

CHAPTER 161A

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION

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DIVISION I

DIVISION OF SOIL CONSERVATION

161A.1 Short title.

[This chapter](#) may be known and cited as the “*Soil Conservation Districts Law*”.
[C39, §2603.02; C46, §160.1; C50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.1]
C93, §161A.1

161A.2 Declaration of policy.

It is hereby declared to be the policy of the legislature to integrate the conservation of soil and water resources into the production of agricultural commodities to insure the long-term protection of the soil and water resources of the state of Iowa, and to encourage the development of farm management and agricultural practices that are consistent with the capability of the land to sustain agriculture, and thereby to preserve natural resources, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, assist and maintain the navigability of rivers and harbors, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base, protect public lands and promote the health, safety and public welfare of the people of this state.

[C39, §2603.03; C46, §160.2; C50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.2]
[86 Acts, ch 1245, §645](#)
C93, §161A.2

161A.3 Definitions.

Wherever used or referred to in [this chapter](#), unless a different meaning clearly appears from the context:

1. “*Agency of this state*” includes the government of this state and any subdivision, agency, or instrumentality, corporate or otherwise, of the government of this state.
2. “*Book*”, “*list*”, “*record*”, or “*schedule*” kept by a county auditor, assessor, treasurer, recorder, sheriff, or other county officer means the county system as defined in [section 445.1](#).
3. “*Commissioner*” means one of the members of the governing body of a district, elected or appointed in accordance with the provisions of [this chapter](#).
4. “*Committee*” or “*state soil conservation committee*” means the committee established by [section 161A.4](#).
5. “*Department*” means the department of agriculture and land stewardship.
6. “*District*” or “*soil and water conservation district*” means a governmental subdivision of this state, and a public body corporate and politic, organized for the purposes, with the powers, and subject to the restrictions in [this chapter](#) set forth.
7. “*Division*” means the division of soil conservation created within the department.
8. “*Due notice*” means notice published at least twice, with an interval of at least six days between the two publication dates, in a newspaper or other publication of general circulation within the appropriate area; or, if no such publication of general circulation be available, by posting at a reasonable number of conspicuous places within the appropriate area, such posting to include, where possible, posting at public places where it may be customary to post notices concerning county or municipal affairs generally. At any hearing held pursuant to such notice, at the time and place designated in such notice, adjournment may be made from time to time without the necessity of renewing such notice for such adjourned dates.
9. “*Government*” or “*governmental*” includes the government of this state, the government

of the United States, and any subdivision, agency or instrumentality, corporate or otherwise, or either of them.

10. “*Landowner*” includes any person, firm, or corporation or any federal agency, this state or any of its political subdivisions, who shall hold title to land lying within a proposed district or a district organized under the provisions of [this chapter](#).

11. “*Nominating petition*” means a petition filed under the provisions of [section 161A.5](#) to nominate candidates for the office of commissioner of a soil and water conservation district.

12. “*Petition*” means a petition filed under the provisions of [subsection 1](#) of [section 161A.5](#) for the creation of a district.

13. “*State*” means the state of Iowa.

14. “*United States*” or “*agencies of the United States*” includes the United States of America, the United States department of agriculture natural resources conservation service, and any other agency or instrumentality, corporate or otherwise, of the United States.

[C39, §2603.04; C46, §160.3; C50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.3; [82 Acts, ch 1199, §72, 96](#)]

[86 Acts, ch 1238, §61](#); [86 Acts, ch 1245, §646, 647](#); [87 Acts, ch 23, §16](#); [89 Acts, ch 83, §55 C93, §161A.3](#)

[95 Acts, ch 216, §25](#); [2000 Acts, ch 1148, §1](#); [2002 Acts, ch 1119, §200, 201](#)

161A.4 Soil conservation division — committee.

1. The soil conservation division is established within the department to perform the functions conferred upon it in [this chapter](#) and [chapters 161C, 161E, 161F, 207, and 208](#). The division shall be administered in accordance with the policies of the state soil conservation committee, which shall advise the division and which shall approve administrative rules proposed by the division for the administration of [this chapter](#) and [chapters 161C, 161E, 161F, 207, and 208](#) before the rules are adopted pursuant to [section 17A.5](#). If a difference exists between the committee and secretary regarding the content of a proposed rule, the secretary shall notify the chairperson of the committee of the difference within thirty days from the committee’s action on the rule. The secretary and the committee shall meet to resolve the difference within thirty days after the secretary provides the committee with notice of the difference.

2. In addition to other duties and powers conferred upon the division of soil conservation, the division has the following duties and powers:

a. To offer assistance as appropriate to the commissioners of soil and water conservation districts in carrying out any of their powers and programs.

b. To take notice of each district’s long-range resource conservation plan established under [section 161A.7](#), in order to keep the commissioners of each of the several districts informed of the activities and experience of all other districts, and to facilitate an interchange of advice and experience between such districts and cooperation between them.

c. To coordinate the programs of the soil and water conservation districts so far as this may be done by advice and consultation.

d. To secure the cooperation and assistance of the United States and any of its agencies, and of agencies of this state, in the work of such districts.

e. To disseminate information throughout the state concerning the activities and program of the soil and water conservation districts.

f. To render financial aid and assistance to soil and water conservation districts for the purpose of carrying out the policy stated in [this chapter](#).

g. To assist each soil and water conservation district in developing a district soil and water resource conservation plan as provided under [section 161A.7](#). The plan shall be developed according to rules adopted by the division to preserve and protect the public interest in the soil and water resources of this state for future generations and for this purpose to encourage, promote, facilitate, and where such public interest requires, to mandate the conservation and proper control of and use of the soil and water resources of this state, by measures including but not limited to the control of floods, the control of erosion by water or by wind, the preservation of the quality of water for its optimum use for agricultural,

irrigation, recreational, industrial, and domestic purposes, all of which shall be presumed to be conducive to the public health, convenience, and welfare, both present and future.

h. To file the district soil and water resource conservation plans as part of a state soil and water resource conservation plan. The state plan shall contain on a statewide basis the information required for a district plan under [this section](#).

i. To establish a position of state drainage coordinator for drainage districts and drainage and levee districts which will keep the management of those districts informed of the activities and experience of all other such districts and facilitate an interchange of advice, experience and cooperation among the districts, coordinate by advice and consultation the programs of the districts, secure the cooperation and assistance of the United States and its agencies and of the agencies of this state and other states in the work of the districts, disseminate information throughout the state concerning the activities and programs of the districts, and provide other appropriate assistance to the districts.

3. The division, in consultation with the commissioners of the soil and water conservation districts, shall conduct a biennial review to survey the availability of private soil and water conservation control contractors in each district. A report containing the results of the review shall be prepared and posted on the department's internet site.

4. A state soil conservation committee is established within the department.

a. The nine voting members of the committee shall be appointed by the governor subject to confirmation by the senate pursuant to [section 2.32](#), and shall include the following:

(1) Six of the members shall be persons engaged in actual farming operations, one of whom shall be a resident of each of six geographic regions in the state, including northwest, southwest, north central, south central, northeast, and southeast Iowa, and no more than one of whom shall be a resident of any one county. The boundaries of the geographic regions shall be established by rule.

(2) The seventh, eighth, and ninth appointive members shall be chosen by the governor from the state at large, with one appointed to be a representative of cities, one appointed to be a representative of the mining industry, and one appointee who is a farmer actively engaged in tree farming.

b. The committee may invite the secretary of agriculture of the United States to appoint one person to serve with the other members, and the president of the Iowa county engineers association may designate a member of the association to serve in the same manner, but these persons have no vote and shall serve in an advisory capacity only.

c. The following shall serve as ex officio nonvoting members of the committee:

(1) The director of the Iowa cooperative extension service in agriculture and home economics, or the director's designee.

(2) The director of the department of natural resources or the director's designee.

5. *a.* The committee shall designate its chairperson, and may change the designation. The members appointed by the governor shall serve for a period of six years. Members shall be appointed in each odd-numbered year to succeed members whose terms expire as provided by [section 69.19](#). Appointments may be made at other times and for other periods as necessary to fill vacancies on the committee. Members shall not be appointed to serve more than two complete six-year terms. Members designated to represent the director of the department of natural resources and the director of the Iowa cooperative extension service in agriculture and home economics shall serve at the pleasure of the officer making the designation.

b. A majority of the voting members of the committee constitutes a quorum, and the concurrence of a majority of the voting members of the committee in any matter within their duties is required for its determination.

c. Members are entitled to actual expenses necessarily incurred in the discharge of their duties as members of the committee. The expenses paid to the committee members shall be paid from funds appropriated to the department. Each member of the committee may also be eligible to receive compensation as provided in [section 7E.6](#). The committee shall provide for the execution of surety bonds for all employees and officers who are entrusted with funds or property, shall provide for the keeping of a full and accurate record of all proceedings and

of all resolutions and orders issued or adopted, and shall provide for an annual audit of the accounts of receipts and disbursements.

6. a. The committee may perform acts, hold public hearings, and propose and approve rules pursuant to [chapter 17A](#) as necessary for the execution of its functions.

b. The committee shall recommend to the secretary each year a budget for the division. The secretary, at the earliest opportunity and prior to formulating a budget, shall meet with representatives of the committee to discuss the committee's recommendation.

c. The committee shall recommend three persons to the secretary of agriculture who shall appoint from the persons recommended an administrative director to head the division and serve at the pleasure of the secretary. After reviewing the names submitted, the secretary may request that the soil conservation committee submit additional names for consideration.

7. The committee or division may call upon the attorney general of the state for necessary legal services. The committee may delegate to its chairperson, to one or more of its members, or to one or more agents or employees, powers and duties as it deems proper. Upon request of the committee, for the purpose of carrying out any of the functions assigned the committee or the department by law, the supervising officer of any state agency, or of any state institution of learning shall, insofar as possible under available appropriations, and having due regard to the needs of the agency to which the request is directed, assign or detail the request to the staff or personnel of the agency or institution of learning, and make the special reports, surveys, or studies as the committee requests.

[C39, §2603.05; C46, §160.4; C50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, §467A.4; C73, §455A.40(3), 467A.4; C75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.4; 82 Acts, ch 1199, §73, 74, 96]

83 Acts, ch 101, §102; 85 Acts, ch 163, §13; 86 Acts, ch 1245, §648 – 650, 668; 87 Acts, ch 23, §17; 88 Acts, ch 1198, §1, 2; 89 Acts, ch 83, §56; 89 Acts, ch 106, §2

C93, §161A.4

2004 Acts, ch 1143, §1; 2007 Acts, ch 22, §43; 2009 Acts, ch 41, §59

DIVISION II

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

161A.5 Soil and water conservation districts.

1. The one hundred soil and water conservation districts* established in the manner which was prescribed by law prior to July 1, 1975 shall continue in existence with the boundaries and the names* in effect on July 1, 1975. If the existence of a district so established is discontinued pursuant to [section 161A.10](#), a petition for reestablishment of the district or for annexation of the former district's territory to any other abutting district may be submitted to, and shall be acted upon by, the state soil conservation committee in substantially the manner provided by [section 467A.5](#), Code 1975.

2. The governing body of each district shall consist of five commissioners elected on a nonpartisan basis for staggered four-year terms commencing on the first day of January that is not a Sunday or holiday following their election. Any eligible elector residing in the district is eligible to the office of commissioner, except that no more than one commissioner shall at any one time be a resident of any one township. A vacancy is created in the office of any commissioner who changes residence into a township where another commissioner then resides. If a commissioner is absent for sixty or more percent of monthly meetings during any twelve-month period, the other commissioners by their unanimous vote may declare the member's office vacant. A vacancy in the office of commissioner shall be filled by appointment of the state soil conservation committee until the next succeeding general election, at which time the balance of the unexpired term shall be filled as provided by [section 69.12](#).

3. At each general election a successor shall be chosen for each commissioner whose term will expire in the succeeding January.

a. Nomination of candidates for the office of commissioner shall be made by petition in accordance with [chapter 45](#), except that each candidate's nominating petition shall be signed

by at least twenty-five eligible electors of the district. The petition form shall be furnished by the county commissioner of elections.

b. Every candidate shall file with the nomination papers an affidavit stating the candidate's name, the candidate's residence, that the person is a candidate and is eligible for the office of commissioner, and that if elected the candidate will qualify for the office. The affidavit shall also state that the candidate is aware that the candidate is disqualified from holding office if the candidate has been convicted of a felony or other infamous crime and the candidate's rights have not been restored by the governor or by the president of the United States.

c. The signed petitions shall be filed with the county commissioner of elections not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixty-ninth day before the general election.

d. The votes for the office of district commissioner shall be canvassed in the same manner as the votes for county officers, and the returns shall be certified to the commissioners of the district. A plurality is sufficient to elect commissioners, and a primary election for the office shall not be held.

e. If the canvass shows that the two candidates receiving the highest and the second highest number of votes for the office of district commissioner are both residents of the same township, the board shall certify as elected the candidate who received the highest number of votes for the office and the candidate receiving the next highest number of votes for the office who is not a resident of the same township as the candidate receiving the highest number of votes.

[C39, §2603.06; C46, §160.5; C50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.5]

87 Acts, ch 23, §18; 89 Acts, ch 136, §73; 90 Acts, ch 1238, §41

C93, §161A.5

94 Acts, ch 1180, §41; 96 Acts, ch 1083, §1; 98 Acts, ch 1052, §5; 2009 Acts, ch 41, §201

*Established as "soil conservation districts"

161A.6 Commissioners — general provisions.

The commissioners of each soil and water conservation district shall convene on the first day of January that is not a Sunday or holiday in each odd-numbered year. Those commissioners whose term of office begins on that day shall take the oath of office prescribed by [section 63.10](#). The commissioners shall then organize by election of a chairperson and a vice chairperson.

The commissioners of the respective districts shall submit to the department such statements, estimates, budgets, and other information at such times and in such manner as the department may require.

A commissioner shall not receive compensation for the commissioner's services. However, to the extent funds are available, a commissioner is entitled to receive actual expenses necessarily incurred in the discharge of the commissioner's duties, including reimbursement for mileage at the rate provided under [section 70A.9](#) for state business use.

The commissioners may call upon the attorney general of the state for such legal services as they may require. The commissioners may delegate to their chairperson, to one or more commissioners or to one or more agents, or employees, such powers and duties as they may deem proper. The commissioners shall furnish to the division of soil conservation, upon request, copies of such ordinances, rules, regulations, orders, contracts, forms, and other documents as they shall adopt or employ, and such other information concerning their activities as it may require in the performance of its duties under [this chapter](#).

The commissioners shall provide for the execution of surety bonds for all employees and officers who shall be entrusted with funds or property; shall provide for the keeping of a full and accurate record of all proceedings and of all resolutions, regulations, and orders issued or adopted; and shall regularly report to the division a summary of financial information regarding moneys controlled by the commissioners, which are not audited by the state, according to rules adopted by the division.

The commissioners may invite the legislative body of any municipality or county located near the territory comprised within the district to designate a representative to advise and

consult with the commissioners of the district on all questions of program and policy which may affect the property, water supply, or other interests of such municipality or county.

[C39, §2603.08; C46, §160.6; C50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.6]

87 Acts, ch 23, §19

C93, §161A.6

93 Acts, ch 176, §33; 96 Acts, ch 1083, §2

161A.7 Powers of districts and commissioners.

1. A soil and water conservation district organized under [this chapter](#) has the following powers, in addition to others granted in other sections of [this chapter](#):

a. To conduct surveys, investigations, and research relating to the character of soil erosion and erosion, floodwater, and sediment damages, and the preventive and control measures needed, to publish the results of such surveys, investigations or research, and to disseminate information concerning such preventive and control measures; provided, however, that in order to avoid duplication of research activities, no district shall initiate any research program except in cooperation with the Iowa agricultural experiment station located at Ames, Iowa, and pursuant to a cooperative agreement entered into between the Iowa agricultural experiment station and such district.

b. To conduct demonstrational projects within the district on lands owned or controlled by this state or any of its agencies, with the consent and cooperation of the agency administering and having jurisdiction thereof, and on any other lands within the district upon obtaining the consent of the owner or occupier of such lands or the necessary rights or interests in such lands, in order to demonstrate by example the means, methods, and measures by which soil and soil resources may be conserved, and soil erosion in the form of soil blowing and soil washing may be prevented and controlled; provided, however, that in order to avoid duplication of agricultural extension activities, no district shall initiate any demonstrational projects, except in cooperation with the Iowa agricultural extension service whose offices are located at Ames, Iowa, and pursuant to a cooperative agreement entered into between the Iowa agricultural extension service and such district.

c. To carry out preventive and control measures within the district, including but not limited to crop rotations, engineering operations, methods of cultivation, the growing of vegetation, changes in use of land, and the measures listed in [section 161A.2](#), on lands owned or controlled by this state or any of its agencies, with the consent and cooperation of the agency administering and having jurisdiction thereof, and on any other lands within the district, upon obtaining the consent of the owner or occupier of such lands or the necessary rights or interests in such lands. Any approval or permits from the council required under other provisions of law shall be obtained by the district prior to initiation of any construction activity.

d. To cooperate, or enter into agreements with, and within the limits of appropriations duly made available to it by law, to furnish financial or other aid to any agency, governmental or otherwise, or any owner or occupier of lands within the district, in the carrying on of erosion-control and watershed protection and flood prevention operations within the district, subject to such conditions as the commissioners may deem necessary to advance the purposes of [this chapter](#).

e. To obtain options upon and to acquire, by purchase, exchange, lease, gift, grant, bequest, devise or otherwise, any property, real or personal, or rights or interests therein; to maintain, administer, and improve any properties acquired, to receive income from such properties and to expend such income in carrying out the purposes and provisions of [this chapter](#); and to sell, lease or otherwise dispose of any of its property or interests therein in furtherance of the purposes and provisions of [this chapter](#).

f. To make available on such terms as it shall prescribe, to landowners or occupiers within the district, agricultural and engineering machinery and equipment, fertilizer, lime, and such other material or equipment as will assist such landowners or occupiers to carry on operations upon their lands for the conservation of soil resources and for the prevention and control of soil erosion and for the prevention of erosion, floodwater, and sediment damages.

g. To construct, improve, and maintain such structures as may be necessary or convenient

for the performance of any of the operations authorized in [this chapter](#). Any approval or permits from the council required under other provisions of law shall be obtained by the district prior to initiation of any construction activity.

h. To develop comprehensive plans for the conservation of soil resources and for the control and prevention of soil erosion and for the prevention of erosion, floodwater, and sediment damages within the district, which plans shall specify in such detail as may be possible, the acts, procedures, performances, and avoidances which are necessary or desirable for the effectuation of such plans, including the specification of engineering operations, methods of cultivation, the growing of vegetation, cropping programs, tillage practices, and changes in use of land; and to publish such plans and information and bring them to the attention of owners and occupiers of lands within the district.

i. To sue and be sued in the name of the district; to have a seal, which seal shall be judicially noticed; to have perpetual succession unless terminated as hereinafter provided; to make and execute contracts and other instruments, necessary or convenient to the exercise of its powers; to make, and from time to time amend and repeal, rules not inconsistent with [this chapter](#), to carry into effect its purposes and powers.

j. To accept donations, gifts, and contributions in money, services, materials, or otherwise, from the United States or any of its agencies, or from this state or any of its agencies, and to use or expend such moneys, services, materials, or other contributions in carrying on its operations.

k. Subject to the approval of the state soil conservation committee, to change the name of the soil and water conservation district.

l. To provide for the restoration of permanent soil and water conservation practices which are damaged or destroyed because of a disaster emergency as provided in [section 161A.75](#).

m. To encourage local school districts to provide instruction in the importance of and in some of the basic methods of soil conservation, as a part of course work relating to conservation of natural resources and environmental awareness required in rules adopted by the state board of education pursuant to [section 256.11, subsections 3 and 4](#), and to offer technical assistance to schools in developing such instructional programs.

n. To develop a soil and water resource conservation plan for the district.

(1) The district plan shall contain a comprehensive long-range assessment of soil and surface water resources in the district consistent with rules approved by the committee under [section 161A.4](#). In developing the plan the district may receive technical support from the United States department of agriculture natural resources conservation service and the county board of supervisors in the county where the district is located. The division and the Iowa cooperative extension service in agriculture and home economics may provide technical support to the district. The support may include but is not limited to the following:

(a) Assessing the condition of soil and surface water in the district, including an evaluation of the type, amount, and quality of soil and water, the threat of soil erosion and erosion, floodwater, and sediment damages, and necessary preventative and control measures.

(b) Developing methods to maintain or improve soil and water condition.

(c) Cooperating with other state and federal agencies to carry out this support.

(2) The title page of the district plan and a notification stating where the plan may be reviewed shall be recorded with the recorder in the county in which the district is located, and updated as necessary, after the committee approves and the administrator of the division signs the district plan. The commissioners shall provide notice of the recording and may provide a copy of the approved district plan to the county board of supervisors in the county where the district is located. The district plan shall be filed with the division as part of the state soil and water resource conservation plan provided in [section 161A.4](#).

o. To enter into agreements pursuant to [chapter 161C](#) with the owner or occupier of land within the district or cooperating districts, or any other private entity or public agency, in carrying out water protection practices, including district and multidistrict projects to protect this state's groundwater and surface water from point and nonpoint sources of contamination, including but not limited to agricultural drainage wells, sinkholes, sedimentation, and chemical pollutants.

2. As a condition to the extending of any benefits under [this chapter](#) to, or the performance

of work upon, any lands not owned or controlled by this state or any of its agencies, the commissioners may require contributions in money, services, materials, or otherwise to any operations conferring such benefits, and may require landowners or occupiers to enter into and perform such agreements or covenants as to the permanent use of such lands as will tend to prevent or control erosion thereon.

3. The commissioners, as a condition for the receipt of any state cost-sharing funds for permanent soil conservation practices, shall require the owner of the land on which the practices are to be established to covenant and file, in the office of the soil and water conservation district of the county in which the land is located, an agreement identifying the particular lands upon which the practices for which state cost-sharing funds are to be received will be established, and providing that the project will not be removed, altered, or modified so as to lessen its effectiveness without the consent of the commissioners, obtained in advance and based on guidelines drawn up by the state soil conservation committee, for a period not to exceed twenty years after the date of receiving payment. The commissioners shall assist the division in the enforcement of [this subsection](#). The agreement does not create a lien on the land, but is a charge personally against the owner of the land at the time of removal, alteration, or modification if an administrative order is made under [section 161A.61, subsection 3](#).

4. No provisions with respect to the acquisition, operation, or disposition of property by other public bodies shall be applicable to a district organized hereunder unless the general assembly shall specifically so state.

5. After the formation of any district under the provisions of [this chapter](#), all participation hereunder shall be purely voluntary, except as specifically stated herein.

[C39, §2603.09; C46, §160.7; C50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.7; 82 Acts, ch 1083, §1, ch 1220, §1]

86 Acts, ch 1238, §61; 86 Acts, ch 1245, §651; 87 Acts, ch 23, §20; 88 Acts, ch 1189, §1; 88 Acts, ch 1198, §3; 88 Acts, ch 1262, §9; 89 Acts, ch 83, §57; 92 Acts, ch 1108, §1; 92 Acts, ch 1239, §49

C93, §161A.7

93 Acts, ch 109, §1; 95 Acts, ch 216, §25; 97 Acts, ch 59, §1; 2009 Acts, ch 41, §60; 2012 Acts, ch 1095, §9

Review of road construction projects, §306.50 – 306.54

161A.8 Cooperation between districts.

The commissioners of any two or more districts organized under the provisions of [this chapter](#) may cooperate with one another in the exercise of any or all powers conferred in [this chapter](#).

[C39, §2603.10; C46, §160.8; C50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.8]

C93, §161A.8

161A.9 State agencies to cooperate.

Agencies of this state which shall have jurisdiction over, or be charged with the administration of, any state-owned lands, and of any county, or other governmental subdivision of the state, which shall have jurisdiction over, or be charged with the administration of, any county-owned or other publicly owned lands, lying within the boundaries of any district organized hereunder, may cooperate to the fullest extent with the commissioners of such districts in the effectuation of programs and operations undertaken by the commissioners under the provisions of [this chapter](#).

[C39, §2603.11; C46, §160.9; C50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.9]

C93, §161A.9

161A.10 Discontinuance of districts.

At any time after five years after the organization of a district under [this chapter](#), any twenty-five owners of land lying within the boundaries of the district, but in no case less than twenty percent of the owners of land lying within the district, may file a petition with the committee asking that the operations of the district be terminated and the existence of

the district discontinued. The committee may conduct public meetings and public hearings upon the petition as necessary to assist in the consideration of the petition. Within sixty days after a petition has been received by the committee, the division shall give due notice of the holding of a referendum, shall supervise the referendum, and shall issue appropriate rules governing the conduct of the referendum. The question is to be submitted by ballots upon which the words “For terminating the existence of the (name of the soil and water conservation district to be here inserted)” and “Against terminating the existence of the (name of the soil and water conservation district to be here inserted)” shall be printed, with a square before each proposition and a direction to insert an X mark in the square before one or the other of the propositions as the voter favors or opposes discontinuance of the district. All owners of lands lying within the boundaries of the district are eligible to vote in the referendum. No informalities in the conduct of the referendum or in any matters relating to the referendum invalidate the referendum or the result of the referendum if notice was given substantially as provided in [this section](#) and if the referendum was fairly conducted.

When sixty-five percent of the landowners vote to terminate the existence of the district, the committee shall advise the commissioners to terminate the affairs of the district. The commissioners shall dispose of all property belonging to the district at public auction and shall pay over the proceeds of the sale to be deposited into the state treasury. The commissioners shall then file an application, duly verified, with the secretary of state for the discontinuance of the district, and shall transmit with the application the certificate of the committee setting forth the determination of the committee that the continued operation of the district is not administratively practicable and feasible. The application shall recite that the property of the district has been disposed of and the proceeds paid over as provided in [this section](#), and shall set forth a full accounting of the properties and proceeds of the sale. The secretary of state shall issue to the commissioners a certificate of dissolution and shall record the certificate in an appropriate book of record in the secretary of state’s office.

Upon issuance of a certificate of dissolution under [this section](#), all ordinances and regulations previously adopted and in force within the districts are of no further force and effect. All contracts previously entered into, to which the district or commissioners are parties, remain in force and effect for the period provided in the contracts. The committee is substituted for the district or commissioners as party to the contracts. The committee is entitled to all benefits and subject to all liabilities under the contracts and has the same right and liability to perform, to require performance, to sue and be sued, and to modify or terminate the contracts by mutual consent or otherwise, as the commissioners of the district would have had.

The committee shall not entertain petitions for the discontinuance of any district nor conduct referenda upon discontinuance petitions nor make determinations pursuant to the petitions in accordance with [this chapter](#), more often than once in five years.

[C39, §2603.12; C46, §160.10; C50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.10]

[86 Acts, ch 1245, §652](#); [87 Acts, ch 23, §21](#); [89 Acts, ch 106, §3](#)

C93, §161A.10

161A.11 Report to governor. Repealed by 2003 Acts, ch 74, §2; 2003 Acts, ch 128, §2.

161A.12 Statement to department of management.

On or before October 1 next preceding each annual legislative session, the department shall submit to the department of management, on official estimate blanks furnished for those purposes, statements and estimates of the expenditure requirements for each fiscal year, and a statement of the balance of funds, if any, available to the division, and the estimates of the division as to the sums needed for the administrative and other expenses of the division for the purposes of [this chapter](#).

[C46, §160.12; C50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.12]

[86 Acts, ch 1245, §654](#)

C93, §161A.12

[96 Acts, ch 1034, §6](#); [2012 Acts, ch 1095, §10](#)

DIVISION III
SUBDISTRICTS

161A.13 Purpose of subdistricts.

Subdistricts of a soil and water conservation district may be formed as provided in [this chapter](#) for the purposes of carrying out watershed protection and flood prevention programs within the subdistrict but shall not be formed solely for the purpose of establishing or taking over the operation of an existing drainage district.

[C58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.13]

[86 Acts, ch 1238, §61](#); [87 Acts, ch 23, §22](#); [89 Acts, ch 83, §58](#)
C93, §161A.13

161A.14 Petition to form.

When the landowners in a proposed subdistrict desire that a subdistrict be organized, they shall file a petition with the commissioners of the soil and water conservation district. The area must be contiguous and in the same watershed but it shall not include any area located within the boundaries of an incorporated city. The petition shall set forth an intelligible description by congressional subdivision, or otherwise, of the land suggested for inclusion in the subdistrict and shall state whether the special annual tax or special benefit assessments will be used, or whether the use of both is contemplated. The petition shall contain a brief statement giving the reasons for organization, and requesting that the proposed area be organized as a subdistrict, and must be signed by sixty-five percent of the landowners in the proposed subdistrict. Land already in one subdistrict cannot be included in another. The soil and water conservation district commissioners shall review the petition and if it is found adequate shall arrange for a hearing on it.

[C58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.14]

[87 Acts, ch 23, §23](#)
C93, §161A.14

161A.15 Notice and hearing.

Within thirty days after a petition has been filed with the soil and water conservation district commissioners, they shall fix a date, hour, and place for a hearing and direct the secretary to cause notice to be given to the owners of each tract of land, or lot, within the proposed subdistrict as shown by the transfer books of the auditor's office, and to each lienholder, or encumbrancer, of any such lands as shown by the county records, and to all other persons whom it may concern, and without naming individuals all actual occupants of land in the proposed subdistrict, of the pendency and purpose of the petition and that all objections to establishment of the subdistrict for any reason must be made in writing and filed with the secretary of the soil and water conservation district at, or before, the time set for hearing. The soil and water conservation district commissioners shall consider and determine whether the operation of the subdistrict within the defined boundaries as proposed is desirable, practicable, feasible, and of necessity in the interest of health, safety, and public welfare. All interested parties may attend the hearing and be heard. The soil and water conservation district commissioners may for good cause adjourn the hearing to a day certain which shall be announced at the time of adjournment and made a matter of record. If the soil and water conservation district commissioners determine that the petition meets the requirements set forth in [this section](#) and in [section 161A.5](#), they shall declare that the subdistrict is duly organized and shall record such action in their official minutes together with an appropriate official name or designation for the subdistrict.

[C58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.15]

[87 Acts, ch 23, §24](#)
C93, §161A.15
[2001 Acts, ch 24, §32](#)

161A.16 Publication of notice.

The notice of hearing on the formation of a subdistrict shall be by publication once each week for two consecutive weeks in some newspaper of general circulation published in the county or district, the last of which shall be not less than ten days prior to the day set for the hearing on the petition. Proof of such service shall be made by affidavit of the publisher, and be on file with the secretary of the district at the time the hearing begins.

[C58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.16]

[87 Acts, ch 115, §61](#)

C93, §161A.16

161A.17 Subdistrict in more than one district.

If the proposed subdistrict lies in more than one soil and water conservation district, the petition may be presented to the commissioners of any one of such districts, and the commissioners of all such districts shall act jointly as a board of commissioners with respect to all matters concerning the subdistrict, including its formation. They shall organize as a single board for such purposes and shall designate its chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary-treasurer to serve for terms of one year. Such a subdistrict shall be formed in the same manner and has the same powers and duties as a subdistrict formed in one soil and water conservation district.

[C58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.17]

[87 Acts, ch 23, §25](#)

C93, §161A.17

161A.18 Certification.

Following the entry in the official minutes of the soil and water conservation district commissioners of the creation of the subdistrict, the commissioners shall certify this fact on a separate form, authentic copies of which shall be recorded with the county recorder of each county in which any portion of the subdistrict lies, and with the division of soil conservation.

[C58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.18]

[87 Acts, ch 23, §26](#)

C93, §161A.18

[2001 Acts, ch 24, §33](#)

161A.19 Governing body.

The commissioners of a soil and water conservation district in which the subdistrict is formed are the governing body of the subdistrict. When a subdistrict lies in more than one soil and water conservation district, the combined board of commissioners is the governing body. The governing body of the subdistrict shall appoint three trustees living within the subdistrict to assist with the administration of the subdistrict.

[C58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.19]

[87 Acts, ch 23, §27](#)

C93, §161A.19

161A.20 Special annual tax.

After obtaining agreements to carry out recommended soil conservation measures and proper farm plans from owners of not less than fifty percent of the lands situated in the subdistrict, a subdistrict shall have the authority to impose a special annual tax, the proceeds of which shall be used for the repayment of actual and necessary expenses incurred to organize the subdistrict, to acquire land or rights or interests therein by purchase or condemnation, repair, alteration, maintenance and operation of the present and future works of improvement within its boundaries.

On or before January 10 of each year its governing body shall make an estimate of the amount it deems necessary to be raised by such special tax for the ensuing year and transmit said estimate in dollars to the board of supervisors of the county in which the subdistrict lies.

If portions of the subdistrict are in more than one county, then the governing body, as hereinbefore designated in such event, after arriving at the estimate in dollars deemed

necessary for the entire subdistrict shall ratably apportion such amount between the counties and transmit and certify the prorated portion to the respective boards of supervisors of each of the counties.

The board or boards of supervisors shall upon receipt of certification from the governing body of the district make the necessary levy on the assessed valuation of all real estate within the boundaries of the subdistrict lying within their respective county to raise said amounts, but in no event to exceed one dollar and eight cents per thousand dollars of assessed value.

The special tax levied under [this section](#) shall be collected in the same manner as other taxes with a penalty for delinquency. The moneys collected from the special tax and any delinquency penalty shall be deposited in a fund established by the governing body as provided by a resolution adopted by the governing body and delivered for filing with each appropriate county treasurer. Moneys earned as income from moneys in the fund, including as interest, shall remain in the fund until expended by the governing body according to procedures specified in the resolution. If the governing body does not adopt a resolution or deliver the resolution to the county treasurer, the moneys shall be deposited into a separate account in the county's general fund by that county treasurer. The account shall be identified by the official name of the subdistrict and expenditures from the account shall be made on requisition of the chairperson and secretary of the governing body of the subdistrict.

[C58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.20]

C93, §161A.20

[2005 Acts, ch 116, §1](#)

161A.21 Condemnation by subdistrict.

A subdistrict of a soil and water conservation district may condemn land or rights or interests in the subdistrict to carry out the authorized purposes of the subdistrict.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.21]

[87 Acts, ch 23, §28](#)

C93, §161A.21

161A.22 General powers applicable — warrants or bonds.

A subdistrict organized under [this chapter](#) has all of the powers of a soil and water conservation district in addition to other powers granted to the subdistrict in other sections of [this chapter](#).

The governing body of the subdistrict, upon determination that benefits from works of improvement as set forth in the watershed work plan to be installed will exceed costs thereof, and that funds needed for purposes of the subdistrict require levy of a special benefit assessment as provided in [section 161A.23](#), in lieu of the special annual tax as provided in [section 161A.20](#), shall record its decision to use its taxing authority and, upon majority vote of the governing body and with the approval of the state soil conservation committee, may issue warrants or bonds payable in not more than forty semiannual installments in connection with the special benefit assessment, and pledge and assign the proceeds of the special benefit assessment and other revenues of the subdistrict as security for the warrants or bonds. The warrants and bonds of indebtedness are general obligations of the subdistrict, exempt from all taxes, state and local, and are not indebtedness of the soil and water conservation district or the state of Iowa.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.22]

[87 Acts, ch 23, §29](#)

C93, §161A.22

DIVISION IV
ALTERNATE METHOD OF TAXATION FOR
WATERSHED PROTECTION
AND FLOOD PREVENTION

161A.23 Agreement by fifty percent of landowners.

1. After obtaining agreements to carry out recommended soil conservation measures and proper farm plans from owners of not less than fifty percent of the lands situated in the subdistrict, the governing body of the subdistrict shall have the authority to establish a special tax for the purpose of organization, construction, repair, alteration, enlargement, extension, and operation of present and future works of improvement within the boundaries of said subdistrict.

2. The governing body shall appoint three appraisers to assess benefits and classify the land affected by such improvements. One of such appraisers shall be a competent licensed professional engineer and two of them shall be resident landowners of the county or counties in which the subdistrict is located but not living within nor owning or operating any lands included in said subdistrict.

3. The appraisers shall take and subscribe an oath of their qualifications and to perform the duties of classification of said lands, fix the percentages, benefits and apportion and assess the costs and expenses of construction of the said improvement according to law and their best judgment, skill, and ability. If said appraisers or any of them fail or neglect to act or perform the duties in the time and as required of them by law, the governing body of the subdistrict shall appoint others with like qualifications to take their places and perform said duties.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.23]

C93, §161A.23

[2007 Acts, ch 126, §38](#)

161A.24 Assessment for improvements.

At the time of appointing said appraisers, the governing body shall fix the time within which said assessment, classification, and apportionment shall be made, which may be extended for good cause shown. Within twenty days after their appointment, they shall begin to inspect and classify all the lands within said district, or any change, extension, enlargement, or relocation thereof in tracts of forty acres or less according to the legal or recognized subdivisions, in a graduated scale of benefits to be numbered according to the benefit to be received by each of such tracts from such improvement, and pursue said work continuously until completed and, when completed, shall make a full, accurate, and detailed report thereof and file the same with the governing body. The lands receiving the greatest benefit shall be marked on a scale of one hundred, and those benefited in a less degree with such percentage of one hundred as the benefits received bear in proportion thereto.

The amount of benefit appraised to each forty acres of land within the subdistrict shall be determined by the improvements within said subdistrict based upon the work plan as agreed upon by the subdistrict.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.24]

C93, §161A.24

161A.25 Report of appraisers.

In the report of the appraisers so appointed they shall specify each tract of land by proper description, and the ownership thereof, as the same appears on the transfer books in the auditor's office.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.25]

C93, §161A.25

161A.26 Hearing.

The governing body shall fix a time for a hearing within sixty days upon receiving the report of the appraisers, and the governing body shall cause notice to be served upon each person not less than ten days before said hearing whose name appears as owner, naming that person, and also upon the person or persons in actual occupancy of any tract of land without naming them of the day and hour of such hearing, which notice shall be for the same time and served in the same manner as is provided for the establishment of a subdistrict, and shall state the amount of assessment of costs and expenses of organizing and construction apportioned to each owner upon each forty-acre tract or less, and that all objections thereto must be in writing and filed with the governing body at or before the time set for such hearing.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.26]

C93, §161A.26

161A.27 Determination by board.

At the time fixed or at an adjourned hearing, the governing body shall hear and determine all objections filed to said report and shall fully consider the said report, and may affirm, increase, or diminish the percentage of benefits or the apportionment of costs and expenses made in said report against any body or tract of land in said subdistrict as may appear to the board to be just and equitable.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.27]

C93, §161A.27

161A.28 Appeal.

Any person aggrieved may appeal from any final action of the governing body in relation to any matter involving the person's rights, to the district court of the county in which the proceeding was held.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.28]

C93, §161A.28

161A.29 Intercounty subdistricts.

In subdistricts extending into two or more counties, appeals from final orders resulting from the joint action of the several governing bodies of such subdistrict may be taken to the district court of any county into which the district extends.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.29]

C93, §161A.29

161A.30 Notice of appeal.

All appeals shall be taken within twenty days after the date of final action or order of the governing body from which such appeal is taken by filing with the auditor a notice of appeal, designating the court to which the appeal is taken, the order or action appealed from, and stating that the appeal will come on for hearing thirty days following perfection of the appeal with allowances of additional time for good cause shown. This notice shall be accompanied by an appeal bond with sureties to be approved by the auditor conditioned to pay all costs adjudged against the appellant and to abide the orders of the court.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.30]

C93, §161A.30

161A.31 Petition filed.

Within twenty days after perfection of notice, the appellant shall file a petition setting forth the order or final action of the governing body appealed from and the grounds of the appellant's objections and the appellant's complaint, with a copy of the appellant's claim for damages or objections filed by the appellant with the auditor. The appellant shall pay to the clerk the filing fee as provided by law in other cases. A failure to pay the filing fee or to file

such petition shall be deemed a waiver of the appeal and in such case the court shall dismiss the same.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.31]
C93, §161A.31

161A.32 Assessment certified.

When the board or boards of supervisors shall receive a certification from the governing body of the district to make the necessary assessment on the real estate within the boundaries of the subdistrict lying within their respective county, this shall be construed as final action by the governing body.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.32]
C93, §161A.32

161A.33 Assessments transmitted.

1. The governing body upon receiving the reports from three appointed appraisers and after holding the hearings shall transmit and certify the amounts of assessments to the respective boards of supervisors which, upon receipt of certification from the governing body of the district, make the necessary levy of such assessments as fixed by the governing body upon the land within such subdistrict. The assessments shall be levied at that time as a tax and shall bear interest at a rate not exceeding that permitted by [chapter 74A](#) from that date payable annually except as hereafter provided as to cash payments therefor within a specified time.

2. The assessment levied under [this section](#) together with any accrued interest or delinquency penalty as provided in [this chapter](#) shall be deposited in a fund established by the governing body as provided by a resolution adopted by the governing body and delivered for filing with each appropriate county treasurer. Moneys earned as income from moneys in the fund, including as interest, shall remain in the fund until expended by the governing body according to procedures specified in the resolution. If the governing body does not adopt a resolution or deliver the resolution to the county treasurer, the moneys shall be deposited into a separate account in the county's general fund by that county treasurer. The account shall be identified by the official name of the subdistrict and expenditures from the account shall be made on requisition of the chairperson and secretary of the governing body of the subdistrict.

3. At no time shall an assessment be made where the benefits accrued to the subdistrict do not exceed the cost of the improvements within the subdistrict.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.33]
C93, §161A.33

[2005 Acts, ch 116, §2](#)

161A.34 Payment to county treasurer.

1. All assessments for benefits shall be levied at one time against the property benefited and when levied and certified by the board or boards of supervisors shall be paid at the office of the county treasurer. Each person shall have the right within twenty days after the levy of assessments to pay the person's assessment in full without interest. The county treasurer shall pay the collected moneys into a fund established by the governing body or an account of the county's general fund as provided in [section 161A.33](#).

2. If any levy of assessments is not sufficient to meet the cost and expenses of organizing and construction apportioned to each owner upon each forty-acre tract or less, additional assessments may be made on the same classification as the previous ones.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.34]
C93, §161A.34

[2005 Acts, ch 116, §3](#)

161A.35 Installments.

If the owner of any premises against which a levy exceeding five hundred dollars has been made and certified shall, within thirty days from the date of such levy, agree in writing in a

separate agreement, that in consideration of having a right to pay the owner's assessment in installments, the owner will not make any objection as to the legality of the assessment for benefit, or the levy of the taxes against the owner's property, then such owner shall have the following options:

1. To pay one half of the amount of such assessment at the time of filing such agreement and the remaining one half shall become due and payable one year from the date of filing such agreement. All such installments shall be without interest if paid at said times, otherwise said assessments shall bear interest from the date of the levy at a rate fixed by the governing body of the subdistrict, but not exceeding that permitted by [chapter 74A](#), payable annually, and be collected as other taxes on real estate, with like penalty for delinquency.

2. To pay such assessments in not less than ten nor more than forty equal installments, the number to be fixed by the governing body of the subdistrict and interest at the rate fixed by the governing body of the subdistrict, not exceeding that permitted by [chapter 74A](#). The first installment of each assessment shall become due and payable at the September semiannual tax paying date after the date of filing such agreement, unless the agreement is filed with the county treasurer less than ninety days prior to such September semiannual tax paying date, in that event, the first installment shall become due and payable at the next succeeding September semiannual tax paying date. The second and each subsequent installment shall become due and payable at the September semiannual tax paying date each year thereafter. All such installments shall be collected with interest accrued on the unpaid balance to the September semiannual tax paying date and as other taxes on real estate, with like penalty for delinquency.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.35]

C93, §161A.35

[98 Acts, ch 1107, §1](#); [99 Acts, ch 83, §1](#); [2012 Acts, ch 1138, §94](#)

161A.36 Option by appellant.

When an owner takes an appeal from the assessment against any of the owner's land, the option to pay in installments whatever assessment is finally established against such land in said appeal shall continue, if within twenty days after the final determination of said appeal the owner shall file in the office of the auditor the owner's written election to pay in installments, and within said period pay such installments as would have matured prior to that time if no appeal had been taken, together with all accrued interest on said assessment to the last preceding interest-paying date.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.36]

C93, §161A.36

161A.37 Status of classification.

A classification of land for watershed purposes, when finally adopted, shall remain the basis of all future assessments for the purpose of said subdistrict, except as provided in [section 161A.38](#).

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.37]

C93, §161A.37

161A.38 New classification.

After a subdistrict has been established and the improvements thereof constructed and put in operation, if the governing body shall find that the original assessments are not equitable as a basis for the expenses of any enlargement or extension thereof which may have become necessary, they shall order a new classification of all lands in said subdistrict by resolution, and appoint three appraisers, which shall meet the same requirements as set forth in [section 161A.23](#).

Upon the completion of the reclassification, those affected by such reclassification shall have the right to appeal as hereinabove set forth.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.38]

C93, §161A.38

161A.39 Benefit of whole subdistrict.

Assessments for repair, alteration, enlargement, extension, and operation of works of improvement within the watershed district shall be a benefit to the entire subdistrict and levied as such.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.39]

C93, §161A.39

161A.40 Compensation of appraisers.

Persons appointed to appraise and make classifications of lands shall receive such compensation as the governing body may fix and in addition thereto, the necessary expenses of transportation of said persons while engaged in their work; such compensation and expenses shall be construed as part of the cost of the subdistrict which shall be included when considering classifications of lands within a subdistrict.

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.40]

C93, §161A.40

161A.41 Election of taxing methods.

Subdistricts organized under the provisions of [this chapter](#) shall designate in the petition which of the taxing methods will be used or may stipulate that both methods are contemplated for use. Should the governing body of the subdistrict find it desirable to change from a special annual tax to special benefit assessments it may elect to do so and shall institute proceedings described in [sections 161A.23 through 161A.40](#) and may divert any moneys already collected under [section 161A.20](#), for the purposes authorized in [this chapter](#).

[C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.41]

C93, §161A.41

DIVISION V

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION PRACTICES

PART 1

DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS

161A.42 Definitions.

In addition to the definitions established by [section 161A.3](#), as used in [this division](#), unless the context otherwise requires:

1. “*Agricultural land*” has the meaning assigned that term by [section 9H.1](#).
2. “*Conservation agreement*” means a commitment by the owner or operator of a farm unit to implement a farm unit soil conservation plan or, with the approval of the commissioners of the soil and water conservation district within which the farm unit is located, a portion of a farm unit soil conservation plan. The commitment shall be conditioned on the furnishing by the soil and water conservation district of technical or planning assistance in the establishment of, and cost sharing or other financial assistance for establishment and maintenance of the soil and water conservation practices necessary to implement the plan, or a portion of the plan.
3. “*Cost-share*” or “*cost-sharing*” means a contribution of money made by the state in order to pay a percentage of the costs related to the establishment of voluntary or mandatory practices as provided under [this chapter](#), including but not limited to soil and water conservation practices and erosion control practices.
4. “*Erosion control practices*” means:
 - a. The construction or installation, and maintenance, of such structures or devices as are necessary to carry to a suitable outlet from the site of any building housing four or more residential units, any commercial or industrial development or any publicly or privately

owned recreational or service facility of any kind, not served by a central storm sewer system, any water which:

- (1) Would otherwise cause erosion in excess of the applicable soil loss limit; and
- (2) Does not carry nor constitute sewage, industrial waste, or other waste as defined by [section 455B.171](#).

b. The employment of temporary devices or structures, temporary seeding, fibre mats, plastic, straw, or other measures adequate to prevent erosion in excess of the applicable soil loss limits from the site of, or land directly affected by, the construction of any public or private street, road or highway, any residential, commercial, or industrial building or development, or any publicly or privately owned recreational or service facility of any kind, at all times prior to completion of such construction.

c. The establishment and maintenance of vegetation upon the right-of-way of any completed portion of any public street, road, or highway, or the construction or installation thereon of structures or devices, or other measures adequate to prevent erosion from the right-of-way in excess of the applicable soil loss limits.

5. “*Farm unit*” means a single contiguous tract of agricultural land, or two or more adjacent tracts of agricultural land, located within a single soil and water conservation district, upon which farming operations are being conducted by a person who owns or is purchasing or renting all of the land, or by that person’s tenant or tenants. If a landowner has multiple farm tenants, the land on which farming operations are being conducted by each tenant is a separate farm unit. This definition does not prohibit land which is within a single soil and water conservation district and is owned or being purchased by the same person, or is being rented by the same tenant, from being treated as two or more farm units if the commissioners of the soil and water conservation district deem it preferable to do so.

6. “*Farm unit soil conservation plan*” means a plan jointly developed by the owner and, if appropriate, the operator of a farm unit and the commissioners of the soil and water conservation district within which that farm unit is located, identifying those permanent soil and water conservation practices and temporary soil and water conservation practices the use of which may be expected to prevent soil loss by erosion from that farm unit in excess of the applicable soil loss limit or limits. The plan shall if practicable identify alternative practices by which this objective may be attained.

7. “*Forest*” means stands of native or introduced trees containing at least two hundred trees per acre and located on privately owned land. However, a stand of fruit trees is not a forest.

8. “*Professional forester*” means a forestry graduate of an institution of higher learning, who has a minimum of two years of forest management experience.

9. “*Soil and water conservation practices*” means any of the practices designated in or pursuant to [this subsection](#) which serve to prevent erosion of soil by wind or water, in excess of applicable soil loss limits, from land used for agricultural or horticultural purposes only.

a. “*Permanent soil and water conservation practices*” means planting of perennial grasses, legumes, shrubs, or trees, the establishment of grassed waterways, and the construction of terraces, or other permanent soil and water practices approved by the committee.

b. “*Temporary soil and water conservation practices*” means planting of annual or biennial crops, use of strip-cropping, contour planting, or minimum or mulch tillage, and any other cultural practices approved by the committee.

10. “*Soil loss limit*” means the maximum amount of soil loss due to erosion by water or wind, expressed in terms of tons per acre per year, which the commissioners of the respective soil and water conservation districts determine is acceptable in order to meet the objectives expressed in [section 161A.2](#).

11. “*State forester*” means a person employed by the department of natural resources as required by [section 456A.13](#).

[C73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.42]

86 Acts, ch 1238, §40; 86 Acts, ch 1245, §655, 656; 87 Acts, ch 23, §30; 88 Acts, ch 1134, §88; 89 Acts, ch 106, §4; 92 Acts, ch 1184, §2, 3

C93, §161A.42

94 Acts, ch 1107, §8; 2012 Acts, ch 1095, §11, 12

161A.43 Duty of property owners — liability.

To conserve the fertility, general usefulness, and value of the soil and soil resources of this state, and to prevent the injurious effects of soil erosion, it is hereby made the duty of the owners of real property in this state to establish and maintain soil and water conservation practices or erosion control practices, as required by the regulations of the commissioners of the respective soil and water conservation districts. As used in [this section](#), “*owners of real property in this state*” includes each state government agency, each political subdivision of the state and each agency of such a political subdivision which has under its control publicly owned land, including but not limited to agricultural land, forests, parks, the grounds of state educational, penal and human service institutions, public highways, roads and streets, and other public rights-of-way.

A landowner shall not be liable for a claim based upon or arising out of a claim of negligent design or specification, negligent adoption of design or specification, or negligent installation, construction, or reconstruction of a soil and water conservation practice or an erosion control practice that was installed, constructed, or reconstructed in accordance with generally recognized engineering or safety standards, criteria, or design theory in existence at the time of the installation, construction, or reconstruction. A soil and water conservation practice or an erosion control practice installed, constructed, or reconstructed in compliance with rules adopted by the division and currently in effect shall be deemed to be installed, constructed, or reconstructed according to generally recognized engineering or safety standards, criteria, or design theory in existence at the time of the installation, construction, or reconstruction. A claim shall not be allowed for failure to upgrade, improve, or alter any aspect of an existing soil and water conservation practice or erosion control practice to a new, changed, or altered design standard. This paragraph does not apply to a claim based on a failure of a landowner to upgrade, improve, or alter a soil and water conservation practice or erosion control practice in violation of law. This paragraph does not apply to claims based upon gross negligence.

[C73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.43]

[92 Acts, ch 1184, §4](#); [92 Acts, ch 1239, §50](#)

[C93, §161A.43](#)

[94 Acts, ch 1023, §16](#)

161A.44 Rules by commissioners — scope.

The commissioners of each soil and water conservation district shall, with approval of and within time limits set by administrative order of the state soil conservation committee, adopt reasonable regulations as are deemed necessary to establish a soil loss limit or limits for the district and provide for the implementation of the limit or limits, and may subsequently amend or repeal their regulations as they deem necessary. The committee shall review the soil loss limit regulations adopted by the soil and water conservation districts at least once every five years, and shall recommend changes in the regulations of a soil and water conservation district which the committee deems necessary to assure that the district’s soil loss limits are reasonable and attainable. The commissioners may:

1. Classify land in the district on the basis of topography, soil characteristics, current use, and other factors affecting propensity to soil erosion.
2. Establish different soil loss limits for different classes of land in the district if in their judgment and that of the state soil conservation committee a lower soil loss limit should be applied to some land than can reasonably be applied to other land in the district, it being the intent of the general assembly that no land in the state be assigned a soil loss limit that cannot reasonably be applied to such land.
3. Require the owners of real property in the district to employ either soil and water conservation practices or erosion control practices, and:
 - a. May not specify the particular practices to be employed so long as such owners voluntarily comply with the applicable soil loss limits established for the district.
 - b. May specify two or more approved soil and water conservation practices or erosion control practices, one of which shall be employed by the landowner to bring erosion from

land under the landowner's control within the applicable soil loss limit of the district when an administrative order is issued to the landowner.

c. In no case may the commissioners require:

(1) The employment of erosion control practices as defined in [section 161A.42, subsection 4](#), on land used in good faith for agricultural or horticultural purposes only.

(2) The employment of soil and water conservation practices or erosion control practices on that portion of any public street, road or highway completed or under construction within the corporate limits of any city, which is or will become the traveled or surfaced portion of such street, road, or highway.

(3) That any owner or operator of agricultural land refrain from fall plowing of land on which the owner or operator intends to raise a crop during the next succeeding growing season, however on those lands which are prone to excessive wind erosion the commissioners may require that reasonable temporary measures be taken to minimize the likelihood of wind erosion so long as such measures do not unduly increase the cost of operation of the farm on which the land is located. However, fall plowing of soil which is commonly known as gumbo shall always be permitted.

d. May require that a person under an order to employ soil and water conservation practices or erosion control practices submit up to three bids to the commissioners for the work and provide an explanation to the commissioners if a bid other than the lowest bid has been selected by that person.

[C73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.44]

[83 Acts, ch 45, §1](#); [86 Acts, ch 1245, §657](#); [87 Acts, ch 23, §31](#); [89 Acts, ch 106, §5](#)
C93, §161A.44

161A.45 Submission of regulations to committee — hearing.

Regulations which the commissioners propose to adopt, amend, or repeal shall be submitted to the committee, in a form prescribed by the committee, for its approval. The committee may approve the regulations as submitted, or with amendments as it deems necessary. The commissioners shall, after approval, publish notice of hearing on the proposed regulations, as approved, in a newspaper of general circulation in the district, setting a date and time not less than ten nor more than thirty days after the publication when a hearing on the proposed regulations will be held at a specified place. The notice shall include the full text of the proposed regulations or shall state that the proposed regulations are on file and available for review at the office of the affected soil and water conservation district.

[C73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.45]

[86 Acts, ch 1245, §658](#); [87 Acts, ch 23, §32](#); [89 Acts, ch 106, §6](#)
C93, §161A.45

161A.46 Conduct of hearing.

At the hearing, the commissioners or their designees shall explain, in reasonable detail, the reasons why adoption, amendment, or repeal of the regulations is deemed necessary or advisable. Any landowner, or any occupant of land who would be affected by the regulations, shall be afforded an opportunity to be heard for or against the proposed regulations. At the conclusion of the hearing, the commissioners shall announce and enter of record their decision whether to adopt or modify the proposed regulations. Any modification must be approved by the committee, which may at its discretion order the commissioners to republish the regulations and hold another hearing in the manner prescribed by [this chapter](#).

[C73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.46]

[86 Acts, ch 1245, §659](#); [89 Acts, ch 106, §7](#)
C93, §161A.46

161A.47 Inspection of land on complaint.

1. The commissioners shall inspect or cause to be inspected any land within the district to determine if land is being damaged by sediment, from soil erosion occurring on neighboring land in excess of the limits established by the district's soil erosion control regulations. If the land is privately owned, the commissioners shall make or cause to be made the inspection,

upon receiving a written complaint signed by an owner or occupant of land claiming that the owner's or occupant's land is being damaged by sediment. If the land is subject to a public interest, the commissioners shall make or cause to be made the inspection upon a majority vote of commissioners at an open meeting held pursuant to [chapter 21](#). Land is subject to a public interest if the land is publicly held, subject to an easement held by the public, or the subject of an improvement made at public expense.

2. If, after the inspection, the commissioners find that sediment damages are occurring to land which is owned or occupied by the person filing the complaint or subject to a public interest, and that excess soil erosion is occurring on neighboring land, the commissioners shall issue an administrative order to the landowner or landowners of record, and to the occupant of the land if known to the commissioners. The order shall describe the land and state as nearly as possible the extent to which soil erosion on the land exceeds the limits established by the district's regulations.

3. The order shall be delivered either by personal service or by restricted certified mail to each of the persons to whom it is directed, and shall:

a. In the case of erosion occurring on the site of any construction project or similar undertaking involving the removal of all or a major portion of the vegetation or other cover, exposing bare soil directly to water or wind, state a time not more than five days after service or mailing of the notice of the order when work necessary to establish or maintain erosion control practices must be commenced, and a time not more than thirty days after service or mailing of the notice of the order when the work is to be satisfactorily completed.

b. In all other cases, state a time not more than six months after service or mailing of the notice of the order, by which work needed to establish or maintain the necessary soil and water conservation practices or erosion control measures must be commenced, and a time not more than one year after the service or mailing of the notice of the order when the work is to be satisfactorily completed, unless the requirements of the order are superseded by the provisions of [section 161A.48](#).

[C73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.47]

[87 Acts, ch 23, §33](#); [92 Acts, ch 1057, §1](#)

[C93, §161A.47](#)

[2009 Acts, ch 41, §202](#)

161A.48 Mandatory establishment of soil and water conservation practices.

1. An owner or occupant of agricultural land in this state is not required to establish any new permanent or temporary soil and water conservation practice unless cost-share or other public moneys have been specifically approved for that land and made available to the owner or occupant pursuant to [section 161A.74](#).

2. Evidence that an application for cost-share or other public moneys, from a source or sources having authority to pay a portion of the cost of work needed to comply with an administrative order issued pursuant to [section 161A.47](#), has been submitted to the proper officer or agency constitutes commencement of the work within the meaning of [sections 161A.43 through 161A.53](#).

3. Upon receiving evidence of the submission of an application, the commissioners shall forward to the officer or agency to which the application was made a written request to receive notification of the disposition of the application. When notified of the approval of the application, the commissioners shall issue to the same parties who received the original administrative order, or their successors in interest, a supplementary order, to be delivered in the same manner as provided by [sections 161A.43 to 161A.53](#) for delivery of original administrative orders. The supplementary order shall state a time, not more than six months after approval of the application for public cost-sharing funds, by which the work needed to comply with the original administrative order shall actually be commenced, and a time thereafter when the work is to be satisfactorily completed. If feasible, that time shall be within one year after the date of the supplementary order, but the owner of land on which a soil and water conservation practice is being established under [this section](#) is not required to incur a cost for the practice in any one calendar year which exceeds ten dollars per acre

for each acre of land belonging to that owner and located in the county containing the land on which the required practice is being established or in counties contiguous to that county.

[C73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.48]

84 Acts, ch 1192, §1; 86 Acts, ch 1245, §660; 87 Acts, ch 23, §34; 89 Acts, ch 106, §8; 90 Acts, ch 1255, §35; 90 Acts, ch 1260, §29; 91 Acts, ch 268, §238; 92 Acts, ch 1184, §5

C93, §161A.48

96 Acts, ch 1083, §3

161A.49 Petition for court order.

The commissioners shall petition the district court for a court order requiring immediate compliance with an administrative order previously issued by the commissioners as provided in [section 161A.47](#), if:

1. The work necessary to comply with the administrative order is not commenced on or before the date specified in such order, or in any supplementary order subsequently issued as provided in [section 161A.48](#), unless in the judgment of the commissioners the failure to commence or complete the work as required by the administrative order is due to factors beyond the control of the person or persons to whom such order is directed and the person or persons can be relied upon to commence and complete the necessary work at the earliest possible time.

2. Such work is not being performed with due diligence, or is not satisfactorily completed by the date specified in the administrative order, or when completed does not reduce soil erosion from such land below the limits established by the soil and water conservation district's regulations.

3. The person or persons to whom the administrative order is directed advise the commissioners that they do not intend to commence or complete such work.

[C73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.49]

C93, §161A.49

161A.50 Burden — court order.

In any action brought under [section 161A.49](#), the burden of proof shall be upon the commissioners to show that soil erosion is in fact occurring in excess of the applicable soil loss limits and that the defendant has not established or maintained soil and water conservation practices or erosion control practices in compliance with the soil and water conservation district's regulations. With respect to construction, repair, or maintenance of any public street, road, or highway, evidence that soil erosion control standards equivalent to or in excess of those currently imposed by the United States government on the project or like projects involving use of federal funds shall create a presumption of compliance with the applicable soil loss limit. Upon receiving satisfactory proof, the court shall issue an order directing the landowner or landowners to comply with the administrative order previously issued by the commissioners. The court may modify such administrative order if deemed necessary. Notice of the court order shall be given either by personal service or by restricted certified mail to each of the persons to whom the order is directed, who may within thirty days from the date of the court order appeal to the supreme court. Any person who fails to comply with a court order issued pursuant to [this section](#) within the time specified in such order, unless the order has been stayed pending an appeal, shall be deemed in contempt of court and may be punished accordingly.

[C73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.50]

C93, §161A.50

161A.51 Entering on land.

The commissioners and their authorized agents or employees may enter upon any private or public property, except private dwellings, at any reasonable time to classify land by soil sampling or other appropriate methods or to determine whether soil erosion is occurring on the property in violation of the district's regulations.

1. If the owner or occupant of any property refuses admittance, or if prior to such refusal the commissioners demonstrate the need for a warrant, the commissioners may make an

application under oath or affirmation to the district court of the county in which the property is located for the issuance of a search warrant.

2. In the application the commissioners shall state that entry on the premises is mandated by the laws of this state or that entry is needed to conduct soil sampling necessary to classify soil in the district as specified in [section 161A.44, subsection 1](#), or to determine whether soil erosion is occurring on the property in violation of the district's regulations. The application shall describe the area or premises, give the date of the last known investigation or sampling, give the date and time of the proposed inspection, declare the need for such inspection, recite that notice of desire to make an inspection has been given to affected persons and that admission was refused if that be the fact, and state that the inspection has no purpose other than to carry out the purpose of the statute, ordinance or regulation pursuant to which the inspection is to be made.

3. The court may issue a search warrant, after examination of the applicant and any witnesses, if the court is satisfied that there is probable cause to believe the existence of the allegations in the application.

4. In soil sampling and making investigations pursuant to a warrant, the commissioners must execute the warrant in a reasonable manner within the time period specified in the warrant.

[C73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.51]

C93, §161A.51

161A.52 Reserved.

161A.53 Cooperation with other agencies.

Soil and water conservation districts may enter into agreements with the federal government or an agency of the federal government, as provided by state law, or with the state of Iowa or an agency of the state, any other soil and water conservation district, or any other political subdivision of this state, for cooperation in preventing, controlling, or attempting to prevent or control soil erosion. Soil and water conservation districts may accept, as provided by state law, money disbursed for soil erosion control purposes by the federal government or an agency of the federal government, and expend the money for the purposes for which it was received.

[C73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §467A.53]

[86 Acts, ch 1238, §61](#); [87 Acts, ch 23, §35](#); [89 Acts, ch 83, §59](#)

C93, §161A.53

161A.54 State agency conservation plans — exemptions.

Each state agency shall enter into an agreement with the soil and water conservation district in which the state agency has public land under its control in cultivation. The agreement shall contain a plan of the state agency to prevent soil erosion in excess of soil loss limits by the use of soil and water conservation practices and erosion control practices. [This section](#) applies to all public land which is used for horticultural or agricultural purposes. State soil conservation cost-sharing funds shall not be used on these public lands. Conservation plans required by [this section](#) shall be completed by July 1, 1986, and implementation shall occur consistent with the schedule contained in the conservation plan. Application for exemption from [this section](#) may be submitted to the appropriate soil and water conservation district. The exemption shall be granted for land upon which soil management research for the purposes of the study, evaluation, understanding and control of erosion, sedimentation and run-off water is conducted by or in conjunction with institutions governed by the board of regents.

[85 Acts, ch 133, §1](#)

CS85, §467A.54

[87 Acts, ch 23, §36](#)

C93, §161A.54

161A.55 through 161A.60 Reserved.

161A.61 Discretionary inspection by commissioners — actions upon certain findings.

1. In addition to the authority granted by [section 161A.47](#), the commissioners of a soil and water conservation district may inspect or cause to be inspected any land within the district on which they have reasonable grounds to believe that soil erosion is occurring in excess of the limits established by the district's soil erosion control regulations. If the commissioners find from an inspection conducted under authority of either [section 161A.47](#) or [this section](#) that soil erosion is occurring on that land in excess of the applicable soil loss limits established by the district's soil erosion control regulations, they shall send notice of that finding to the landowner or landowners of record, and to the occupant of the land if known to the commissioners. The notice shall describe the land affected and shall state as nearly as possible the extent to which soil erosion from that land exceeds the applicable soil loss limits.

a. If the commissioners find that the excessive erosion described in the notice is not causing sediment damage to property owned or occupied by any person other than the owner or occupant of the land on which the excessive soil erosion is occurring, and that the rate of the excessive erosion is less than twice the applicable soil loss limit, the notice required by [this subsection](#) shall include or be accompanied by information regarding financial or other assistance which the commissioners are able to make available to the owner or occupant of the land to aid in achieving compliance with the applicable soil loss limits.

b. If the commissioners find that the excessive soil erosion described in the notice is not causing sediment damage to property owned or occupied by any person other than the owner or occupant of the land on which it is occurring, but that the erosion is occurring at a rate equal to or greater than twice the applicable soil loss limit, the notice shall so state, shall include or be accompanied by the information required by paragraph "a" of [this subsection](#), and shall be delivered by personal service or by restricted certified mail to each of the persons to whom the notice is directed. A notice given under this paragraph shall also include or be accompanied by information explaining the provisions of [subsection 2](#).

2. The commissioners of the soil and water conservation district in which a farm unit is located may petition the district court for an appropriate order with respect to that farm unit if its owner or occupant has been sent a notice by the commissioners under [subsection 1](#), paragraph "b", for three or more consecutive years. The commissioners' petition shall seek a court order which states a time not more than six months after the date of the order when the owner or occupant must commence, and a time when the owner or occupant must complete the steps necessary to comply with the order. The time allowed to complete the establishment of a temporary soil and water conservation practice employed to comply or advance toward compliance with the court's order shall be not more than one year after the date of that order, and the time allowed to complete the establishment of a permanent soil and water conservation practice employed to comply with the court's order shall be not more than five years after the date of that order. [Section 161A.48](#) applies to a court order issued under [this subsection](#). The steps required of the farm unit owner or operator by the court order are those which are necessary to do one of the following:

a. Bring the farm unit which is the subject of the order into compliance with its farm unit soil conservation plan, if such a plan had been agreed upon prior to the time the commissioners petitioned for the order.

b. Bring the farm unit which is the subject of the order into compliance with a plan developed for that farm unit by the commissioners, in accordance with guidelines established by the division of soil conservation, and presented to the court as a part of the commissioners' petition, if a farm unit soil conservation plan has not previously been agreed upon for that farm unit. A plan presented to the court by the commissioners under this paragraph shall specify as many alternative approved soil and water conservation practices as feasible, among which the owner or occupant of the farm unit may choose in taking the steps necessary to comply with the court's order.

c. Bring the farm unit which is the subject of the order into compliance with a soil conservation plan developed by the owner or occupant of that farm unit as an alternative to the proposed soil conservation plan developed by the commissioners, if the owner or occupant so petitions the court and the court finds that the owner or occupant's plan will bring the farm unit into conformity with the applicable soil loss limits of the district.

3. The commissioners may also cause an inspection of land within the district on which they have reasonable grounds to believe that a permanent soil and water conservation practice established with public cost-sharing funds is not being properly maintained or is being altered in violation of [section 161A.7, subsection 3](#). If the commissioners find that the practices are not being maintained or have been altered in violation of [section 161A.7, subsection 3](#), the commissioners shall issue an administrative order to the landowner who made the unauthorized removal, alteration or modification to maintain, repair, or reconstruct the permanent soil and water conservation practices. The requirement for maintenance and repair is for the length of life as defined in [section 161A.7, subsection 3](#). Public cost-sharing funds are not available for the work under this order. If the landowner fails to comply with the administrative order, the commissioners may petition the district court for an order compelling compliance with the order. Upon receiving satisfactory proof, the court shall issue an order directing compliance with the administrative order and may modify the administrative order. The provisions of [section 161A.50](#) relating to notice, appeals, and contempt of court shall apply to proceedings under [this subsection](#).

[C81, §467A.61; [82 Acts, ch 1220, §2](#)]

[87 Acts, ch 23, §37, 38](#)

C93, §161A.61

[2009 Acts, ch 41, §61; 2012 Acts, ch 1095, §13; 2013 Acts, ch 90, §32](#)

161A.62 Duties of commissioners and of owners and occupants of agricultural land — restrictions on use of cost-sharing funds.

The commissioners of each soil and water conservation district shall seek to implement or to assist in implementing the following requirements:

1. The commissioners of each soil and water conservation district shall complete preparation of a farm unit soil conservation plan for each farm unit within the district as soon as adequate funding is available to permit compliance with this requirement.

a. Technical assistance in the development of the farm unit soil conservation plan may be provided by the United States department of agriculture natural resources conservation service through the memorandum of understanding with the district or by the department. The commissioners shall make every reasonable effort to consult with the owner and, if appropriate, with the operator of that farm unit, and to prepare the plan in a form which is acceptable to that person or those persons.

b. The farm unit soil conservation plan shall be drawn up and completed without expense to the owner or operator of the farm unit, except that the owner or operator shall not be reimbursed for the value of the owner's or occupant's own time devoted to participation in the preparation of the plan.

c. If the commissioners' farm unit soil conservation plan is unacceptable to the owner or operator of the farm unit, that person or those persons may prepare an alternative farm unit soil conservation plan identifying permanent or temporary soil and water conservation practices which may be expected to achieve compliance with the soil loss limit or limits applicable to that farm unit, and submit that plan to the soil and water conservation district commissioners for their review.

2. Within one year after completion of a farm unit soil conservation plan for a particular farm unit which is acceptable both to the commissioners of the soil and water conservation district within which the farm unit is located and to the owner and, if appropriate, to the operator of that farm unit, the commissioners shall offer to enter into a soil conservation agreement with the owner, and also with the operator if appropriate, based on the mutually acceptable farm unit soil conservation plan.

[C81, §467A.62; [81 Acts, ch 153, §1](#)]

[86 Acts, ch 1238, §22; 87 Acts, ch 17, §10; 87 Acts, ch 23, §39](#)

C93, §161A.62

[95 Acts, ch 216, §25; 2012 Acts, ch 1095, §14, 15](#)

161A.63 Right of purchaser of agricultural land to obtain information.

A prospective purchaser of an interest in agricultural land located in this state is entitled to obtain from the seller, or from the office of the soil and water conservation district in which the land is located, a copy of the most recently updated farm unit soil conservation plan, developed pursuant to [section 161A.62, subsection 1](#), which is applicable to the agricultural land proposed to be purchased. A prospective purchaser of an interest in agricultural land located in this state is entitled to obtain additional copies of the document referred to in [this section](#) from the office of the soil and water conservation district in which the land is located, promptly upon request, at a fee not to exceed the cost of reproducing them. All persons who identify themselves to the commissioners or staff of a soil and water conservation district as prospective purchasers of agricultural land in the district shall be given information, prepared in accordance with rules of the department, which clearly explains the provisions of [section 161A.76](#).

[C81, §467A.63]

[87 Acts, ch 23, §40](#)

C93, §161A.63

[2012 Acts, ch 1095, §16](#); [2012 Acts, ch 1138, §55](#)

161A.64 Erosion control plans required for certain projects.

1. If a political subdivision has adopted a sediment control ordinance which the commissioners and the political subdivision jointly agree is at least as equally effective as the commissioners' rules in preventing erosion from exceeding the established soil loss limits, the commissioners and the political subdivision shall execute an agreement under [chapter 28E](#) allowing an agency authorized by the political subdivision to receive and file an affidavit from a person, prior to initiating a land disturbing activity in that subdivision, stating that the proposed activity will not exceed the established soil loss limits. A copy of the affidavit shall be mailed to the district as a part of the terms of the agreement. The affidavit shall be in a form prescribed by the department and made available by the district.

2. Prior to initiating a land disturbing activity in a political subdivision which has not adopted sediment control ordinances as described in [subsection 1](#), a person engaged in the land disturbing activity shall file a signed affidavit with the soil and water conservation district that the project will not exceed the soil loss limits. The affidavit shall be in a form prescribed by the department and made available by the district.

3. For the purposes of [this section](#), "*land disturbing activity*" means a land change such as the tilling, clearing, grading, excavating, transporting or filling of land which may result in soil erosion from water or wind and the movement of sediment and sediment related pollutants into the waters of the state or onto lands in the state but does not include the following:

- a. Tilling, planting or harvesting of agricultural, horticultural or forest crops.
- b. Preparation for single-family residences separately built unless in conjunction with multiple construction in subdivision development.
- c. Minor activities such as home gardens, landscaping, repairs and maintenance work.
- d. Surface or deep mining.
- e. Installation of public utility lines and connections, fence posts, sign posts, telephone poles, electric poles and other kinds of posts or poles.
- f. Septic tanks and drainage fields unless they are to serve a building whose construction is a land disturbing activity.
- g. Construction and repair of the tracks, right-of-way, bridges, communication facilities and other related structures of a railroad.
- h. Emergency work to protect life or property.
- i. Disturbed land areas of less than twenty-five thousand square feet unless a political subdivision by ordinance establishes a smaller exception or establishes conditions for this exception.
- j. The construction, relocation, alteration or maintenance of public roads by a public body.

4. If the agency authorized under [subsection 1](#) determines that a land disturbing activity is not being conducted in compliance with the soil loss limits, it shall file a written and signed complaint with the soil and water conservation district commissioners. The complaint shall

have the same effect and validity as a complaint filed by an owner or occupant of land being damaged by sediment pursuant to [section 161A.47](#). If the affidavit is filed with the district or the political subdivision, the commissioners may proceed on their own complaint. The soil and water conservation district commissioners may issue an administrative order as provided in that section to the person conducting the land disturbing activity.

[C81, §467A.64; [81 Acts, ch 154, §1, 2](#)
[87 Acts, ch 23, §41](#)
C93, §161A.64

161A.65 Reserved.

161A.66 Procedure when commissioner is complainant.

A soil and water conservation district commissioner who is an owner or occupant of land being damaged by sediment has the same right as any other person in like circumstances to file a complaint under [section 161A.47](#); however, a commissioner who is the complainant shall not vote on the question whether, on the basis of the inspection made pursuant to the complaint, the commissioners shall issue an administrative order under [section 161A.47](#).

[C81, §467A.66]
[87 Acts, ch 23, §43](#)
C93, §161A.66

161A.67 through 161A.69 Reserved.

PART 2

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

161A.70 Establishment and purpose.

Financial incentive programs are established within the division in order to protect the long-term productivity of the soil and water resources of the state from erosion and sediment damage, and to encourage the adoption of farm management and agricultural practices which are consistent with the capability of the land to sustain agriculture and preserve this state's natural resources.

[92 Acts, ch 1184, §6](#)

161A.71 Conservation practices revolving loan fund.

1. The division may establish a conservation practices revolving loan fund composed of any money appropriated by the general assembly for that purpose, and of any other moneys available to and obtained or accepted by the committee from the federal government or private sources for placement in that fund. Except as otherwise provided by [subsection 3](#), the assets of the conservation practices revolving loan fund shall be used only to make loans directly to owners of land in this state for the purpose of establishing on that land any new permanent soil and water conservation practice which the commissioners of the soil and water conservation district in which the land is located have found is necessary or advisable to meet the soil loss limits established for that land. A loan shall not be made for establishing a permanent soil and water conservation practice on land that is subject to the restriction on state cost-sharing funds of [section 161A.76](#). Revolving loan funds and public cost-sharing funds may be used in combination for funding a particular soil and water conservation practice. Each loan made under [this section](#) shall be for a period not to exceed ten years, shall bear no interest, and shall be repayable to the conservation practices revolving loan fund in equal yearly installments due March 1 of each year the loan is in effect. The interest rate upon loans for which payment is delinquent shall accelerate immediately to the current legal usury limit. Applicants are eligible for no more than twenty thousand dollars in loans outstanding at any time under this program. "*Permanent soil and water conservation practices*" has the same meaning as defined in [section 161A.42](#) and those established under this program are

subject to the requirements of [section 161A.7, subsection 3](#). Loans made under this program shall come due for payment upon sale of the land on which those practices are established.

2. The general assembly finds and declares the following:

a. The erosion of topsoil on agricultural land by wind and water is a serious problem within the state and one which threatens to destroy the natural resource most responsible for Iowa's prosperity.

b. It is necessary to the preservation of the economy and well-being of the state to encourage soil conservation practices by providing loans for permanent soil and water conservation practices on agricultural land within the state.

c. The use of state funds for the conservation practices revolving loan fund established under [subsection 1](#) is in the public interest, and the purposes of [this section](#) are public purposes and uses for which public moneys may be borrowed, expended, advanced, loaned, or granted.

3. The division may:

a. Contract, sue and be sued, and promulgate administrative rules necessary to carry out the provisions of [this section](#), but the committee shall not in any manner directly or indirectly pledge the credit of the state of Iowa.

b. Authorize payment from the conservation practices revolving loan fund and from fees for costs, commissions, attorney fees and other reasonable expenses related to and necessary for making and protecting direct loans under [this section](#), and for the recovery of moneys loaned or the management of property acquired in connection with such loans.

4. [This section](#) does not negate the provisions of [section 161A.48](#) that an owner or occupant of land in this state shall not be required to establish any new soil and water conservation practice unless public cost-sharing funds have been approved and are available for the land affected. However, the owner of land with respect to which an administrative order to establish soil and water conservation practices has been issued under [section 161A.47](#) but not complied with for lack of public cost-sharing funds, may waive the right to await availability of such funds and instead apply for a loan under [this section](#) to establish any permanent soil and water conservation practices necessary to comply with the order. If a landowner does so, that loan application shall be given reasonable preference by the state soil conservation committee if there are applications for more loans under [this section](#) than can be made from the money available in the conservation practices revolving loan fund. If it is found necessary to deny an application for a soil and water conservation practices loan to a landowner who has waived the right to availability of public cost-sharing funds before complying with an administrative order issued under [section 161A.47](#), the landowner's waiver is void.

[83 Acts, ch 207, §53, 93](#)

[CS83, §467A.71](#)

[85 Acts, ch 67, §46; 85 Acts, ch 170, §1; 86 Acts, ch 1244, §58; 86 Acts, ch 1245, §661; 87 Acts, ch 23, §44; 91 Acts, ch 260, §1234](#)

[C93, §161A.71](#)

[2013 Acts, ch 15, §1](#)

161A.72 Administration.

1. Financial incentives provided under [this chapter](#) shall be administered by the division. The incentives shall be supported with funds appropriated by the general assembly, and moneys available to or obtained by the division or the committee from public or private sources, including but not limited to the United States, other states, or private organizations. The division shall adopt all rules consistent with [chapter 17A](#) necessary to carry out the purpose of [this division](#) as provided in [section 161A.70](#).

2. The commissioners of a district shall, to the extent funding is available, contract with a person who is an owner or occupant of land within the district applying to establish soil and water conservation practices as provided in [this chapter](#). Under the agreement, the person shall receive financial incentives to establish permanent soil and water conservation practices and management practices, in consideration for promising to maintain the practices according to rules adopted by the division. If the land subject to an agreement is converted

to a nonagricultural use that does not require a permanent soil and water conservation practice which has been established with financial incentives, the permanent soil and water conservation practice shall not be removed until the owner pays an amount to the district, which shall be deposited into a fund established by the district for use in providing financial incentives under [this chapter](#). The amount shall be a prorated share of the amount paid in financial incentives to establish the practice, as provided in rules adopted by the division.

[92 Acts, ch 1184, §7](#); [96 Acts, ch 1083, §4](#)

161A.73 Voluntary establishment of soil and water conservation practices.

1. The division shall establish voluntary financial incentive programs which shall provide for the following:

a. The allocation of cost-share moneys as financial incentives provided for the purpose of establishing permanent soil and water conservation practices, including but not limited to terraces, diversions, grade stabilization structures, grassed waterways, and critical area planting. The financial incentives shall not exceed fifty percent of the estimated cost of establishing the practices, or fifty percent of the actual cost, whichever is less.

b. The allocation of moneys as financial incentives provided for the purpose of establishing management practices to control soil erosion on land that is row cropped, including but not limited to no-till planting, ridge-till planting, contouring, and contour strip-cropping. The division shall by rule establish limits on the amount of incentives which shall be authorized for payment to landowners upon establishment of the practice.

c. The allocation of cost-share moneys as financial incentives provided to establish practices to protect watersheds above publicly owned lakes of the state from soil erosion and sediment. The financial incentives shall be awarded to watersheds which are of the highest importance based on soil loss as established by the natural resource commission pursuant to [section 456A.33A](#). The financial incentives shall not exceed seventy-five percent of the estimated cost of establishing the practices as determined by the commissioners or seventy-five percent of the actual cost of establishing the practices, whichever is less.

d. The allocation of cost-share moneys as financial incentives to establish permanent grass and buffer zones, including an erosion control structure or an erosion control practice to mitigate the effects of concentrated runoff on surface water quality. The financial incentives shall not exceed one hundred percent of the estimated cost of establishing a zone, as determined by the commissioners, or one hundred percent of the actual cost of establishing the zone, whichever is less.

e. The allocation of cost-share moneys as financial incentives for the same purposes that are supported from the soil and water enhancement account of the resources enhancement and protection fund as provided in [section 455A.19](#), or by the water protection practices account of the water protection fund established pursuant to [section 161C.4](#). The financial incentives shall not exceed fifty percent of the estimated cost of establishing the practices, or fifty percent of the actual cost, whichever is less.

2. The commissioners of a district may establish voluntary financial incentive programs which shall provide for the following:

a. The allocation of cost-share moneys as financial incentives under a special agreement with owners of land in the district who promise to adopt a watershed conservation plan as provided by rules which shall be adopted by the division. The watershed conservation plan shall be in conjunction with the owners' respective farm unit soil conservation plans. The funding agreement must provide for the funding of a project which includes five or more contiguous farm units which have at least five hundred acres of agricultural land and which constitutes at least seventy-five percent of the agricultural land located within a watershed or subwatershed. The financial incentives shall not exceed sixty percent of the estimated cost of the project as determined by the commissioners or sixty percent of the actual cost, whichever is less.

b. The allocation of cost-share moneys as financial incentives to encourage summer construction of permanent soil and water conservation practices. The practices must be constructed on or after June 15 but not later than October 15. The commissioners may also provide for the payment of moneys on a prorated basis to compensate persons for the

production loss on an area disturbed by construction, according to rules which shall be adopted by the division.

3. a. The division may reimburse private landowners for a portion of the cost of fencing materials and installation for permanent fence used to protect forest land from domestic livestock grazing, if the division determines that the grazing has caused excessive soil loss. For purposes of [this subsection](#), forests shall be considered as agricultural land eligible for cost-share moneys. The total expenditure of reimbursement moneys shall not exceed fifty percent of the total landowner expenditures. Expenditures for boundary and road fence construction and for repair and replacement of existing fences are not eligible for reimbursement unless the complete fence is replaced.

b. A landowner shall sign an agreement with the division as a condition for receiving cost-share moneys. The agreement shall provide that the landowner shall maintain the fence for a minimum of ten years and shall follow written professional forester recommendations relating to land protected by fencing. The recommendations must be approved by the state forester or the forester's designee.

c. A landowner who violates the maintenance agreement shall maintain, repair, or reconstruct the damaged fence, or shall pay the division an amount equal to the amount of cost-share moneys reimbursed.

d. The division shall adopt rules to administer [this subsection](#), including rules relating to procedures required to receive reimbursement, and eligibility requirements such as the minimum forest acreage required, and the maximum reimbursement amount allowed.

[92 Acts, ch 1184, §8; 92 Acts, ch 1239, §51, 52; 96 Acts, ch 1083, §5; 98 Acts, ch 1040, §1; 2012 Acts, ch 1095, §17](#)

161A.74 Mandatory establishment of soil and water conservation practices — allocations.

1. The commissioners shall allocate cost-share moneys to establish mandatory soil and water conservation practices, as provided in [sections 161A.43 through 161A.53](#), according to the following requirements:

a. The financial incentives shall not exceed more than fifty percent of the estimated cost of establishing the practices as determined by the commissioners, or fifty percent of the actual cost of establishing the practices, whichever is less. However, the commissioners may allocate an amount determined by the committee for management of soil and water conservation practices, except as otherwise provided regarding land classified as agricultural land under conservation cover.

b. The commissioners shall establish the estimated cost of the permanent soil and water conservation practices in the district based upon one and two-tenths of the average cost of the practices installed in the district during the previous year. The average costs shall be reviewed and approved by the commissioners each year.

2. The committee shall review requirements of [this section](#) once each year. The committee may authorize commissioners in districts to condition the establishment of a mandatory soil and water conservation practice in a specific case on a higher proportion of public cost-sharing than is required by [this section](#). The commissioners shall determine the amount of cost-sharing moneys allocated to establish a specific soil and water conservation practice in accordance with an administrative order issued pursuant to [section 161A.47](#) by considering the extent to which the practice will contribute benefits to the individual owner or occupant of the land on which the practice is to be established.

[92 Acts, ch 1184, §9; 92 Acts, ch 1239, §53, 54](#)

161A.75 Use of moneys for emergency repairs.

1. The commissioners of a district may allocate moneys otherwise available for voluntary financial incentive programs as provided in [section 161A.73](#) to provide for the restoration of permanent soil and water conservation practices which are damaged or destroyed because of a disaster emergency. In providing for the restoration, the commissioners may allocate moneys under [this section](#) for construction, reconstruction, installation, or repair projects. For each project the commissioners must determine that the allocation is necessary in order

to restore permanent soil and water conservation practices in order to prevent erosion in excess of the applicable soil loss limits caused by the disaster emergency.

2. In order to allocate moneys under [this section](#), the disaster emergency must have occurred in an area subject to a state of disaster emergency pursuant to a proclamation made by the governor as provided in [section 29C.6](#). The commissioners shall use the moneys only to the extent that moneys from other sources, including any moneys provided by the state or federal government in response to the disaster emergency, are not adequate. The commissioners are not required to allocate the moneys on a cost-share basis.

3. Following the disaster emergency, the commissioners shall submit a report to the committee providing information regarding restoration projects and moneys allocated under [this section](#) for the projects.

[97 Acts, ch 59, §2](#)

161A.76 Cost sharing for certain lands restricted.

1. It is the intent of [this chapter](#) that each tract of agricultural land which has not been plowed or used for growing row crops at any time within the prior fifteen years shall for purposes of [this section](#) be considered classified as agricultural land under conservation cover. If a tract of land so classified is thereafter plowed or used for growing row crops, the commissioners of the soil and water conservation district in which the land is located shall not approve use of state cost-sharing funds for establishing permanent or temporary soil and water conservation practices on that tract of land in an amount greater than one-half the amount of cost-sharing funds which would be available for that land if it were not considered classified as agricultural land under conservation cover. The restriction imposed by [this section](#) applies even if an administrative order or court order has been issued requiring establishment of soil and water conservation practices on that land. The commissioners may waive the restriction imposed by [this section](#) if they determine in advance that the purpose of plowing or row cropping land classified as land under conservation cover is to revitalize permanent pasture and that the land will revert to permanent pasture within two years after it is plowed.

2. When receiving an application for state cost-sharing funds to pay a part of the cost of establishing a permanent or temporary soil and water conservation practice, the commissioners of the soil and water conservation district to which the application is submitted shall require the applicant to state in writing whether, to the best of the applicant's knowledge, the land on which the proposed practice will be established is land considered to be classified as agricultural land under conservation cover, as defined in [subsection 1](#). An applicant who knowingly makes a false statement of material facts or who falsely denies knowledge of material facts in completing the written statement required by [this subsection](#) commits a simple misdemeanor and, in addition to the penalty prescribed therefor by law, shall be required to repay to the department any cost-sharing funds made available to the applicant in reliance on the false statement or false denial.

[C81, §467A.65]

[87 Acts, ch 23, §42](#)

C93, §161A.76

[2012 Acts, ch 1095, §18](#)

161A.77 through 161A.79 Reserved.

DIVISION VI

BLUFFLANDS PROTECTION

161A.80 Blufflands protection program and revolving fund.

1. As used in [this section](#), unless the context otherwise requires:

a. For purposes of [this section](#) only, “*bluffland*” means a cliff, headland, or hill with a

broad, steep face along the channel or floodplain of the Missouri or Mississippi river and their tributaries.

b. “*Conservation organization*” means a nonprofit corporation incorporated in Iowa or an entity organized and operated primarily to enhance and protect natural resources in this state.

2. A bluffslands protection revolving fund is created in the state treasury. All proceeds shall be divided into two equal accounts. One account shall be used for the purchase of bluffslands along the Mississippi river and its tributaries and the other account shall be used for the purchase of bluffslands along the Missouri river and its tributaries. The proceeds of the revolving fund are appropriated to make loans to conservation organizations which agree to purchase bluffsland properties adjacent to state public lands. The department of agriculture and land stewardship, in conjunction with the department of natural resources, shall adopt rules pursuant to [chapter 17A](#) to administer the disbursement of funds. Notwithstanding [section 12C.7](#), interest or earnings on investments made pursuant to [this section](#) or as provided in [section 12B.10](#) shall be credited to the bluffslands protection revolving fund. Notwithstanding [section 8.33](#), unobligated or unencumbered funds credited to the bluffslands protection revolving fund shall not revert at the close of a fiscal year. However, the maximum balance in the bluffslands protection revolving fund shall not exceed two million five hundred thousand dollars. Any funds in excess of two million five hundred thousand dollars shall be credited to the rebuild Iowa infrastructure fund.

a. [This section](#) is repealed on July 1, 2015.

b. The principal and interest from any bluffslands protection loan outstanding on July 1, 2015, and payable to the bluffslands protection revolving fund, shall be paid to the administrative director of the division of soil conservation on or after July 1, 2015, pursuant to the terms of the loan agreement and shall be credited to the rebuild Iowa infrastructure fund.

[98 Acts, ch 1219, §17](#); [99 Acts, ch 96, §16](#); [99 Acts, ch 204, §26, 42](#); [2005 Acts, ch 178, §17](#)

Coordination with programs and projects of the loess hills alliance, §161D.7