



CONSERVATION CATCHALL

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AISWCD ASSISTS LIVING LANDS & WATERS WITH TREE HARVEST



Over an eight-day period in March, Volunteers from Cargill, Beardstown High School and other organizations joined a team from Living Lands & Waters to harvest 100,000 oak tree saplings for transplanting in communities along the Mississippi and Illinois rivers in the region.

Cargill employees from the area's pork processing facility collaborated with Beardstown High School, the Association of Illinois Soil & Water Conservation Districts and Living Lands & Waters volunteers to harvest and distribute 100,000 oak tree saplings to communities along the region's Mississippi and Illinois rivers over an eight-day period earlier this month. Two years ago, the trees were planted adjacent to the Cargill pork facility near Beardstown on company property, then nurtured by volunteers until this year's transplanting effort. Cargill is a longtime supporter of Living Lands and Waters, hosting land and water clean-up activities and sponsoring regional and local conservation and environmental education programs.

[\(Continued on page 6\)](#)





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE - JAMES TODD

jtoddfarm@starband.net

I have just come from the annual Illinois Ag Legislative Day event. Lonnie Wilson and Rich attended with me and we were very pleased to see the ISWCDEA represented as well as they were in their efforts to help make legislators more aware of our funding problems. We feel like the legislators at least know we were there because of the information that was given to each one. We were also able to provide a large red oak seedling to each legislator with the AISWCD's information attached in hopes of getting their attention. This was just one more day in a long string of days that we have spent at the Capitol Complex. We have had meetings with the Governor's Office and several new and veteran legislators to discuss the districts' funding situation. We have provided the information that was sent to the districts concerning the lack of savings that can be expected from consolidation and the loss of state and federal funds due to the loss of trained staff. With very few exceptions we have been well received and legislators have expressed their support for the SWCDs.

As I'm sure you are aware from Rich's reports, there are two bills, one in the Senate sponsored by Michael Noland and one in the House sponsored by Chapin Rose that would alter the "grants to soil and water conservation districts" line and raise the amount in the FY12 budget to \$6,000,000. When it appears that those bills begin to move, we will be asking you to contact your legislator and ask for their support for those bills.

While we are very aware that \$6 million is not our desired amount, we believe that under the financial condition the state is in, doubling our proposed Operations line from \$2.9 million to \$6 million will help many districts weather the funding problems until the state is in better condition and able to restore funding levels to what was received in FY 08 or higher.

That is not to mean that we have given up on dedicated funding. That effort will continue until such time as we are successful.

I understand that we are going through a very stressful and frustrating time and that some feel the Association should be doing more. I want to assure you that we are doing as much as we can at this time. We do not have control of the schedule of what happens in the General Assembly and must take advantage of the opportunities when they are present. Mike has done an excellent job of making many of those opportunities available for us to talk with leadership in both the House and Senate. We will continue to press to meet with more legislators, especially those from the Chicago area. We believe we have support from the majority of the down state legislators but when nearly 60% of the General Assembly is from the Chicago metro area, we must convince them that they should support soil and water conservation.

In addition to meeting with legislators, we have been meeting with representatives from other Ag groups to build a broader base of support. We would ask that you take the opportunity also to talk to your local representatives from state wide ag organizations and let them know that we need their support.

I will be meeting with the Soil and Water Conservation Districts Advisory Board, BLWR staff and Director Jennings on March 10th. It is my intention to continue pressing the Department for greater funding support for the SWCDs

The Association was conceived as a grass roots organization and is careful to continue to operate in that capacity. We can only do what our members tell us they want done. You have made it very clear that districts need a stable source of funding and we are working toward that end every time we talk with legislators or agricultural organizations. However, we are also very aware of the financial crisis the state is going through. We are doing our best to make sure that districts can survive in the short term so we can better present our case for stable funding in the long term.

James H. Todd



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTES - RICH NICHOLS

rich.nichols@aiswcd.org

Well, it appears that winter is losing its grip and spring may be on its way. The days have been warmer with more day time temperatures above freezing than below and even the night time temperature are remaining above freezing on a fairly frequent basis. I suppose it won't be long now before the farmers hit the fields with a feeling of optimism for the coming year and start on the 2011 crop.

We hope that there is some optimism for the SWCDs in all of this also. It does appear that the districts will get their FY11 funding but as yet we do not have a time line. All of the grant agreements have been returned to the Bureau of Land and Water and are now being processed prior to vouchers for payment being sent to the Comptroller's Office. Once those vouchers have been sent the Association will do what we can to encourage timely payments to the SWCDs. We are aware of at least three districts that will be forced to discontinue services by the end of March if payments are not received by that time. We are optimistic that we can get those payments made before any districts have to shut down.

We are also optimistic about FY12 funding levels for the SWCDs. We have had some encouraging conversations with legislators and with the Governor's Office and believe that additional funding will be made available before the final budget bill is signed later in the year. There are two identical bills, SB2006 sponsored by Michael Noland and HB3397 sponsored by Chapin Rose that call for an appropriation of \$6,000,000 for the SWCDs in FY12. That would be a substantial improvement over the \$2,931,600 appropriation listed in the Governor's proposed FY12 budget.

We are also optimistic about HB2957 sponsored by Representative Lisa Dugan that will create the Soil and Water Conservation District Stabilization Fund. The bill is one that is referred to as a "vehicle" bill meaning that it sets up the mechanism through which a stable funding source can be found for the SWCDs. As yet we have no indication what kind of funding source may be inserted into the bill but it is still early in the legislative session and there will be time to insert the appropriate language at a later date if the bill is able to gain traction.

We hope that the districts are working on contacts with their legislators. It is important that your legislators hear from you. It is easy for them to ignore the issue and spend their time and energy on other things if the issue of districts funding is not kept in front of them. Please use the fact sheets that were sent out the first week in March and as much as possible use information that is relevant to your own district. The fact sheets were prepared with the entire state in mind. Translating that statewide information to the districts level will have greater impact on what you do for your legislator's constituency.

We are making a good case for no savings to the state accruing from consolidation of districts. Your efforts in showing what is accomplished in terms of work load and utilization of non-state dollars will greatly help in that effort. Continue to encourage those who locally support your district and those that depend on the district for assistance to write to your legislators and to the Governor. Short hand written letters can accomplish much when many supporting the same issue are received by public officials. Also, don't overlook the schools. I know they have their own funding problems but I also know that districts all over the state work closely with teachers to provide field trips and learning opportunities that will likely be lost if current funding levels prevail or if districts are forced to reduce staff further through consolidation. In addition to the schools, you may want to contact your County Farm Bureau members and ask if they will write letters to their adopted legislator. Many of the Farm Bureaus throughout the state have formed relationships with Chicago area legislators and use those contacts to help urban legislators understand agriculture and its importance to urban dwellers. I don't think anyone can wage an argument that soil and water conservation is not of vital importance to agriculture and urban dwellers alike.

I wish you well in this endeavor. We are only as strong as the support we receive, we can not afford to let any opportunity pass to tell someone what Illinois soil and water conservation districts do that provides benefits to them, their family and to Illinois' economy.

Rich



URBAN STORMWATER UPDATE - JIM NELSON

jim.nelson@aiswcd.org

My reports usually address water quality, Illinois EPA programs, nonpoint source pollution, and urban conservation. However I can see now that none of this work will matter in the long run should soil and water conservation districts in Illinois cease to function. Over the past several years Soil and Water Conservation Districts' (SWCD's) parent agency has clearly indicated that districts are better off consolidating and has indicated this through a series of public statements to us and other leaders across the state. We read it in papers, hear it from our legislators, and those in charge of our funding at the capitol. There appears to be a major communication gap between what we have been saying over the years and what is being heard at the top.

It is understood that other entities may see cost savings by consolidating offices when those offices incur major overhead costs. This is true with any (typical) business. You pay rent in exchange for a secure roof over your head, you purchase or lease expensive copy equipment, computers, desks, chairs, perhaps a weekly cleaning crew, as well as lawn and snow maintenance. All of these things add up to a lot of money. If you could consolidate and therefore divide these resources there would, undoubtedly, be a cost savings. However, that is not how the vast majority of soil and water conservation districts function in Illinois. By sharing an office with federal partners, most SWCDs pay no rent and are equipped with furniture and nearly enough machines to do all their work. Furthermore, district staff utilize these resources to assist in the implementation of on-the-ground federal programs in addition to state funded programs from other agencies. These agencies rely on our assistance in each county we represent and the physical offices we populate will continue to exist whether or not SWCDs occupy them. In essence consolidation saves no overhead costs.

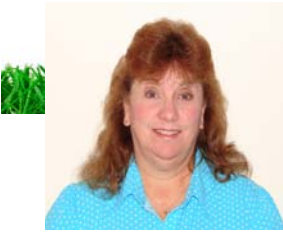
Since a savings won't be realized through eliminating a physical office, let's turn to the possibility of savings due to a consolidated district getting twice the money of one. As some of us have found in the case of the possible Lake/McHenry SWCD consolidation, future allocations based on the two-district rate are only guaranteed through 2012. (That means the consolidated SWCD would get essentially two allocations for FY 2012.) This is great news at first glance however, not coincidentally, if this particular consolidation moves forward it wouldn't actually be completed until sometime in FY 2012; meaning the promise of that allocation is merely a fact of life and not an act of kindness. Knowing they won't receive two allocations in the future has not deterred this consolidation only because there is billable work available to the entity that will remain. This is uncommon throughout the rest of the state. There are natural resource inventories (NRIs), EPA construction education inspections, soil borings, and other for-profit services that will support the extra staff time and resources necessary to cover two counties. Furthermore, there is very little agriculture left in Lake County so cost share project implementation is almost non-existent. Therefore much of the work to be picked up in Lake County will be billable."

For other SWCDs, in comparison, this is not the case. The majority of our SWCDs are nearly 100% dependent on IL Department of Agriculture funds. Let's say a rural district consolidates with a neighbor. If the surviving district gets two allocations that first year, everything works out ok (although they didn't save a dime on rent etc.) but, if they only get one allocation (like the districts mentioned above) the following year, they will suddenly be doing the work of two counties for the price of one. The former, dissolved-SWCD's, allocation will be spread out 97 ways (less than \$300 per district using 2012 budget numbers) and the new district is in worse shape than before consolidating. Now they still have two employees but they are working in two counties, driving twice what they had been, but on the same amount of money. How does that math work?

Now we can consider the ramifications of our latest \$600,000 cut to operations this year. Some have said to not look at this as an allocation of only \$29,910 per district but as \$44,190 because a portion of Partners for Conservation will come into the operations amount. Apparently we are to ignore the fact that approximately \$14,000 of that \$44,190 is for insurance and not for paying our employees. When all is said and done we're still left with \$29K to pay two employees and operate. Now let's consider how much \$29K is per person at a typical SWCD. Should we expect to attract/keep well trained employees when the allocation means \$14,955 per full-time position? That amount is \$645 less than what is required by Illinois' minimum wage law. Look at our federal counter parts doing similar work but for 4 times that amount (sometimes more). In a time when politicians are railing against, "luxurious salaries" of public employees, aren't they getting more than a bargain for the work SWCD employees do? By the way, this comparison is only between SWCDs and a federal agency (NRCS); think of the difference in scale compared to environmental consulting firms. The previous numbers pale in comparison.

Here is one example. As part of my Illinois Urban Manual grant, I use consultant volunteer time as in-kind match to reach my total project cost. If someone volunteers their time, I can use part of their prorated salary for every hour of their time. The other day a biologist weighed in on three of the standards we have drafted. His total rate equivalent for two hours was \$400! That's not what he makes, mind you, but that's what his company charges for two hours of his time working on a project. In other words, if the state of Illinois contracted with this particular consulting firm they would be paying \$200/hr for one consultant to design a wetland for instance. Other members of the project team have varying rates but none are below \$100/hr. Now look at SWCDs. Can the department and state of Illinois afford us, or can they not afford to lose us?

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT'S UPDATE - *SHERRY FINN*

sherry.finn@aiswcd.org

February Activities

CREP Coordinator Grant:

- Mailed Marketing information to Jan for Districts \$100 reimbursements
- Worked on FY 2010 Annual Report

March Quarterly Board Meeting:

- Completed QB Packet; mailed & e-mailed to Members
- Selected meal menu and break items and contacted Northfield Inn; made room reservations and meeting room setup
- Prepared database for confirmations; phoned members not heard from
- Set up teleconference call info for Executive Mtg on 3/8/11
- Set up teleconference call info for Legislative Committee on 2/22/11 for FY 2012 State Budget
- Completed Roll Call Sheets; New District Map Info; New FAC Committee Listings
- Updated Agenda and did handouts for new items
- Completed 2011 Budget Info in Quick Books

IL Envirothon:

- Mailed Envirothon Coordinator contract to Grundy Co SWCD; copied signed contract and mailed copy back to Grundy Co
- Notified Canon Envirothon of the update with new coordinators information
- Confirmed with Allerton Park Director to send me a signed contract for housing for 2011; received contract, had Rich sign and mailed completed contract back
- Sent Wizard e-mail request for II Envirothon Taskforce meeting date

2011 Annual Meeting:

- On teleconference call for 2/15/11 Taskforce meeting
- Went to Hilton Hotel to do walk through and set up meeting spaces, check on rooms, parking, and meals with Lonnie Wilson, Rich Nichols, and Jim Todd
- Mailed letters to District Chairmen, AISWCD Officers and VPs, and LUC Chairmen to request consideration of nominating someone for the Employee of the Year Award
- Sent e-mail to Districts updating them on the Annual Meeting Status after Taskforce meeting

OTHER DUTIES:

- Phone calls, mail and e-mail correspondence
- Compiled expense report for Credit Card
- Timesheets
- Organized February CREP Vouchers & sent to IEPA for payment
- Maintain Patio Paver and Rain Barrel Database
- Maintain SWCD Dues Paid (FY '10 & FY '11) Databases
- Mailed Thank You Notes to Paid Districts
- Maintain Sponsorship Database (FY '11) & Brochure Printing Fee Database

- Sent AISWCD/SWCD Sponsors monthly CC and Legislative Newsletter
- E-mailed Monthly Financials to Officers; sent Dec QB FAC meeting minutes to Chairman
- Updated Records Retention, Mgmt & Destruction Folder
- Maintain a Database for computer items ordered w/ HP; contacted HP with new purchase orders for Districts
- Forward to Rich the monthly SWCD/LUC agenda and meeting minutes that are e-mailed to me; file these after seen by Rich
- Proofread Conservation Catchall and Legislative Newsletter and mailed to Legislators without e-mail
- Completed Monthly Office Supply Inventory and placed order
- Attended ISWCDEAs February Meeting
- Attended Sangamon County SWCD Annual Meeting at Northfield Inn Conference Center
- Sent e-mail to Districts preparing them for upcoming PAC 10 request for letters to Legislators regarding FY 2012 State Budget

ACCOUNTING/OFFICE ADMIN:

- Completed Payroll and Payroll Taxes for February
- Reconciled all bank accounts
- Completed bookwork for All AISWCD & Insurance Accts
- Prepared Deposits for SWCD Dues and Receivables
- Completed Checks for Payables; Completed Deposits for Receivables; Completed Monthly Financials
- Filed all Completed Payables & Receivables Documentation
- Faxed Copy Count to CDS Technology; ordered maintenance on copier and postage machine
- Received check for Fire Inventory services; completed checks to Districts; Rich signed; mailed checks
- Wrote checks for SWCD various insurance premiums; had Rich sign; mailed; e-mailed copies to Debbie Holsapple
- Completed Semi-Monthly IL Lobbyist Expenditure Data for II Secretary of State

LOOKING AHEAD:

- Annual Meeting Taskforce Duties
- Tracking of FY 2011 Funding
- March QB Meeting
- Illinois Envirothon-May 12-13, 2011 at Allerton Park, Monticello, IL
- 63rd Annual Meeting-July 25-27, 2011 at Hilton Hotel

REMEMBER: Focus not on your fears but on your strengths!!!!

Sherry

ISWCDEA CORNER - MEGAN POSTEN, ISWCDEA REGION FIVE REPRESENTATIVE

website: <http://www.il.ncdea.org>



By now you're all well aware of the \$600,000 cut to SWCDs outlined in Governor Quinn's 2012 budget. Rest assured the ISWCDEA isn't ignoring the elephant in the room. We are discussing ways to get the word out to legislators about the effect of reduced funding and the importance of SWCDs. Keep your eyes and ears open for calls to action from the ISWCDEA and the AISWCD.

At the February 10 meeting of the ISWCDEA, BLWR presented us with a proposed PFC average cost list for the FY 12 cost-share program. The list was also included in the BLWR March 2011 Update for your review. I urge you to take the time to look over the components and their average costs on the spreadsheet and see how they compare with your county's average costs. I recently worked up a cost estimate using Randolph County's average cost list and the proposed list for a grassed waterway planned in Randolph County, and found our cost estimate and the proposed cost estimate didn't work out quite the same. E-mail Mike Rahe your findings at mike.rahe@illinois.gov by COB March 18th.

Finally, please consider filling the vacant ISWCDEA representative openings in your regions! In Region 5 alone we have a vacant rep position with two current representatives' terms ending December 2011. Regions 3 and 4 also have vacancies. Now, more than ever, we all need to step up and work together to ensure that we receive adequate funding in 2012 and beyond.

LIVING LANDS & WATERS TREE HARVEST

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)



Sherry Finn and her husband Robert, represented the AISWCD at the tree harvest event. Sherry reported that the volunteers collected the two-year old saplings from the field after the digging machine had loosened the soil, bundled them into bundles of 25 trees, tied them and deposited them into large plastic bags. The bagged trees were then taken to a processing area where they were cleaned and placed in packages with moist sphagnum moss for shipping to their planting location. Among the trees harvested were Red Oak, White Oak, Burr Oak and Pin Oak.

The program is part of the Living Lands and Waters "Million Trees Project".

The picture at left shows Jim Schonoff, RCI project lead and Robert Finn as they pull trees from the loosened planting bed to be bundled and bagged.

Natural Area Guardians - *Tim Keller*

Tim Keller, Whiteside Co. SWCD Director

"Ah, Just Throw It Away"

Now, if there isn't enough to worry about, another thing looms on the horizon. By chance, a program titled "Trash, Inc." caught my attention. It is focused on the status of landfills world-wide.

Using satellite imagery, a study group had been able to locate four massive areas of floating garbage (flotsam) in the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Each of the three debris fields is larger than the size of Texas and California combined. Contrary to what we are led to believe, these gigantic whirlpools of discarded plastic and other refuse do not magically decompose. They tend to float on forever. Discarded fishing nets, in particular, pose a hazard to ships, whales and other wildlife, fish being the most vulnerable. One of the last places one would expect to find debris is on the beaches of Hawaii.

This problem of trash is worldwide in scope, especially in China, and seems to be insurmountable. Somehow or other the situation must be addressed. Hopefully, technology will come and rescue mother earth from this nightmare of worldwide waste, especially the oceans. Somehow, mankind has been able to solve or cope with our problems – or bury our collective heads in the sand and just hope the problem goes away. We consume too much, waste too much, throw away too much. The environment suffers, and we are part of that environment. Literally speaking, past actions come back to haunt us in more ways than one.

Time to Renew SWCDs Sponsorships

The first sponsorships are expiring but you can help your district and the AISWCD by encouraging those sponsors to renew! The AISWCD will contact those persons and businesses who subscribed to a sponsorship in 2010 asking for their renewals. Your encouragement may help make the difference.

Sponsorship brochures can be obtained by contacting the AISWCD office. To help defray printing expense, we are asking that each SWCD pay \$10.00 for 50 copies of the brochure. To make sure all 98 SWCDs have the opportunity to receive their 50 copies we are only giving out one packet (50 copies) per SWCD.

When an individual/company signs up to become a sponsor the checks are to be made out to the AISWCD. To make it easier, please feel free to send sponsors checks all at once or as you see fit. Keep in mind that individuals/companies can mail the sponsorships directly to us. For those of you that have not seen the brochure, there is a line for them to fill in their county name, to assure that SWCDs will receive 50% of the donations made in their county. Checks from the AISWCD to the SWCDs will be issued on a quarterly basis (March, June, September and December).

Take advantage of your annual meeting to hand out sponsorship brochures. Every sponsorship helps you and makes it possible for the AISWCD to continue our efforts to obtain a stable funding source for Illinois' Soil and Water Conservation Districts.





Legislative Corner - Mike Hoffmann

Budget Watch

As everyone knows by now, the Governor's budget did not treat us very well. Our General Revenue Fund appropriation for operational grants was cut by \$600,000, a 17% cut from the current year's level. At \$2.9 million, the recommended amount for fiscal year 2012 is less than half our appropriation of three years ago. Here is how the budget stacks up by fund:

Soil and Water Conservation District Appropriations FY's 2010-2012

<u>Purpose</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>Recommended</u>
			<u>2012</u>
Operations	\$6,951,100	\$3,531,600	\$2,931,600
Cost-share	<u>\$4,275,000</u>	<u>\$4,275,000</u>	<u>\$4,275,000</u>
Total	\$11,228,110	\$7,808,611	\$7,208,612

*Source Governor's 2012 budget book

We have our work cut out for us in the next few months to make sure the budget for soil and water conservation is restored to an adequate level. We continue to discuss options with our supporters at the Statehouse. The leadership team from the AISWCD and I have been making trips to the capitol to talk to legislators and the governor's staff and let them know the consequences to our state natural resources should the soil and water conservation program continue to be shortchanged.

Every district should be meeting with their legislators in their district offices to let them know what will happen if this budget is enacted. Now more than ever you need to *Keep Your State Legislators Educated on SWCD Activities*

Bills to Watch

- **SB0003 (Sen. John Cullerton, D-Chicago)** would authorize \$8.750 billion in to pay vouchers that are at least 60 days past due, medical expenses incurred by the State under its health plans, corporate income tax refunds, and other operating expenses of the State.
- **HB5424 (Rep. Mike Madigan, D-Chicago)** is a significant budget reform bill that was passed by the lame duck 96th G.A. in its waning hours (like the tax increase). Among other things, the bill would sunset every state grant program every five years beginning July 1, 2012. In order to continue in existence, grant programs would have to be renewed by a majority vote of both the House and the Senate. It would also revise budget priorities according to "merit" by requiring budgeting by goals and outcomes. The bill is on the Governor's desk awaiting his action. **The bill was signed into law by Gov. Quinn on February 16.**
- It does not have a bill number yet, but we've been informed that Rep. Chapin Rose (R-Champaign Co.) will be offering an appropriations bill to fund some of the Ag programs – including SWCDs – at a more sufficient level. We'll update you when the bill is introduced.
- **HB3094 (Rep. Mike Tryon, R-McHenry Co.)** stipulates that the Prevailing Wage Act does not apply to projects with a total cost of \$20,000 or less.
- **HB3379 (Rep. Chapin Rose, R-Champaign Co.)** would set General Revenue Fund appropriations to the Department of Agriculture for grants to soil and water conservation districts at \$6 million, an amount we have not seen for some time. The final amount will be set by state budget makers, but we appreciate Rep. Rose setting a reasonable goal.



ILLINOIS CHAPTER-IAAP - JANE BRANGENBERG, PRESIDENT

website: <http://iaap-swcd.tripod.com>

The IAAP would like to welcome a new member, Kyndall Kaufman. Kyndall is the Administrative Coordinator for Coles County. If you are not a member, please consider attending one of our meetings as a guest. To learn more about the chapter check out our website at <http://iaap-swcd.tripod.com>.

The chapter will also be holding their Annual Raffle on April 27th in honor of Administrative Professionals Day. The chapter will be drawing two names for an IPAD and also a Kindle. Tickets are \$2.00 each or 3 for \$5.00 and you do not need to be present to win. Contact any IAAP member to purchase a ticket. Hope that you can join us for our next meeting in April!

NEW BROCHURE SOLICITS AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS TO BE SPOKESPERSONS FOR THE INDUSTRY

The brochure, sponsored by the Illinois Beef Association, the Illinois Farm Bureau, the Illinois Pork Producers, The Illinois Corn Marketing Board and The Illinois Soybean Association is intended to generate a list of people who will speak for agriculture. If you would be willing to:

- Talk with neighbors and members in my community about farmers and farming
- Open my farm facilities for an open house for consumers
- Host a small group of non-farm men or women on my farm
- Write a "blog" about my farm
- Speak to small groups, such as service clubs, about farmers and farming
- Work with teachers to develop virtual field trips to my farm
- Help recruit others to join the **Farmers Opening Our Doors** movement
- Put up a yard sign on my property or help in some other way contact your local Farm Bureau office and request the **Farmers Opening Our Doors** brochure.



Information in the brochure is reproduced below:

I want to trust you. But I'm concerned based on what I hear and see...

Consumers want to feel good about their choices. They want to become healthier through the foods they eat, and they are concerned about protecting the environment. They want to know their food is safe, healthy and good for them and their families.

I don't know much about what you do...

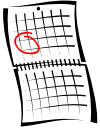
Consumers have real questions about how you farm. They are concerned about chemicals, hormones and antibiotics. They want to know you care about your land and your animals. They want to know you care about growing healthy food. Some of their misconceptions may surprise you. In a recent survey of 1,100 Illinois residents, most believe that more than half of all Illinois farms are corporate owned. The truth is, 94 out of 100 are family owned.

The most important thing to me is protecting my family and ensuring their health.

Most consumers feel farmers are hardworking, honest and trustworthy. But while they trust you, more than half don't believe you will do the right thing when it comes to specifics - like using fewer chemicals, treating animals properly and protecting the environment. These concerns leave consumers looking for answers. Unfortunately, farmers have been absent from the conversation. Rather than talking with you, consumers are getting their information from talk shows, websites, the media and of course, other moms. **Everyone except you**, the people who grow and raise their food

Give me reasons to trust you...

Moms want to trust you. Every mom feels good when we tell her you feed your family the same food she feeds hers. Moms want you to open your doors and show them what you do. They want to see for themselves and make informed decisions. They want to ask you questions. Are you ready to begin the conversation? Without your voice, consumers will never have the answers only you can share.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

- Conservation Farm Family and Outstanding Distirct Employee Awards - April 18th, Last date to be received by Council Chairman
- 2011 Illinois Envirothon - May 12th-13th at 4-H Camp, Monticello, IL
- All 2011 Award Nominations - May 16th, Last date to be received at AISWCD Office.
- Resolutions for Consideration at 2011 Annual Meeting - June 1, 2011 to Legislative Chair
- AISWCD Annual Meeting and Summer Conference - July 25 - 27, 2011, Springfield Hilton Hotel

2011 QUARTERLY BOARD MEETING DATES

- June 2011 Quarterly Board Meeting - June 13th/14th, Northfield Inn - Springfield, IL
- September 2011 Quarterly Board Meeting - Only if needed



2011 ENVIROTHON DATES

5th Category Topic: Salt & Freshwater Estuaries

ILLINOIS ENVIROTHON
May 12th - 13th
4-H Memorial Camp - Allerton Park
Monticello, Illinois

April 20th -
Last day for
LUC competitions

April 22nd - Last day
to register for Illinois
Envirothon

CANON ENVIROTHON
July 24th - 29th
Mount Allison University
Sackville, New Brunswick

Envirothon Update:

2011 5th category materials were posted to the AISWCD web site January 3rd. We have contracted with the Grundy County SWCD to serve as the Envirothon Coordinator for the AISWCD. Please feel free to contact Brooke Baker or Natalie Mahler if you have questions about the Envirothon.

AISWCD Mission: *To represent and empower Illinois' SWCDs*

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