties. The state board shall use the program plan in decisions to allocate funds to districts. The state board shall emphasize the determination of priority areas where erosion, sedimentation, and related water quality problems appear most in need of control and the development of the comprehensive public information program.

Subd. 2. **Informational hearing on plan.** To develop the program plan, the state board may request existing pertinent information from state agencies and may conduct hearings.

Subd. 3. **Coordination with state resource plans.** The program plan shall be coordinated as closely as possible with the statewide framework water resources plan, the statewide water quality management plan, and other statewide resource plans.

Subd. 4. **Review and revision.** The state board shall review and revise the program plan at intervals it deems appropriate.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 22

COST-SHARING CONTRACTS

103C.501 CONSERVATION CONTRACTS PROGRAM.

Subdivision 1. **Program authorization.** The state board may allocate available funds to districts for practices, projects, and systems for:

- (1) erosion or sedimentation control;
- (2) improvements to water quality or water quantity;
- (3) habitat enhancement;
- (4) plant biodiversity;
- (5) energy conservation; or
- (6) climate adaptation, resiliency, or mitigation.

Subd. 2. MS 2022 [Repealed, 2023 c 60 art 5 s 22]

Subd. 3. MS 2022 [Repealed, 2023 c 60 art 5 s 22]

Subd. 4. **Use of funds.** The allocated funds must be used:

(1) for conservation activities, including technical and financial assistance, identified in state-approved plans that are related to water and natural resources and established under chapters 103B, 103C, 103D, 103F, 103G, and 114D;

- (2) to leverage federal or other nonstate funds; or
- (3) to address high-priority needs identified by the district based on public input.

Subd. 5. **Contracts by districts.** (a) A district may provide technical and financial assistance to a land occupier or to a state or federal agency for practices and projects for:

- (1) erosion or sedimentation control;
- (2) improvements to water quality or water quantity;
- (3) habitat enhancement;
- (4) plant biodiversity;

(5) energy conservation; or

(6) climate adaptation, resiliency, or mitigation.

(b) A district, consistent with state board rules and policies, may contract to provide technical and financial assistance for structural and nonstructural practices and projects.

(c) The state board or the district may not furnish any financial assistance for practices designed only to increase land productivity.

(d) When a district determines that long-term maintenance of a system or practice is desirable, the district or the state board may require that maintenance be made a covenant upon the land for the effective life of the practice. A covenant under this subdivision shall be construed in the same manner as a conservation restriction under section 84.65.

Subd. 6. **Policies and rules.** The state board may adopt rules and shall adopt policies prescribing:

(1) procedures and criteria for allocating funds; and

(2) standards and guidelines for implementing the conservation contracts program.

Subd. 7. **Inspections.** The district or the district's delegate must conduct site inspections of conservation practices installed to determine if the land occupier is in compliance with design, operation, and maintenance specifications.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 23; 1997 c 216 s 91; 2006 c 251 s 1; 2009 c 176 art 1 s 27-30; 2013 c 143 art 4 s 4; 1Sp2015 c 2 art 2 s 15; 2023 c 60 art 5 s 9-13

WORKS OF IMPROVEMENT

103C.601 WORKS OF IMPROVEMENT.

Subdivision 1. **Authority.** (a) The district board may, if directed by resolution of the boards of commissioners from the counties where the district is located undertake, construct, install, maintain, and operate works of improvement for a district purpose. The district board may:

(1) use the proceeds of tax levies, assessments, and other available funds for the works of improvement;

(2) acquire necessary real or personal property by purchase or gift for the works of improvement;

(3) contract, survey, plan, construct, install, maintain, and operate the works of improvement; and

(4) exercise other authorized powers.

(b) Two or more district boards may jointly exercise the powers granted by this section.

Subd. 2. **Request for project.** A program for works of improvement in any area within one or more districts may be initiated upon written request for a project submitted to the district board by one or more of the owners of land in the affected area. The request must include:

(1) a general description of the area proposed for inclusion in an improvement work unit, with a proposed name or number for the project;

(2) a description of the affected land owned by the signers; and

(3) a statement of the objectives of the proposed works in furtherance of the authorized purposes, the grounds upon which the project will be of public benefit and utility and promote the public health, safety, and welfare, and special benefits to property that will result from the project.

Subd. 3. **Surveys and studies.** As soon as practicable after receipt of the request the district board shall have necessary preliminary surveys and studies conducted.

Subd. 4. **Recommendation to establish.** (a) The district board may, by resolution, recommend the establishment of an improvement work unit and a program for works of improvement in the work unit to the boards of county commissioners of the counties where the affected land is located if the district board determines the proposed works of improvement:

- (1) are feasible;
- (2) will be of public utility and benefit;
- (3) will promote the public health, safety, and welfare; and
- (4) will further the authorized purposes and best interests of the district.

(b) The district board shall by resolution give the improvement work unit an appropriate name or number, which may be different from the one proposed in the initial project request.

(c) The resolution shall recommend definite boundaries for the improvement work unit, which may be those proposed in the request or modified as the district board deems advisable.

(d) In the resolution the district board may also enlarge, reduce, or otherwise modify the proposed objectives of the program, but not make a substantial change in its main purposes as stated in the initial project request unless consented to in writing by the signers of the request.

(e) At any time before further action is taken on the project as provided in section 103C.605 the district board may amend the resolution, subject to the foregoing limitations.

Subd. 5. **Preliminary general plan.** (a) After adoption of the resolution recommending the improvement work unit and program under subdivision 4, the district board after being directed by resolution of the affected boards of county commissioners may have further surveys and studies made as necessary.

(b) The district board may then have a preliminary general plan with cost estimates made to implement the program for the improvement work unit or part of the work unit.

Subd. 6. **Financial aid.** (a) The district board, at the direction of the affected county boards, may apply for federal aid, state aid, or aid available from other sources for the works of improvement in the program or part of the works of improvement under federal or state law.

(b) The district board may take the steps necessary to determine whether aid will be available and the amount of the aid. The district board may consider how the cost of the works not expected to be paid by federal or other aid may be met from funds of the district or from the proceeds of assessments on benefited property or otherwise, and the district board may make estimates of the amounts and sources.

Subd. 7. **Necessary cooperation or joint action.** If the cooperation or joint action of an adjacent district or other public agency is desirable for the program, the district board, at the direction of the affected county boards, may negotiate with the authorities concerned for cooperation or joint action.

Subd. 8. Recommendation report. (a) After completion of the requirements in subdivisions 1 to 7, the district board may make and file a recommendation report, summarizing findings and recommendations for further action on all or part of the program and containing substantially the engineering information required by section 103D.711, subdivisions 1 to 3.

(b) The district board shall make the recommendation report and the preliminary general plan for the improvement work unit available to the affected county boards and to all other public agencies and concerned persons, and may provide other publicity that it deems advisable. The district board shall transmit a copy of the recommendation report and preliminary general plan to regional development agencies where the project is located. If the preliminary general plan involves a project for which a water-use permit or public-waters-work permit is required from the commissioner of natural resources under chapter 103G, or for which proceedings will be instituted under chapter 103E, the district board shall transmit the recommendation report and plan to the commissioner of natural resources and to the state board.

Subd. 9. State board review. (a) The state board shall review the recommendation report and preliminary general plan and, if the state board concludes that the plan is inconsistent with systematic administration of state water policy, the state board shall report the conclusion to the district board and the commissioner of natural resources within 60 days after receiving the recommendation report and preliminary general plan.

(b) The district board may modify and retransmit the recommendation report and preliminary general plan to the state board, or request a hearing on the recommendation report and preliminary general plan. The state board shall hear the matter in the manner and following the procedures provided in sections 103A.321 to 103A.341, for the hearing of cases when the state board consents to intervention proceedings.

(c) Unless the state board concludes that the report and plan are inconsistent with state water policy, the district board, with the approval of the county boards, may adopt and sponsor the improvement work unit and a program of work for the unit.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 24

103C.605 COUNTY DETERMINATION OF PROJECT.

Subdivision 1. Petition. (a) The county board or joint county board, acting jointly under section 471.59, may take action on a project within the improvement work unit to construct or install works of improvement or part of the works of improvement pursuant to the recommendation report after receiving a petition.

(b) The petition must be for a project signed by:

(1) at least 25 percent of the owners of the land over which the proposed improvement work passes;

(2) at least 25 percent of the owners of land where the proposed improvement is located;

(3) the owners of at least 30 percent of the land area over which the proposed improvement work passes;

or

(4) the owners of at least 30 percent of the land area where the proposed project is located.

(c) The petition must describe the land and request the county board or joint county board to hold a hearing on the practicability and desirability of implementing the project in accordance with the preliminary general plan and the recommendation report of the district board.

(d) If the recommendation report specifies that part of the cost of the project is to be paid from the proceeds of assessments on benefited property, one or more of the petitioners, upon filing the petition and

before action is taken on the petition, must file a bond to the county or counties conditioned as provided by section 103E.202, for a county drainage system, to be approved by the chair of the board.

Subd. 2. **Hearing.** The county board or joint county board shall set a time and place for the hearing on the petition, and give notice of the hearing as provided in section 103E.261, subdivision 1.

Subd. 3. **Resolution for further action.** (a) After the hearing the county board or joint county board may adopt a resolution directing further action on the project if it makes and states findings that implementation of the project as requested in the petition will be:

- (1) feasible;
- (2) in accordance with the recommendation report;
- (3) in furtherance of the objectives and purposes of the recommendation report; and
- (4) within the estimated cost for which funds may reasonably be expected to be available.

(b) By the resolution the county board or joint county board shall determine the amount to be paid from the various sources of available or potentially available funds, including federal aid, district funds, assessments on benefited property, and other funds. The amount payable from district funds may not exceed the value of the general public benefit of the project to the district as determined by the district board.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 25

103C.611 PROJECT WITHOUT ASSESSMENTS.

Subdivision 1. **Order establishing project.** (a) If a portion of the project cost is not to be paid from assessments on benefited property, the county board or joint county board may proceed with complete surveys and detailed plans and specifications and make an order establishing the project. The order shall contain findings substantially conforming to those required by section 103E.341, subdivision 2.

(b) Notice summarizing the findings and order shall be served upon the persons entitled to notice of a county drainage project in section 103E.325, unless the notice is waived in writing by each person entitled to the notice. Waiver of notice must be filed with the county auditor.

Subd. 2. **Acquiring property and materials.** Unless an appeal is taken within 30 days after the notice is given, the county board or joint county board may proceed to acquire necessary rights or property, procure materials, let contracts, and take other steps appropriate to complete the project.

Subd. 3. **Delegating duties to district.** The county board or joint county board may delegate its duties and powers under this section to the district board or joint district board but the district board or joint district board may not exercise the power of eminent domain.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 26

103C.615 ACTION ON PROJECT WITH ASSESSMENTS.

Subdivision 1. **Viewers.** If part of the cost of the project is to be paid from the proceeds of assessments on benefited property, viewers must be appointed as provided in section 103E.305, and report as required by sections 103E.311, 103E.315, and 103E.321.

Subd. 2. **Engineering services.** The board or joint board of county commissioners shall direct the petitioners or, with its consent, the district board or joint district board, to provide engineering services as necessary to produce final plans adequate for construction of the proposed improvement.

Subd. 3. **Hearing.** The county board or joint county board shall then give notice of and conduct a final hearing substantially in accordance with sections 103E.325 to 103E.341, as for a drainage proceeding, so far as the procedure is consistent with sections 103C.601 to 103C.635.

Subd. 4. **Assessments greater than benefits.** If the county board or joint county board determines that the total benefits to property are not as much as the amount payable from the proceeds of assessments as specified in the recommendation report of the district board, the petition shall be dismissed and further action on the project discontinued unless the county board or joint county board determines that the deficiency may be met by increasing the amount payable from other funds.

Subd. 5. **Establishing project.** (a) If it determines that the total benefits to property are as much as or more than the amount payable from the proceeds of assessments as specified in the report and that the other requirements of law have been complied with, the county board or joint county board shall by an order containing the findings establish the project as reported or amended and adopt and confirm the viewers' report as made or amended.

(b) If the total amount of benefits to be assessed upon property pursuant to the viewers' report as confirmed is greater than the amount specified as payable from assessments in the report of the district board, the county board or joint county board may reduce the amounts payable from other sources in proportions it may determine.

(c) Further action shall be taken as provided in chapter 103E, so far as is appropriate, except that each tract of land affected shall be assessed for the full amount of benefits, less damages, if any, as shown by the viewers' report as confirmed, unless the total amount of benefits, less damages, exceeds the total actual cost of the project to be paid from the assessments, in which case the cost shall be prorated as provided in section 103E.601.

Subd. 6. **County funding share of project.** (a) Upon filing of the viewers' report as provided in this section, the county board of each county affected shall provide funds to meet its proportionate share of the total cost of the improvement, as shown by the report and order of the county board or joint county board. The county may issue bonds for the purpose in the amount necessary in the manner provided in section 103E.635.

(b) The provision of section 103E.635, requiring the county board to let a contract for construction before issuing bonds does not apply to bonds issued to provide funds required to be furnished by this section.

Subd. 7. **Delegating duties to district.** (a) The county board or joint county board, pursuant to agreement with the district board, may by resolution direct the district to undertake, construct, install, maintain, and operate the improvement upon mutually agreed terms. If it is necessary to acquire property by eminent domain, the county, or the counties acting jointly, shall do so and convey the property to the district pursuant to the agreement.

(b) If, pursuant to an agreement, the responsibility for an improvement is vested in a district, the county treasurers shall transmit the proceeds of assessments or bond issues, when collected, to the treasurer of the district. The district treasurer shall credit the proceeds to the proper funds under the direction of the district board.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 27

103C.621 PROJECT BONDS.

The county board may pledge the proceeds of assessments on property made for the purposes of a project, any revenues derived from the project, and the proceeds of tax levies or funds from other sources to pay bonds issued for the project.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 28

103C.625 STATUS OF DISCONTINUED PROJECT.

If a project is discontinued after action on it has begun under section 103C.605, the project shall have the same status as if the action had not begun. The recommendation report of the district board on the project shall continue to be subject to amendment, a new petition for further action may be made at any time as provided in section 103C.605, and further proceedings may be conducted.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 29; 2019 c 50 art 1 s 27

103C.631 REPAIR.

Subdivision 1. **Definition.** The term "repair" used in this section means to restore a work of improvement or part of it as nearly as practicable to the same condition as when originally constructed or subsequently improved.

Subd. 2. **Maintaining projects.** After the construction of a project is completed and accepted by the board of the county or district board having authority over the project, the county board or district board shall maintain the project or the part of the project that is in its jurisdiction and provide the repairs required to keep the project efficient.

Subd. 3. **Repair authority.** The county board or district board shall have the powers and duties of the drainage authority under sections 103E.701 to 103E.745, except as provided in subdivision 4.

Subd. 4. **Financing repairs.** If the board is a district board, the financing of repairs which require assessments and bond issues shall be the responsibility of the county board or joint county board. The county board or joint county board shall finance repairs in the same way as original construction of the project and as provided in sections 103E.701 to 103E.745, so far as appropriate.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 30

103C.635 APPEALS.

(a) A person aggrieved by an order of a county board or joint county board in a proceeding under sections 103C.601 to 103C.631 may appeal to the district court upon the grounds and in the manner provided by sections 103E.091 and 103E.095, for a county drainage proceeding.

(b) Notices required by sections 103E.091 and 103E.095, to be filed with the county auditor shall also be filed with the district board or joint district board.

(c) An appeal may not be taken from an order made under section 103C.611 or 103C.615 by the board, joint board of county commissioners, district board, or joint district board if the order dismisses a petition or refuses to establish a project.

History: 1990 c 391 art 3 s 31