

How the First Edwards County Conservation District Election Happened

Edwards County's Conservation District — one of 105 local conservation districts across Kansas — traces its beginnings to the era when soil erosion and poor land stewardship were pressing issues throughout the Great Plains.

In response to widespread soil loss during the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, the Kansas Legislature passed the Conservation Districts Law in 1937. This law created a framework for locally governed conservation districts — political subdivisions of state government dedicated to addressing soil, water, and related natural resource concerns at the county level.

The first conservation district in Kansas was established in Labette County in 1938; over the next decade, districts formed in counties statewide.

The conservation movement in Kansas was supported by multiple agencies, especially through the partnership of the Kansas Cooperative Extension Service and the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (now NRCS). By 1954, every county except Shawnee had organized a conservation district following the state law.

A key figure in the early organization of these districts was Reuben C. Lind, an employee of the State Extension Service. Lind served as Secretary of the State Soil Conservation Committee and was instrumental in guiding local leaders through the process of forming their conservation districts, including ballot procedures and elections for district supervisors.

In Edwards County, the first election for district supervisors

was held on September 13, 1943, under the authority of the Kansas State Soil Conservation Committee. Local landowners who were qualified electors — meaning county residents who were U.S. citizens and at least 18 years old — cast secret ballots for candidates running to serve on the district's governing board.

The official tabulation, printed in the election notice, showed that David Britton, Harlow Anderson, and Clarence Michaelis received the highest number of votes and were therefore declared the first elected supervisors of the Edwards County Conservation District.

This election established the tradition of locally elected citizen leadership that remains a hallmark of Kansas conservation districts today. Dis-

trict supervisors serve multi-year terms and work in partnership with landowners, local, state, and federal agencies to encourage and carry out voluntary conservation practices that protect soil, water, and other natural resources.

As Kansas conservation districts grew in number through the 1940s and early 1950s, they became a critical component of the state's farm and ranch community — helping local residents im-



"Soil conservation district winners" group photo (Kansas Memory)

plement practices that reduced erosion, improved water quality, and strengthened agricultural sustainability for generations to come.

Edwards County Conservation District First Elected Board of Supervisors

NOTICE OF RESULT OF ELECTION FOR SUPERVISORS OF EDWARDS COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

To all persons interested, notice is hereby given:

That the tabulation set out below gives a full, correct, and true report of the result of an election for three supervisors for the Edwards County Soil Conservation District, held on the 13th day of September, 1943.

| NAME OF CANDIDATES | NO. OF VOTES |
|--------------------|--------------|
| David Britton | 124 |
| Harlow Anderson | 117 |
| Clarence Michaelis | 105 |
| Russel Taylor | 95 |
| Earl Fisher | 94 |
| Merle Mundenke | 80 |

David Britton, Harlow Anderson, and Clarence Michaelis being the three candidates who received the largest number of votes, were declared the elected supervisors for said district.

STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

By R.C. Lind
Secretary

Dated:
21st day of September, 1943.
Manhattan, Kansas.



Labette County conservation district early-era photo

"It is impossible to have a healthy and sound society without a proper respect for the soil."
~ Peter Maurin

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