

Soil Health Week 2026 March 2 - 8

*Celebrating our state's most
precious resource*



Soil is the foundation of all life.

It performs several vital functions in the natural environment:

- sustains diverse plant life, from crop ground and pasture to woodlands, prairies, savannah's and wetlands
- supports diverse wildlife habitat, fungi and bacteria, both above and below the ground surface
- regulates water flow through the soil, dependent on soil composition, soil structure and the plant community
- stores and cycles nutrients through cation exchange; and earthworms, nematodes and various microorganisms in the soil
- it is a natural filter of pollutants, providing microbes a home to perform the natural degradation and immobilization of pollutants before they can get into our groundwater resources
- provides support to homes, roads and other buildings and infrastructure

For more information about soil health week or soil health in general go to the IL Stewardship Alliance website at www.ilstewards.org/soil-health-week/ or the USDA website at www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns/soil-health.

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



Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), established in 1937 under the Illinois Soil and Water Conservation District Act, are local units of government. The Act gives SWCD'S the responsibility to provide technical information to individuals and groups on methods of soil and water conservation and to provide natural resource inventory information on properties slated for zoning changes. The Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation was formed in 1940 and 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.

Who develops the policies of the Winnebago County SWCD?

The Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation District is a public body made up of citizens concerned with the protection of our natural resources. It is governed by a five-member board of directors elected by District landowners and residents. This Board of Directors, along with the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) develop annual and long range plans that direct the activities of the District and NRCS.

Who funds the SWCD?

Districts have no taxing authority. Funding is provided by the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA). Districts offer several programs and services which supplement IDOA funding. The additional funding is utilized for operation expenses and education programs.

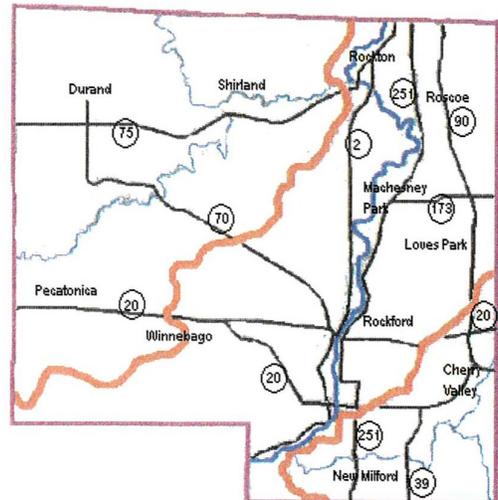
Melisa Long
Horizons Editor

Inside this Issue	Page
Soil Health Week 2026	Cover
Director Election Results	2
FY 2025 Financial Report	3
Poster Contest	4
National Groundwater Awareness Week	5
FY 25 Conservation Events	6
Partners For Conservation Projects	7
Program Measurement Data	8 - 9
Fish Sale & Tree Sale	10
PFC Cost Share Funds Available	11
Seed Mixes & Prices	12
Horizons Sponsors	13
Conserving Your Land & Legacy Workshop	13

Director Election Results

On Tuesday, January 20, the Winnebago County Soil & Water Conservation District held its district director election.

Paul Beuth of Leaf River, Justin Krohn of South Beloit, and Mike Leick of Winnebago were on the ballot. Each were elected for a two-year term on our board of directors and will begin their term on March 2, 2026.



Winnebago County Soil & Water Conservation District FY 2025 Financial Report

ASSETS	
Cash	\$329,489
Accounts Receivable	\$27,087
Fixed (building, land & vehicles)	\$173,944
Undeposited Funds	\$3,351
Total Assets	\$533,871

RESTRICTED PROGRAMS	
Partners For Conservation (PFC)	\$26,929
(state cost-share)	
WC Conservation Fund	\$28,269
(scholarships, education & easement protection)	
Total Restricted	\$55,198

LIABILITIES	
Liabilities	\$8,835
Total Liabilities	\$8,835

GENERAL OPERATION INCOME	
State Government Support	\$43,990
Local Government Support	\$55,000
Interest	\$8,365
Sponsorship (Horizons)	\$470
Rentals (building)	\$74,512
Sales (trees, fish, PF seed & other sales)	\$34,031
Technical Service Agreements with other agencies	\$102,059
Reimbursements (pass-thru funds, trees)	\$902
Special Events	\$14,090
PFC Program Fund	\$30,140
Other	\$4,424
Total Revenues	\$367,983

GENERAL OPERATION EXPENSE	
Administration	\$236,188
Education & Promotion	\$1,533
Office Expenses	\$17,238
Professional Services	\$1,300
Membership Dues	\$2,609
Building Maintenance	\$37,191
Travel	\$1,294
Conferences/Training/Meals	\$3,067
Vehicle	\$3,482
Bank Charges	\$1,095
Insurance	\$5,711
Copier Expense	\$3,344
Reimbursements	\$1,159
Program Expenses	\$2,989
PFC Program Fund payments	\$30,140
Total Expenses	\$348,340

COST OF GOODS SOLD	
District sales (trees, fish, PF seed & other)	\$22,620
Total of Cost of Goods	\$22,620

Gross Profit	\$345,363
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Net Income	\$-2,977
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SWCDS DELIVER DRIVING VALUE, DELIVERING CONSERVATION



TRUSTED RESOURCES

SWCDS are local, trusted resources that provide a wide variety of services in rural and urban settings that include technical expertise and assistance towards natural resource management, conservation planning, outreach and education.



SUSTAINERS

SWCDS work to protect Illinois' greatest assets - the rich, fertile soils and water resources of the state through strategic conservation efforts.



IMPLEMENTORS

SWCDS implement conservation practices, protect groundwater resources, conserve and restore wetlands/habitat and work with the other levels of government, homeowners and developers to manage Illinois' land in an environmentally sensitive manner.

Winnebago County SWCD

Poster Contest

Theme: Soil. Where it all Begins

Formats

K-12th grade - students can create and submit hand drawn, braille or additional assistance posters. 7th-12th grade students also have the option to create and submit digital posters.

One poster will be selected will from each grade division (K-1; 2-3; 4-6; 7-9; 10-12).



Judging will be based on conservation message, visual effectiveness, originality and universal appeal.

Soil.
Where it all Begins



SUBMISSION DEADLINE - May 8

(must be a resident of Winnebago County to participate)

What makes a good poster?

- Attracts attention
- Is simple & concise - Don't try to include too many ideas
- Uses colors & white space effectively
- Text is large enough to be easily read
- Don't use all words or all illustrations
- Research the theme topic & brainstorm ideas

Contact the Winnebago County SWCD for an application form at (815) 965-2392 Ext. 3248 or kwalswcd@comcast.net.

For more information visit <https://www.nacdnet.org/news-and-events/stewardship-week/>.



NATIONAL GROUNDWATER AWARENESS WEEK

March 8-14, 2026

An annual observance established in 1999 to highlight the responsible development, management and use of groundwater and the promotion of policies impacting groundwater quality and supply.

As more than 44% of the population depends on groundwater as a primary water source, developing an interest in the groundwater industry is of vital importance to both the health and economy of the country.

This week also serves as a reminder for water well owners to annually test, tend and treat their private water systems. It also encourages the inspection of all private water system components by a certified water well contractor, to ensure systems are operating correctly and producing safe and healthy water.

- ◆ The average household's leaks can account for nearly 10,000 gallons of water wasted every year, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- ◆ Of the estimated 29 billion gallons of water used daily by households in the United States, nearly 9 billion gallons, or 30% is devoted to outdoor water use, according to the EPA's WaterSense program. In the hot summer months, or in dry climates, a household's outdoor water use can be as high as 70%.
- ◆ The United States uses 82.3 billion gallons per day of fresh groundwater for public supply, private supply, irrigation, livestock, manufacturing, mining, thermoelectric power and other purposes, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

TEN WAYS TO PROTECT AND CONSERVE GROUNDWATER

1. **Go native**

Use native plants in your landscape. They look great, and don't need much water or fertilizer. Choose grass varieties for your lawn that are adapted for your region's climate, reducing the need for extensive watering or chemical applications.

2. **Reduce chemical use**

Use fewer chemicals around your home and yard and make sure to dispose of them properly - don't dump them on the ground!

3. **Manage waste**

Properly dispose of potentially toxic substances like unused chemical, pharmaceuticals, paint, motor oil and other substances. Many communities hold household hazardous waste collections or sites - contact your local health department to find one near you.

4. **Don't let it run**

Shut off the water when you brush your teeth or while shaving and don't let it run while waiting for it to get cold. Keep a pitcher of cold water in the fridge instead.

5. **Fix the drip**

Check all the faucets, fixtures, toilets and taps in your home for leaks and fix them right away, or install water conserving models.

6. **Wash smarter**

Limit yourself to just a five-minute shower and challenge your family members to do the same! Make sure to only run full loads in the dish and clothes washer.

7. **Water wisely**

Water the lawn and plants during the coolest parts of the day and only when they truly need it. Make sure you, your family and your neighbors obey any watering restriction during dry periods.

8. **Reduce, reuse and recycle**

Reduce the amount of "stuff" you use and reuse what you can. Recycle paper, plastic, cardboard, glass, aluminum and other materials.

9. **Natural alternatives**

Use all natural/nontoxic household cleaners whenever possible. Materials such as lemon juice, baking soda and vinegar make great cleaning products, are inexpensive and environmentally-friendly.

10. **Learn and do more!**

Get involved in water education! Learn more about groundwater and share your knowledge with others.

Information from the National Groundwater Association - www.ngwa.org

FY 25 Conservation Events



Highland Community College Ag Expo
Park-Er-Woods Plug Planting
Pollinator Palooza
Cover Crop Field Day
Northeastern IL Envirothon
Winnebago-Boone Farm Breakfast
Extension/4-H & District Oak Tree Restoration Program



FY25 PARTNERS FOR CONSERVATION PROJECTS



WATERWAY ROCK CHECK



4 YEAR - BIOSWALE



POLLINATOR INTERSEEDING

WATERWAYS - AFTER CONSTRUCTION



6 MONTH



1.5 YEAR

WINNEBAGO COUNTY SWCD/USDA OFFICE

PROGRAM MEASUREMENT DATA – CALENDER YEAR 2025

PRODUCERS BENEFITTED THROUGH SWCD & USDA-NRCS/FSA & IDOA PROGRAMS

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) - Environmentally sensitive cropland or pastureland are enrolled into 10, 15 or 30-year contracts. Areas are planted to cool season grasses and legumes or warm season grasses and forbs. Some practices are planted with trees and shrubs. The program goals are to establish grass cover to prevent soil erosion on highly erodible land, improve the health and quality of the soil; improve water quality by filtering sediment and nutrients from runoff before they enter streams and rivers; restore functional wetlands in floodplain areas; and increase or enhance wildlife habitat. Information for Winnebago County for Year 2025 includes:

- **440** contracts with **364** landowners covering **6,320.63** Acres
 - There are about **50** contracts on **600-750** additional acres in the County, but administered by adjacent offices
- Federal dollars brought into the County through annual rental payments total approximately **\$1,631,490**
In addition, payments are made to landowners for practice installation for new acreages, and to complete mid-contract management practices such as burning, managed mowing, spraying, inter-seeding or light disking
- On an annual basis we work with **35-40** percent of the contracts and landowners

Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) – Environmentally sensitive lands are put into long-term or permanent easements. The Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) Program re-establishes wetlands that had been converted to cropland. The Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) Program protects cropland and pastureland by preventing the conversion of the land to non-agricultural uses.

- Monitor **6** parcels with **1,631** acres enrolled in Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) program; with an additional **320**-acre parcel located in Winnebago County monitored by an adjacent USDA office
- Monitor **1** parcel with **28** acres enrolled in the Agricultural Land Easement (ALE)
- Streambank, wetland and habitat enhancement projects continue to be completed on the easements as needed

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) – The program is designed to compensate agricultural producers who agree to increase their level of conservation by adopting additional conservation activities and maintaining their baseline level of conservation. Participants earn payments based on the level of conservation performance. Practices include cover crops, nutrient & pest management, adding buffer strips, creating pollinator habitat, etc.

- **29** Active contracts with **24** Producers, covering **27,400** acres – Annual payments totaled **\$513,359**

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) – This program provides financial and technical assistance to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits, such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, and improved or created wildlife habitat. This program can include targeted sign-ups to address state and/or local watershed initiatives.

2025 – 5 New contracts (single-year or multi-year contracts) with total anticipated payments of **\$420,778**

- **2** – Prairie/Savannah Restoration – **125.6** Acres
- **1** – High Tunnel + 2 acres Prairie Restoration
- **1** – Grazing plan – **6** acres
- **1** – Cropland Management BMP's – **496** Acres

Oak Ecosystem Regional Conservation Partnership Program (EQIP-RCPP) – This project targets assistance where it is most needed, working collaboratively with agriculture producers and forest land managers. The goal is to restore, enhance, and protect oak ecosystems (forests, woodlands, and savannas) to improve ecological health, connectivity, and biological diversity in regions of Northeast Illinois where oak ecosystems once thrived.

FY25 - 8 New contracts on **165.3** acres, with a total cost-share of **\$193,111**

- **2** – Forestry Management plans – on **74.2** acres
- **6** – Forestry Management Implementation – **91.1** acres

Partners for Conservation Program (PFC) – This is our State Cost-share program that provides up to 75% in cost-share assistance for the construction or adoption of conservation practices such as establishing grassed waterways, no-till planting, cover crops, and other practices to address the State's Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRs). Urban-type programs and practices include well sealing, rain gardens and pollinator plantings. In **2025** there was **\$2,622** allocated to the following practices.

- **4** landowners – **10.26** acres of pollinator projects

Fall Covers For Spring Savings (FCSS) - This Illinois Department of Agriculture program was available to farmers who planted cover crops following their 2024 cash crop. Farmers received a **\$5** rebate on their crop insurance. This program was available for new or repeated fields of cover crops.

- **1** Producers – **1,321** Acres - **\$6,607** payment

WINNEBAGO COUNTY SWCD

PROGRAM MEASUREMENT DATA

Calendar Year 2025

CUSTOMERS BENEFITTED THROUGH SWCD PROGRAMS

Land Use Programs: Soils, Natural Resource Information, Plat Reviews, Sediment & Erosion Control

Soil Boring Evaluations for Septic Systems	67 parcels (5 Boone); 1 supplemental visits
Other soils work – lot splits, land purchases	5 house sites, 1 septage application site
Natural Resource Inventory - Full Reports (Ag/vacant land)	29 reports - 415.97 acres
Resource Concern Letters for Variances and Special Uses	19 reports - 122.89 acres
In-office Plat Reviews	23 - 197.4 acres
IEPA Construction Site Inspection	148 inspections on 49 active sites (22 New)
County/MS4 Erosion Control Agreements	48 inspections on 7 active sites, 4 plan reviews

Natural Resource - Education, Outreach and Information

Educational Events – District Sponsored or Partner Programs	
Youth – Ag Industry Expo, Oak planting program, Envirothon	3 events - 200 Attendees
Youth/Adult – Pollinator Palooza, Farm Breakfast	2 events - 350 Attendees
Agricultural Meetings – Cover Crops, Local Work Group	2 events - 64 Attendees
Technical Meetings – Erosion & Sediment Control	1 event - 92 Attendees
Partnership Meetings - Provide Technical & Natural Resource information to partners	
Technical - various Region 1 Planning Council committees, Illinois Urban Manual, etc.	20 meetings - 289 attendees
Advisory - various Region 1 Planning Council committees, Groundwater Committee	
Ag in the classroom Committee, Kishwaukee River Ecosystem Partnership	15 meetings - 250 attendees
Resource Material - maps, soil sampling and water testing kits, etc.	100 customers
Reference Materials - educational brochures/handouts	250 people - office & partnering events

Conservation Products and Sales

Conservation ID books - trees, birds, butterflies, wildflowers, etc.	6 books sold
Conservation Seed Sale - for wildlife and conservation plantings	19 customers - 115 acres of seed
Rain Barrel Program - 55-gallon food grade plastic drums	44 rain barrels sold, plus accessories
Tree and Shrub Sale & Accessories Program - bare root seedlings	93 customers, 3,075 trees sold
Fish Sale – stocking of ponds	15 Customers, 829 fish (63 lbs. minnows)

Public Relations

Horizons newsletters	5 published – 1,145 e-mail distribution
News Releases/TV interviews	6 print, 3 TV stories
Facebook, Website	used to distribute information, share partner events

Local Organization & Group Participation

Ag in the Classroom - Ag Literacy Advisory Com.	Pheasants Forever – Winnebago County Chapter
Certified Professional in Erosion & Sediment Control	Region 1 Planning Council Committees
City of Rockford – water division – water testing kits	Climate Resiliency Forum
City of Rockford – Stormwater Team	Community Advisory Forum
Forest Preserves of Winnebago County	MPO Technical Committee
Four Rivers Sanitation Authority	Watershed Education and Outreach group
Illinois Department of Natural Resources	Water Resource Management Planning
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency	Severson Dells Nature Center
Illinois Soil Classifiers Association	Soil Science Society of America
Illinois Urban Manual - Update Committee	University of IL – Cooperative Extension Service
International Association of Administrative Professionals	Winnebago - Boone Farm Bureau
LUC 16 (NE Illinois) Envirothon Committee	Winnebago County Health Department
Natural Lands Institute	Winnebago County Highway Department
Northern Regional Groundwater Protection Planning Com.	Winnebago County Planning & Zoning Department

Pond Stocking

Fish Sale



**ORDER
DEADLINE
April 3**

*regular bluegill, hybrid bluegill, redear,
channel catfish, black crappie, largemouth
bass, fathead minnow & triploid grass carp*

Call the office at (815) 965-2392, Ext. 3 or go to
www.winnebagoswcd.org for a brochure.

Order pick up will be April 23 at 8:00 a.m.

TREE SALE

Shade Trees, Evergreens and Shrubs

Tree Accessory Items

Edible & Pollinator Tree Packs

Rain Barrels

Pollinator Seed



SUPPLIES ARE LIMITED!

ORDER DEADLINE FEBRUARY 25

(orders will still be accepted as supplies last)

Order pick up - April 9

Brochures are available at

www.winnebagoswcd.org

or by calling (815) 965-2392, Ext. 3.

Partners For Conservation (PFC) Cost Share Funds Available for YOUR Project

The Winnebago County SWCD is offering up to **75% cost-share assistance** to eligible county residents, organizations and businesses to complete conservation projects on their property. Funding is limited and funding decisions will be based on ranking criteria. All projects must be completed in Winnebago County.

**Applications are available on our website or in the office.
Applications for spring projects are due April 10. **Apply today!****



Popular Projects	Average Cost to Install*
Grassed Waterways	\$4,029.17 - \$4,990.07/ac
Pollinator/Monarch Planting	\$308.77 - \$1,206.26/ac
Cover Crops	\$61.13 - \$105.40/ac
No-Till/Strip-Till	\$40.00/ac
Well Sealing	\$11.32 - \$108.95/ft

* Prices are subject to change and limitations to cost share may apply

For a complete list of eligible projects and to learn more - contact the Winnebago County SWCD - (815) 965-2392, Ext. 3248.

2026 SEED MIXES AND PRICES

- IL CRP Tallgrass (\$100/ac)
- IL CRP Shortgrass (\$100/ac)
- IL CRP Wet Shortgrass or Tallgrass (\$115/ac)
- IL CRP HEL 5% Slope Shortgrass or Tallgrass (\$130/ac)
- IL CRP Wildflowers Only (\$70/ac)
- IL CRP Plateau Tolerant Shortgrass or Tallgrass(\$115/ac)
- IL CRP CP21 Native Filter Strip (\$95/ac)
- IL CRP CP1 (\$40/ac)
- IL USFWS Berm Mix (\$140/ac)
- IL Firebreak Mix with grass (\$41/ac) no grass (\$40/ac)
- IL MCM Forb Only Inter-seeding (\$20/ac)
- Shortgrass or Tallgrass (grass only) Inter-seeding (\$15/ac)
- IL Diverse Pollinator (\$130/ac)
- IL Diverse Pollinator Plus (\$180/ac)
- IL HEL Diverse Pollinator (\$260/ac)
- IL Wet Pollinator (\$230/ac)
- IL Monarch Pollinator (\$160/ac)
- IL MCM Pollinator Forb Only Inter-seeding (\$50/ac)

For additional seed mixes and a list of species in each mix visit www.PFHabitatStore.com.

To place an order contact Katie Peterson at 815-965-2392 ext. 3248 or at kwalswcd@comcast.net.



HORIZON SPONSORS

The following businesses are sponsoring your Soil and Water Conservation District.



TO BECOME A "HORIZONS" SPONSOR CONTACT THE DISTRICT OFFICE AT (815) 965-2392, EXT. 3

Extension offers: Workshop Series ~ Conserving Your Land and Legacy

Join University of Illinois Extension for a three-part evening series designed for farmers, landowners and anyone interested in sustainable agriculture and natural resource stewardship. This program will explore practical strategies for improving soil health, protecting water quality and planning for long-term farm transition. Each session will provide hands-on learning, real-world examples and opportunities for discussion with local professionals and peers.

- March 24 - Conserving Your Land
- March 31 - Conserving Your Water
- April 7 - Conserving Your Legacy

Register online: <http://extension.illinois.edu/global/events>

Illinois Extension is partnering with WCSWCD for the first workshop of the series geared towards soil health, pollinators and habitat.

Date: Tuesday, March 24th
Time: 6:30-8:00 pm
Location: Lena Community Center
497 Lions Dr, Lena
Admission: \$15



Register online: <https://extension.illinois.edu/events/2026-03-24-conserving-your-land-and-legacy>



Winnebago County SWCD

4833 Owen Center Rd.
Rockford, IL 61101-6007

Office Hours
Monday - Friday
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Follow us



www.winnebagoswcd.org

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Justin Krohn - Chairman
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Jim Morrison - Secretary/Treasurer
Sue Bates
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ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

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Larry McPheron
Dwayne Proctor
Harlan Tipton
Tom Walsh

Monthly board meetings are held the last Tuesday of the month at the Soil & Water Conservation District Office. Call the office for meeting times and dates.

Meetings are open to the public and interested citizens are encouraged to attend.

NWTF STAFF

National Wild Turkey Federation

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webpage: winnebagoswcd.org

