

ASSOCIATION OF ILLINOIS SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS



ANNUAL REPORT



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE

Dear Partners and Friends,

Illinois' Soil and Water Conservation Districts are the multi-tool in our toolbox because of the hard work you put in every day. This year has been tough on everyone across our nation and our state. With the uncertainty we have all faced, it's comforting to know our agriculture community can count on you to keep watch over our land and water.

This past year the Department launched the Fall Cover for Spring Savings premium discount program. Our inaugural season resulted in an additional 50,000 acres of cover crops planted in the State with 70% of applicants identified as planting cover crops for the first time. We encouraged farmers to take this program into consideration when making fall planting decisions and the response was overwhelming.

I want to also commend the hard work S.T.A.R. (Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources) has done in the past year. S.T.A.R. is a prime example of how a tool developed by Illinois farmers can help encourage improvements in on-farm soil health and downstream water quality.

In August, S.T.A.R released their annual report for the 2019 growing season. The strides taken by S.T.A.R to give farmers flexibility in choosing their path to conservation success will translate into environmental impacts that we will see in our farming communities.

IDOA looks forward to another year working jointly promoting innovative forms of agriculture protecting Illinois' vital resources, water and soil. Congratulations on a great 2020 and the Department looks forward to working with you in 2021.

Sincerely,



JERRY COSTELLO II

ILLINOIS DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE





**FROM EVERY CONCEIVABLE
ANGLE - ECONOMIC, SOCIAL,
CULTURAL, PUBLIC HEALTH,
NATIONAL DEFENSE - THE
CONSERVATION OF NATURAL
RESOURCES IS AN OBJECTIVE
ON WHICH ALL SHOULD
AGREE.**

Hugh Hammond Bennett,
American conservationist and founder of
the Natural Resources Conservation Service.



MESSAGE FROM THE STATE CONSERVATIONIST

Dear Partners and Friends,

Every year we look back at the challenges we faced and do our best to tabulate our accomplishments. 2020 might go down as one of the most challenging years of all time—and for some unfamiliar reasons. As difficult a year as it was, I must admit that NRCS managed to get a lot of work done even during difficult circumstances. Much of that I attribute to our passion for what we all do, but most of it happens because of our allies and partnerships.

The Illinois NRCS needs conservation partners more than ever before. I keep saying what a great time it is to be a conservationist. Agriculture is strong and the public's awareness of environmental issues and natural resources has expanded. The amount of work that lays ahead is tremendous. The opportunities and benefits that are connected to all that hard work is also tremendous. And with the realities of our local and national water quality issues and the importance of making progress in the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy, it is essential that we continue to plan and install practices on the land. We must do what we do best. But we must do it even better.

What we bring to the fight, the history, our combined technical skills, and the absolute commitment to win is difficult to measure. But we must measure it and even more important, we must increase what we have and what we are right now.

NRCS staffing numbers are down—but they are on the rise. Soil and Water Conservation District staff numbers and technical levels aren't exactly where we need them to be, but they too are on the rise. We must stay committed to improving our staffs and increasing our skills. It's now or never. We must stay relevant. We must be perceived as essential.

I thank you all for your hard work—especially in this pandemic outbreak. Thank you for finding new ways to get old jobs done. And thank you for your commitment to take on the tough challenges together.

Sincerely,

IVAN DOZIER

ILLINOIS STATE CONSERVATIONIST





**AISWCD SUPPORTS
CLEAN WATER, HEALTHY SOILS.**

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends:

2020 presented several extraordinary events that significantly impacted America's way of life as we have known it. The Covid-19 Pandemic, the Presidential election, civil unrest, a record number of hurricanes and wildfires, all created new and unique challenges for everyone, including the natural resource conservation community. However, like the resiliency of our fellow citizens, conservationists around Illinois have met these challenges head on and continue to work hard to find solutions to natural resource concerns.

This annual report highlights the accomplishments of the Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts and its member local Soil and Water Conservation Districts during 2020. It represents the concerted efforts of the men and women dedicated to the conservation and enhancement of our finite natural resources.

I am pleased to share this annual report with everyone. We are optimistic that 2021 will be a much better year.

Clean Water, healthy soils.



THOMAS G. BEYERS
PRESIDENT



DID YOU KNOW?

\$4.5M

ILLINOIS' SWCD OPS FUNDING SUPPORT

(ROUGHLY \$41,500.00 PER DISTRICT)

+ 1,000 % ROI

(RETURN ON INVESTMENT)

\$52M

**FEDERAL FARM BILL PROGRAM DOLLARS
SWCDS HELPED DELIVER THIS YEAR ALONE**

WHERE ELSE CAN YOU GET AN ROI LIKE THAT?

ABOUT AISWCD

OUR MISSION IS TO REPRESENT AND EMPOWER THE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS OF ILLINOIS.



The Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts (AISWCD), is a grass roots organization formed in 1948. It is made up and serves Illinois' Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). Soil and Water Conservation Districts work to protect Illinois' greatest assets – the rich, fertile soils and diverse water resources of the state through strategic conservation efforts. Soil and Water Conservation Districts, working in conjunction with agricultural as well as environmental stakeholders, have for decades over played a central role in efforts to protect and sustain the viability of Illinois' natural resources for future generations.

CLEAN WATER, HEALTHY SOILS.

AISWCD LEADERSHIP

President | Thomas Beyers
Vice President | Dale Shumaker
Secretary | Maggie Soliz
Treasurer | Dan Duval
Past President | Steve Stierwalt

Area 1 Vice President | Jerry Snodgrass
Area 2 Vice President | David McCormick
Area 3 Vice President | Kenny Hawthorne
Area 4 Vice President | Rudy Rice

Director LUC 1 | Barb Klinger
Director LUC 2 | Josh Curry
Director LUC 3 | Lee Bunting
Director LUC 4 | Terry Davis
Director LUC 5 | Chuck Schafer
Director LUC 6 | Randy Molitoris
Director LUC 7 | Joe Rothermel
Director LUC 8 | Bruce Yingling
Director LUC 9 | Mark Roth
Director LUC 10 | Daniel Doedtman
Director LUC 11 |
Director LUC 12 |
Director LUC 13 |
Director LUC 14 |
Director LUC 15 | Wayne Wildermuth
Director LUC 16 | Thomas Konen

ISWCDEA Co-Chair | Tara Hopkins
ISWCDEA Co-Chair | Rich Stewart

**THANKS ARE IN ORDER TO THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR
THEIR CONTINUED LEADERSHIP
AND SERVICE TO AISWCD.**

AISWCD TEAM

THE TEAM AT AISWCD IS PROUD TO WORK HARD ON THE BEHALF OF MEMBER DISTRICTS TO ADVANCE THE IMPORTANT WORK OF SWCDS.



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AISWCD'S WORK

AISWCD SPEAKS WITH ONE VOICE ON THE BEHALF OF ITS MEMBER DISTRICTS AND REPRESENTS THEM ON ISSUES IMPACTING CONSERVATION ACROSS THE STATE.

1. ADVOCACY

AISWCD STRONGLY ADVOCATES UPON THE BEHALF OF SWCDS ON LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY MATTERS IMPACTING SWCDs.

2. PUBLIC RELATIONS

AISWCD WORKS TO FOSTER A POSITIVE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF SWCDS TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC, MEDIA, AND POLICYMAKERS.

3. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

AISWCD STRIVES TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTINUED EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND DEVELOPMENT.

4. MEMBER SERVICES AND SUPPORT

AISWCD AIMS TO FURNISH MEMBERS WITH THE RESOURCES AND KNOWLEDGE THEY NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN FULFILLING THEIR CONSERVATION MISSION.

ADVOCACY

AISWCD CONTINUES TO STRONGLY ADVOCATE ON BEHALF OF SWCDS AT THE STATE HOUSE ON CONSERVATION POLICIES.



ABOVE: Executive Director Hammer (left) meets with Illinois Agriculture Director Jerry Costello (Center) at the State Library for Ag Legislative Day. AISWCD contractual lobbyist Trevor Clatfelter is at right.

Illinois' fiscal challenges have certainly impacted soil and water conservation, and budgets over the past decade have reflected this. The AISWCD Board of Directors, at its December 2019 quarterly meeting, made plans to launch a multi-faceted advocacy campaign to make a strong push for increased resources to strengthen soil and water conservation programs. The AISWCD has worked

tirelessly over the past two years to lay the groundwork needed to realize our goals, and has made significant progress. AISWCD will pick up where we have left off and build towards the future in 2021.



DIGITAL ADVOCACY

AISWCD EMBRACES TECH TO DELIVER RESULTS FOR SWCDS.

ASWCD unveiled a new, grassroots digital advocacy tool in 2020 to modernize advocacy capabilities. Now more than ever, our members can easily and conveniently make their voices heard to lawmakers and demonstrate strong support for soil and water conservation from legislative district to legislative district across the state. The following highlight the early success of the new tool over the course of spring 2020.

3

**TOTAL NUMBER OF EMAIL
ACTION ALERTS SENT TO
AISWCD MEMBERS**

115

**TOTAL NUMBER OF AISWCD
SUPPORTERS WHO SENT
EMAILS**

40%

**PERCENTAGE OF LAWMAKERS
RECEIVING MESSAGES FROM
AISWCD ADVOCATES**

383

**TOTAL NUMBER OF EMAIL
MESSAGES SENT BY AISWCD
ADVOCATES**

PUBLIC RELATIONS

HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPORTANT WORK AND VALUE OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION.



AIWCD made news in 2020 with a series of opinion-editorial articles that were strategically submitted in key media markets throughout the state which included; southern Illinois, central Illinois, and the suburban collar counties. The articles articulated the important need for soil and water conservation programs as well as the central role that SWCDs play in the delivery of conservation across the state. These efforts no doubt raised the profile of SWCDs and supported the advocacy work occurring at the State House. The opinion-articles also

highlighted the work and contributions of our member districts and the value they offer to the communities they serve. We thank all of those who helped to make this effort possible.

HEADLINE HIGHLIGHTS

THESE WERE THE NEWS
STORIES THAT HIT HOME.

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION MORE IMPORTANT NOW THAN EVER

The Southern Illinoisan

AMID COVID-19, WE MUST SOLVE THE GROWING THREAT FROM EXTREME WEATHER ...

The Daily Herald

URGENT ACTION NEEDED TO PROTECT WATER, SOIL

The Champaign News-Gazette

MEMBER SERVICES AND SUPPORT

AISWCD PROVIDED MEMBERS WITH A WIDE ARRAY OF SUPPORT OVER THE COURSE OF 2020 WHICH INCLUDED JOB POSTINGS, EQUIPMENT SALES POSTINGS, SURVEYS, AND READY MADE SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT.



ATTENTION SWCD DIRECTORS! SIGN UP FOR THE AISWCD'S E-NEWSLETTER WHICH IS DISTRIBUTED EACH FRIDAY VIA EMAIL FOR NEED TO KNOW INFO, NEWS, AND EVENTS!

EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGNS



WHERE WOULD WE BEE WITHOUT POLLINATORS!?

2020 STEWARDSHIP WEEK
APRIL 26 - MAY 3



Learn more and access student resources at aiswcd.org.



2020

CELEBRATE EARTH DAY

TAKE CARE OF THE
LAND AND IT WILL
TAKE CARE OF YOU.



AISWCD.ORG

NACD ANNUAL MEETING

AISWCD REPRESENTATIVES AND STAFF ATTENDED THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (NACD) ANNUAL MEETING IN LAS VEGAS DURING FEBRUARY 2020.



The Illinois delegation to the NACD Annual Meeting brought with them a resolution urging NACD to recognize the Saving Tomorrow's Agricultural Resources (STAR) initiative. The resolution passed unanimously with strong support from several supportive states. This major accomplishment was the first national recognition of the novel sustainability initiative.

NACD HAS MADE THE DECISION TO TAKE ITS 2021 MEETING, SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY 2021, TO AN ONLINE FORMAT TO REDUCE THE HEALTH RISKS TO THE MANY ATTENDEES TRAVELLING FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

ANNUAL MEETING & SUMMER TRAINING CONFERENCE

THE SITUATION INVOLVING COVID-19 MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO SAFELY MEET IN PERSON, HOWEVER, AISWCD PIVOTED AND TOOK THE EVENT VIRTUAL TO ACCOMPLISH KEY ASSOCIATION GOVERNANCE MATTERS.



Due to the magnitude of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the AISWCD Board of Directors made a difficult decision to cancel the 2020 Summer Training Conference. The health and safety of the AISWCD's membership and partners were paramount to this decision. The AISWCD, however, held a virtual Annual Meeting to conduct official business. The 2021 Annual Meeting and Summer Training Conference is tentatively scheduled for July 2021.

HERE'S LOOKING TO 2021 WHERE WE HOPE TO BE ABLE TO MEET IN PERSON TO CONDUCT BUSINESS, RECEIVE TRAINING, AND CELEBRATE MILESTONES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN CONSERVATION.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

AISWCD FISCAL HEALTH REMAINS STEADY AND STRONG.



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

CURRENT AS OF NOV. 30, 2020 | FISCAL YEAR JAN 1 - DEC 31

ASSETS	TOTAL
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	\$ 193,407.24
TOTAL FIXED ASSETS	\$ 165,661.40
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 359,068.64
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	TOTAL
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$ 13,149.50
TOTAL EQUITY	\$ 345,919.14
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$ 359,068.64

GRANT MANAGEMENT

1,400

TOTAL NUMBER OF NEW CSP
AND EQUIP APPLICATIONS

4,600

TOTAL NUMBER OF NEW AND
RE-ENROLLED CRP CONTRACTS

\$1.8M

TOTAL AMOUNT INVOICED BY SWCDS FOR
WORK PERFORMED THROUGH THE GRANT

STAR

AISWCD STRENGTHENED ITS SUPPORT OF THE SAVING TOMORROW'S AGRICULTURE RESOURCES INITIATIVE THROUGH COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS WITH THE STAR STEERING COMMITTEE



AISWCD strengthened its ties with the Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources initiative. This initiative provides Illinois farm operators and landowners a means to evaluate, measure and increase their use of conservation practices. The Association collaborated on STAR's steering committee and offered communication and outreach support.

The Association also worked with the committee to hire Nick Longbucco as the new full-time STAR Coordinator via a grant funded opportunity. Nick looks to expand STAR throughout Illinois, engaging with more county conservation districts and farmers to increase the use of STAR's free evaluation tool. With increasing consumer demand for sustainability produced food and fiber products, STAR is a great way for Illinois' farmers to demonstrate how they are protecting valuable soil and water resources. Open enrollment for the 2020 Crop Year is ongoing through next January. If interested in STAR, please visit www.starfreetool.com!

2020 STAR HEADLINES

KELLOGG'S SUPPORT OF S.T.A.R. NETWORK SLASHES 13M VEHICLE MILES WORTH OF CO2E FROM ENTERING THE ATMOSPHERE

BAKERYANDSNACKS.COM | SEP 16, 2020

CONSERVATION INITIATIVE EXPANDING IN STATE

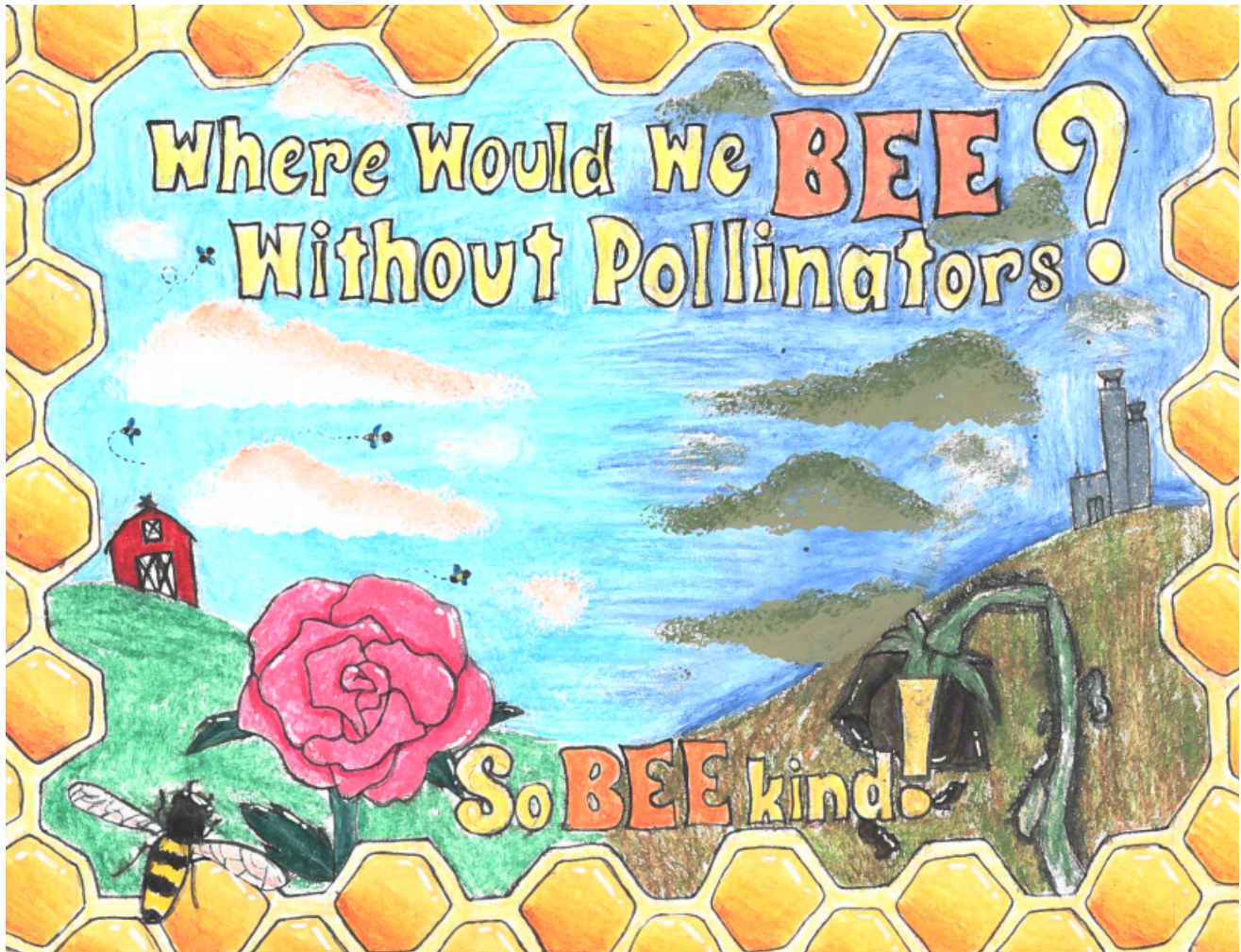
JACKSONVILLE JOURNAL COURIER | OCT 24, 2020

ILLINOIS STAR PROGRAM REACHES MORE THAN 80,000 ACRES IN 2019

BROWNFIELD AG NEWS | MAY 11, 2020

POSTER CONTEST WINNERS

AISWCD HOSTS A STATE LEVEL POSTER AND PHOTO COMPETITION FOR STUDENTS AND ADULTS, AND REFLECTS THE ANNUAL NACD STEWARDSHIP WEEK THEME.



ABOVE: WINNING POSTER OF KATE TURLEY, GRADE 7

Youth Posters:

Grades K-1 | Emma Tally, Bond County SWCD
Grades 2-3 | Sydney Anne Duncan, Stephenson County SWCD
Grades 4-6 | Isabella Noschese, Marion County SWCD
Grades 7-9 | Kate Turley, Bond County SWCD
Grades 10-12 | Madison Rae Palmer, Henry County SWCD

Where would we
BEE



without
pollinators?



FEATURED POSTER WINNER

EMMA TALLY, 1ST GRADE

PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS



ABOVE: A WINNING ADULT PHOTO BY SONDRA COOPER

Youth Photos:

Conservation Practices | Annabelle Lee, Coles County SWCD

Category: Close up Conservation | Delaney Smith, Bond County SWCD

Category: Ag/Con Across America | Delaney Smith, Bond County SWCD

Adult Photos:

Conservation Practices | Sarah Earles, Ford County SWCD

Category: Conservation in Action | Sondra Cooper, Coles County SWCD

Category: Close up Conservation | Sondra Cooper, Coles County SWCD

Category: Ag/Con Across America | Sondra Cooper, Coles County SWCD



FEATURED PHOTO WINNER

ANNABELLE , 9TH GRADE

