

AISWCD

Executive Director's Bi-Monthly Report

Wednesday, September 9, 2015

I sincerely apologize for not sending out an August mid-month report. As you all know, a lot has taken place and AISWCD staff and Directors are trying to keep everything a float. We are working for the Districts.

STATE-WIDE CALL UPDATE AND UNITY

Thank you to all who attended the state-wide conference call on Thursday, August 27th. While we have received feedback on the information that was presented I'd like everyone to know that this call was for the Directors who may or may not have read the insurance email that was sent out by Melissa Cauble. This was purely an informational call only; to recap the meeting that took place with the Governor's Office on Management and Budget on Friday, August 21st. AISWCD cannot tell a District how to run its office thus no specific options on how to proceed were given. We can provide you the information as it was presented and let the Directors make the final decisions. We feel the information given was adequate and informative. AISWCD works day in and day out for Districts and both AISWCD staff and Directors are working to keep Districts afloat. We understand the importance of the work that each and every District performs. Please continue to help move your local District forward.

The above information leads me to my next observation, lack of unity. We all understand emotions are at an all-time high; however, everyone needs to be thinking on how we can move our organization forward and not backwards. Be thinking of ways to evolve and remain relevant. There has been talk about potential funding opportunities for Districts. These type of conversations will continue to take place and evolve until a funding source is secured. Please know there is no one magic funding source just like there is no "money tree". However, if you find one, please let me know!

The insurance concern is only the tip of the ice berg at this point; however it is the immediate concern and crisis Districts are faced with resolving before September 30th. The overall structure of SWCDs is at risk. Instead of tearing District's apart one-by-one, let's develop a plan for the future of this organization.

While Districts need a base amount of state funds to remain functional, **AISWCD**, with the help of **employees and Directors**, need to **work together to develop a plan for the future of Soil and Water Conservation Districts**. Now is the District's time to shine and show our partners what our future holds. Now is the time to move forward, not backward, to **come together as one unified organization** to show Illinois (the Governor, Legislators and agency partners) how crucial SWCDs are to Illinois' ability to thrive financially. SWCDs are crucial to the "Turnaround Agenda" that Governor Rauner built his campaign on for winning the election in Illinois. **Without natural resources (i.e. clean water, air and soil) there will be no new businesses opening in Illinois, less private money to move organizations forward and more Illinois citizens and businesses relying on the state for a paycheck.** The lack of SWCDs will have a domino effect on the Illinois, agriculture, natural resources and the economy now and in the future.

Please carry this message forward. We want to be a **strong organization** that can **move forward together** as one voice. Divides are for the weak and our organization is strong. We WILL conquer this battle and we WILL win. Please be hopeful and find ways to be resilient. We need to be unified. **BE STRONG** and let's **move Soil and Water Conservation Districts forward!**

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INSURANCE – Health, Worker's Compensation and Equipment

Health Insurance options have been provided to Districts by the Insurance Committee. Melissa Cauble will be sending out invoices to Districts sometime this week. Melissa will also be sending out termination letters for those Districts not wishing to keep the CMS insurance. Should you have any additional questions please contact either Melissa Cauble or Annyce Winters.

Worker's Compensation and Equipment insurance is now paid monthly. AISWCD invoices Department of Ag for the total amount. AISWCD has not been reimbursed as of today's date. If IDOA cannot reimburse AISWCD then coverage will terminate. Before coverage is terminated, AISWCD will give ample notification to Districts.

SUB-AGREEMENTS

Many of you still do not have access to ProTracts. We have contacted NRCS regarding this issue. We hope to have this resolved within the next week. Gina will be sending information to those Districts with no access updates by early next week. Again we apologize but hope to have it resolved very soon!

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Partner Support – I'd first like to say SWCDs have some fantastic partnerships both at the local, state and federal level. I'd like to thank the Illinois Stewardship Alliance for organizing a conference call concerning the SWCD funding. The Illinois Environmental Council developed an online petition to support SWCDs. The petition is floating around the internet. If you haven't seen the petition the links are below. Illinois Stewardship Alliance and Prairie Rivers Network have also developed a petitions with information provided by AISWCD. Please feel free to share as you see fit. Prairie Rivers Network and a few others are also in support of Districts and have a similar petition that you might have received via email.

Illinois Environmental Council

http://action.ilenviro.org/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=17403

Illinois Stewardship Alliance

<http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?ca=2ba896fa-398e-4860-9df4-f2c76f35dc4f&c=ed5fe860-4038-11e5-9029-d4ae52754007&ch=ed99bd10-4038-11e5-902a-d4ae52754007>

Prairie Rivers Network

<http://prairierivers.org/articles/2015/09/take-action-funding-crisis-for-illinois-soil-and-water-conservation-districts/>

HB4282 – Districts in Representative Jerry Costello, Brandon Phelps, Mike Smiddy, Daniel Beiser and Katherine Cloonen's regions, please encourage them to bring this bill to the floor for discussion and a vote. There are several bills similar to this that have been introduced for other organizations who are in the same situation as Soil and Water Conservation Districts. We need to continue to press

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the sponsors on bringing this bill before the Committee of the Whole. Districts, please **encourage** your **Republican legislators to sign onto HB4282**. This bill **needs bipartisan support**.

Funding Ideas – We are currently working with legislators on other avenues of funding. Please know that these will take some time and will not be a quick fix to our immediate concerns. Should your District have any ideas they'd like to share please let us know. Also, if your District has already talked with local legislators about a particular funding avenue, please let me know so I can follow-up.

IN THE NEWS

Here are a few articles that have been published throughout Illinois newspapers over the past month. I know not all have been captured here, so if you'd like to share additional news articles please feel free to email the link to me.

[Chicago Tribune](#)

[State Journal-Register](#)

[Journal Pilot](#)

[Bloomington Pantagraph](#)

[The Southern Illinoisan](#)

[FarmWeek](#)

FARM PROGRESS SHOW

The 2015 FPS was a success! We had great partners in the Partners in Conservation tent this year. Thank you to all who volunteered to work during the dry, hot three days in Decatur. The Farmer Panel discussions were a hit this year. Each day, morning and afternoon, featured a Farmer Panel discussion. The farmer panel ranged from new beginning farmers to farmers who have implemented pollinator plans.

In the News – here is an article published in FarmWeek describing the Partners In Conservation tent at the FPS this year. [CLICK HERE](#)

Photos from the event will be posted on the website within the next several weeks.



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ILLINOIS RIVER CONFERENCE

This year the 15th Biennial Governor's Conference on the Management of the Illinois River System is being held **October 27-29, 2015 in Peoria** at the Marriott Pere Marquette. SWCD employees and directors have a unique opportunity to attend the Tuesday Watershed Tour plus afternoon **CPESC workshop** and a **one-day conference pass for Wednesday** at the cost of **\$100 plus room and travel**. Please contact me if you are interested in attending either Tuesday & Wednesday or just Tuesday. The **Tuesday tour** is just **\$30** to attend with **lunch included**. Below is a brief description of the Watershed Tour. The CPESC workshop agenda is being developed. If you have suggestions for the workshop please let me know.



A **Watershed Tour** will take place on **Tuesday, October 27, 2015 | 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM**

Overview: Infiltrate the green infrastructure movement within the Greater Metropolitan Peoria Area! This tour will reveal the urban side of our theme The Illinois River: A Watershed Partnership by visiting project sites to see the practices and to hear from the partners who did the work. The tour will be by charter bus and will include stops at a variety of locations to let you investigate stormwater runoff control efforts for both public and private land. Lunch and refreshments will be provided.

I am still accepting names of employees or Directors who wish to take advantage of this opportunity. Please email me sooner rather than later if you'd like to attend.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY AISWCD

AISWCD is grateful for Soil and Water Conservation Districts! We'd like to provide a list of services that we currently offer to our SWCD members.

- ❖ **Lobbying** for SWCD funds
- ❖ Registered **Lobbyist**
- ❖ **Discounted Insurance Premiums** (AISWCD holds the master policy and gets reimbursed by IDOA)
 - Directors and Officers Liability
 - Business Auto
 - Package Policy (property, inland marine and general liability)
 - Umbrella Policy
 - Workers Compensation
- ❖ **Program & Grant Opportunities** – Contribution Agreements
- ❖ State Envirothon Competition
- ❖ Illinois Urban Manual – coordination & update
- ❖ Watershed Development Coordinator
- ❖ Informational material – email based (IL.ALL listserv)
- ❖ Conservation Catchall publication
- ❖ Legislative Day Reception
- ❖ Tech Soup – technology discounts

We greatly appreciate your membership! Please let us know how we can better serve your district by submitting comments to Kelly.thompson@aiswcd.org. I will direct any comments or question to the AISWCD Executive Board members.

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AISWCD continues to work to find dedicated sources of funding for SWCDs. 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 STRONG!

Enjoy the month of September!

Kelly Thompson

