



**CLEAN WATER,  
HEALTHY SOILS.**



**AISWCD.ORG**

**ASSOCIATION OF ILLINOIS SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

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## **STAR Sustainability Initiative Grows while Shining a Light on Farmers' Soil and Water Conservation Efforts**

SPRINGFIELD, IL - Today, the Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources (STAR) initiative introduced Nick Longbucco as its new fulltime Coordinator. Longbucco will be engaging with Conservation Districts and other partners to grow STAR and support farmers in their conservation journey.

A strong proponent of soil health and nutrient management practices, Longbucco has experience collaborating with farmers, government agencies and agriculture service providers to better understand the challenges and opportunities of adopting these practices.



Longbucco is a graduate of Michigan State University and holds a M.S. in Environmental Resource Management from Southern Illinois University Carbondale. He spent the last five years with a non-profit in Iowa working on watershed level water resource issues, which included managing a wetland restoration program and working with watershed and supply-chain partners to secure support for conservation on agricultural working lands.

With a strong appreciation for the soil and water resources that bless the Midwest, Longbucco is passionate about finding solutions that benefit farming communities and protects and improves these invaluable resources.

"I am thrilled to be working on such an innovative conservation tool. The early success of the initiative can be attributed to the dedication of the diverse Steering Committee and partners," said Nick Longbucco. "We'll be having many conversations with folks on opportunities to grow STAR and how to better promote and encourage progress on the farm".

Consumer demand for sustainably produced food and fiber products is increasing and so is the need to better integrate conservation in agriculture. Grain and food companies are looking to achieve better environmental outcomes from their supply-chain partners. STAR is a free tool that provides Illinois farm operators and landowners a means to evaluate, measure and increase their use of conservation practices based on local soil and water resource concerns.

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STAR was formed in 2017 by the Champaign County Soil and Water Conservation District and has been recognized nationally by the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD).

“We created STAR to show farmers how easy it can be to prevent runoff, protect our water supplies, and promote soil health. And every year, we see more participants eager to invest in a stronger future by using the free STAR tool,” said Bruce Henrikson, an early developer of the initiative.

In three years, the initiative has expanded to 71 Illinois counties and two Indiana counties, evaluating over 83,000 acres. The initiative has also expanded to Iowa and Missouri, with the states’ respective conservation district associations adopting the program.

The harvest season will soon be over, and it will be time for farmers and landowners to reflect on 2020 and start planning for the next cropping year. STAR can help farmers evaluate their current nutrient and soil management practices and identify needed improvements.

Open enrollment for the 2020 Crop Year is ongoing through next January. Participation is free, and as simple as completing a field form using any of three methods described at [www.starfreetool.com](http://www.starfreetool.com). If interested in STAR, contact your local county Soil and Water Conservation District to see if they are a licensed provider or contact Nick Longbucco.

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Clean Water, Healthy Soils. The Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts (AISWCD), is a grass roots organization formed in 1948. It is made up and serves Illinois’ 97-member Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). Soil and Water Conservation Districts work to protect Illinois’ greatest assets – the rich, fertile soils and water resources of the state through strategic conservation efforts. SWCDs, working in conjunction with agricultural as well as environmental stakeholders, have played a central role in efforts to protect and sustain the viability of Illinois’ finite natural resources for future generations. To learn more about AISWCD, visit [aiswcd.org](http://aiswcd.org) or connect with AISWCD on social media (@AISWCD and [facebook.com/ILSWCDs](https://www.facebook.com/ILSWCDs)).