

What is Locally Led Conservation?

A guide for landowners, producers, and community members

Conservation works best when the people who live and work on the land are the ones driving it. That's the idea behind locally led conservation, and it's what your conservation district is working toward.

What "Locally Led" Actually Means

The community shapes the direction. The district leads the way. That's what locally led conservation looks like in practice - your conservation district listening to landowners, producers, neighbors, and local organizations, finding out what people actually care about, and building projects around those needs.

1 You set the priorities

Local people decide what conservation challenges matter most, not a federal agency.

2 Your district leads

Your conservation district, governed by locally elected supervisors, designs and drives the project.

3 Agencies support, not direct

NRCS, DANR, and other agencies provide resources and expertise. But you're in the driver's seat.

What is LWG?

LWG stands for Local Work Groups. It's a structured process to help conservation districts:

- Identify the most pressing conservation challenges in their local area
- Build a clear, measurable project to address those challenges
- Connect with the right partners and resources to make it happen
- Track progress and share results with their community

Districts don't do this alone. LWG brings together producers, landowners, partners, agencies, and community members to talk about what's happening on the land and work toward solutions together.

LWG isn't a program you sign up for. It's a process that puts local people in charge of local conservation.

Common Questions

Does this mean someone will tell me what to do on my land?

No. Locally led conservation is voluntary. No one is coming to regulate your operation. The district is here to offer resources and support, not to dictate land management.

Is this just another

No. Your conservation district is run by locally elected board

government program?	members - your neighbors, not federal employees. LWG is their tool for figuring out what conservation challenges matter most in your community and getting to work on them.
What's in it for me?	It depends on what you're dealing with. If you're losing topsoil, there's help for that. If your grass is struggling, there's help for that too. The whole point of locally led conservation is that the resources follow what you need, not what someone decided you should need. That can mean cost-share funding to offset the cost of conservation practices, technical help figuring out what will actually work on your ground, and connections to others dealing with the same challenges.
Do I have to participate?	No. Participation is completely voluntary. But local input matters. The more people who share what they're seeing and experiencing, the better conservation efforts can reflect the needs of the community.

Want to get involved or learn more? Contact your local conservation district:
www.sdconservation.org