

## Laurie's Swan Song (abbreviated)

My son's favorite saying is "success comes in cans." Not sure where he stole it from, but it is a sentiment I firmly believe in. Over the last 40 years, conservation districts have many successes – some hard fought, some came easy. My job, as I saw it, over the last 40 years was to empower growth and accomplishment without limitations.

Looking back over CD's accomplishments in the last 40 years, it is hard to imagine the CD world I began in. Back then, it would have been unimaginable that conservation district supervisors would have been successful in organizing and building a drinking water project that serves four counties and the local tribes. Who could have envisioned that the conservation districts along the Yellowstone River would have had success being the local driver of what was originally a federally-driven project? Their efforts inspired conservation districts along the Missouri River and now the Milk River to organize to ensure local voices were heard in huge variety of natural resource projects.

I see so much growth, so much creativity, and so much conviction that local voices are not just a luxury, but an absolute requirement in any activity that affects land stewards of all kinds.

Over the last 40 years, seven governors have come and gone, along with all the administration changes that go with it. CDB has been shuffled, reorganized, and moved from building to building many times, our budgets have grown and shrunk depending on the state's finances, and together we survived it all – not only survived, but grew, and came out stronger. Through it all, your voices were heard and CDB (wherever we happened to be) continued to provide the services that encourage growth at a local level and that support locally lead conservation. I have worked for 18 (ish) MACD presidents – each one with their strengths and dedication.

We get caught up in the notion that we have to accomplish big things to be successful, but there is beauty in showing up, listening, speaking up when you need to, being kind when you would rather not, and adding your voice to this beautiful music you are all part of.

I will miss you all as you have all been part of family that has guided me, shaped my mission, and inspired my actions over the last 40 years. My hope for you in this difficult times ahead is that you continue to grow without limitations, continue to speak up, and to continue to have the unshakable believe that if you think you can, you can.