

Are you an avid environmentalist? Do you have an interest in the natural resources and the people of Iowa? If so, you may be just who we are looking for. The Johnson County Soil & Water Conservation District will have three commissioner positions up for election this fall to begin serving in 2009. Our current commissioners are:

Cynthia Asmussen – Newport township – term expires 2011

Ed Ruppenkamp – Union township – term expires 2011

Dave Parsons – East Lucas township – term expires 2009

Janet Wilson – Liberty township – term expires 2009

Kelley Putman – West Lucas township - term expires 2009

A commissioner is an elected volunteer conservation promoter in the community, whose primary duty is to oversee the distribution of federal, state and local conservation dollars. Commissioners help direct activities such as field days, educational meetings and materials, contests, awards programs, and publicity. A commissioner's role includes establishing conservation priorities, resolving soil loss complaints, establishing acceptable soil loss limits, publishing an annual report, approving soil conservation plans, and assisting in the management of district funds and personnel. A commissioner receives no compensation for services but may be reimbursed for actual expenses necessary to discharge the duties of commissioner.

Soil and water conservation districts are the local legal subdivisions of state government responsible under state law for soil and water conservation work within their boundaries. Iowa Code Chapter 161 A, defines a "district" or soil and water conservation district" as "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." Districts promote protection, maintenance, improvement, and wise use of the soil and water within the district.

Each Soil & Water Conservation District board is composed of five commissioners. If you are an eligible elector residing within a given county, you're eligible to be a candidate for election to that county's SWCD board. You will need a nominating petition from the county Auditor (call 319-356-6004). At least 25 eligible voters must sign the petition (excluding yourself) and you must file it with the Johnson County Auditor between August 1, 2008 and August 22, 2008 (no later than the 69th day before the general election). You must also file an affidavit stating your name, residence and an assurance that you are an eligible candidate.

No more than one commissioner can be a resident from any one township at the same time. Candidates for the position of commissioner are elected locally on a nonpartisan ballot during the general election. Elections are held in even-numbered years.

Districts offer services without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, political beliefs or marital status. Studies have shown that where minorities and/or women are represented on boards in proportion to their presence in the area, program participation by these groups increased. District boards are seeking more diversity in their representation. To help broaden interest in district programs and to bring different perspectives to district boards, districts encourage members from those groups to consider serving as a soil and water conservation district commissioner, for more information please call the Johnson County Soil & Water Conservation District Office at 337-2322 ext. 3.