

AISWCD Resolution 2018-03

S.T.A.R.(Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources) Program

Whereas, the Strategic Plan for the AISWCD lays out "Clean Water & Healthy Soils" as our Mission

Whereas, Resolution 2017-2 sets forth Water Quality as a top priority for the AISWCD, with an emphasis on using the NLRS to help improve Water Quality.

Whereas, the Illinois Department of Agriculture has made a formal endorsement of the S.T.A.R. (Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources) Program.

Whereas, the S.T.A.R. Program fits well in assisting the AISWCD implement portions of all 5 of the major goals set forth in our Strategic Plan.

1. Capitalize on Unique Asset: Local knowledge, presence and influence.
Districts know the unique resource concerns of their District and are already advising farmers on the best use of conservation practices. The S.T.A.R. Program will "raise visibility" and help reach more farmers to get more conservation on the ground.
2. Enhance Relevance and Reputation for achieving Illinois conservation goals
Being the "local implementor" of conservation practices has always been one of the strengths of Districts. The NLRS provides the opportunity for Districts to enhance their leadership role. The NLRS provides a focused goal, much like the "T by 2000" campaign. The S.T.A.R. Program will provide a new way to focus on conservation practices, that will help district efforts get noticed. The S.T.A.R. Program could be our "thing". It will be what SWCDs become recognized for across the state. It will raise our visibility and enhance our relevance.
3. Increase Funding
The S.T.A.R. Program would provide our newly invigorated Foundation a "focused goal" to talk with potential funders. Water Quality and Healthy Soils are top of mind with many funders. The S.T.A.R. Program would give the AISWCD Foundation and the AISWCD a great reason to solicit funding that will help bring additional resources to local districts.
4. Improve partnerships for efficient program delivery, best conservation results and further funding opportunities.
While many conservation efforts are ongoing, implementing the S.T.A.R. Program will provide an opportunity for districts to improve the organization and leadership of these efforts in Illinois. This will provide Districts with the opportunity to work with partners to;
 - Clarify roles
 - Eliminate duplication
 - Improve cooperation

This leadership role will put us in a much stronger position as we write grants to help keep districts in the forefront of these conservation efforts.

5. Provide valuable services for partners and stake holders to help achieve conservation goals.

Districts have consistently provided valuable services to our partners and stake holders, but it seems we struggle getting the credit and recognition for our efforts. By taking leadership through the S.T.A.R. Program, SWCD's will earn the recognition that is necessary to raise our visibility and increase our credibility among Legislators and other potential funders.

Therefore, we the SWCD's of Illinois, do support and promote the implementation of the S.T.A.R. evaluation and verification program in Illinois. We request the Illinois Department of Agriculture to add the S.T.A.R. Program to the CPP docket as another way to help meet the goals set forth in the NLRS and to help us reach our goal of "Clean Waters and Healthy Soils" for all of Illinois.

Resolution Approved by Land Use Council 3
May 31, 2018