

AISWCD

Executive Director's Bi-Monthly Report

Thursday, March 12, 2015

To say it's been busy, since my last report was posted, is a complete understatement; however we are thankful for every second that we are busy, after all that's why we are here!

I want to first start by thanking a few key people and groups. A huge thank you goes out to the ISWCDEA and SWCD employees. Without their help AISWCD could not have completed many of the events and tasks that have taken place over the past several weeks. Thank you also to AISWCD Executive Board for all they do as well as the entire AISWCD Board. The recent Quarterly Board meeting was a success and without the help of the Board members it would not have been as successful. Thank you to the AISWCD grant staff for attending and helping with QB committee meetings. A final thank you goes out to AISWCD office staff. While there aren't many of them they are still a force, so thank you Gina Bean and Matt Hanauer!

AISWCD OFFICE UPDATE

We just completed our 2nd Annual AISWCD & Partners Legislative Day and Reception. More info listed under legislative update. This was held in conjunction with the March Quarterly Board meeting.

SWCD LONG RANGE PLANS

Just wanted to make mention about the Long Range Plans that each district is developing for IDOA. AISWCD can't stress enough how important these plans are to future funding ventures. The Long Range Plan acts as a Business plan which once completed will likely open doors to more funding opportunities. While IDOA is not providing a template for districts to use, you are welcome to Google "Business Plans" to see the structure and layout. There are several districts who have already completed their plans and would be more than happy to answer questions or let you borrow their plan as a template. Just remember, while we are all SWCDs, each is uniquely different in that districts have a wide range of partners and projects within their county. If AISWCD can help in anyway please let us know or contact Elliot Lagacy for more info Elliot.Lagacy@Illinois.gov.

AISWCD INTERNSHIP

The AISWCD Board has voted and approved for AISWCD to hire a summer intern this year. We'll be conducting interviews within the next several weeks. Our hope is to have the person hired and on staff by May 1st. We'd like this person to gain experience planning the Summer Conference and participate in other field work as time allows.

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NUTRIENT LOSS REDUCTION STRATEGY (NLRS)

We just received an email yesterday stating the NLRS will be finalized closer to May 1st as they are still making updates based on comments received during the 60 day comment period.

NLRS TASKFORCE

The AISWCD Board has formed the NLRS Taskforce. The Taskforce will be meeting with key partners within the next several weeks to discuss how they see SWCDs fitting into the implementation phase of the NLRS. Moving forward, AISWCD knows the districts have a presence in each county. Districts have local connection and that's where most other groups and organizations fall short. It is going to take local buy-in from local landowners to promote, implement and conduct further research in order to achieve measurable results. Who is in a better position than districts to get the job done...no one! AISWCD believes in the districts! We will help give you the necessary tools needed to complete this task. Again, we are meeting with partners to discuss which direction we will take in the near future. Please stay-tuned for more information!

CDSI - CLIENT GATEWAY

Myron and I met with Ivan Dozier, Dave Dornbusch, Eric Gerth, Paula Hingson and Angela Biggs on Wednesday, March 11th after the State Technical Committee meeting in Champaign. We discussed the agreement between NRCS and AISWCD to have districts complete administrative tasks for NRCS. The term being used is CDSI or Conservation Delivery Streamline Initiative which includes Client Gateway and other tools. We also discussed CRP Contribution Agreements. Ivan and Angela have a meeting this week so we hope to hear more information in the coming weeks.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Budget - Update

As you know the Governor gave his FY16 budget address in the middle of February. While SWCDs appeared to remain flat the more questionable issue at hand was the FY15 budget. The previous Governor, before he left office, promised over 300 million dollars to special groups. Some of that money had already been allocated and a check issued to those groups before Governor Rauner took office. The remaining funds promised to special groups and organizations has been frozen, along with all other state spending. What does this mean for SWCDs? The SWCD 2nd allocation from IDOA has also been frozen.

Myron, Mike and I have met with several legislators to stress the importance of districts receiving their final allocation. We have informed them about insurance premiums being due as well as the financial situation that each district is facing, especially since they have already received a 70% funding cut since 2002. After meeting with legislators,

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some instructed us to talk directly with Governor's Office of Management and Budget (GOMB).

On Wednesday, March 4th Myron, Steve Chard and I met with IDOA Director Nelson. We discussed the financial issue that districts were facing. He also instructed us to talk with legislators and GOMB. Then on Thursday, March 5th during IL AG Legislative Day, Mike, Myron, Tom and I talked with legislators and attempted to set-up a meeting with GOMB's Director. They were unable to meet on Thursday however, Friday (late afternoon) I received a phone call from GOMB staff asking for district's financial information, hence the reason for our urgent request on such short notice last Friday. - Just a quick side note: thank you all who helped in contacting districts and thank you to the SWCDs for providing that information on such short notice. - Upon receiving that information, GOMB requested a meeting, to be held on March 10th, with AISWCD to discuss the importance of the 2nd allocation for SWCDs. Myron, Mike, Van and I met with Mr. Scott Harry – Chief of Staff and two other staff members to discuss district funding. At the close of the meeting, GOMB said they would work with IDOA. We have not heard an update since that meeting. We will make everyone aware of any changes or updates as they become available.

Legislative Day 2015

Legislative Day & Reception was a success once again this year. Thank you to all who participated and made this day such a great event! Gina is still working on a final attendance count and a list of all the legislators that were visited by the groups. I can report that 19 Representatives and 2 Senators (according to the signed-in list) attended the Reception at Boones Saloon. We'll provide a full list early next week.

***If the legislators your group visited requested more information on NLRs, funding or anything else, please let me know immediately so I can get that information to them.

PLEASE CONTINUE TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS!

Discuss with them ***how will funding cuts will affect their legislative district and the state as a whole***. Keep reminding them throughout the legislative session on how important Soil and Water Conservation is to Illinois. Legislators need to hear from their constituents. One last time, **I can't stress how important it is to call your legislator to let them know how a cut in funding will not only affect SWCDs but their legislative district as well.** We will post the list of talking points that we discussed with legislators on Legislative Day. Please continue to carry this message throughout the year as it is imperative that we are all carrying a clear and concise message.

Legislative Visit(s) – Thank you to Rick Macho and Madison SWCD for the invitation to present the NLRs at your recent Legislative Meeting on Monday, March 2nd in Edwardsville. They invited several legislators but due to scheduling conflicts only one was able to attend, Charlie Meier. Also in attendance was the County Farm Bureau President, SWCD Directors and many more. It was a great event. Thanks again for the invitation!

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Legislative Book

The book will be posted to the website within the next week. We intend to also bring a few copies to each Quarterly Board meeting and the Annual Meeting in July. Once posted, feel free to download and share with your legislators. I will be using information in the book to develop quarterly Protect and Conserve newsletters that will be sent out to all legislators. If your district would like to provide more information on events and projects taking place in your area please forward to Gina or myself.

AISWCD ANNUAL MEETING

Planning for the AISWCD Annual Meeting and BLWR Summer Conference is underway. The AISWCD Board approved the new schedule for this year's conference. Gina will post a draft (without specific sessions listed) on the website within the next week. Some exciting changes are coming to this year's event! We want everyone to learn something new, meet someone new and bring new ideas back to your district. We hope your district can attend this year! Be sure to read the upcoming Conservation Catchall as it will have registration, award and form submission deadlines.

NEW THIS YEAR ... An **Exhibit Hall** will feature partners and products. We have already invited and confirmed two groups: NRCS and Illinois Stewardship Alliance. If you know of a company or vendor that is interested in joining the Exhibit Hall please have them contact Gina Bean. The Exhibit Hall will be open on both Monday and Tuesday of the conference. A **Sunday Tour** will be offered for those who like to travel to Springfield a day early. The tour is still being planned but as information becomes available it will be added to the Annual Meeting webpage. The **Hospitality Rooms** will once again be offered during the conference.

Live Auction Update: AISWCD is seeking 10-12 auction items (value \$250+) for the live auction. We are also taking other donations (i.e. wine, hand-made items, housewares, wall art, etc.) for the silent auction (value <\$250). The silent auction will take place in conjunction with the Live Auction this year. If your LUC would like to pool their money to purchase an item to place in the Live Auction (i.e. seed corn, Terry Redland print, firearms, etc.) it is greatly appreciated. Some items might be paired and placed as a "basket-type" item. We need a list of all items no later than June 1st so we can advertise on the website and in the auction booklet.

Bring your spouse and family to this year's Annual Meeting & Summer Conference. There will be plenty of activities for the whole family!

FARM PROGRESS SHOW 2015

SPACE IS LIMITED...The FPS is scheduled for September 1-3 in Decatur, IL. AISWCD and partners will once again have the **Partners in Conservation Tent**. Planning is already underway. Jody Christensen and I are co-chairs and are working diligently to

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secure tent space, invite interested partners to attend and much more. The next FPS meeting will be held in Tuesday, March 17 in Decatur at the USDA/SWCD Service Center. If you are interested in participating please let me know.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY AISWCD

AISWCD is grateful for Soil and Water Conservation Districts! We'd like to provide a list of services that we currently offer to our SWCD members.

- ❖ Informational material – email based (il.all subscription)
- ❖ Conservation Catchall publication
- ❖ Legislative Day Reception
- ❖ Insurance Policy (AISWCD holds the policy and gets reimbursed by IDOA)
 - Directors and Officers Liability
 - Business Auto
 - Package Policy (property, inland marine and general liability)
 - Umbrella Policy
 - Workers Compensation
- ❖ Tech Soup – technology discounts
- ❖ Registered Lobbyist

We greatly appreciate your membership! Please let us know how we can better serve your district by submitting comments to Kelly.thompson@aiswcd.org. I will direct any comments or question to the AISWCD Executive Board members.

As always, if you have any questions or comments at all, don't hesitate to call the office! Remember, AISWCD works for Districts...without SWCDs, the Association would not exist!

Remember to **INFORM** your Legislators!

You can never send them enough information on activities taking place in your district!

Only 1 week until spring!



Kelly Thompson