

Polk County Soil and Water Conservation Commission Goals 2025-2030

“The goal of Polk SWCD is to protect water quality and conserve soil resources in Iowa.”

<http://polkswcdiowa.gov>

Polk SWCD Goals

Promote good stewardship of soil and water resources:

1. continue to improve efficiency at Polk County SWCD meetings, keeping the commission effective and efficient in its work.
2. promote soil health.
3. work to improve water quality.
4. support urban agriculture.

Short Term Actions (1-3 years to completion):

1. Run organized and concise Polk County SWCD meetings:
 - Promote use of Robert’s Rules of Order between and during meetings
 - Coordinate meeting agendas with SWCD staff
 - Plan to finish monthly meetings in two hours or less
2. Encourage soil health with the preservation and building of Iowa topsoil by promoting erosion control practices, tillage reduction strategies, increasing cover cropping, and promotion of sustainable stewardship of urban and rural land.
 - Use social media to plant seeds of information or facts in minds about good soil health
 - Promote existing local soil health events and activities
 - Make and share instructions for people interested in doing a DIY project (worm box, soil testing resources, raised garden beds)
 - Support educational projects in schools and FFA programs
 - Facilitate/sponsor/partner with other organizations conducting soil health field days.
 - Collaborate with available educational programming for students to show the connection between soil health and water quality.
3. Work for water quality that is suitable for human consumption and wildlife.
 - Promote and sponsor local events such as bike rides along the Fourmile Creek trail (Gay Lea Wilson trail) to learn about the storm water and other practices put in place by Polk County and the City of Des Moines.

Addendums:

Robert’s Rules of Order Summary
Polk SWCD Data Collection and Information Resources

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- Demonstrate what water conservation is and share good conservation habits (A list of 5-10 things households can do; for example, turn off faucets when brushing teeth, use irrigation water responsibly by watering dawn and dusk.)
 - Advertise to the public (and participate as a commission when possible) to the watershed clean-up efforts in Polk County. For example, the April 19th Walnut Creek Cleanup. (As a commission develop a list of local youth groups and business contacts to notify when opportunities for water clean-up efforts are occurring in their local area to drive participation.)
 - Compile an edge-of-field inventory in Polk County. How many saturated buffers and bioreactors do we have in the county?
4. Supporting urban agriculture projects
- Support urban agriculture where possible. These might include edible fruit and nut trees and shrubs along with honeybees and backyard chickens.
 - Support turning lawns into gardens for water quality and soil health.
 - Promoting urban agriculture for soil health

Long Term Commission Actions (2-5 years to completion):

1. Meeting Organization
 - 1.1. Maintain timely and productive monthly meetings.
2. Soil Health
 - 2.1. Educate Polk County citizens on the history of soils in Polk County, IA and what makes them unique.
 - 2.2. Offer a range of ideas and solutions to prevent and correct soil loss issues, both urban and rural.
 - 2.3. Educate Polk County residents on the benefits of plant and crop diversity within our landscape.
 - 2.4. Recognize improved methods of urban and rural land use that preserve and conserve soil resources for future generations.
3. Water Health
 - 3.1. Define water quality and provide access to water quality data for all citizens of Polk County.
 - 3.2. Identify major water uses in Polk County including data centers, irrigation, manufacturing, watering lawns, and household usage.
 - 3.3. Compile simple visuals for website/ social media that demonstrate Polk County water use and stream health.

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- 3.4. Share conservation concepts with IPTV and public schools (encourage the youth to understand water quality and soil health.)
- 4. Urban Agriculture
 - 4.1. Promote concepts in public spaces (parks, schools, town squares, etc.) in collaboration with community organizations.
- 5. General Goals:
 - 5.1. Promote outdoor recreational activities that introduce and keep people in harmony with nature.
 - 5.2. Teach about the importance of holistic systems approaches that promote local foods and diversified markets for farm products.
 - 5.3. Data collection and information availability to improve awareness of soil and water quality and the significant impact collective community effort can have over time.
 - 5.4. Sponsor a source that aggregates soil & water quality information.

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- Publish Polk County soil erosion estimates.
 - Estimate tons of soil erosion from wind and water.
 - How many acres of full-width tillage do we have?
 - How many acres of conservation tillage do we have?
 - How many acres of highly erodible farmland do we have?
 - How much development land do we have?
 - How many acres of land are lost to urbanization/suburbanization each year?
- Cover crop inventory in Polk County.
 - How many acres of cover crops do we have?
 - How many acres are seeded every year and how many are on soybean acres (every other year)?
 - Are cover crop acres increasing, staying steady, and declining?
- What happens to our storm water in Polk County?
 - How much storm water do we generate?
 - Does it flow directly into the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers?
 - How much sewage water do we generate and what happens to that water?
 - In flooding situations, how much storm water runoff and sewage water runs together?
- Water use data collection in Polk County
 - Data centers that use water: 2-7% of consumption (6/18/2025 KCCI Report)

How much do they use in our county?

- Do they recycle the water in some way?
 - Do they access deep, ancient aquifers or shallower water?
- Agricultural water use
 - How much irrigation is there?
- Industrial uses of water
 - Which industries use water and how much?
- Data resources to share with public:
 - ❖ Explore the potential uses of gray water:
<https://waterconservationsummit.com/unveiling-the-potential-of-graywater-a-sustainable-solution-for-water-conservation>

- ❖ Iowa Environmental Council water quality information:
<https://www.iaenvironment.org/our-work/clean-water-and-land-stewardship/water-quality-monitoring-data>
- ❖ Polk County Conservation:
<https://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/sp/conservation/water-quality>
- ❖ Iowa Water Quality Information System: <https://iwqis.iowawis.org/>
- ❖ USGS data: <https://waterdata.usgs.gov/monitoring-location/05485640/#dataTypeId=continuous-000650&period=P7D&showMedian=false&period=P7D&showMedian=true>
- ❖ Municipal water system use: Central Iowa Water Works:
<https://www.ciww.gov/> (ex-Des Moines Water Works)
- ❖ CISRA Water Report Information: <https://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/board-of-supervisors/board-of-supervisors-news-and-press-releases/polk-county-launches-central-iowa-source-water-research-assessment/>
- ❖ CISRA Water Report (when published July 2025)

Robert's Rules of Order Summary for POLK SWCD Commission

Robert's Rules of Order is a manual of parliamentary procedure, widely used in the United States, that provides guidelines for conducting meetings and making decisions in an organized and fair manner. It's designed to help groups, from small boards to large assemblies, operate efficiently and ensure everyone has an opportunity to participate.

Purpose and Principles:

- **Orderly Meetings:** Robert's Rules ensures meetings are conducted in an organized and efficient way, preventing chaos and promoting a structured environment for decision-making.
- **Fairness and Participation:** It ensures that all members have a chance to be heard, that discussions are focused, and that decisions are made through a fair process.
- **Focus on Majority Rule:** While protecting minority rights, Robert's Rules emphasizes the importance of majority rule in decision-making.

Key Elements:

- **Motions:** Members can propose actions through motions, which require a second, debate, and a vote.
- **Debate:** Only one person speaks at a time, and discussions must stay on topic and be respectful.
- **Voting:** Decisions are typically made by a majority vote, but some require a two-thirds vote.
- **Point of Order:** Members can raise concerns about rule violations.

Meeting Structure: Meetings follow a defined structure, including calling the meeting to order, addressing old and new business, and adjourning.

Simplified Explanation:

Imagine a group of people needing to make a decision. Robert's Rules of Order provides a framework for this process:

1. **Making a Proposal:** Someone proposes an action (a motion).
2. **Seconding the Proposal:** Another person agrees the proposal should be considered.
3. **Discussion:** Members discuss the proposal, with only one person speaking at a time.

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4. **Voting:** Members vote on the proposal, with the majority (or a two-thirds majority in some cases) deciding whether it passes or fails.

In essence, Robert's Rules of Order is a tool for facilitating effective and fair decision-making in group settings.