

Modernizing Manitoba's Conservation Districts Program

Moving from Conservation Districts to Watershed Districts

Manitoba's Conservation Districts Program is one of the most successful land and water conservation partnerships in Canada, but the program is long overdue for an update. Conservation districts will transition to become watershed district in 2020. Watershed districts support healthy and sustainable watersheds through focused, priority-based programs and partnerships that address water quality, flooding, drought, land use and climate change. With funding from municipal governments and the Province of Manitoba, locally appointed watershed district boards make planning and management decisions to improve watershed health across most of municipal Manitoba.

Core Principles of the Program:

- Functions as a partnership between levels of government and the engagement of local citizens
- Is cost-shared by provincial and municipal government partners who provide long-term core funding at a 3:1 ratio (for every \$3 the province provides, the district must collect a minimum of \$1 from their municipal partners)
- Is incentive-based and non-regulatory
- Relies on local decision-making by district boards and subdistricts
- Uses watershed management plans as a land and water conservation framework

Priorities to Modernize the Conservation Districts Program:

1. Align conservation district boundaries to watersheds, including a name change from conservation districts to watershed districts.
2. Refresh the program mandate through enhancing surface water management planning and ecological goods and services programming.
3. Amend legislation to support the boundary and name changes, facilitate enhanced partnerships with Indigenous communities, add flexibility for municipal funding and appointments, and reduce red tape.
4. Modernize funding models by moving to a three tiered funding approach, streamlining provincial reporting requirements, and placing emphasis on program outcomes (return on investment).
5. Enhance watershed planning and improving reporting on the implementation of watershed management plans.



Conservation district programming includes:

- Drinking water protection
- Waterway management
- Water quality improvement
- Wetland protection and enhancement
- Environmental education
- Soils conservation
- Habitat restoration
- Water conservation

PROGRAM SPENDING BY ACTIVITY (2017-18)

District programming varies between individual districts, but generally falls within five main categories:

Surface Water Management

63%

Includes water retention, erosion control, grassed waterways, wetland restoration and drain maintenance

Nutrient Reduction and Water Quality

14%

Includes exclusion fencing, alternative watering systems and riparian buffer strips

Drinking Water Protection

13%

Includes abandoned well sealing and well-head remediation

Natural Areas Protection and Enhancement

5%

Includes conservation agreements, habitat leases, tree planting and aquatic restoration

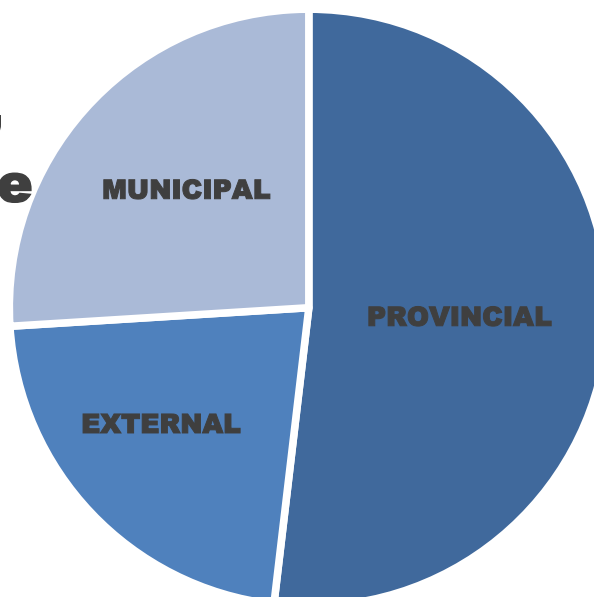
Education

5%

Includes water festivals, producer workshops, tours and presentations



For every \$1 municipal dollar, districts leverage an additional \$4



Total Program Budget in 2017-18

\$10.2 million