

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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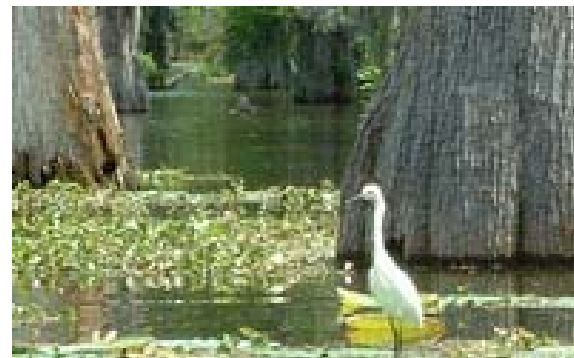
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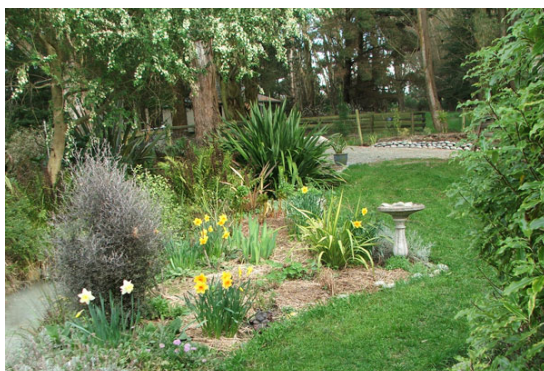
May marks the 21st anniversary of American Wetlands Month, a time to celebrate the important role wetlands play in our Nation's environmental, ecological and socio-economic health. Wetlands provide many significant benefits for fish and wildlife as well as society. The inherent, unique natural characteristics of wetlands include protecting and improving water quality, providing fish and wildlife habitat, floodwater storage, coastal protection, and increased water storage and supply.

Wetlands are transitional areas, sandwiched between permanently flooded deepwater environments and well-drained uplands. They include mangroves, marshes, swamps, forested wetlands, bogs, wet prairies, prairie

ridges, ponds, and lakes. Aquatic habitats are also critical to fish and wildlife as well as economically and recreationally valuable to humans.



Heron Pond in southern Illinois provides important habitat for many kinds of wildlife.



Rain gardens provide temporary wetland like habitats in urban areas.

potholes, and vernal pools. They often contain more plants and animals and produce more organic material than either the adjacent water or land areas. Aquatic habitats include permanently flooded parts of estuaries and nearshore environments like seagrass beds,

Wetlands are among the most productive habitats on earth providing shelter and nursery areas for commercially and recreationally important animals like fish and shellfish, as well as wintering grounds for migrating birds. Aquatic habitats along the Gulf of Mexico are vital to seabirds, fish, and shellfish; economically the gulf alone contributes billions to the economy. Riverine deep water areas like the Mississippi River and its many channels are not only essential for navigation, industry, and recreation and therefore responsible for billions of dollars to the economy, but are also invaluable for natural resources. Songbirds and waterfowl use rivers as migratory guides, and rivers and lakes are both essential to countless species of fish, amphibians like frogs and salamanders, and reptiles like turtles, snakes, and alligators.

(Source: United States and Illinois State Geological Survey)



Districts' Spotlight

Marion County: The George P. Irwin Conservation Education Station (GPICES) was established in September of 1993 with the transfer of a 382 acre tract of land to the Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District. A total resource management approach is being used to develop the property which consists of timber, bottoms, grassland and cropland - much of which is considered highly erodible land (HEL). In 1997, most of the cropland was enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program. Some of the demonstration sites at the Station include sustainable agriculture projects, shallow water wetlands, warm season grasses and legumes. Prairie burns are conducted annually at the Station. These burns have been used as training sessions for area residents. A hunting lottery is held each July. Wildlife hunted at GPICES include deer, turkey and upland game. Permits for trapping can also be obtained.



This shallow water wetland was created in 1995 with assistance from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Prairie burns are completed annually at the education station.



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!

Champaign County: St. Joseph Wetland Restoration and Education Project



St. Joseph Wetland site plan.

The Champaign County Soil and Water Conservation District is working to complete the educational center at our St. Joseph Wetland site. Construction began this spring, and the 90' long concrete entrance of Illinois Route 150 is complete. Donations are being accepted from those who want to be part of this exciting opportunity for environmental education and enjoyment. The education center will include a permeable pavement for parking, bio-retention basins and rain gardens, educational signage around a viewing area and seating benches built by high school students at St. Joseph-Ogden. The site has already been used by many groups and individuals, and the local Boy Scout troop, along with others, will be part of completing the center.

Interested persons can help us bring this premier outdoor classroom to life so all can learn about the flora and fauna of a wetland. To learn more, please check out our [history and plans for education at the St. Joseph Wetland Restoration and Education Site](http://www.ccsxcd.com) or go to <http://www.ccsxcd.com> and select "Special Projects".



Several wood duck boxes, like the one above, are located in the wetland area.