

**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!



The 2013 State Budget contains funding levels for the 97 SWCDs that are \$739,500 or more than 10% below 2012 levels, an amount that is sure to see many SWCDs falter and cease providing services during the 2013 fiscal year. Without further action by the General Assembly it is likely that 31 SWCDs will cease to function by January 1, 2013.

**THIS ISSUE**

Hot, Dry Weather no Deterrent to Conservation Work P. 1

FY13 State Budget Hard on SWCDs P. 1

District's Spotlight P. 2

SWCDs Provide Many Kinds of Services and Assistance P. 2

Hot, Dry Weather no Deterrent to Conservation Work

The hot, dry weather Illinois is experiencing is quite a departure from the past three years. Instead of being wetter than normal the state is now dryer than normal. Unfortunately, it doesn't average out. Plants, including trees, grass, garden vegetables and agricultural crops are finding it difficult to find sufficient moisture on their own to remain green and growing. Plants with deep roots seem to be doing better for the time being but if they can't find water, either through rainfall or watering, they may begin to suffer as well.

Just because it is hot and dry doesn't mean that Soil and Water Conservation District staff have nothing to do. This is perfect weather for work on areas that are normally wet. Conservation practices such as streambank stabilization, wetland restoration, wetland creation and others are well suited to the dry weather. Construction can take place at a much faster pace since the equipment operators don't have to worry about standing or flowing water interfering with their earthwork.

The biggest problem with installing conservation practices in this kind of weather is establishment of vegetation where vegetative ground cover is part of the overall construction project.

Normally the seeding date for grasses in Illinois is no later than mid September. With the soil as dry as it is, any seeding done before the September date will

probably not survive without extensive watering and that can be a difficult thing to do in rural areas.

The SWCDs will figure out how to deal with the problem. They have a strong history of doing just that. Whether they decide to use a temporary seeding with a drought tolerant crop to help control erosion until a more permanent seeding can be established or decide to try something different, the technical knowledge they possess will enable the SWCD staff to find a way to work with the property owner. Staff will make sure the money the owner paid for the project isn't wasted and that the intended purpose of the project will ultimately be carried out.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts are, unfortunately, becoming used to dealing with adversity and adverse conditions. With funding decreasing every year since 2002, the SWCDs have had to find other sources of money or use creative solutions to retain trained, qualified staff. It is disheartening to realize that as a SWCD director and employer, you have no control over the funding provided by the State and that in many cases, there are few options to generate additional funding locally.

Since 2002, SWCD funding levels have plummeted by more than 56% for all funds and nearly 70% for administrative funds. Without some relief, we believe that lack of funding, not weather, will finally stop conservation work in 31 SWCDs by January 1, 2013.



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

- The 97 SWCDs are continually involved in implementing 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 natural 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.

Gaming expansion legislation 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



Severely eroded streambank.

Adams County:

The dry weather affecting Illinois this summer has severely affected crops but because of low water flows in most streams, it is a good time to install streambank stabilization practices.

Streambank erosion is a natural wearing away of soil and rock that form streambanks. This natural process has been accelerated by activities that increase drainage water flow and water velocity, including stream channelization and straightening, removal of streamside vegetation, and construction of impervious surfaces.



Streambank stabilization practice installed

etation, and construction of impervious surfaces.

Streambank erosion, a major source of sediment buildup in bodies of water, threatens soil, water, plant and animal resources. It decreases the depth and holding capacity of lakes and reservoirs and reduces stream channel capacity, which increases the likelihood of flooding and additional streambank erosion. Excessive flooding degrades water quality and damages fish and wildlife habitat.

These two photos show a severely eroded streambank and the same stream segment after the stabilization practice was installed and vegetation was allowed to grow.

Champaign County:

St. Joseph Wetland - The St. Joseph Wetland project is located on both sides of US 150 on the west edge of St. Joseph. In 1999 the property owners (2) were approached to determine if they would be interested in selling their property to the Champaign County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD) to have it restored. They agreed and an application was made to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources through the C-2000 program to obtain funding to make the purchase. The CCSWCD Board wanted the project to be a place where residents could enjoy the wetland and students could learn wetland ecology.

The land (67 acres) is now owned by the CCSWCD with a conservation easement held by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

A plan for development for the north side of the road was developed with several scrapes and 2 ponds that contain water control structures to control the water level in the ponds. This will provide an area for wet prairie plants on the site.

Future hopes for the site include a raised parking lot on the north side and possibly tying an observation deck into the proposed bike path on the south side. A plan for the wetland restoration on the South side is also under development.



Dry weather offered a helping hand to volunteers when they planted the wetland. With limited quantities of standing water, volunteers found it much easier to plant the area with plants that will make the wetland attractive to wildlife.

Issue 7 Vol. 4 • July 2012

YOUR LAND, YOUR WATER, YOUR ILLINOIS

association of illinois

SOIL &
WATER

conservation districts

4285 North Walnut Street Road
Springfield, IL 62707
217.744.3414 ph
217.744.3420 fax
www.aiswcd.org