

# AISWCD

## Executive Director's Bi-Monthly Report

Friday, February 20, 2015

What a busy past few weeks it has been here at AISWCD! Legislative session is in full swing and we are gearing up for the March Quarterly Board meeting and Legislative event.

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### AISWCD OFFICE UPDATE

The February Conservation Catchall was published this week so be looking for staff updates within that publication.

### CAREER FAIR

Gina and I attended a Career Fair at the University of Illinois in Springfield on Tuesday, February 17<sup>th</sup> in Springfield. The AISWCD Board voted at the December QB meeting to begin seeking resumes for a summer intern. We also have the LaSalle CREP Resource Specialist position open so we were collecting resumes for both positions. In addition to summer internship for AISWCD we were interested to know if any SWCDs would have a need for an intern as well. We did receive several students interested in the internship position and would be glad to pass along resumes if your **SWCD** has a need for a summer intern. Please contact our office at your earliest convenience. This is a great way to get young people exposed to conservation and to get some help with daily office duties! (This would be an unpaid internship opportunity)

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### NACD UPDATE

We received an email this week with regards to NACD's CEO position. John Larson has taken another job with American Farmland Trust and has given his 60 day notice to the NACD Executive Board. NACD is actively seeking a new CEO. The release is below:

State Contacts -- Please see the message below from NACD President Lee McDaniel:

On Friday, CEO John Larson submitted his 60-day notice to the officer team. He has accepted the Executive Director position with American Farmland Trust (AFT), where he will be in charge of all programming including a \$5.5 million budget and over 25 employees in five regional offices and two field offices.

We will begin the search for a new CEO immediately, with NACD COO Jeremy Peters serving as Interim CEO until the position is filled.

We thank John for his service and wish him the best in his new position.

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# AISWCD

## Executive Director's Bi-Monthly Report

### MEETINGS

Myron and I attended the Lake Springfield Watershed producers meeting on Wednesday, February 11<sup>th</sup> at the Northfield Center in Springfield. The program was very well attended by both producers, NGOs and Agency personnel. They had many great speakers: Lauren Lurkins from IL Farm Bureau discussed Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy, Mike Plumber discussed cover crops, Indian Creek Watershed and Lake Springfield Watershed landowners discussed the work being done within the watersheds, as well as a representative from Brandt who discussed their cover crop test plots in the Pleasant Plains area and finally, Jennifer Tirey from IL Council on BMPs was the MC for the event.

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### CLIENT GATEWAY

Myron and I met with Dave Dornbusch directly following the Lake Springfield Watershed meeting on Wednesday, February 11 in Clinton to discuss the Client Gateway Contract AISWCD will have with NRCS. Many details still need to be discussed but we have seen a draft contract. We still need to meet with Ivan to discuss those final details. More information will be given as it becomes available.

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### LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The Governor gave his budget address this week on Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>. I don't think any of us were surprised as to what we would hear – major cuts are coming to the state of Illinois. While the budget look bleak for most on the surface it looks acceptable for Soil and Water. However, once we began digging deeper into the document we see some discrepancies between the FY14 and FY15 budgets. Once we have a more definite explanation from IDOA and the Governor's office on the proposed budget we will send out an update to all districts.

Myron, Mike and I met with eight legislators yesterday in Springfield most of which are in either the Appropriations Committees (House and Senate) or Agriculture (Senate) and Agriculture and Conservation (House) committees.

Senator John Sullivan	Senator Dan Kotowski
Senator Neil Anderson	Senator Chapin Rose
Representative Don Moffitt	Representative Fred Crespo
Representative Tom Morrison	Representative Jerry Costello

All legislators were very interested and engaged in our conversations. Their overall message to SWCDs... ***how will funding cuts affect my legislative district***. They also said to remind them throughout the legislative session on how important Soil and Water Conservation is to Illinois. Just like in any job, sometimes other issues take precedent and in the case of Soil and Water we often get pushed to the back. We are asking district directors and staff to please continue to engage your legislators in your district's activities. Legislators need to hear from their constituents. **I can't stress how important it is to call your legislator to let them know how a cut in funding will not**

# AISWCD

## Executive Director's Bi-Monthly Report

only affect SWCDs but their legislative district as well. Below, I have included a list of talking points that we discussed with many legislators this week. Please continue to carry this message throughout the year as it is imperative that we are all carrying a clear and concise message.

### List of Legislative Talking Points:

- ❖ The entire state needs clean soil, air and water to survive. Without these vital resources businesses and government in Illinois will cease to exist in its current state.
- ❖ Soil and Water Conservation Districts are a local, grass roots organization that helps local landowners implement conservation on their land to help reduce soil loss from erosion, water & nutrient runoff and education others about these practices.
- ❖ Soil and Water Conservation Districts work in all legislative districts from northern Illinois in the urban and suburban areas to southern rural Illinois.
- ❖ Your legislator's district **WILL** be affected by either flat or a reduction of funding in the following ways:
  - Loss of Farm Bill money brought in through programs that each SWCD helps to administer through USDA NRCS
  - Loss of five Directors plus Associate Directors AND a least one to two staff per district
  - Loss of the grassroots structure to get conservation on the ground - No other organization has the connection to local landowners like Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- ❖ The Governor has mentioned that Agriculture is the largest business in Illinois. Without Soil and Water Conservation Districts agriculture would not be as productive
- ❖ The Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRS) will create more work for SWCDs which are currently underfunded. If SWCDs are not in place to serve landowners the NLRS will go from being a voluntary program to a mandatory program with fines to local landowners who don't comply with the requirements.

These are just a few of the talking points that will be pertinent to this year's legislative session. The NLRS is key this year. Most legislators were not informed when the document was being developed thus they are unaware of the inherent consequences this strategy will have on agriculture and the state as a whole, if the (voluntary effort) goal is not met.

***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 increased funding if they know the importance of an SWCD!

# **AISWCD**

## **Executive Director's Bi-Monthly Report**

**Legislative Day 2015** is **Tuesday, March 10<sup>th</sup> 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!

Register and purchase lunch: <http://www.aiswcd.org/legislative/legislative-day-2014/>

**Legislative Visit(s)** – Thank you to Greene, Pike, Scott, Jersey, Macoupin, Morgan and Calhoun County SWCDs to making the trip to Jacksonville on Tuesday, February 10<sup>th</sup> to meet with your Representative C.D. Davidsmeyer. We had a great turnout and gave Representative Davidsmeyer an abundance of information about Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Representative Davidsmeyer mentioned his SWCDs in a Facebook post which can be found in the February Conservation Catchall. Thank you again to all the SWCDs that make time to visit with your local legislators! It really does make a difference!

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### **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.

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### **AISWCD ANNUAL MEETING**

Planning for the AISWCD Annual Meeting and BLWR Summer Conference is underway. The taskforce met last week to discuss the newly proposed schedule as well as the logo for this year's event. Some exciting changes are coming to this year's event! We want everyone to learn something new, meet someone new and bring new ideas back to your district. We hope your district can attend this year! Be sure to read the upcoming Conservation Catchall as it will have registration, award and form submission deadlines.

**NEW THIS YEAR** ... An **Exhibit Hall** will be added to this year's event. If you know of a company or vendor that is interested in joining the Exhibit Hall direct them to the AISWCD Annual Meeting webpage. The Exhibit Hall will be open on both Monday and Tuesday of the conference. A **Sunday Tour** will be offered for those who like to travel to



# AISWCD

## Executive Director's Bi-Monthly Report

Springfield a day early. The tour is still being planned but as information becomes available it will be added to the Annual Meeting webpage. The **Hospitality Rooms** will once again be offered during the conference.

Live Auction Update: AISWCD is seeking auction items for this year's event. Donate a local item, specific to your county. We are placing the auction items on the website this year and creating an auction booklet so be sure to get your district's auction item submitted early so we can advertise and place the item in the booklet.

Bring your spouse and family to this year's Annual Meeting & Summer Conference. There will be plenty of activities for the whole family!

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### FARM PROGRESS SHOW 2015

SPACE IS STILL AVAILABLE...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 Tuesday, March 17 in Decatur at the USDA/SWCD Service Center. If you are interested in participating please let me know.

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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!

*Stay safe and warm!*



*Kelly Thompson*