



20 21

A YEAR IN
REVIEW

VISIT AISWCD.ORG

AISWCD LEADERSHIP

LEADERSHIP FOR 2022 AND BEYOND

AISWCD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Vacant | LUC 10 - 14
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CLEAN WATER,
HEALTHY SOILS.



AISWCD LEADERSHIP

REFLECTIONS ON ANOTHER GREAT YEAR IN CONSERVATION

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Another year has passed and there continues to be an increasing demand, both from rural and urban areas, for resource conservation services provided by Illinois' 97 local Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Soil health, climate-smart agriculture, climate-change mitigation, nutrient management, cover crops, and agriculture resiliency are key buzzwords currently used in conservation discussions. Speaking of resiliency, local Soil and Water Conservation Districts have served their constituencies well in the face of the COVID-19 Pandemic and with other barriers experienced during 2021. Resource conservation never takes a day off and SWCDs are well positioned to help producers and homeowners achieve vital conservation goals.

This Annual Report demonstrates the intrinsic value of SWCDs in fostering soil and water conservation throughout Illinois. In part, recognition of the previous accomplishments of SWCDs and their plans for the future have resulted in significantly increased funding levels in Fiscal Year 2022 to the Illinois Department of Agriculture for SWCD programs. The Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts and all 97 local SWCDs wish to express sincere gratitude to Governor Pritzker and the Members of the Illinois General Assembly in supporting the higher appropriations passed for conservation work. The increased funding will significantly help SWCDs meet the ever-growing demand for the delivery of technical, financial, and educational services to their customers.



Clean Water, Healthy Soils.

Sincerely,

Tom Byers

Tom Byers | AISWCD President

AISWCD OVERVIEW

STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF DECADES OF CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP



MISSION: TO REPRESENT AND EMPOWER THE SWCDS 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' 97 member Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). These Districts work to protect Illinois' greatest assets – the rich, fertile soils and water resources of the state through strategic conservation efforts. SWCDs, 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.

AISWCD SUPPORTS THE MANTRA: CLEAN WATER, HEALTHY SOILS.

AISWCD MANAGEMENT

MEET THE MANAGEMENT TEAM AT AISWCD

PROFESSIONAL STAFF

CLEAN WATER, HEALTHY SOILS.



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CLEAN WATER, HEALTHY SOILS.



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CLEAN WATER, HEALTHY SOILS.



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CLEAN WATER, HEALTHY SOILS.



Vacant | STAR Coordinator

ADVOCACY

AISWCD CELEBRATES HISTORIC GAINS IN THE REALM OF ADVOCACY



— “ —

I have been excited to work this spring with a coalition of agricultural and environmental advocates led by American Farmland Trust and the Illinois Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, with the mission of encouraging more Illinois farmland to feature cover crops. Cover crops are planted to protect soil from erosion and nutrient loss when those fields are not filled with corn, soybeans and wheat for harvesting.

— ” —

SENATOR PATRICK JOYCE

From Patch.com | Posted May 24, 2021

ADVOCACY SCORECARD

AISWCD CELEBRATES HISTORIC GAINS IN THE REALM OF ADVOCACY



RENEWED THE PARTNERS FOR CONSERVATION FUND AVOIDING PROGRAM DISRUPTION.



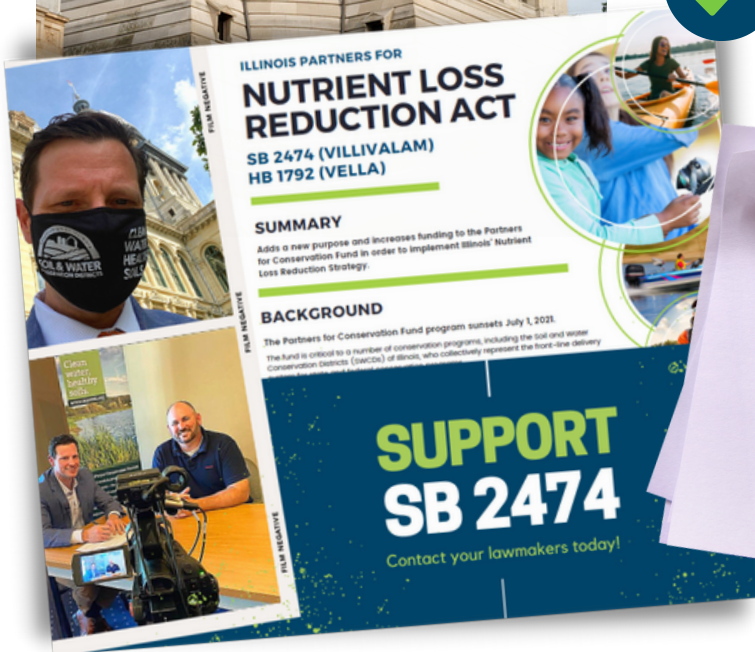
\$3.5M IN NEW AND DEDICATED FUNDING FOR NLRS IMPLEMENTATION.



DOUBLED THE FUNDING FOR SWCD OPERATIONS.



DOUBLED THE FUNDING FOR THE FCSS COVER CROP PILOT.



PUBLIC RELATIONS

AISWCD SPEAKS WITH ONE UNIFIED VOICE



AISWCD WAS ON THE TIP OF TONGUES DURING 2021

AISWCD is tasked with speaking with one voice for its many districts, and it takes that responsibility with great measure. In 2021, AISWCD launched an aggressive and coordinated news media campaign to capture good public relations and support the advocacy efforts underway at the State House.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

AISWCD SPEAKS WITH ONE UNIFIED VOICE

New state budget funds obligations, avoids painful choices

Kay Shipmen | FarmWeek | Jun 1, 2021

“

Grant Hammer, executive director of the Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts, said a conservation coalition worked to prevent a June 30 sunset of the Partners for Conservation Fund and to obtain dedicated funding for the NLRs.

With state dollars dedicated to implement the NLRs, “it will help accelerate the program toward our goals,” Hammer said.

”

STATE FAIR AG DAY

AISWCD REPRESENTS CONSERVATION BEFORE AG COMMUNITY



Top left, AISWCD Executive Director Grant Hammer with State Representative Norine Hammond. Top middle, STAR Partner of the Year Sarah Blount discusses her award with Rita Frazier of RFD Radio. Top right, Department of Natural Resources Director Colleen Callahan with Hammer. Bottom left, State Conservationist Ivan Dozier with Hammer. Bottom middle, AISWCD Vice President Dale Shumaker with Assistant State Conservationist Ben Schmidt and American Farmland Trust's Kris Reynolds. Bottom right, Sarah Blount is interviewed by central Illinois agriculture reporter Stu Ellis.

EVENTS LIKE AG DAY AT THE STATE FAIR PROVIDE FOR GOOD PUBLIC RELATIONS

Each year, organizations from the agriculture industry gather on the Illinois State Fairgrounds to celebrate accomplishments and traditions in Illinois agriculture. Agriculture Day at the State Fair presents numerous opportunities to represent soil and water conservation before members of the news media, policymakers, and elected officials. AISWCD was proud to serve as an event sponsor, and also help recognize the 2020 STAR award winners.

FARM PROGRESS SHOW

AISWCD AND PARTNERS CELEBRATE A SUCCESSFUL 2021 SHOW



Top: Congresswoman Cheri Bustos stops by the Partners in Conservation tent. Bottom left, partners from the Wetlands Initiative and the Illinois Land Improvement Contractors Association. Bottom middle, friends from the Illinois Stewardship Alliance and American Farmland Trust along with AISWCD's Ashley Curran. Bottom right, State Treasurer Michael Frerichs views the soils pit with AISWCD Executive Director Grant Hammer.

IT WAS ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR IN THE PARTNERS FOR CONSERVATION TENT

AISWCD once again joined partnering organizations for the three day Farm Progress Show located in Decatur, Illinois. The weather was cooperative this September, and the show attendance and the number of visitors to the conservation tent thusly reflected this. AISWCD and partners were visited by two members of the US House of Representatives Agriculture Committee, as well as the Illinois State Treasurer and state lawmakers. Finally, AISWCD highlighted the work of SWCDs through seven media interviews!

FARM PROGRESS SHOW

2021 SHOW BY THE NUMBERS

7



The number of media interviews conducted over the course of the three day show promoting SWCDs, Conservation, and STAR.

2



The number of members of the US House Agriculture Committee who visited with AISWCD during the show to discuss conservation issues.

15



The number of partner organizations who partook in the Partners in Conservation Tent.

1k



The estimated number of visitors to the Partners in Conservation Tent over the course of the three day show.

FPS PHOTO GALLERY

AISWCD AND PARTNERS CELEBRATE A SUCCESSFUL 2021 SHOW



REVENUES | EXPENSES

AISWCD CELEBRATES ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR

REVENUES	2021	2020	2019
MEMBERSHIP DUES	119,786	116,253	173,771
ANNUAL MEETING	36,000	-	38,553
PASS THRU	98,426	81,846	90,737
ALL OTHER SOURCES	190,989	195,518	234,477
TOTAL	445,201	393,617	537,538

GRANTS	2021	2020	2019
NRCS GRANT PROGRAM	1,969,081	1,226,779	763,578
STAR PROGRAM	91,586	-	-
TOTAL	2,060,667	1,226,779	763,578

EXPENSES	2021	2020	2019
OPERATIONS	283,497	313,512	312,449
ANNUAL MEETING	31,000	3,013	32,206
LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY	24,292	21,196	26,117
PASS THRU	79,292	99,177	103,446
TOTAL	418,081	436,898	474,218

2021 BY THE NUMBERS

2021 FACTS AND FIGURES

Percentage increase in NRCS grants to SWCDs (2021 vs. 2020)

61%

7%

Membership dues as a percentage of total grants awarded to SWCDs.

99%

Percentage of SWCDs who are AISWCD members.

27%

Membership dues as a percentage of total AISWCD revenue.

AISWCD HOSTS NACD

AISWCD HELPS NACD RETURN TO ITS PLACE OF ORIGIN



Above left, founding members of the National Association of Soil Conservation District Governing Officials - later to be known as the National Association of Conservation Districts. Above right, AISWCD President Tom Beyers and wife Judy pictured with STAR's Bruce Henrikson. Bottom right, AISWCD staff pose for a snapshot photo.

NACD WAS FOUNDED IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS IN 1948

On July 25, 1946 at the Morrison Hotel in Chicago, Illinois, 18 representatives from 17 states created the National Association of Soil Conservation District Governing Officials. In 1970, during the annual convention in San Francisco, the association's name was shortened to the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD). As part of the 75th Anniversary celebration, the 2021 NACD Summer Conservation Forum and Tour returned to where our association was born in Chicago! AISWCD was honored to assist with planning for a return to NACD's founding host state!

AISWCD HOSTS NACD

AISWCD HELPS NACD RETURN TO ITS PLACE OF ORIGIN

National Association of Conservation Districts

75th Anniversary *Chicago*



STAR SHINES BRIGHT

RECOGNIZING CONSERVATION LEADERS THROUGHOUT ILLINOIS



Bottom left, Sarah Blount was recognized as the Partner of the Year for her work at American Farmland Trust to advance STAR. Bottom middle, the DeKalb County Soil and Water Conservation District was named the Licensee of the Year - pictured are Dean Johnson and Jeffrey Woodyat. Bottom right, Derek Martin of Martin Family Farms was named the STAR Farmer of the Year.

2020 CROP YEAR STAR AWARDEES WERE RECOGNIZED AT NACD's 2021 SUMMER MEETING IN CHICAGO

AISWCD was proud to help shine a light on the conservation difference makers. Congrats to the awardees!

STAR CROP YEAR 2020



The use of no-till and strip-till by Illinois STAR farmers accounted for ...

4,075

Truckloads of sediment kept out of Illinois waterways.

The use of cover crops by Illinois STAR farmers accounted for ...

2,548

Truckloads of sediment kept out of Illinois waterways.



17,028

Pounds of phosphorus kept in the field.

143,888

Pounds of nitrate-nitrogen and 10,781 pounds of phosphorus kept in the field.



9,767

Provided climate benefits equal to removing the greenhouse gas emissions from 9,767 passenger cars.



3,525

Provided climate benefits equal to removing the greenhouse gas emissions from 3,525 passenger cars.

ENVIROTHON

AISWCD NAMES NEW ENVIROTHON COORDINATOR IN 2021



ALEXA LAWSON OF PULASKI-ALEXANDER SWCD NAMED NEXT COORDINATOR

After a lengthy and successful tenure as the Illinois Envirothon state competition coordinator, Sondra Baker made the bittersweet decision to pass the baton to another this year. She left an indelible mark on the annual educational competition, and AISWCD thanks her for her many contributions over a span of nearly ten years. AISWCD was excited to announce in November that Alexa Lawson, an employee of the Pulaski-Alexander Soil and Water Conservation District, has stepped forward to lead the event in the spring of 2022. We look forward to a successful event this coming spring, and encourage our members to get involved with this event - please consider donating time or financial resources to this top-notch event!

GET THE E-NEWS

THE NEWS AND INFO YOU NEED - SENT WEEKLY!

DON'T MISS OUT
ON IMPORTANT
NEWS AND
INFORMATION!

Subscribe today by
visiting aiswcd.org or
contacting a team
member!



**AISWCD
E-NEWS!**



MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS

RECOGNIZING THE WORK OF MEMBER DISTRICTS IN 2021



Left to Right: AISWCD Executive Director Grant Hammer, Resource Conservationist Mitchell Killough, Director Neil Andrews, Administrative Coordinator Lisa Leigh, Chairman Rick Kentner, State Representative Tom Bennett, and Director Chris Elliott.

AISWCD HELPS TO SHINE A LIGHT ON THE GREAT WORK OF MEMBER DISTRICTS

THE AISWCD is proud to share the success stories of its member districts and highlight the good work done by featuring these stories in the AISWCD E-News. In this segment, we profiled the Vermilion County SWCD which continues to work towards updating the Lake Vermilion Watershed Plan. The district was awarded a Section 319 grant from the Illinois EPA in 2019 to update the previous watershed plan and to identify key point and nonpoint sources of water pollution, as well as site specific recommendations for best management practices.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

AISWCD FORESTRY COMMITTEE BUILDS OUTDOOR CLASSROOM



Above, photos from the dedication of the outdoor classroom. AISWCD Vice President Dale Shumaker, chair of the Forestry Committee, helped to showcase the new Century School Outdoor Classroom, a project sponsored by the committee as well as the Alexander-Pulaski SWCD and others. Nearly 200 people attended the event, ranging from students, teachers, sponsors, elected officials, and news media.

AISWCD FORESTRY COMMITTEE BUILDS OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

The outdoor classroom is an educational space that aims to bring learning to life by bringing learning outside. It is a gathering place for teachers and students and provides an opportunity to integrate nature onto school grounds. All subjects or curriculum related to Illinois forests can be presented in this outdoor classroom and it can be utilized year round and will foster a new generation of interest in forestry management and the abundant forest resources of southern Illinois. Nicely done, AISWCD Forestry Committee!

STATE EXCHANGE

AISWCD ENGAGES OTHER STATE LEADERS TO FOSTER EXCHANGE



Above left, AISWCD Executive Director Grant Hammer with the staff of the Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District in North Carolina. Top right, the state Executive Directors from other state associations gather for a group photo. Bottom right, conservation executives from across the country viewed a small wetland installed at the headquarters of the Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District.

MEETING OF STATE ASSOCIATION CONSERVATION EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Conservation executives from across the country gathered for the NACD's annual Executive Directors conference held this year in Asheville, North Carolina. Attendees had the opportunity to network, exchange ideas, and grow professionally.



EDUCATION AND TRAINING

AISWCD ADAPTED TO COVID-19 AND WENT VIRTUAL!



DESPITE COVID-19, AISWCD PROVIDED SUMMER DEVELOPMENT TRAINING!

It's the middle of summer, we're working, and a thousand miles from a tropical beach. For those reasons, AISWCD did its best to bring the beach to our virtual Summer Training Conference attendees! Congratulations to Kathy Birkett and the gang at the Wayne County Soil and Water Conservation District for going all in with the beach attire - how fun!

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

ENGAGING STUDENTS TO BUILD FOR THE FUTURE



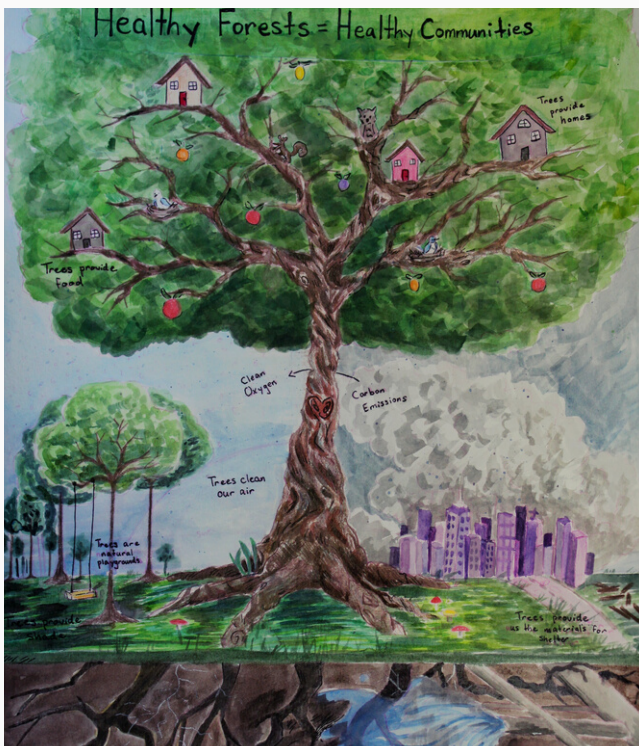
EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

ENGAGING STUDENTS TO BUILD FOR THE FUTURE

AISWCD STRIVES TO ENGAGE AND EDUCATE FOR THE FUTURE



Whether through educational contests or events, such as the Illinois Envirothon State Competition, AISWCD engages the next generation of conservationists - but this cannot be done without the terrific support from districts across the state who participate!



EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

CELEBRATE STEWARDSHIP WITH AISWCD AND NACD THIS SPRING!



2022 THEME: HEALTHY SOIL, HEALTHY LIFE

The annual AISWCD Poster and Photo Contests, part of the larger national competitions hosted by the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), provides students from kindergarten through 12th grade as well as adults the chance to have their art displayed as part of a national conservation outreach initiative. Each year, the winning entries reflect NACD's annual Stewardship theme and highlight the work of conservation districts and their supporters.

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

AISWCD DEVELOPS EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS FOR STUDENTS

QUESTION 1

TRUE OR FALSE?

IT TAKES 500 YEARS TO FORM
ONE INCH OF TOPSOIL.

QUESTION 5

CHOOSE THE RIGHT ANSWER ...

PLANTS NEED POLLINATORS TO MAKE NEW PLANTS.
WHICH OF THESE ANIMALS ARE CONSIDERED
POLLINATORS?

- A. Bees
- B. Birds
- C. Bats
- D. Moths
- E. All of the above

**CONSERVATION
QUIZ TIME!**



QUESTION 2

CHOOSE THE RIGHT ANSWER ...

HOW MANY TONS OF DRY SOIL PER ACRE PASS
THROUGH ONE EARTHWORM EACH YEAR?

- A. 5
- B. 10
- C. 15
- D. 1,000

QUESTION 3

CHOOSE THE RIGHT ANSWER ...

TREES CAN HELP WITH AIR POLLUTION. HOW MANY POUNDS OF
CARBON DIOXIDE CAN A MATURE TREE
ABSORB ANNUALLY?

- A. 2 lbs
- B. 24 lbs
- C. 48 lbs

QUESTION 4

TRUE OR FALSE ...

THERE IS THE SAME AMOUNT OF WATER ON EARTH AS THERE
WAS WHEN THE EARTH WAS FORMED ... THE WATER FROM YOUR
FAUCET COULD CONTAIN MOLECULES THAT DINOSAURS DRANK.

2021 PHOTO GALLERY

SNAPSHOTS FROM MEMBERS AND MORE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR



2021 PHOTO GALLERY

SNAPSHOTS FROM MEMBERS AND MORE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR



PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

AISWCD REPRESENTS AT ILLINOIS SOY HARVEST DINNER EVENT



Above, AISWCD's Ashley Curran attending the Illinois Soybean Association's "Gather Around the Table" event. Participants were welcomed to a picturesque working soybean farm in Waterman for a scenic farm tour, opportunities to learn about sustainable soy production, and an exceptional soy-centric dining experience. Top, Ashley with Kankakee County SWCD Director Jeff O'Connor. Bottom right, Ashley with Megan Baskerville of The Nature Conservancy.

AISWCD WORKS TO MAINTAIN STRONG RELATIONS WITH PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

AISWCD staff value our working relationships with like-minded organizations, and work to facilitate greater exchange in hopes of building toward mutual conservation goals.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

AISWCD PROVIDES MEMBERSHIP WITH PUBLIC OUTREACH MATERIALS



Above, various public announcements made over the course of 2021 located in the weekly AISWCD E-News digital newsletter.

AISWCD HELPS TO KEEP SWCDs AND CONSERVATION AT THE FOREFRONT

In addition to maintaining strong traditional news media relations, AISWCD provides its member districts with digital resources to connect with communities and partner organizations on other platforms where the public receives news content. Subscribe to the AISWCD E-News by visiting aiswcd.org to capture all of this content and more!

PUBLIC OUTREACH

AISWCD PROVIDES MEMBERSHIP WITH PUBLIC OUTREACH MATERIALS

2021 Harvest Safety Message

LET'S LOOK OUT FOR OUR FARMERS!

**It's fall y'all and
harvest has started.
Slow down, stay
alert, share the road!**

This is a friendly message
from your local Soil and
Water Conservation
District (SWCD).



QUOTE OF NOTE

WISDOM FROM THE PAST

In His Own Words ..

”

“National action may be led and aided by government, but the soil must be conserved ultimately by those who till the land and live by its products.”

Hugh Hammond Bennett



FRIDAY FUN(NY)!

AIswCD HAS LIGHTENED THE MOOD WITH A WEEKLY SERIES OF HUMOR

CONSERVATION JOKES

FRIDAY FUNNY



**JOKE: WHEN DID
THE FARMER
KNOW HE WAS
GREAT?**

Answer: When he was out
standing in his field.

HA
HA
HA



aiswcd.org