



# Setting-Up A Web Site?

A few simple steps to get you on your way

Setting up a web site for your local SWCD can be a fun way to reach the public you serve, while utilizing the ever expanding World Wide Web. It's also a way of sharing information and ideas with other SWCDs and your partners.



**1. Registering a Domain Name** - Selecting the right domain name can be very important. This is your identity for the Internet. The domain name should be short and easy to remember. From a state perspective, it is also good to have some uniformity to the names from one SWCD to another. **MASWCD recommends the following: [acmeswcd.org](http://acmeswcd.org).** Dot com, or .com, is the extension most of us are familiar with, however it is mainly identified with commercial, for-profit organizations. The .org extension, on the other hand, can be broadly applied to many types of organizations.

Domain name registration can be done through several companies over the Internet (MASWCD recommends going through NACD as part of a larger package of services - more on this later). Domain Registry of America ([www.droa.com](http://www.droa.com)) is company that sells domain names and it charges \$30 for one year, with price breaks for longer terms. Whatever term length you choose, just be sure to set-up some kind of reminder for renewing, or your service might expire, allowing someone else to buy your domain name.

Some domain registration companies are going to offer you other features, such as server space, e-mail accounts, etc. These aren't usually the best deals and you're better off shopping elsewhere for those additional features. The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) is another option for registering your domain name. They can register a domain name for you as part of a larger package of services. Which leads us to...

**2. Server Space/Hosting Services** - After you have selected your domain name it's time to find server space - a computer which will "serve" or "host" your web site to the World Wild Web. Most of us don't have the equipment or financial resources to set-up a stand-alone computer in our office as a server - it needs to be extremely reliable, have plenty of memory, a fast, non-stop Internet connection, and state of the art security features built in to it, among other things. So, it is easier and more cost effective to "rent" space on someone else's server. NACD provides this service for a reasonable cost (current prices are posted on their web site - <http://www.nacdnet.org/hosting/service.htm>). **This is the set-up that MASWCD has chosen.** In addition, the Natural Resources Conservation Service of Minnesota can provide this to you at no charge, but there may be some caveats with regard to the content you can post on your web site (e.g. no Arc View or GIS components).



When you purchase server space/hosting services from a company/organization, they will give you the IP (Internet protocol) address for the computer which will be serving your web site. You then need to tell your domain name manager that IP address. Then, when you type [www.acmeswcd.org](http://www.acmeswcd.org) into a web browser, you are forwarded to the computer and folder which hold your web site. If this sounds confusing, don't worry; a good server hosting plan will include technical support for this part of the process, and they are used to helping people who are not familiar with the technical details of how the Web works. Now you are ready to start designing your web site.

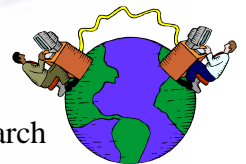
**3. Web Site Design/Development** - Like many things, web site design can be viewed as an art and a science. To do a really professional, high quality web site takes a high level of knowledge of the code, XHTML



(Extensible Hyper Text Markup Language). However, most of us do not have the time and resources to learn XHTML in a short amount of time, while still taking care of our other work responsibilities. The alternative? Microsoft Expression Web. This software program is the successor to Microsoft FrontPage, and can serve as your translator. Working in a window similar to a word processor, Expression can translate your work into the XHTML code needed for broadcast on the Internet. It can also make it easier to put your webpages out on the Internet. The current version of Expression Web (2006) retails for about \$270. It should come with a user's guide, along with a tutorial that will walk you through developing a sample web site. Make full use of these tools to get yourself acquainted with the program and the basic features.

As you design your web site, try to keep a consistent theme, make use of photos or other graphics to break up text, and HAVE FUN! Be creative! When you're done, follow the instructions from your server company on how to upload your site to the server.

Now you have developed another means of getting out the conservation message. People all over the world will be able to see what's going on in your SWCD! Or will they?...



**4. Registering Your Domain Name with Search Engines** - Most of us are familiar with search engines like Google and Yahoo. Whenever we aren't sure about a web address, we type in the name of what we're looking for and, voila!, a list of results come up and we choose the closest fit. You may be thinking that now that your web site is up on the web, it will automatically come up as a search result when someone types Acme SWCD into a search engine. Unfortunately, this is not the case. People will only reach it by typing the domain name into a web browser or following a link on someone else's site to your site. Don't worry; if people already know your web address and type it into a web browser, or if another website (like MASWCD's) links to your site, people will still be able to get there; it's only people who are *searching* for your site that will not be able to find it right away. It can take many months or even as long as a year for Google's or Yahoo's robot web crawlers to find your web site on their own and include it in their databases, depending on whether your site is linked to from other sites. To speed up this process, you need to manually submit your domain name to the major search engines. Yahoo has a link at the bottom of their search page titled, "Suggest a Site." For other search engines (Web Crawler, Alta Vista, Hot Bot, etc.) if you don't see such a link, you may want to do a search on "Suggesting a site to WebCrawler.com," for example. As alluded to above, the time it takes for your site to show up in a search will also decrease if other sites link to yours. When your site is ready and uploaded, ask your local and state partners to include you on any "links" pages they may have on their web sites. Then after about a few weeks or a month or so, everyone will be able to find your site with a search engine.

**Success!** That wasn't so difficult, was it? **Remember to keep your site updated on a regular basis.** Announce your web site address in newsletters, and add it to your letterhead and business cards, as well as your e-mail signature block. Now your site is ready for the whole world to see!



HAPPY WEBBING!!

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