

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2022 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 4302

BY DELEGATES REED, QUEEN, ROWAN, RILEY, WORRELL,
MALLOW, HORST, KEATON, LONGANACRE, BOOTH, AND
MILLER

[Introduced January 20, 2022; Referred to the
Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
then the Judiciary]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §19-21A-1 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended; to
 2 repeal §19-21A-2 of said code; and to amend and reenact §19-21A-3, §19-21A-4, §19-
 3 21A-6, and §19-21A-8 of said code, all relating to conservation districts; providing for a
 4 title of the article to be known as the “Conservation Districts Law of West Virginia;”
 5 providing for legislative determinations; providing for revised definitions; modifying the
 6 process for elections and for the filling of vacancies; and providing an updated process for
 7 public meetings.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 21A. CONSERVATION DISTRICTS.

§19-21A-1. Legislative Title of article; legislative determinations and declaration of policy.

1 This article may be known and cited as the “Conservation Districts Law of West Virginia.”

2 It is hereby declared, as a matter of legislative determination:

3 ~~(a) That the farm and grazing lands of the State of West Virginia are among the basic~~
 4 ~~assets of the state and that the preservation of these lands is necessary to protect and promote~~
 5 ~~the health, safety and general welfare of its people; that improper land use practices have caused~~
 6 ~~and have contributed to, and are now causing and contributing to, a progressively more serious~~
 7 ~~erosion of the farm and grazing lands of this state by water; that the breaking of natural grass,~~
 8 ~~plant, and forest cover has interfered with the natural factors of soil stabilization, causing~~
 9 ~~loosening of soil and exhaustion of humus and developing a soil condition that favors erosion;~~
 10 ~~that the topsoil is being washed out of fields and pastures; that there has been an accelerated~~
 11 ~~washing of sloping fields; that these processes of erosion by water and flooding is increased with~~
 12 ~~removal of absorptive topsoil, causing exposure of less absorptive and less protective but more~~
 13 ~~erosive subsoil; that failure by any landowner to conserve the soil and control erosion upon his~~
 14 ~~lands causes a washing of soil and water from his or her lands onto other lands and makes the~~
 15 ~~conservation of soil and control of erosion of such other lands difficult or impossible and increases~~
 16 ~~the potential damages from flooding.~~

17 ~~(b) That the consequences of such soil erosion in the form of soil washing are the silting~~
18 ~~and sedimentation of stream channels, reservoirs, dams, ditches, and harbors; the piling up of~~
19 ~~soil on lower slopes and its deposit over alluvial plains; the reduction in productivity or outright~~
20 ~~ruin of rich bottom lands by over-wash of poor subsoil material, sand and gravel swept out of the~~
21 ~~hills; deterioration of soil and its fertility, deterioration of crops grown thereon and declining acre~~
22 ~~yields despite development of scientific processes for increasing such yields; loss of soil and~~
23 ~~water which causes destruction of food and cover for wildlife; the washing of soil into streams~~
24 ~~which silts over spawning beds and destroys water plants, diminishing the food supply of fish; a~~
25 ~~diminishing of the underground water reserve which causes water shortages, intensifies periods~~
26 ~~of drought and causes crop failures; an increase in the speed and volume of rainfall runoff,~~
27 ~~causing more severe and more numerous floods which bring suffering, disease, and death;~~
28 ~~impoverishment of families attempting to farm eroding and eroded lands; damage to roads,~~
29 ~~highways, railways, farm buildings, and other property from floods; and losses in navigation,~~
30 ~~hydroelectric power, municipal water supply, irrigation developments, farming, grazing and~~
31 ~~reduction of suitable land available for homes and businesses.~~

32 ~~(c) That to conserve soil resources and control and prevent soil erosion and prevent~~
33 ~~floodwater and sediment damage and further the conservation, development, utilization, water~~
34 ~~quality, and disposal of water, it is necessary that land-use practices contributing to soil wastage~~
35 ~~and soil erosion be discouraged and discontinued and appropriate soil-conserving land-use~~
36 ~~practices and works of improvement for flood prevention or the conservation, development,~~
37 ~~utilization, water quality, and disposal of water be adopted and carried out; that among the~~
38 ~~procedures necessary for widespread adoption are engineering operations such as the~~
39 ~~construction of terraces, terrace outlets, dams, desilting basins, floodwater retarding structures,~~
40 ~~channel improvements, floodways, dikes, ponds, ditches, and the like; the utilization of strip~~
41 ~~cropping, lister furrowing, contour cultivating and contour furrowing; land drainage; land irrigation;~~
42 ~~seeding and planting of waste, sloping, abandoned or eroded lands with water-conserving and~~

43 ~~erosion-preventing plants, trees and grasses; forestation and reforestation; rotation of crops; soil~~
44 ~~stabilization with trees, grasses, legumes, and other thick-growing, soil-holding crops; retardation~~
45 ~~of runoff by increasing absorption of rainfall; and retirement from cultivation of steep, highly~~
46 ~~erosive areas and areas now badly gullied or otherwise eroded.~~

47 ~~(d) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Legislature to provide for the conservation~~
48 ~~of the soil and soil resources of this state, for the control and prevention of soil erosion, for the~~
49 ~~prevention of floodwater and sediment damage and for furthering the conservation, development,~~
50 ~~utilization, water quality, and disposal of water, and thereby to preserve natural resources, control~~
51 ~~floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, assist in maintaining the navigability of rivers~~
52 ~~and harbors, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base, protect public lands, and protect and promote~~
53 ~~the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of this state.~~

54 ~~(e) This article contemplates that the incidental cost of organizing conservation districts~~
55 ~~will be borne by the state, while the expense of operating the districts so organized will be provided~~
56 ~~by donations, gifts, contributions, grants, and appropriations, in money, services, materials, or~~
57 ~~otherwise, from the United States or any of its agencies, from the State of West Virginia or from~~
58 ~~other sources, with the understanding that the owners or occupiers will contribute funds, labor,~~
59 ~~materials, and equipment to aid in carrying out erosion control measures on their lands~~

60 (a) That West Virginia has a rich history of farming and using natural resources. The farms,
61 forests, soil, and water resources are among the basic assets of the state and conservation of
62 these resources is vital to the maintenance and future of the state and its citizens. However,
63 improper land use practices have led to unnecessary soil erosion and water degradation.

64 (b) There is a continuing need for the implementation of conservation practices, whether
65 urban, suburban, or rural, that maintain, promote, control and prevent soil erosion, prevent
66 floodwater and sediment damage and further the conservation, development, use, disposal and
67 quality of water, thereby to preserve natural resources, control floods, prevent impairment of dams
68 and reservoirs, assist in maintaining the navigability of rivers and harbors, preserve wildlife,

69 protect the tax base, protect public lands and protect and promote the health, safety and general
70 welfare of the people of this state.

71 (c) Adopting sound conservation policies and practices is an investment in West Virginia's
72 natural resources and is a foundation for profitable, productive, and healthy ecosystems that are
73 resilient and better able to withstand current and future environmental challenges.

74 (d) In recognition of the ever-increasing demands on West Virginia's soil and water
75 resources, it is declared the policy of the state that the State Conservation Committee and the
76 State's Conservation Districts, in cooperation with other state and federal agencies, political
77 subdivisions, nongovernmental organizations, private landowners and others, work to
78 recommend and implement programs and policies that improve soil health and water quality.

79 (e) This article contemplates that the cost of operating conservation districts will be
80 provided by donations, gifts, contributions, grants, and appropriations, in money, services,
81 materials, or otherwise, from the United States or any of its agencies, from the State of West
82 Virginia or from other sources, with the understanding that the owners or occupiers of the land
83 bear the responsibility of implementing practices to alleviate soil erosion and/or improve water
84 quality on their lands and will contribute funds, labor, materials, and equipment to aid in carrying
85 out such measures.

§19-21A-2. Legislative determinations and declaration of policy.

1 [Repealed].

§19-21A-3. Definitions.

1 Wherever used or referred to in this article, unless a different meaning clearly appears
2 from the context:

3 (1) "Agency of this state" means the government of this state and any subdivision, agency,
4 or instrumentality, corporate or otherwise, of the government of this state.

5 (2) "Committee" or "State Conservation Committee" means the agency created in §19-
6 21A-4 of this code.

7 (3) "Conservation" means the reduction of soil erosion, enhancement of water supplies,
8 control, and abatement of nonpoint sources of water pollution, improvement of water quality,
9 increased aquatic and wildlife habitat, and the reduction of damages caused by floodwater and
10 sediment damages and other natural disasters.

11 (4) "District" or "conservation district" means a subdivision of this state, organized in
12 accordance with the provisions of this article, for the purposes, with the powers and subject to the
13 restrictions hereinafter set forth.

14 (5) "Grant" means the providing of grants for conservation purposes pursuant to legislative
15 rule.

16 (6) "Governing body" means the supervisors of any conservation district, town, or city,
17 council, city commission, county court, or body acting in lieu of a county court, in this state, and
18 the term "governmental division" means any conservation district, town, city, or county in this
19 state.

20 (7) "Land occupier" or "occupier of land" means any person, firm, or corporation who shall
21 hold title to, or shall be in possession of, any lands lying within a district organized under the
22 provisions of this article, whether as owner, lessee, renter, or tenant.

23 (8) "Landowners" or "owners of land" means any person or persons, firm, or corporation
24 who holds title to any lands lying within a district organized under the provisions of this article.

25 (9) "Notice" means notice published as a Class II legal advertisement in compliance with
26 the provisions of §59-3-1 *et seq.* of this code and the publication area for the publication is the
27 county in which is located the appropriate area. At any hearing held pursuant to such notice at
28 the time and place designated in the notice, adjournment may be made, from time to time, without
29 the necessity of renewing the notice for the adjournment dates.

30 (10) "Petition" means a petition filed under the provisions of ~~§19-21A-5(a)~~ §19-21A-14 of
31 this code for the creation of a district.

32 (11) "Soil conservation", "erosion control", or "erosion prevention projects" means those

33 projects that have been established by federal agencies in cooperation with state agencies for
 34 the purpose of demonstrating soil erosion control and water conservation practices.

35 (12) "State" means the State of West Virginia.

36 (13) "Supervisor" means one of the members of the governing body of a district, elected
 37 or appointed in accordance with the provisions of this article.

38 (14) "Urban Agriculture" means the cultivation, processing and distribution of agricultural
 39 products grown in urban and suburban settings, including vertical production, warehouse farms,
 40 community gardens, rooftop farms, hydroponic, aeroponic and aquaponic facilities, and other
 41 innovations.

42 ~~(14)~~ (15) "United States" or "agencies of the United States" means the United States of
 43 America, Natural Resources Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture,
 44 and any other agency or instrumentality, corporate or otherwise, of the United States of America.

45 ~~(15)~~ (16) "Works of improvement" means such structures as may be necessary or
 46 convenient for flood prevention or the conservation, development, utilization, or disposal of water.

§19-21A-4. State Conservation Committee; continuation.

1 (a) The State Conservation Committee is continued. It serves as an agency of the state
 2 and is to perform the functions conferred upon it in this article. The committee consists of the
 3 following 10 members:

4 (1) Four citizen members;

5 (2) The following ex officio members or his or her designee:

6 (A) The Director of the state Cooperative Extension Service;

7 (B) The Director of the State Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station;

8 (C) The Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection;

9 (D) The State Commissioner of Agriculture, who is the chairperson of the committee;

10 (E) The Director of the Division of Forestry; and

11 (F) The President of the West Virginia Association of Conservation Districts.

12 (b) The Governor shall appoint, by and with the consent of the Senate, the four citizen
13 members. Members shall be appointed for four-year terms, which are staggered in accordance
14 with the initial appointments under prior enactment of this section. In the event of a vacancy, the
15 appointment is for the unexpired term.

16 (c) The committee may invite the Secretary of Agriculture of the United States of America
17 to appoint one person to serve with the committee as an advisory member.

18 (d) The committee shall keep a record of its official actions, shall adopt a seal, which shall
19 be judicially noticed, and may perform those acts, hold public hearings, and adopt or propose for
20 legislative approval rules necessary for the execution of its functions under this article.

21 (e) The State Conservation Committee may employ an administrative officer, technical
22 experts, and other agents and employees, permanent and temporary, as it requires. The
23 administrative officer and support staff shall be known as the West Virginia Conservation Agency.
24 The committee shall determine their qualifications, duties, and compensation. The committee may
25 call upon the Attorney General of the state for legal services it requires. It may delegate to its
26 chairperson, to one or more of its members, or to one or more agents or employees powers and
27 duties it considers proper. The committee may secure necessary and suitable office
28 accommodations and the necessary supplies and equipment. Upon request of the committee, for
29 the purpose of carrying out any of its functions, the supervising officer of any state agency or of
30 any state institution of learning shall, insofar as may be possible, under available appropriations
31 and having due regard to the needs of the agency to which the request is directed, assign or detail
32 to the committee members of the staff or personnel of the agency or institution of learning and
33 make special reports, surveys or studies required by the committee.

34 (f) A member of the committee holds office so long as he or she retains the office by virtue
35 of which he or she is serving on the committee. A majority of the committee is a quorum and the
36 concurrence of a majority in any matter within their duties is required for its determination. The
37 chairperson and members of the committee may receive no compensation for their services on

38 the committee, but are entitled to reimbursement of expenses, including traveling expenses
39 necessarily incurred in the discharge of their duties on the committee. The committee shall:

40 (1) Require the execution of surety bonds for all employees and officers who are entrusted
41 with funds or property;

42 (2) Provide for the keeping of a full and accurate public record of all proceedings and of
43 all resolutions, rules, and orders issued or adopted;

44 (3) Provide for an annual audit of the accounts of receipts and disbursements; and

45 (4) Cooperate with the State Resiliency Office to the fullest extent practicable to assist that
46 office in fulfilling its duties.

47 (g) In addition to other duties and powers conferred upon the State Conservation
48 Committee, it may:

49 (1) ~~Offer~~ Review district programs and offer appropriate assistance to the supervisors of
50 conservation districts, organized as provided in this article, in the carrying out of any of their
51 powers and programs;

52 (2) Assist and advise conservation districts and others in implementing conservation
53 improvements, and projects to control and abate nonpoint sources of water pollution and prevent
54 damage from floodwater and sediment;

55 (3) Keep the supervisors of each of the several districts, organized under the provisions
56 of this article, informed of the activities and experience of all other districts organized under this
57 article, and facilitate an interchange of advice and experience between the districts and
58 cooperation between them;

59 (4) Review agreements, or forms of agreements, proposed to be entered into by districts
60 with other districts or with any state, federal, interstate, or other public or private agency,
61 organization, or individual, and advise the districts concerning such agreements or forms of
62 agreements;

63 (4) ~~(5)~~ Coordinate the programs of the several conservation districts so far as this may be

64 done by advice and consultation;

65 ~~(5)~~ (6) Contract for services directly related to natural disaster recovery and stream
66 restoration related to flooding, on an as-needed basis;

67 ~~(6)~~ (7) Comply with provisions of present and future federal aid statutes and regulations,
68 including execution of contracts or agreements with, and cooperation in, programs of the United
69 States government and any of its proper departments, bureaus, or agencies relating to natural
70 disaster response, natural disaster recovery, or stream restoration related to flooding;

71 ~~(7)~~ (8) Secure the cooperation and assistance of the United States and any of its agencies
72 and of agencies of this State in the work of the districts;

73 ~~(8)~~ (9) Disseminate information throughout the state concerning the activities and
74 programs of the conservation districts and encourage the formation of the districts in areas where
75 their organization is desirable;

76 (10) Administer the provisions of any law hereinafter enacted by the Legislature
77 appropriating funds for expenditures in connection with the activities of conservation districts; to
78 distribute to conservation district funds, equipment, supplies and services received by the
79 committee for such purpose from any source subject to conditions in any state or federal statute
80 or local ordinance making such funds, property or services; to adopt rules establishing guidelines
81 to govern the use by conservation districts of such funds, property and services; and to review all
82 budgets, administrative procedures and operations of such districts and advise the districts
83 concerning their conformance with applicable laws and rules;

84 ~~(9)~~ (11) Administer a conservation grant program that provides financial assistance to
85 conservation districts and others to promote approved conservation, water quality, and soil
86 conservation projects;

87 ~~(10)~~ (12) Accept and receive donations, gifts, contributions, grants, and appropriations in
88 money, services, materials, or otherwise from the United States or any of its agencies, from the
89 State of West Virginia, or from other sources and use or expend the money, services, materials,

90 or other contributions in carrying out the policy and provisions of this article, including the right to
91 allocate the money, services, or materials in part to the various conservation districts created by
92 this article in order to assist them in carrying on their operations;

93 ~~(14)~~ (13) Obtain options upon and acquire by purchase, exchange, lease, gift, grant,
94 bequest, devise, or otherwise any property, real or personal, or rights or interests in the property;
95 maintain, administer, operate, and improve any properties acquired; receive and retain income
96 from the property and to expend the income as required for operation, maintenance,
97 administration, or improvement of the properties or in otherwise carrying out the purposes and
98 provisions of this article; and sell, lease, or otherwise dispose of any of its property or interests in
99 the property in furtherance of the purposes and the provisions of this article. Money received from
100 the sale of land acquired in the small watershed program shall be deposited in the special account
101 of the State Conservation Committee and expended as provided in this article;

102 ~~(12)~~ (14) Promulgate emergency and legislative rules to effectuate the provisions of this
103 article; and

104 ~~(13)~~ (15) Upon a Governor's proclamation declaring a state of emergency or federal
105 disaster declaration, the state committee, its employees, or agents may enter any water of the
106 state for the purpose of removing debris and other obstruction which impede water flow and
107 present additional flood hazards. The agency shall make reasonable efforts to secure the
108 permission of the landowner before entering any private property in connection with these removal
109 activities. The exercise of this limited authority does not constitute taking of private property or
110 trespass. This authority shall continue for the duration of the Governor's proclamation or the
111 federal disaster declaration.

112 (16) To require annual reports from conservation districts, the form and content of which
113 shall be developed by the state committee; and

114 (17) To establish by rule, adequate and reasonably uniform accounting and auditing
115 procedures which shall be used by conservation districts.

§19-21A-6. Election of supervisors for each district; filling vacancies.

1 ~~(a) Each county in a district shall elect two nonpartisan supervisors: *Provided*, That any~~
2 ~~county with a population of one hundred thousand based on the most recent decennial census~~
3 ~~shall elect one additional supervisor and any county with a population over one hundred thousand~~
4 ~~based on the most recent decennial census shall elect one additional supervisor for each fifty~~
5 ~~thousand residents over one hundred thousand.~~

6 ~~(b) A candidate for supervisor must be a landowner and an active farmer with a minimum~~
7 ~~of five years' experience or a retired farmer who has had a minimum of five years' experience and~~
8 ~~must have the education, training and experience necessary to carry out the duties required by~~
9 ~~this article. The State Conservation Committee shall propose for promulgation in accordance with~~
10 ~~the requirements of article three-a, chapter twenty-nine of this code legislative rules to establish~~
11 ~~criteria for the necessary education, training and experience.~~

12 ~~(c) All registered voters in the district are eligible to vote in the election for candidates from~~
13 ~~the county within the boundaries of the district in which the voter resides. The candidates in each~~
14 ~~county who receive the largest number of votes cast in the election shall be elected supervisors~~
15 ~~for that county.~~

16 ~~(d) Supervisors shall be elected in the primary election and serve a term of four years. The~~
17 ~~provisions of chapter three of this code apply to election of supervisors.~~

18 ~~(e) Persons holding the position of supervisor, regardless of the expiration of the~~
19 ~~designated term of office, continue to serve until the election and qualification of his or her~~
20 ~~successor~~

21 (a) All registered voters in each county in a district shall elect two nonpartisan supervisors
22 who shall hold office for a term of four years and until his/her successor is elected and qualified:
23 *Provided*, That any county with a population of 100,000 based on the most recent decennial
24 census shall elect one additional supervisor and any county with a population over 100,000 based
25 on the most recent decennial census shall elect one additional supervisor for each 50,000

26 residents over 100,000.

27 (b) The provisions of chapter three of this code apply to the election of supervisors, and
28 the terms of such members shall begin on July 1, next following the primary election at which they
29 were elected: *Provided*, That if no candidate seeks the office, then the district shall advertise and
30 select a candidate from the county in which the vacancy occurs and submit the name to the state
31 committee for appointment.

32 (c) A candidate for supervisor must have experience in agriculture, conservation, or
33 natural resources.

34 ~~(f)~~ (d) Any vacancy occurring in the office of supervisor shall be filled by the state
35 committee by appointment of a person from the county in which the vacancy occurs. Within ~~fifteen~~
36 90 days after the vacancy occurs, the district shall submit a list of names of persons qualified to
37 be a supervisor shall advertise and select a candidate from the county in which the vacancy
38 occurs and submit the name to the state committee for appointment. If the unexpired term is for
39 less than two years and six months, the appointed person holds office until the expiration of the
40 term. If the unexpired term is for more than two years and six months, the appointed person holds
41 the office until a successor is elected in the next primary or general election and qualified.

§19-21A-8. Powers of districts; additional powers of supervisors.

1 A conservation district organized under the provisions of this article and the supervisors
2 thereof shall have the following powers, in addition to others granted in other sections of this
3 article:

4 (1) ~~To~~ Shall hold public meetings to conduct surveys, investigations, and research relating
5 to the character of soil erosion, floodwater and sediment damage, and nonpoint source water
6 pollution, and to the conservation, development, utilization, water quality, and disposal of water
7 and the preventive and control measures needed to publish the results of such surveys,
8 investigations, or research and to disseminate information concerning such preventive and control
9 measures and works of improvement to the public: *Provided*, That in order to avoid duplication of

10 research activities, no district shall initiate any research program or publish the results except with
11 the approval of the state committee and in cooperation with the government of this state or any
12 of its agencies, or with the United States or any of its agencies;

13 (2) To conduct demonstrational projects within the district on lands owned or controlled by
14 this state or any of its agencies, with the consent and cooperation of the agency administering
15 and having jurisdiction thereof, and on any other lands within the district upon obtaining the
16 consent of the owner and occupier of the lands or the necessary rights or interests in the lands in
17 order to demonstrate by example the means, methods, and measures by which soil and soil
18 resources may be conserved and soil erosion in the form of soil washing may be prevented and
19 controlled, water quality may be improved, and works of improvement may be carried out;

20 (3) To carry out preventive and control measures and works of improvement within the
21 district, including, but not limited to, engineering operations, methods of cultivation, the growing
22 of vegetation, changes in use of land; drainage, irrigation, and other agricultural water
23 management operations and measures for the prevention of floodwater and sediment damages,
24 or for the control and abatement of nonpoint sources of water pollution; and the measures listed
25 in ~~§19-21A-2(e)~~ §19-21A-2 of this code on lands owned or controlled by this State or any of its
26 agencies with the consent and cooperation of the agency administering and having jurisdiction
27 thereof and on any other lands within the district upon obtaining the consent of the owner and
28 occupier of such lands or the necessary rights or interests in such lands;

29 (4) To cooperate, or enter into agreements with, and within the limits of appropriations
30 duly made available to it by law, to furnish financial or other aid to any agency, governmental or
31 otherwise, or any occupier of lands within the district in the carrying on of erosion-control and
32 prevention operations, operations for the control and abatement of nonpoint sources of water
33 pollution, and works of improvement within the district, subject to such conditions as the
34 supervisors may deem necessary to advance the purposes of this article;

35 (5) To obtain options upon and to acquire, by purchase, exchange, lease, gift, grant,

36 bequest, devise, or otherwise, any property, real or personal, or rights or interests therein; to
37 institute condemnation proceedings to acquire any property, real or personal, or rights or interests
38 therein, whether or not located in the district, required for works of improvement; to maintain,
39 administer and improve any properties acquired, to receive income from such properties and to
40 expend such income in carrying out the purposes and provisions of this article; and to sell, lease
41 or otherwise dispose of any of its property or interests therein in furtherance of the purposes and
42 the provisions of this article;

43 (6) Accept and receive donations, gifts, contributions, grants, and appropriations in money,
44 services, materials, or otherwise from the United States or any of its agencies, from the State of
45 West Virginia, or from other sources and use or expend the money, services, materials, or other
46 contributions in carrying out the policy and provisions of this article;

47 ~~(6)~~ (7) To make available, on such terms as it shall prescribe, to land occupiers within the
48 district agricultural and engineering machinery and equipment, fertilizer, seeds and seedlings,
49 and such other material or equipment as will assist such land occupiers to carry on operations
50 upon their lands for the conservation of soil resources and for the prevention and control of soil
51 erosion and for flood prevention or the conservation, development, utilization, water quality, and
52 disposal of water;

53 ~~(7)~~ (8) To construct, improve, operate, and maintain such structures as may be necessary
54 or convenient for the performance of any of the operations authorized in this article;

55 ~~(8)~~ (9) To develop ~~with the approval of the state committee comprehensive plans for the~~
56 and submit to the state committee its proposed long range program and annual work plans related
57 to the conservation of soil resources and for the control and prevention of soil erosion and for
58 flood prevention and water quality improvement, or the conservation, development, utilization,
59 and disposal of water within the district. The plans shall specify, in as much detail as may be
60 possible, the acts, procedures, performances and avoidances which are necessary or desirable
61 for the effectuation of such plans, including the specification of engineering operations, methods

62 of cultivation, the growing of vegetation, cropping programs, tillage practices and changes in use
63 of land; and to publish such plans and information and bring them to the attention of occupiers of
64 lands within the district;

65 ~~(9)~~ (10) To take over, by purchase, lease or otherwise, and to administer any soil-
66 conservation, flood-prevention, drainage, irrigation, water-management, erosion-control or
67 erosion-prevention project, or combinations thereof, located within its boundaries, undertaken by
68 the United States or any of its agencies, or by this state or any of its agencies; to manage, as
69 agent of the United States or any of its agencies, or of this state or any of its agencies, any soil-
70 conservation, flood-prevention, drainage, irrigation, water-management, erosion-control or
71 erosion-prevention project, or combinations thereof, within its boundaries; to act as agent for the
72 United States or any of its agencies, or for this state or any of its agencies, in connection with the
73 acquisition, construction, operation, or administration of any soil-conservation, flood-prevention,
74 drainage, irrigation, water-management, erosion-control or erosion-prevention project, or
75 combinations thereof, within its boundaries; to accept donations, gifts, contributions and grants in
76 money, services, materials, or otherwise, from the United States or any of its agencies, or from
77 this state or any of its agencies, or from any other source and to use or expend such money,
78 services, materials or other contributions in carrying on its operations;

79 ~~(10)~~ (11) To sue and be sued in the name of the district; to have a seal, which shall be
80 judicially noticed; to have perpetual succession unless terminated as hereinafter provided; to
81 make and execute contracts and other instruments, necessary or convenient to the exercise of
82 its powers; to make and, from time to time, amend and repeal rules and regulations not
83 inconsistent with this article to carry into effect its purposes and powers;

84 ~~(11)~~ (12) As a condition to this extending of any benefits under this article to, or the
85 performance of work upon, any lands, the supervisors may require contributions in money,
86 services, materials or otherwise to any operations conferring such benefits and may require land
87 occupiers to enter into and perform such agreements or covenants as to the permanent use of

88 such lands as will tend to prevent or control erosion and prevent floodwater and sediment damage
89 thereon;

90 ~~(12)~~ (13) No provisions with respect to the acquisition, operation, or disposition of property
91 by other public bodies shall be applicable to a district organized hereunder in its acquisition,
92 operation and disposition of property unless the Legislature shall specifically so state;

93 ~~(13)~~ (14) To enter into contracts and other arrangements with agencies of the United
94 States, with persons, firms, or corporations, including public and nonprofit corporations, with the
95 state government of this state or other states, or any department or agency thereof, with
96 governmental divisions, with soil conservation, drainage, flood control, soil erosion, or other
97 improvement districts in this state or other states, for cooperation or assistance in constructing,
98 improving, operating, or maintaining works of improvement within the district, or in preventing
99 floods, or in conserving, developing, utilizing and disposing of water in the district, or for making
100 surveys, investigations, or reports thereof; and to obtain options upon and acquire property, real
101 or personal, or rights or interests therein, in other districts or states required for flood prevention
102 and water quality improvement, or the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of
103 water within the district and to construct, improve, operate or maintain thereon or therewith works
104 of improvement.

105 (15) Each district shall, through public meetings, publications, or other means, keep the
106 general public, agencies, and occupiers of the land within the district, informed of the works and
107 activities planned and administered by the district, of the purposes these will serve and of the
108 results achieved annually by the districts.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to create the "Conservation Districts Law of West Virginia." The bill provides for legislative determinations. The bill provides for revised definitions. The bill modifies the process for elections and for the filling of vacancies. Finally, the bill provides an updated process for public meetings.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law, and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.