

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 division, 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 division 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 director of the division approves and 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 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 division, 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; 2015 Acts, ch 103, §31; 2017 Acts, ch 159, §8, 9; 2024 Acts, ch 1170, §8 – 11

Referred to in §161A.4, 161A.61, 161A.71

Review of road construction projects, §306.50 – 306.54

Subsection 1, paragraph k amended

Subsection 1, paragraph n, subparagraph (1), unnumbered paragraph 1 amended

Subsection 1, paragraph n, subparagraph (2) amended

Subsection 3 amended