

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!



When Will the Money Come?

Illinois' SWCDs are experiencing significant funding problems. As of April 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. Four SWCDs have announced that they will be forced to cease providing services by May 1, 2010 due to lack of funds.



THIS ISSUE

SWCDs Help High School Students
Become Environmentally Aware P.1

When Will Money Come? P.1

Districts' Spotlight P.2

SWCDs Provide Educational
Opportunities For Many P.2

SWCDs Help High School Students Become Environmentally Aware

The annual Illinois Envirothon Competition is underway at locations throughout Illinois. Illinois began participating in the Envirothon in 1995 with just one county, Coles. Today more than three-fourths of the SWCDs participate in local and Land Use Council (LUC) competitions.



2009 WINNING TEAM - Woodstock High School, LUC 16 - McHenry Co.

L to R - Advisor Bill Donato, Kim Lucka, Jon Psochka, Anna Woodruff, Chelsey Belt, and Brian Glow.

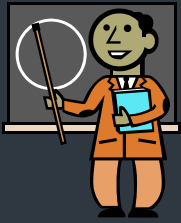
The Envirothon program is for high school students and combines classroom learning with hands-on field experiences focused around five major subject areas: Aquatics, Forestry, Soils, Wildlife and a Current Environmental Issue. The five-member teams rotate through five outdoor testing stations, where their knowledge is evaluated and scored through written examination. Additionally, the competition includes an oral presentation component that challenges students to effectively apply and communicate a solution to a complex environmental issue.

The competition pits five-member teams against teams from other schools in their area at sixteen locations around the state. The top scoring team at each location will go on to compete at the state level at Allerton 4-H Memorial Camp near Monticello which, this year, is scheduled to take place May 13 & 14.

Awards are given for the top scoring teams in each of the five subject areas and the team with the top score overall will advance to the National Cannon Envirothon competition which will be held in California this year.

Illinois' teams have represented the state quite well in past years. Last year's state winner, Woodstock High School from Woodstock Illinois placed 9th in the National Cannon Envirothon.

Fact: April is a busy month for Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Many districts hold tree sales during April to help supplement their state allocations. Last year eighty-five districts sold more than 200,000 tree seedling to 5,253 landowners



Soil and Water Conservation Districts Provide Educational Opportunities to Many.

- In a continuing effort to foster a caring attitude about Illinois' natural resources, soil and water conservation district staff lead tours, host meetings and workshops and provide field days and presentations to many different groups. Last year Illinois' 98 SWCDs presented information to more than 54,000 adults, 150,000 students and 13,945 teachers.
- Illinois SWCD employees assist educators in meeting conservation education requirements for students and provide educational opportunities for adults who want to know how to care for their environmental resources.



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

PROTECT & CONSERVE

Districts' Spotlight

April is filled with educational activities being conducted by Illinois' 98 soil and water conservation districts. Though these educational activities occur year round, many districts set aside time in April to host teachers' workshops and provide opportunities for students to experience some "hands-on" activities showing the importance of protecting our land, water and wildlife resources.

Knox County:

SWCD Employees Darla Steele and Kara Downin along with Knox County Farm Bureau Ag Literacy Coordinator, Miss Aggie presented to over 100 cub scouts and 30-40 parents/helpers at the ILLOWA Council Cub Scout Day Camp on Monday, July 13, 2009 at Little John Conservation Club. The camp theme was National Treasure in reference to Earth's natural resources. The presentation topic was water and included Earth's water supply, conserving water and the water cycle. The presentation concluded with the group making water cycle bracelets.

The District also donated use of its stream table toward the Cub Scout science presentation.



Darla Steele (L) and Kara Downin explain the water cycle process while campers build their beaded water cycle bracelets



Students learned about the habits of wild turkeys at one of the many stations at the Conservation Day event.

This event supplements the schools' curriculum content by adding natural resource conservation and environmental activities to ensure and expand these topics. A variety of topics were provided by staff from the Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources, University of Illinois Extension, Soil & Water Conservation Districts, as well as several local volunteer experts. Topics covered areas such as: soil and water quality, animals found in the habitats of Illinois, forestry knowledge, fisheries topics, & backpacking. Hands-on activities & visual aids - along with the outdoor setting - increased the awareness and enthusiasm of the students participating.

• 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!

Whiteside County:

On October 1, 2009 the 13th annual Conservation Day was held at Mississippi Palisades State Park in Savanna, IL. Conservation Day is a tri-county event for 4th grade students sponsored by Whiteside, Carroll, & Jo Daviess Counties Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). Whiteside County SWCD employees -Dave Harrison, Tammy Houzenga, & Rhonda Marshang, offered their knowledge and expertise to help make the annual event a success. There were more than 500 students from the tri-county area, with 171 students participating from Whiteside County.

Conservation Day is a one day outdoor education program providing students with the opportunity to learn about the natural resources and environment of Illinois.



Issue 07 • April 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