

161D.11 Southern Iowa development and conservation authority created membership and duties.

1. A southern Iowa development and conservation authority is created. The counties of Appanoose, Clarke, Davis, Decatur, Jefferson, Lucas, Monroe, Van Buren, Wapello, and Wayne are entitled to one voting member each on the authority, but membership or participation in projects of the authority is not required. Each member of the authority shall be appointed by the respective board of supervisors for a term to be determined by each board of supervisors, but the term shall not be for less than one year. An appointee shall serve without compensation, but an appointee may be reimbursed for actual expenses incurred while performing the duties of the authority as determined by each board of supervisors. The authority shall meet, organize, and adopt rules of procedures as deemed necessary to carry out its duties. The authority may appoint working committees that include other individuals in addition to voting members.
2. The mission of the authority is to develop and coordinate plans for projects related to the unique natural resources, rural development, and infrastructure problems of counties in the most fragile areas of the southern Iowa drift plain. The authority's mission is established in part as a response to the erosion of soils, degradation of water resources, and the destabilization of stream channels in the fragile glacial till soils of southern Iowa that have occurred in a large part due to unchecked conversion of grassland to cropland. This land use conversion was brought about by the economic pressures of past federal agricultural policies that disregarded the fragile nature of the southern Iowa soil resource and the incompatibility of these soils with the subsidized commodities. The resulting erosion of the land has damaged the rural infrastructure of this area, destroyed public roads and bridges, adversely impacted stream water quality and riparian habitat, affected other public and private improvements, and severely threatens the potable water supply of the region. Reducing soil erosion, preventing sedimentation, and stopping nutrients and pesticides from entering water resources are all necessary to protect the rural infrastructure in the southern area of the state. Important protection measures include structural improvements and the reestablishment of grasslands for sustainable economic uses.
3. The authority shall cooperate with the division of soil conservation of the department of agriculture and land stewardship, the affected soil and water conservation districts, the department of natural resources, and the state department of transportation in carrying out its mission and duties. The authority shall also cooperate with appropriate federal agencies, including the United States environmental protection agency, the United States department of interior, and the United States department of agriculture natural resources conservation service. The authority shall make use of technical resources available through member counties and cooperating agencies.
4. The authority shall administer the southern Iowa development and conservation fund created under section 161D.12 and shall deposit and expend moneys in the fund for the planning, development, and implementation of development and conservation activities or measures in the member counties.
5. This section is not intended to affect the authority of the department of natural resources in its acquisition, development, and management of public lands within the counties represented by the authority.