

Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs)

There are 98 soil and water conservation districts making a difference in your community. No matter how big or small each of the 102 counties is represented equally. 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 them our communities could not thrive!



SWCDs in Trouble

Illinois' SWCDs are experiencing significant funding problems. As of March 1, 2010, no district has received any FY 2010 operating funds. The lack of available funds is causing many districts to reduce employee hours and forego filling vacant positions. About 20% of the SWCDs estimate that they will run out of funds within the next two to three months.



THIS ISSUE

SWCDs Remediate Problems **P.1**

SWCD in Trouble **P.1**

Districts' Spotlight **P.2**

SWCDs Perform Many Different Tasks **P.2**

SWCDs Remediate Problems From Excess Rainfall

The rains of 2009 have been forgotten but the damage caused by erosion and flooding remain in many parts of the state.

In McHenry County, the McHenry County Soil and Water Conservation District worked with a site developer to help repair a large gully that threatened utility service to the homeowners.

While the site has been restored the soil that was there before the gully was formed is gone! Where did it go?

In the background is a drainage way. The eroded soil along with what ever nutrients it contained was carried away from the site and ended up somewhere down stream either in a stream, a wetland, a lake or somewhere else where it was not needed and most likely not wanted. Rain storms that occurred throughout 2009 caused tremendous damage to our streams, lakes and rivers that will have lasting effects for years to come.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts work with landowners, developers, municipal and county government and state and federal agencies to prevent erosion from storm runoff.



Gully caused by excessive runoff. Notice high voltage utility box on right side



Later in the fall, the same gully has been filled and stabilized with ryegrass

Fact: One square foot of "black snow" collected in Douglas County yielded 7 oz. of dried soil. Calculations based on that sample showed that the farmer lost 5.77 tons of soil per acre during the snowstorm. The total soil lost was equivalent to 23 tons per mile of road ditch.



Soil and Water Conservation Districts Perform Many Different Tasks

- Illinois SWCD employees utilize such tools as GIS software, electronic survey instruments and old fashioned leg work to assist landowners with the planning, design and installation of conservation practices.
- Illinois SWCD employees are familiar with state, county and municipal zoning and permitting requirements and work with developers to help them comply with those requirements
- Illinois SWCD employees assist educators in meeting conservation education requirements for students and to provide educational opportunities for adults who want to know how to care for their environmental resources.
- Illinois SWCD directors meet with and advise municipal, county, state and federal governmental agencies and organizations on programs and policies to help protect our environment.



NOTE: SWCDs DO NOT have taxing authority and must rely on state source funding to employ staff to administer programs.

PROTECT & CONSERVE

Districts' Spotlight



District employees survey the elevation of an underground tile inlet which will allow water to safely escape from a terrace system



The completed terrace system will collect stormwater runoff and safely convey the water to a stream through underground tile lines.

Randolph County

Terraces are low earth embankments that are constructed across a sloping field to "stair-step" the water down the slope and allow it to drain away slowly by means of a grassed water way or through underground tile. The Randolph County Soil and Water Conservation District utilized state funds to cost share the terrace system shown above. This terraces system, constructed on 21 acres of crop land, will reduce erosion on the field by more than 18 tons per year.



The high tech soil probe and its GPS system with computer monitor are mounted on the passenger side of this specially modified vehicle.

Bond County

For large landowners the SWCD offers custom soil sampling and testing. The Resource Conservationist has a Suzuki Samurai customized with a hydraulic soil probe mounted in the passenger's seat. The RC uses GPS technology to map the perimeter of farmer's field. Then when the sample is ready to be taken, GPS locks in the coordinates. The probe drops through an opening in the floorboard of the Suzuki and takes the sample. The samples are collected and sent for testing. The GPS mapping allows for more targeted application of fertilizers through Variable Rate Technology (VRT). The landowner is provided with the soil test results and if requested the VRT maps. The district promotes responsible and efficient fertilizer application and uses this program as an opportunity to develop nutrient management plans for many of its landowners.

Since the program began in 1998 the district has sampled approximately 55,500 acres. The program continues to grow and each year more and more customers are requesting assistance from the SWCD in sampling their soil.

• Your Local SWCD

Do you know what your local SWCD is doing to help your constituents protect and improve our soil and water? Take a moment to access our website at www.aiswcd.org, and look for the red starburst to find out what is happening in your back yard!



Issue 06 • March 2010

YOUR LAND, YOUR WATER, YOUR ILLINOIS

association of illinois
SOIL & WATER
 conservation districts

4285 North Walnut Street Road
 Springfield, IL 62707
 217.744.3414 ph
 217.744.3420 fax
www.aiswcd.org