

# Election Process Review

# Goals of the Commission

- Increase Voter Participation
- Improve Transparency in the Election Process

# Current Rules

- Board shall conduct an election within 4 months of term expiring.
- Board shall identify 1 nominating committee for each area an election is to be held.
- Nominating committee is to nominate 2 qualified candidates 60 days prior to election.
- Any land representative not nominated may have their name added to the ballot if secure 10 signatures on a petition and submit the petition to the board at least 10 days before the election.

## Current Rules cont.

- Only land representatives are eligible to vote. Land representative is the owner or has power of attorney of any farm lying within the district and be a taxpayer of the county. A representative is only allowed 1 vote regardless of the number of farms owned.
- A land representative can vote for a board member in all the areas in the county.
- Each farm that has a FSA number or assessed agricultural land shall be entitled to be represented in the election.

# Current Rules cont.

- Board must publish 2 legal notices of election in a newspaper of general circulation. The second notice shall appear in the latest issue before the election date and the first one a week prior to the final.
- Select 3 residents of the district to serve as election judges.
- Require polling place to be open for at least 6 hours. If in conjunction with an annual meeting a central polling location must be open by noon and then moved to the annual meeting location.

# Current Rules cont.

- Election judges are to open and close the polls as advertised, collect and attach power of attorneys to the list of voters, count the ballots and record on tally sheet, and place counted ballots in an envelope and seal.

# Commission Policies

## Definition for Election Process

- Cooperator- Any landowner who has cooperated with the district in carrying out a SWCD practice successfully from implementation through the claims process.
- Newspaper of general circulation – Newspaper the district Supervisors deem to have the largest circulation among cooperators and landowners in the district.

# Commission Policies

- The district shall place two advertisement in a newspaper of general circulation.
- The first advertisement shall be not less than three months before the election and include:
  - General information about the district.
  - Identify the 3 people serving on each nominating committee.
  - Provide the district office phone number to enable a cooperator to submit their name for consideration.



# Commission Policies

- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Advertisement shall be in the same newspaper 2 months prior to election and shall include:
  - The names of nominated individuals for each area.
  - The date, time and place for the election.
  - The process to get name placed on the ballot through petitions.

The commission will reimburse districts up to \$500 for placing the two advertisements.

# Voluntary Transparency Policies

- Mail copies of the second advertisement to the cooperators in areas due for elections.
- Have the polls open from 12:00 – 6:00 pm to accommodate landowners. Hours of election certified by judges.

The commission will reimburse the districts \$100 for following each of these voluntary policies.

# Proposed Rule Changes

- Post a notice of SWCD Board vacancies in a newspaper of general circulation and on the front page of the District's newsletter at least 2 months prior to the ballot being developed. Require responses from qualified individuals within 3 weeks of preparation of the official ballot.
- Board vacancy notice will include the cost share funds spent on all practices in the county for past 5 years. In addition, the amount of the district staffing budgeted for current FY and number of District Board meetings held for the year.

# Proposed Rule Changes

- If there is no interest in the vacant board positions, have the board select a nominating committee to place two names on the ballot during the 3 weeks timeframe discussed above.

# Proposed Rule Changes

- Conduct Election Process for 3 week period. Select one day during week two of the election process, to open election poll for a minimum of 8 hours with polls staying open until 7:00 pm. Only non district cooperator residents holding title to land assessed agriculture (per the county assessor office) can receive a ballot at the poll to vote. District Cooperators will have already received an official ballot from the Program office (via MOSWIMS Cooperator lists) by mail to place the entities' vote.

# Proposed Rule Changes

- All individuals receiving an official ballot via mail can vote by returning the ballot to the district office in person or by mail in the three week election period. Ballots can also be turned in at the open election poll.
- District cooperator – All individuals listed in the Cost Share Software as a cooperator will receive a ballot. Cooperators will be defined as the name as shown on the Title of the Deed. For example “John and Betty Brown”. District Cooperator list will need to be updated.

Questions and comments on  
improving transparency of district  
elections.