

Activities for the 3rd and 4th Quarter Ending December, 2013

Submitted by Richard Nichols

Executive Director

- June 10-11 – Attended Quarterly Board Meeting.
- June 19 – Met with Brandon Clark an intern with IEPA who is working on a paper for use with the General Assembly explaining what the SWCDs are and what they do.
- June 20 – Participated in a NACD conference call of the planning committee for the Executive Directors' Conference that will take place in September in Arizona.
- June 24 – Kelly and I met with IEPA staff to discuss the continuation of the IUM Grant. That meeting resulted in a new grant funded through Section 604b – a federal source of funds that does not require a match as do grants funded through Section 319.
- July 9 – Mike Chandler of IDNR and I conducted interviews for the LaSalle SWCD CREP Resource Specialist Position.
- July 10 – Lonnie, Kelly and I attended the CTIC tour of the Indian Creek Watershed in Livingston County.
- July 15 – Steve Chard and I met with the Illinois Farm Bureau SWAT group to discuss SWCD funding issues. It appears that IFB will introduce a resolution at its December Annual Meeting to support funding for the SWCDs.
- July 16 – Kelly and I attended a Farm Progress Show meeting of the participants in the Partners in Conservation Tent that will be at the 2013 Farm Progress Show.
- July 17 – Kelly and I met with representatives of Mass Mutual and a benefits management company out of St. Louis to discuss an affiliate membership program we have been working on for some time.
- July 29 – I participated in a conference call with the Envirothon Committee to discuss the new agreement for Envirothon Administration.
- July 31 – Completed and submitted final report for the Green Infrastructure Grant at the Fairgrounds, Completed and submitted the CREP grant proposal for 2014 – 2015.
- July 31 – I participated in an MOU Taskforce conference call.
- August 1 – I participated in a short conference call with the CREP Resource Specialists.
- August 8 – Lonnie and I attended the Nutrient Reduction Strategy Policy Work Group meeting at IEPA.
- August 13 – Attended and participated in Ag Day at the State Fair.
- August 20 – Participated in an MOU conference call.
- August 21 – Met with USFWS and contractor to plan out the rain garden to the west of the AISWCD office.
- August 22 – Kelly and I participated in a conference call with TireBuyer to see if we could add their program to the affiliate membership program.
- August 26-29 – I participated in set-up on the 26th and manned the booth the 27-29 during the 2013 Farm Progress Show in Decatur.
- September 3 – Participated in the Executive Committee Conference Call.
- September 9-11 – Attended the 2013 Executive Director's Conference in Arizona.
- September 17 – Mike Hoffmann and I met with Illinois Department of Revenue managers to discuss the Cover Crop Sales Tax in the morning. In the afternoon Kelly and I met with representatives from an insurance brokerage firm to discuss the possibility of offering health and life insurance at a discount through the affiliate membership program.
- September 18 – I participated in an ISWCDEA board meeting conference call in the morning and attended the Nutrient Reduction Strategy Policy Work Group meeting at IEPA in the afternoon.
- September 20-21 – I attended and represented the AISWCD at the Illinois Forestry Association Annual Meeting.
- October 1-3 – Sherry, Kelly and I attended the Illinois River conference in Peoria.
- October 1-17 – The federal government shut down. The office did what we could to facilitate communication between SWCDs through our web site and through use of the directors' email list.
- October 9 – Kelly and I attended the Ag Legislative Day planning meeting.
- October 18 – I attended the Nutrient Reduction Strategy Policy Work Group Meeting in Bloomington.
- October 21 – Sherry and I participated in a conference call with NRCS to finalize plans for the Contract Administration Pilot program.
- October 28 – I conducted interviews for the vacant CREP Resource Specialist position.

October 31 – Sherry and I participated in a conference call with NRCS and the five Contract Administration Pilot districts.

November 7 – Mike Hoffmann, Kelly and I met with staff from the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules, and IDNR and IFB representatives to discuss IDNR's proposed rules for construction in a flood plain.

November 22 – I participated in a conference call with the Illinois Soybean Association as a member of their Sustainability Advisory Panel.

November 25 – I spoke (conference call) with representatives from the Northridge Company. They have been employed by IEPA to look at ways the State Revolving Loan Fund can be used to help with non-point source issues.

November 26 – I attended the Illinois Commodity Conference in Bloomington.

December 2 – Sherry and I participated in a conference call with NRCS and the Contract Management Pilot SWCDs.

December 3-4 – Sherry, Kelly, Gina and I attended the ISWCEA Winter Training I Springfield. I participated in three of the sessions.

In addition to the above, I have performed my duties as the Executive Director for the AISWCD, written and emailed regular weekly reports to the SWCDs, written and edited six Conservation Catchalls and five legislative newsletters, spent several days researching legal assistance for the AISWCD and SWCDs, written letters on behalf of the AISWCD and SWCDs regarding IDNR's proposed rules, SWCD allocations, Cover Crop Sales tax issues, assisted with implementation of a pilot program for NRCS and the SWCDs for Contract Administration.

Five resolutions have seen some action this period.

- **Resolution 2008-1** Stable Funding
Status: Ongoing. Amendment #4 to SB1739 filed by Senator Link shortly before the bill passed the Senate included \$6.25 million for grants to districts to be funded from the proceeds of the Chicago Casino. We will work to support passage of this bill as it is brought before the House. Work continues with Representative Frank Mautino to craft a funding bill for the Department of Agriculture that will include additional funds for the SWCDs. The source of the funds will be fee based. We will continue as needed to try to get a bill introduced during the spring 2014 session.
- **Resolution 2010-2** Establish Illinois Envirothon Scholarship Program
Status: Ongoing. Sponsors are being sought for the Envirothon and to provide funding for scholarships. The Affiliate Membership program is designed to assist with funding the Envirothon.
- **Resolution 2011-1** Prevailing Wage Act Resolution
Status: Ongoing: Representative David Reis sponsored HB0987 that exempts agricultural lands from the PWA requirements. We were successful in getting agreement on the bill from union lobbyists but it was not called for third reading before adjournment May 31, 2013. The bill has been "shelled" to keep it alive until such time as we can get the bill to move. We are currently seeking a different sponsor for the bill and will attempt to get it passed during the 2014 spring session.
- **Resolution 2013-1** Soil and Water Conservation Districts Policy Book
Status: Ongoing. Work has begun on assembling existing resolutions and policies that can be organized and used to build the manual.
- **Resolution 2013-2** Sales Tax Relief For Cover Crops
Status: Completed. We met with representatives of the Illinois Department of Revenue. They agreed to write a General Information Letter to seed dealers to exclude cover crop seed from the state sales tax after receiving documentation to support their decision. The documentation has been provided.