

Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs)

There are 97 soil and water conservation districts making a difference in your community. No matter how big or small, each of the 102 counties has the services of a SWCD. From educating homeowners on practical utilization of water to helping rural landowners save soil and improve water quality; it takes everyone working together to protect our soil and water! Without these vital resources our communities cannot thrive!



SWCD Importance

SWCDs are an important link to deliver federal source funds that directly benefit the local and state economy. The economic benefit that SWCDs provide is far greater than the amount of money that is appropriated for their use by the General Assembly. Please support the governor's proposed funding levels for the SWCDs for FY2014.



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HOLDING STORMWATER ON SITE REDUCES FLOODING

Recent heavy rains across northern and central Illinois have led to significant flooding in low lying areas and along Illinois' major rivers. A large portion of the state received from 3 to more than 5 inches of rain within a 24 hour period. Because of earlier rains that had saturated much of the surface soil, much of this storm's heavy rain fall could not be absorbed and ran off into streams, lakes and rivers swelling them to record levels in some areas.

Conservation practices in rural and urban areas are designed to reduce the speed at which storm water runs off and help allow it to soak into the ground, even under near saturated conditions

The Fields Neighborhood project in East Troy, WI set a goal to design site layouts that incorporate ways to maintain pre and post development runoff volumes and rates in order to better preserve downstream water resources (waterways, wetlands,



Rain Gardens reduce stormwater runoff.

wildlife habitat, etc.). In this case runoff volumes from this development are not over taxing the resources of Honey Creek.

The site design of the Fields Neighborhood development includes front yard rain gardens and ponding areas designed to

contain a rainfall event exceeding the 100 year-24 hour storm (5.9" of rainfall in a 24 hour period).

An overall Integrated Resource Management approach was used to evaluate and design the best method for maximizing the on-site infiltration and minimizing total runoff.



Green Roofs and Rain Gardens retain large amounts of stormwater on site.

1) Reduced Imperviousness: Road widths were minimized to decrease paved ground cover. Native grasses and woody plantings were used wherever possible rather than less pervious sod mats.

2) Maximize Infiltration and Treatment: A series of rain gardens and ponding areas were laid out on the site in a daisy-chain fashion to route runoff through a "treatment train" where water is forced to pond, infiltrate and get cleaned prior to leaving the site.

The Michael Fields Agricultural Institute is involved in many activities primarily aimed at developing sustainable agricultural systems and environmentally friendly urban development through the use of soil and water conservation practices.

Illinois' SWCDs use these same practices to reduce soil erosion and help control flooding on rural and urban lands.



Districts' Spotlight

Recent heavy rains have shown the need for more conservation practices to be installed to help hold stormwater runoff and reduce flooding.

Warren County: The photo shows a water control structure doing its job with a severely flooded stream in the background. The Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District has been working with agricultural landowners for more than seventy years to apply conservation practices that are designed to reduce soil erosion by slowing and temporarily storing stormwater runoff so that flooding is also reduced.



(Photo by Dan Byers)

This photo was taken near Roseville, IL after more than 5 inches of rain had fallen April 19, 2013.

The Warren Co. SWCD continues to seek new and innovative ways to help rural and urban landowners protect the environment. As existing control methods become more sophisticated and new methods are developed, the SWCD will work with landowners to implement the protective measures and in the process, make our waters cleaner, our soil more productive and hopefully future floods less damaging.

Henry County: Henry County contains parts of three major watersheds, the Green, Rock and Mississippi River direct tributaries. The photo is of a stream in the Green River Watershed. The Henry County Soil and Water Conservation District has a long history of assisting rural landowners in the watershed with implementing conservation practices. Unfortunately, the watershed's topography is generally flat and many landowners don't believe they have a problem with soil erosion. To help work with the landowners and to control soil erosion at the same time, the SWCD is promoting the use of cover crops and no-till under a nutrient management strategy.



(Photo by Rock Katschnig)

A flooded bridge northeast of Atkinson.

The flooding in the picture above underscores the need for the district to have the ability to provide greater educational opportunities for landowners. To do that, greater funding levels for the SWCDs will be required.

Legislators, want to learn more about how conservation practices can help control flooding?

*** Mark your calendars! On August 22, 2013 the Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts, in conjunction with the Illinois Stewardship Alliance, the Illinois Land Implement Contractor's Association, Caterpillar, and several soil and water conservation districts, is hosting a summer legislator conservation tour and luncheon near Edwards, Illinois, just west of Peoria. Transportation will be provided from the Chicago area.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts Provide Many Kinds of Services and Assistance.

- The 97 SWCDs are continually involved in implementing the most up-to-date conservation practices to maximize use of available resources while also protecting these essential environmental resources.
- SWCDs provide educational assistance to urban and rural decision makers so that they can make wise choices that will protect people and property in the future
- Through education and the various programs they administer and the technical assistance they provide, SWCD's encourage the protection, conservation and wise use of our environmental resources to assure sustainability for future generations.



NOTE: SWCDs DO NOT have taxing authority and must rely on state source funding to employ staff to administer programs.

There is an urgent need to develop a funding source to help Illinois SWCDs retain staff and provide services. Without additional revenue environmental problems can not be adequately addressed.