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# Press Release

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## **Funding Crisis for Soil and Water Conservation Districts**

*Springfield, IL, April 7, 2015*—Nearly \$2.8 million of the Soil and Water Conservation District funding for FY 2015 has been “suspended” by Governor’s Office of Management & Budget and Illinois Department of Agriculture. The suspension of funds accounts for 37.3% of the total \$7.5 million appropriations districts receive for operations. If the suspension is not lifted, soil and water conservation districts around the state will be forced to dismantle their work force.

Only \$4.7 million has been released to fund the operations of soil and water conservation districts so far this fiscal year. That constitutes about \$33,900 to each of the 97 districts, plus health insurance premiums. Districts still need \$1.75 million total—or about \$18,800 per district—to fund the districts through the remainder of this fiscal year. These funds are for salaries of the employees of the 97 districts. Soil and Water districts are now operating with about 149 employees state-wide—or about 30% fewer employees than just 8 years ago.

SWCD were established during the Dust Bowl Era to combat the soil erosion taking place— they continue to provide valuable services to the community by working closely with several federal, state, and other non-governmental organizations. The District serves as a point of contact to landowners wishing to address resource concerns on their property and assists in delivering programs that prevent erosion from urban development and of tillable soil that threaten our agricultural economy and the sustainability of our surface water supplies. In addition to providing technical service and information regarding federal and state conservation programs, District staff also provide services to the general public. Many of the services and events throughout the year include providing tree seedlings to area students to be planted for Arbor Day, hosting Ag Discovery Day for county students, holding annual poster and photo contests, holding native tree and fish sales, hosting various educational workshops, participating in community events and much more.

Each SWCD office is responsible for bringing state and federal agency funding to both rural and urban citizens in Illinois. Unlike most state funded agencies, SWCDs return to the local economy an average of \$23.57 for every \$1 spent for their operation. SWCD programs are capable of adding more than \$400 million to the State’s economy every year, but if SWCDs are forced to close due to a lack of funding, the valuable services they provide to the residents of Illinois will disappear completely.

Agriculture and urban and rural Conservation are all part of the future. We are all taught that we have a responsibility to protect our natural resources.

### Media links

AISWCD Website: <http://www.aiswcd.org/>

AISWCD Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ILSWCDs?ref=hl>

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