

Draft

State Conservation Commission

Conservation District Drone Utilization Policy

(Rev.1-11-21)

A. Drones Used for State Delegated and State Contracted Programs

A county conservation district may not use a drone to carry out any state delegated or state contracted program duties unless the following occur:

1. The state agency (DEP, PDA, SCC, etc.) which has granted the district the authority to carry out the program through a delegation agreement or contract has provided specific written authorization to allow the conservation district to utilize a drone for program duties. Written authorization by the agency shall be from the Deputy Secretary or Commission Executive Secretary that is responsible to oversee the duties and responsibilities that are delegated or contracted to the district.
2. The agency delegating or contracting the duties has provided written guidance regarding how the drone may be utilized for the program duties carried out by the district.
3. The conservation district board has approved the use of the drone, has developed a written policy as required in Section C below, and is compliant with all other requirements of this policy.

B. Drones Used for Other District Programs.

1. A county conservation district may use a drone for other district programs (i.e. non-state delegated, non-state contracted) at the discretion of its board.
2. Other program purposes may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Monitoring of BMP installation
 - b. Crop monitoring and inspection
 - c. Educational and academic uses
 - d. Aerial photography
 - e. Stream corridor mapping and monitoring
 - f. Road corridor mapping and monitoring
 - g. Engineering data collection and design work
 - h. General conservation efforts
3. Any conservation district that chooses to use a drone for other district programs (i.e. non-state-delegated and non-state-contracted) must have written authorization through an action of its board prior to its initial use and must be compliant with all applicable requirements of this policy.

C. General Provisions

1. Conservation districts that operate drones for any purpose must comply with all Federal, State and local laws and regulations governing their use.
2. Conservation districts that operate drones for any purpose must develop, adopt and implement a written policy and or written standard operating procedures, that at a minimum outlines:
 - a. The specific authorized uses of the drone;
 - b. The specific program authorities, if applicable, under which these uses are authorized;

- c. Any use restrictions or limitations based on these authorities;
 - d. Operator qualifications;
 - e. Individuals authorized to operate the drone;
 - f. Procedures established to protect public safety; and
 - g. Procedures established to protect individual privacy.
3. Conservation districts that authorize the use of a drone for any purpose must ensure that they have secured adequate insurance coverage or other protections necessary to minimize their liability and legal exposure related to the use of the drone.
 4. Conservation districts that hire another individual, business or any other entity to use a drone on their behalf or provide services to a conservation district that involve the use of a drone must take reasonable steps to ensure that the individual, business, or other entity is in compliance with all requirements of local, state and federal law pertaining to the operation of drones, as well as the applicable requirements of this policy.
 5. Conservation districts that authorize the use of a drone should recognize they may be liable for damages caused by the use of the drone under applicable local, state and federal laws.
- D. This policy was adopted by the Commission on _____ date _____.