

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!



We Need Your Help

SWCDs are an important link to deliver state and federal source programs and funds that directly benefit the local and state economy. The economic benefit the SWCDs provide is far greater than the amount of money that is appropriated for their use by the General Assembly.

Please support legislation that includes increased funding for the SWCDs



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Nutrient Reduction Strategy Plan Nearing Final Stage

The Nutrient Reduction Strategy Policy Work Group has been meeting on a monthly basis since August 2013. The final meeting for the group will be May 19, 2014. During the short nine months the group has been working, the plan has focused on three major areas as sources for excess nutrients in the state's waters. Those focus areas are Point Source (primarily from waste water treatment facilities), Urban Nonpoint Source and Agriculture Nonpoint Source.

Each of the focus areas has its own subcommittee that has been meeting separately from the larger group to develop strategies for reducing nutrients from the identified source.

Agriculture is the largest contributor of excess nonpoint source nutrients in water both because of the amount of surface area involved and because agriculture requires the use of nutrients to produce crops. It appears that tile drained agricultural land is the largest contributor of nonpoint source nutrients.

Strategies being discussed that will help reduce the amount of nutrients leaving farm fields include, among others, the use of drainage water management systems, multiple applications of fertilizer at lower rates, bio-filters at the end of the field tile system, filter strips and stream buffers, soil erosion control practices, wetlands at the end of field tile systems, cover crops and nutrient management plans for whole farms.

Another strategy that will receive further discussion is that of providing some type of "certainty" or relief from immediate regulation

for farmers who have and are following a nutrient management plan.

Other states have developed such programs to help farmers come into compliance over a period of time. Implementation of nutrient reduction practices will be very expensive. The science assessment conducted by the University of Illinois estimates that the total cost for meeting nutrient reduction standards will be \$700 million per year. Much of that cost will have to be borne by the Agriculture sector.

Illinois' Soil and Water Conservation Districts will be instrumental to the success of the Strategy Plan and to fending off USEPA regulations like those imposed on the Chesapeake Bay states.

USEPA is serious about reducing the hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico. Excess nitrogen and phosphorous contained in waters that flow from farming areas through the inland river system and eventually to the Mississippi River are being blamed for the hypoxic conditions in the Gulf. Therefore USEPA has set a goal of reducing nutrients contributions by 45%.

The Soil and Water Conservation Districts will be called on to work with ag and urban nonpoint source contributors to help meet that goal. Unfortunately, without needed funding, the SWCDs may not be able to get the job done in time to prevent USEPA from imposing regulatory standards in spite of our best efforts.

As members of the General Assembly you can have significant influence over whether Illinois has the time and resources to adopt nutrient reduction practices or if USEPA will impose an immediate regulatory program.

We need your help!



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.

The Governor's 2015 budget provides level funding for the SWCDs. Your support in maintaining the Governor's recommended appropriation as a minimum is appreciated.

THANK YOU!

PROTECT & CONSERVE

Districts' Spotlight

Sangamon County: Lake Springfield Nitrogen Management Program

The Council on Best Management Practices (CBMP) is launching a 3 year special nitrogen management program in the Lake Springfield, IL watershed. This program encourages ag retailers and farmers to adopt a nitrogen management system in the watershed to **Minimize** environmental impact, **Optimize** harvest yield and **Maximize** input utilization (MOM). In addition to CBMP, local ag retailers and farmers, other vital partners in the project include City Water Light & Power (CWLP), Sangamon County SWCD and the Lincoln Land Community College Ag Program.

How the program will work:

1. Participating ag retailers will agree to work with farmers in the watershed to manage nitrogen inputs as a Nitrogen Management System (as described by the Illinois CBMP), beginning with the 2014 corn crop.
2. Participating farmers will enroll into the N-WATCH Program to inventory residual soil plant-available nitrogen prior to or immediately after corn harvest and track its movement periodically into the next cropping season. Samples will be collected according to the N-WATCH inventory sampling protocol.
3. Participating farmers will have an opportunity to enroll in the Lake Springfield Cover Crop Program to help minimize sediment and/or nutrient loading of surface water entering the Lake Springfield Watershed.
4. Members of the Illinois CBMP will promote the Lake Springfield Project and Nitrogen Management as a System through farmer/retailer contacts within the targeted watershed.
5. CBMP will communicate progress and efforts to CWLP and gauge impact on water quality through monitoring of tributaries to Lake Springfield and finished water from the treatment plant. Lincoln Land Community College will be responsible for collection and analysis of spot-check samples from identified locations within the watershed. The Sangamon County SWCD will be responsible to collect and manage rainfall data at identified locations within the watershed.

Because of the excellent working relationship the SWCD has with the farmers in the watershed, this project was selected as the preferred site to test implementation of many of the practices that are being considered by the Nutrient Reduction Strategy Policy Work Group as it develops Illinois' plan.



Cover Crop Demonstration Fields: Twelve Soil and Water Conservation Districts have partnered with the Illinois Department of Agriculture to establish fourteen field size demonstration plots for cover crops, all of which are located along Illinois Interstate highways.

In addition, nine SWCDs have initiated their own cover crop demonstration/research sites. As you travel the Interstates and other major roads this year, look for the "Cover Crops" signs and watch for additional information over the next two to three years on the nutrient utilization efficiency results of the demonstration fields.



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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