

AISWCD

Executive Director's Bi-Monthly Report

Friday, January 16, 2015

Greetings all!

I hope everyone is having a fantastic month of January! Things have started to pick-up again here in Springfield. The town is bustling and so is AISWCD. The past few weeks have been a whirlwind but most importantly, a very productive whirlwind. The bulk of my report is related to legislative topics. See my report below for more information.

AISWCD OFFICE UPDATE

Gina is busy preparing for the March Legislative Day and the March Quarterly Board meeting.

Matt made it back safely from his cruise. He has been working diligently on IUM updates and watershed related items.

Gina and I participated in a CRS CREP conference call. We have recently updated the CRS timesheets for the new year and wanted to discuss any concerns the CRSs might be experiencing. I participated in the Envirothon Taskforce call as well as an Envirothon meeting with FFA to discuss potential sponsors.

NACD NORTH CENTRAL REGION

Myron, Tom and I attended the NACD North Central meeting in Schiller Park, IL on January 8-9th. The meeting was very informative and well attended. A new North Central Region chair was elected, Kent Stuckey from Ohio. Kenny Lovelace from Missouri was elected as Vice Chair. Several resolutions were brought forward and passed: 1) Filter Strips; 2) Incentive Program for Wide Headlands Borders and Buffers; and 3) USDA Highly Erodible Land (HEL) Conservation Compliance Plans. NRCS State Conservations were present to give their report. Tom Davenport from EPA Region 5 was present on the second day to give his report. NCDEA Rep. Tia Rice also gave a report. Overall, it was a great meeting.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Myron, Mike and I attended several Legislative Receptions on Wednesday, January 15th in Springfield. We attended the following receptions:

- Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Inaugural Celebration at the Hilton Hotel
- Senator Neil Anderson Reception at Illinois Realtors Association
- Senator Andy Manar Inaugural Reception at Café Moxo
- Representative C.D. Davidsmeyer Reception at Inn at 835
- Reps. Hoffman, Phelps, Sullivan & Sandack Inaugural Reception on 420 W. Capitol.

We spoke with several key legislators at the receptions. Those who have worked with AISWCD in the past, we thanked them for their generosity. Those who were new or

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have not had the pleasure of working with us, we gave them background information on SWCDs and explained the budget constraints districts are facing.

Highlights from the afternoon:

We met Governor Bruce Rauner at Senator Neil Anderson's reception. Governor Rauner stated he has heard of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and mentioned he had a great Ag Transition team in place to continue moving forward. Senator Neil Anderson was newly elected this year. We spoke with him briefly and explained the purpose of SWCDs. He seemed interested in reducing soil loss. Senator Manar was pleased to speak with us. He has worked with us in the past on a few bills. We thanked him for his generosity and hope we can continue working with him in the future. Representative Davidsmeyer remembered attending our 2014 Legislative Reception at Boones Saloon. He also remembered that no one from his district was present at the reception. We told him we hope to have a constituent from each district represented at this year's event. He is also interested in the work SWCDs are doing in his district (100th). Mike is going to set-up a meeting with Rep. Davidsmeyer shortly so we can discuss the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy document and other important aspects of SWCDs. We talked briefly with Representative Sandack. He was unaware that his district has a combined SWCD office, Kane-DuPage. We also spoke with Rep. Phelps from southern IL. He was aware of SWCDs and their work of putting conservation practices on the ground.

Overall, the message from our meetings with the legislators is continue to brief them on activities happening in and around your district. Many of them wish their constituents would contact them more often to brief them on activities taking place. ***Remember, you can never over inform your legislators.*** The more they know about SWCDs and your activities the more helpful it is when Myron, Mike and I meet with them at the Statehouse. They will also be more likely to support legislation for funding if they know the importance of an SWCD!

Legislative Day 2015 is Tuesday, March 10th from 10:30am – 6:00pm. In addition to our afternoon Legislative visits, we will again have a reception at Boone's Saloon from 4:00pm-6:00pm. Last year as Legislators came into the reception the main question that was asked, "Is there someone here from my area?" While we had a fairly good turnout of participants, there were very few Legislators that were able to talk directly to their constituents due lack of SWCD representation at the reception. We would really encourage each district to have a least one representative present for the reception from 4:00pm-6:00pm. We understand that, for most, it's a long drive to and from Springfield. However, having a constituent present from the Legislator's district is key to having them understand what Districts do and why they are important. Please consider sending a representative to this year's event!

Legislative Book – *There is still time to submit two pages of information highlighting your SWCD activities.* I will be compiling the book during the week of Jan. 26th so please have the information to me **no later than Monday, Jan. 26th.**

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If you have already completed a similar report that has the above information listed, please forward it to me along with photos. A Legislative Book filled with text will not be as appealing as one filled with photos of district activities. If you have any questions on what is needed, please give me a call or send me an email!

ILLINOIS AGRICULTURE LEGISLATIVE DAY

This event has been set for March 5, 2015. Each year AISWCD donates tree saplings to place in the baskets that get distributed by FFA students to the legislators. This year we intend to do the same. If any district is interested in attending this event please contact the office. We make legislative visits, similar to the AISWCD Legislative Day. It never hurts to make multiple visits within the same month. The more they hear "SWCDs" and understand districts the more funding opportunities become available.

IL AG LEGISLATIVE ROUNDTABLE

Myron, Tom and I attended the Legislative Roundtable in Bloomington on Jan. 7th. Former Director Flider of IDOA gave a brief update. Lori Healey discussed the new program Farm Illinois. Rodney Weinzierl the Executive Director of IL Corn Growers Association gave a brief update on the Chicago E15 Ordinance. Two members of the Ag Transition team were given a short period for question and answers. Also, Dan Long the Executive Director from Illinois Commission on Government forecasting and Accountability gave a presentation and discussed Illinois' budget shortfall.

FARM PROGRESS SHOW 2015

The FPS is scheduled for September 1-3 in Decatur, IL. AISWCD and partners will once again have the Partners in Conservation Tent. Planning is already underway. Jody Christensen and I are co-chairs and are working diligently to secure tent space, invite interested partners to attend and much more. The next FPS meeting will be held in March, date TBD. If you are interested in participating please let me know.

As always, if you have any questions or comments at all, don't hesitate to call the office! Remember, AISWCD works for Districts...without SWCDs, the Association would not exist!

Remember to **INFORM** your Legislators! You can never send them enough information on activities taking place in your district!

Kelly Thompson