

## 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 is represented equally. 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!



The Illinois General Assembly will have the opportunity to address funding issues that have had devastating effects on many downstate programs when they return in January 2012 for the spring session.

Gaming bill sponsors have been working since the end of the 2011 veto session to craft a bill that will win the Governor's support. We respectfully request that members of the House and Senate give careful and positive consideration to supporting that measure.



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## Already at 70% - Illinois' SWCDs Can Sustain No Further Reductions

Welcome back to Springfield for the spring session of the 97th General Assembly.

You, as members of the Illinois General Assembly, will have your work cut out for you during this session with the state's economic condition and the threat of programs such as Medicare and pensions adding to the backlog of bills that seem to grow more each day.

There is hope that initiatives such as the gaming bill and other revenue enhancements will be able to be brought forward to help with the terrible financial straits in which we find ourselves.

It is certain that there will be further talk of cuts and reductions for many programs that depend on general revenue sources for their continuance.

Our hope is that when the discussion turns to budget reductions, there will be some thought given to fairness and to the value of the programs in terms of bringing revenue into the state.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts have taken some heavy hits in their funding in the past four years and we ask that there be consideration given to restoring the SWCDs to a functional level of funding. Since FY 2002 when the SWCDs received more than \$8.75 million in general revenue funds, appropriations have been reduced nearly 70% to \$2.9 million in general revenue source funding for FY 2012. Most of that reduction has occurred in fiscal years 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012. I am not aware of any other

organization that is completely dependent on state source dollars that has taken that kind of reduction.

I am certainly not aware of any other state funded organization that has been cut so significantly that can return \$23 to the state's economy for every dollar the state spends.

This newsletter has provided that information in detail in previous issues and it can be shown that Illinois' SWCDs do in fact provide \$23 to the state's economy for every dollar that is appropriated for the operation of the SWCDs.

Reductions in funds have created significant problems for the SWCDs.

- Two districts have consolidated due to insufficient funding to maintain one of them.
- More than 120 employees have either left or been laid off.
- Training costs to bring any new hires up to a level of job knowledge that will allow them to function independent of a project leader have increased to more than half a million dollars.
- Twenty-two SWCDs have at least one vacant position and seventeen additional SWCDs have reduced staff hours to as little as 20 hours per week in an effort to retain skilled employees until funding conditions can improve.

We understand that the state is in terrible financial shape and we don't expect miracles. We simply do not believe it in the best interest of the state and certainly not in the best interest of protecting Illinois' land, water, wildlife and human resources to reduce funding for soil and water conservation districts one more cent. We hope you will agree.



## Soil and Water Conservation Districts Assist Others to Protect, Maintain, Enhance and Improve their Environmental Resources

- The 97 SWCDs are continually involved in assisting local interests to maximize use of available resources while also protecting these essential environmental resources.
- SWCDs constantly monitor conservation practices that have been installed to assure they are functioning properly and to offer assistance to landowners if there are problems.
- Through application of inexpensive conservation techniques, SWCDs have saved tax payers countless millions of dollars to maintain soil and water resources on which they depend



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

Gaming expansion being considered by the 97th General Assembly has the potential to create thousands of jobs and fund SWCDs at a sustainable level.

PROTECT & CONSERVE

# PROTECT & CONSERVE

## Districts' Spotlight



### Menard SWCD:

The Menard County SWCD used this information as a display to inform their landowners of the need to maintain existing conservation practices and replace those that are no longer functional.



**WANNA KNOW MORE?  
SOIL EROSION HERE IT  
GOES.....**

**LOSING SOIL, NUTRIENTS,  
FARMABILITY...BEFORE**

In any area where surface water concentrates and flows across a cultivated field there is potential for gully erosion. Active gully erosion is an obvious indication of the need for conservation work, but any wet area in a field should be considered a possible candidate for protection. Sediment caused by soil erosion is a major source of pollution to our state's waterways. Equally important, soil is a valuable resource to the agricultural producer. Soil particles that erode from fields—and the contaminants they often carry—threaten water quality. Grassed waterways slow runoff from fields and capture soil, prevent rill and gully erosion, and keep soil from entering streams.



### CONSERVATION IN ACTION

The grassed waterway should drain into a vegetated filter that has perennial vegetation.

Where to go for help!!

Technical assistance is available through your local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)

**WHAT IS THIS WATERWAY DOING FOR ME AND THE FARM NOW? AFTER...** .Installed new grassed waterway.... Waterway project controlled ephemeral erosion which resulted in 127 tons of soil saved per year involving 3 different farms, wildlife habitat **AND PROTECTION OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES FOR THE FUTURE!**



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YOUR LAND, YOUR WATER, YOUR ILLINOIS

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**SOIL &  
WATER**

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