

PENNINGTON SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

MEDIA PRACTICES POLICY

Adopted: July 21, 2020



TABLE OF CONTENTS.....2

1. STATEMENT AND SCOPE.....3

2. QUESTIONS AND INQUIRIES.....4

3. COMMENTS RECEIVED4

4. QUESTIONABLE CONTENT4

5. GUIDELINES FOR STAFF AND SUPERVISORS.....5

6. DISTRICT MANAGER AND OUTREACH COORDINATOR DUTIES6

7. CONSEQUENCE OF BREACH.....6

8. ANNUAL REVIEW.....6

9. DISCLAIMER.....7

STATEMENT AND SCOPE

Pennington Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) uses Facebook and other social media programs, the Pennington SWCD website, the Pennington SWCD newsletter, local newspapers, and radio announcements to inform the public about different resources and services the District offers. These media outlets prove to be an invaluable tool in helping to notify the public about current projects, trainings and events, conservation education opportunities for children and adults, and the availability of technical and financial programs for our cooperators.

As a representative of Pennington SWCD, employees and supervisors are expected to demonstrate best practices and appropriate etiquette including but not limited to the following when relaying information over any type of media outlet:

- **Showing Respect for Everyone.** Pennington SWCD does not allow discrimination of any form in its activities or operations.
- **Guarding Information.** It is everyone's responsibility to protect confidential information including personally identifiable information (PII).
- **Representing Pennington SWCD.** Be professional. It only takes one personal comment to change someone's image of the District.
- **Thinking Twice Before You Act.** Stop, reflect, and if you need to, ask, for another opinion before sharing any information. Remember, once it's out there, it's out there forever.
- **Legal Ramifications.** Law suites, hefty fines, and dismissal are all possibilities if copyright, privacy, and confidentiality guidelines are not followed.
- **Fun and Responsibility Go Hand-in-Hand.** Have fun reporting information and events for Pennington SWCD but act responsibly. If a mistake occurs, take immediate action to correct it.

QUESTIONS AND INQUIRIES

The mission of Pennington SWCD is to provide landowners and other agencies with technical assistance in identifying and improving resource issues. Excellent customer service is a top priority for Pennington SWCD.

All questions and inquiries received following a release of information need to be forwarded to appropriate staff personnel and responded to within one day, or as soon as possible.

COMMENTS RECEIVED

Feedback is a very important part of building a relationship with the public and sharing information. The staff of Pennington SWCD looks forward to hearing from our cooperators and will not edit or delete posted comments unless they are found to contain:

- Defamatory remarks
- Statements or links not related to the topic
- Support of illegal activity
- Threats of physical harm
- Vulgar, profane, abusive, or hate language
- Sexually explicit language, graphics, or links
- Advertising for commercial services or products

These types of comments will be deleted immediately.

QUESTIONABLE CONTENT

Any media incidents of misinformation, news leaks, confidential information, or other questionable content regarding Pennington SWCD must be reported to the District Manager or Outreach Coordinator immediately.

GUIDELINES FOR STAFF AND SUPERVISORS

- Always be respectful to others. Hate language, personal insults, obscenity, or slurs will not be tolerated.
- Factual information only will be distributed to the public. Personal views that do not reflect the District shall be left out.
- Be professional. Don't let a personal post change someone's image of the District. It could take a long time to earn trust back. Keep work posts and personal posts separate.
- Releasing employee, supervisor, or cooperator personally identifiable information (PII) or sharing any confidential District information through any media outlet is strictly prohibited.
- Copyright laws must be followed. Pictures, articles, graphics, quotes, and references cannot be published without the proper permission. Rule of thumb – always make sure you have permission to publish.
- All photos must have permission from the owner or a signed photo release form on file in the office before it can be used. Photo credit must be given where warranted.
- Photos of minor children must have a signed photo release form on file in the office signed by the child's parent or legal guardian before it can be used.
- Stop and think twice before sharing any media information. Every release can be scrutinized in a court of law. If undecided about whether to share a piece of information, ask someone else for their opinion. Many times, a second set of eyes and ears will help clarify doubt. Remember, once information is released, it's out there forever.
- If a mistake occurs, report it to the District Manager or Outreach Coordinator immediately.

DISTRICT MANAGER AND OUTREACH COORDINATOR DUTIES

- Only the District Manager and Outreach Coordinator are approved to make additions, corrections, or deletions on the Pennington SWCD Facebook page or Pennington SWCD website.
- The Outreach Coordinator will change the passwords for the Pennington SWCD Facebook page and the Pennington SWCD website annually.
- Facebook posts, news releases for the paper, radio ads, newsletter articles, and website articles are to be routed to the Outreach Coordinator for publishing.
- During a public relation crisis, all questions should be directed solely to the District Manager to resolve either through social media or print, as required.

CONSEQUENCE OF BREACH

Staff and supervisors failing to comply with the provisions of this media policy shall be subject to disciplinary action (as described in the Employment Policy Handbook), up to and including dismissal.

ANNUAL REVIEW

This media policy will be reviewed once per year by the Pennington SWCD Board of Supervisors. Staff and supervisors will be provided access to a copy of this policy.

DISCLAIMER

All communications created and released through Pennington SWCD media outlets are for general information purposes only. The public should use this information at their own risk. Pennington SWCD is not responsible for any losses, injury, or damages incurred from the application of this information.

The public understands and agrees that Pennington SWCD is not liable for the use of hyperlinks to or from any of our sites, hacking or unauthorized change of information, or photos/videos downloaded by third parties. Pennington SWCD does not endorse or sponsor any product, service, or enterprise mentioned through our sites.

Public comments are considered open data that can be used and distributed by anyone. They are the sole responsibility of the person making the comment. Pennington SWCD takes no responsibility and assumes no liability for the content and opinions expressed by any individual. Inappropriate comments per this policy will be deleted.

Pennington SWCD is not liable for interruptions to any of our sites due to technical difficulties or for the precision of current or antiquated information contained on our sites. Information is subject to change without notice.