

SUPPORT ILLINOIS' 97 SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S



OUR PURPOSE:

- Soil and Water Conservation District's (SWCD's) were first organized to provide for locally led, "grass roots" organization to help the USDA set priorities to address the agricultural problems associated with soil erosion. Since their initial creation in 1938, their role has expanded to include flood control, water quality improvement, air quality improvement, plant health maintenance and wildlife habitat enhancement and development. Their role has also expanded to include urban soil erosion control and water quality improvement.
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts provide a unique system of cost share and/or technical assistance programs to both urban and agricultural areas. Most programs and dollars put into action are provided through federal programs which filter down to state and local service providers. We are that service provider.
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts install practices which protect groundwater recharge areas and help reduce flooding in both rural and urban areas.
- SWCD's developed the Illinois Urban Manual (IUM) to assist developers and county and municipal zoning administrators. The IUM contains standards for installing and maintaining soil erosion control and water quality protection practices on development sites. Many county and municipal zoning and planning offices require developers to adhere to the recommended practices contained in the IUM.

FUNDING EFFECTS:

- Unlike most states funded programs, SWCD's have an average of **\$23.57 FOR EVERY \$1.00 SPENT** in return of investment to local and state economies.
- Soil and Water Conservation District programs are capable of adding more than \$205 million to the State's economy every year, but need fully functioning staff to meet that mark.
- SWCD's are the only unit of government in Illinois that have **no taxing power** and must therefore rely on General Revenue Source funds appropriated by the General Assembly. Those funds are insufficient to meet all of the needs for which they are intended to be used. SWCD's have suffered greatly during the past four years as their administrative appropriations have dropped nearly 70% since 2008.

EFFECTS ON STAFFING:

- There has been a 25% reduction in fully-trained, full time staff since 2008. Each office must maintain one full time trained technical professional and one full time trained administrative professional in order to sustain current workloads.
- Approximately one-fourth of the 97 Soil and Water Conservation Districts are operating at just half-staff, and some of those are only on a part-time basis.
- Administrative employees have had to learn the technical employee's jobs and vice-versa, with no increases in pay. This puts added strain on the employee and takes away from the quality, quantity and variety of services which can be offered to local residents, landowners, businesses and others.

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Conserving Our Land Today For Tomorrow

The Winnebago County Soil & Water Conservation District is a locally operated unit of government functioning under Illinois Law. Our purpose is to promote the protection, maintenance, improvement, and wise use of the soil, water, and related resources within the District.
Est. 1940

IF SWCD'S FAIL:

- In rural areas, SWCD's work with agricultural producers to install conservation practices which help maintain soil productivity by reducing soil erosion which can carry nutrients and organic matter as it is washed off the field. SWCD's assist with installation of protective measure such as filter strips and grass or tree buffers near stream-banks, and construct terraces, grass waterways or other structure to prevent soil erosion and keep farm chemicals from running off into rivers and streams. These conservation measures protect the water we drink and use for recreational activity and also keep our farmland productive and contributing to the state's exports and economy. **When the SWCD's fail, there will be no assistance to help farmers implement practices that retain soil on farm fields so that it does not clog road ditches, streams, rivers and lakes and does not contribute to water pollution which can harm aquatic species and wildlife as well as contaminate drinking water supplies.**
- The SWCD's provide state source cost share incentives to farmers and urban landowners for conservation practice construction. Those practices account for an estimated reduction of 85-90 thousand tons of soil erosion and the accompanying pollutants to surface waters. Conservation practices such as well decommissioning also reduce groundwater pollution access points. **When the SWCD's fail an estimated 85 – 90 thousand tons of soil will erode into ditches, streams, rivers and lakes and with it will be an estimated 170-180 thousand pounds of Nitrogen and 85 -90 thousand pounds of Phosphorous every year!**
- SWCD's help the USDA implement federal Farm Bill Programs. SWCD's provide technical assistance to landowners to help them maintain compliance with Farm Bill program contracts. Illinois receives approximately \$230 million for these programs every year and at any given time there are about \$415 million in active multiyear contracts that the SWCD's deal with on a continuing basis. **When SWCD's fail, farmers will lack the technical assistance to maintain their contacts, causing them to be cancelled, costing the Illinois economy an estimated \$260-\$300 million in lost revenue the first year and approximately \$200 million every year thereafter.**
- In urban areas, SWCD's assist developers in putting together pollution control plans and adhering to them in order to comply with EPA restriction on potential contamination of the water supply from construction materials and processes. The SWCD's work with the Illinois EPA and the US Army Corps of Engineers to monitor, inspect and assist with permits. The districts do not have the enforcement authority, but instead serve an educational function to help developers meet their permit requirements. **When the SWCD'S fail, assistance will cease, making it more expensive and difficult for developers to meet permit requirements. IEPA will be forced to hire more inspectors or if that is not possible; inspections will be delayed so long that the development will be complete and the damage done before an inspector can visit the site.**
- **When no services are available or when customers have to wait too long for services they will often choose not to implement conservation practices.** Payback for conservation is a long term process. That is why conservation programs require incentives such as cost share or penalties, regulations and fines. Cost share conservation programs will not be implemented unless services are available at the times they are requested. Regulated conservation programs will be implemented but may not be implemented with proper planning and design, often causing them to fail thereby creating greater problems than their implementation would solve.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

- It is critical that sufficient funding be provided to the 97 Soil and Water Conservation District's to assure that there will be no failed SWCD's. Functional effectiveness will require a minimum of \$9.7 million. Maintenance of the 97 SWCD's to prevent their immediate failure will require an additional \$1 million to the Partners in Conservation fund to provide for a state cost share program and to allow the 97 SWCD's to continue to provide a minimal level without having to reduce employee numbers any further.
- Lapses in funding are having an immediate effect on districts, as we have received only 1/4th of the budgeted allocations for Fiscal year 2013, while being well into the third quarter of the year. Offices are already reducing office hours and staff hours as a means to get by while awaiting the money that is due to them. Employees are in danger of losing their health care coverage and wages as well.
- We respectfully request that you support dedicated funding for SWCD operations and staff as well as state source cost share to allow for the efficient and effective delivery of soil conservation and water quality improvement programs. These programs do much to keep Illinois agriculture viable, improve the state's environmental and conservation climate and help sustain the State's economy. By providing assistance to landowners and encouraging the adoption of best management practices on agricultural and nonagricultural lands to address a wide range of resource concerns, you define the future and the importance of local soil and water conservation districts. **OUR FUTURE DEPENDS ON YOU!**

Contact local Legislators to support Soil and Water Conservation District's (for a list contact the WC SWCD office)