

PROTECT & CONSERVE

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



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SWCDs HAVE HIGH HOPES FOR 98TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Soil and water conservation districts have suffered greatly from funding cuts over the past ten years. From a high of \$8,744,100 in FY 2002 the districts have been subjected to a steady funding decline to just over \$5 million. The 43% reduction has been especially hard on many of the SWCDs who do not have the ability to generate local sources of money. The cuts have resulted in more than 132 employees leaving district employment and taking their more than 740 years of experience with them.

The most critical loss is the experience that those departing employees took with them. The technical aspect of performing as a resource conservationist or an administrative coordinator do not allow for an easy transition for a new employee. Training required for a Resource Conservationist to be fully productive takes on average, five years even for a college graduate. Likewise, training for an Administrative Coordinator will require about three years.

The jobs these employees perform are complex and must adhere to federal standards. Many of the technical duties are the same that are performed by the one or more federal Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employees with whom each district shares space.

The reason for having a trained district employee is because federal employees are not able to work on certain state and local initiatives. That is particularly true in urban areas where the NRCS has no presence.

Many SWCDs have entered into agreements with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to help inspect permitted construction sites and with the US Army Corps of Engineers to inspect sites under section 404 permit authority. NRCS cannot perform those activities and neither the Corps or IEPA have the needed staff to do the inspections. To help insure inspections are completed in a timely manner and that water quality and the environment are protected, the SWCDs make sure their staff are properly trained to do the work. All of the SWCD employees who perform these types of inspections are certified. To obtain the necessary certification requires ten years of experience and training and extensive testing.

It is a shame that Illinois' SWCDs have lost so many people but to lose a high number of certified employees and the time and training already invested is a travesty and one that only the General Assembly can help solve.

We ask for your support in the coming legislative year.



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 needed information for urban and rural decision makers so that they can make wise choices that will protect people and property in the future
- Through 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.

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Districts' Spotlight

Kane-DuPage SWCD: District Inspects Bridge Construction for Compliance with Clean Water Act

Almost two years to the day, the Kane DuPage Soil and Water Conservation District again participated in celebrating the completion and opening of a new bridge over the Fox River between St. Charles and South Elgin.

On December 14, 2010 the Sterns Road Bridge just south of South Elgin was opened for traffic. The bridge was considered a major construction project to help ease traffic congestion in St. Charles and South Elgin. Just two years later, on December 15, 2012, the new Red Gate Bridge located just north of the City of St. Charles was opened to vehicle traffic to provide additional relief for commuters crossing the Route 64 Main Street Bridge over the Fox River in St. Charles.

The Kane-DuPage Soil and Water Conservation District was involved in both projects and assisted in the timely completion of both projects by providing soil erosion and sediment control inspections and reports for the United States Army Corps of Engineers and Illinois EPA. Candice Jacobs and Ashley Jennings coordinated inspections on the Red Gate Bridge with the City of St. Charles and Construction Management Company, Benesch, to do a walk through periodically to ensure that best management practices were in place and being maintained. Assuring that the practices were in place and functioning properly helped the contractor remain in compliance with necessary permits and maintain its construction timetable. As a result of the coordination, natural resources including the Fox River and its nearby tributaries were protected from erosion and sedimentation.

This 31 million dollar project started in August of 2011. The bridge provides a two lane vehicular traffic crossing as well as a suspended pedestrian bridge underneath. A traffic study done the week after the bridge opened counted 5,198 vehicles using the bridge during a 24 hour period. This bridge will provide yet another route across the Fox River to help relieve congestion in downtown St. Charles. Added benefits include a more timely response for emergency vehicles, shortening the distance between the two high schools in St. Charles, and saving travel time for commuters.

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony December 15, 2012



Bridge Construction November 2012

The Kane-DuPage SWCD provides one more example of the work that soil and water conservation districts perform on a daily basis throughout the state to protect our important environmental resources, assist state and federal agencies and help make life better for Illinois' citizens.

Issue 1 Vol. 4 • January 2013

YOUR LAND, YOUR WATER, YOUR ILLINOIS

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SOIL &
WATER

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