

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!



Will Veto Session Relieve District Funding Crisis?

"Spokesmen for Democratic leaders in both the House and Senate say the subject of soil and water district funding will be discussed this fall."

Soil and Water Conservation Districts will be looking to members of the General Assembly to help address shortfalls that have decimated the ranks of experienced employees during the past fourteen months.

*(Bill Grimes Effingham Daily News, September 23, 2010)



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WHERE HAVE DISTRICT EMPLOYEES GONE?

For some time we, the Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts, have maintained that SWCD employees are well trained and highly qualified. That seems to be borne out by a recent review that was made of departing employees and where they went when they left the SWCD.

We found that since July 2007, the start of the 2008 fiscal year and the beginning of the current financial problems that are causing so much concern in SWCDs, districts have lost 76 full time employees and 24 part time employees. Time in service is not calculated for part time employees but the loss of full time employees equates to more than 590 staff years of experience.

Where did those people go when they left the SWCD? We don't know where all of them went but we do know that nine were picked up by professional engineering or consulting firms, sixteen were hired by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service or Farm Service Agency and two entered academia as college instructors.

Though we don't have exact numbers, we know that a significant number of departing employees decided to return to school to do post graduate work. We also know that many of the part time employees were trained as teachers and served as education coordinators when they were

employed by the districts. Since many of the education coordinators were either retired teachers or trained teachers seeking employment in the education field, we believe that several of those departing employees sought and found teaching positions.

It is good that these people were able to capitalize on their training and experience to find employment elsewhere but their loss represents a significant set back to each district that had provided much of the training. The district must now start over with new employees who must be trained and will likely not reach full productivity for at least three years from their initial employment date.

The funding problems encountered by districts in the past three years have moved the state from a relatively stable district work force with an average annual turnover of 5% to the current turnover rate of 53%. Such a rate is unsustainable in terms of being able to assist municipal and county government as well as rural and urban landowners with the complexities of erosion control and water quality improvement programs being mandated by state and federal regulations.

Fact: Soil and Water Conservation Districts will have to spend more than \$420,000 to train new employees to replace those that have left district employment since July 2008.



Soil and Water Conservation Districts Work With City and County Governments to Implement Green Infrastructure Practices

- SWCDs, utilizing the Illinois Urban Manual, (IUM) assist with erosion and stormwater control utilizing practices specifically suited to urban settings.
- There are currently forty-five standards for urban conservation practices of which six are classified as green infrastructure practices.
- The IUM has been adopted by the National Association of Conservation Districts as the national model and will continue to be updated and expanded as technology and knowledge increase.



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

PROTECT & CONSERVE

Districts' Spotlight

Cumberland County SWCD:

During a recent [interview](#) by Barbara Harrington, WEIU TV, Resource Conservationist Randy Hurt explains the financial difficulties the district is facing. Cumberland County farmer Leroy Scott discusses the reliance the people of Cumberland County place on the district and the important role the district fills.

The Cumberland County SWCD is involved in a number of programs that benefit all of the people of the County not just those who rely on farming for their living.



WEIU reporter Barbara Harrington interviews Randy Hurt, Cumberland County SWCD Resource Conservationist.

Click on [interview](#) to view the entire story. If the link does not work, you can copy the following URL into your web browser. http://www.weiunet.com/news/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=903:soil-and-water-conservation-district&catid=2:video

Kane-DuPage SWCD:

The practices depicted are indicative of those for which standards have been developed in the Illinois Urban Manual (IUM). SWCD employees assist engineering firms by educating engineers and designers on best management practice standards and with meeting NPDES permit requirements for construction areas. The practice standards contained in the IUM are devel-



Aqua-Barriers in the Fox River at Batavia help assure an accessible construction site while protecting the river from construction site erosion.



Bank Stabilization at Orchard Valley Golf Course. SWCD employees were responsible for performing construction reviews on the completed practices.

• 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 backyard!

oped to meet national criteria for standard design and are available to all Illinois citizens and entities. The Kane-DuPage SWCD staff, as well as staff from other urbanizing SWCDs, have played an important role in assisting with the development of the IUM and will continue to be involved as more standards are considered for addition in the future.



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YOUR

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