

Increase SWCD Aid to support state conservation goals (SF1089/HF1066)

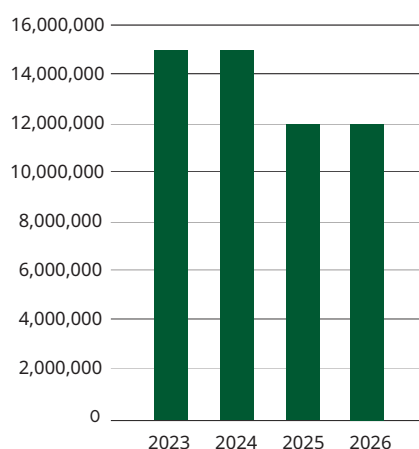
Lawmakers approved permanent funding for soil and water conservation district capacity, known as SWCD Aid, through the general fund. In the current biennium, the state appropriated \$15 million per year in SWCD Aid.

This was an important step in improving the ability of all SWCDs to deliver the services essential for performing our statutory duties through stable, predictable funding, and a long-term investment in SWCDs as partners in achieving the state's soil health and water quality goals.

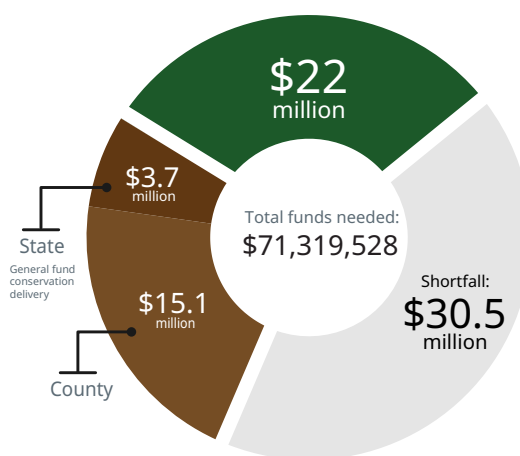
However, starting in 2025 and in all future years, unless the legislature acts, SWCD Aid will be \$12 million per year. This funding level does not match the demands put on districts for implementing conservation practices, serving constituents, delivering on statutory obligations and leveraging federal conservation funding.

FUNDING LEVELS HAVE NOT KEPT PACE WITH SWCD ROLES

■ SWCD State Aid (General Fund)



SWCD Annual Funding Needs



SWCDs HELP CONSERVE NATURAL RESOURCES ACROSS MINNESOTA

SWCDs provide value to our state's conservation through technical assistance, funding and educational services for private landowners. They are a primary source of conservation information, support and program management for landowners and other local units of government. SWCDs are the technical experts and "boots on the ground" who understand their specific communities' needs and help landowners navigate conservation programs from start to finish. As water quality and soil health issues are prioritized in Minnesota, SWCDs' roles have expanded and include helping landowners navigate regulations that are increasing in complexity.



ACT NOW

SWCD Aid at \$22 million per year for 2025 and beyond will help Minnesota maintain its pace of progress toward clean water & healthy soil goals.

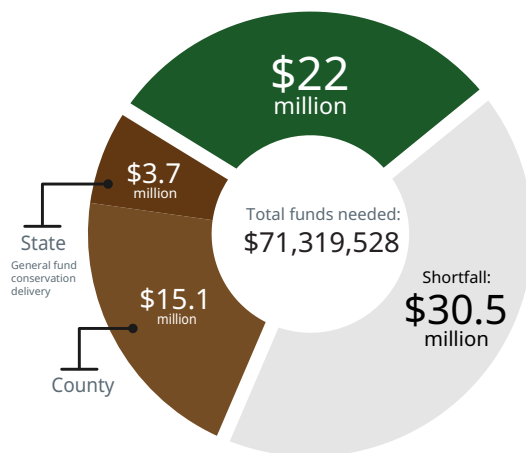
Essential services of a modern soil and water conservation district

SWCDs are Special Purpose Local Units of Government organized under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103C. Professional conservation staff, with direction from locally elected boards, work to implement their statutory obligations for private lands conservation.

SWCDS FACING SHORTFALL TO DELIVER SERVICES

A needs assessment done in summer 2022 calculated a total annual funding need of \$71.3 million. This funding amount represents the cost of operating at base capacity to deliver the essential services outlined for all 88 Minnesota SWCDs and the SWCD duties at Hennepin and Ramsey Counties. With state capacity support of \$22 million in SWCD Aid, there remains a \$30.5 million unmet need to fully fund the essential services of SWCDs. A statewide investment of \$22 million in SWCD Aid is a step toward building greater ability of our state's SWCDs to continue advancing our shared clean water and soil health goals through locally led conservation projects on private lands.

SWCD Annual Funding Needs



SWCD AREAS OF EXPERTISE AND ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:

- Technical expertise: Expert support to private landowners for local land, soil, water, forestry, plant and wildlife resource challenges.
- Public information and education: Outreach and engagement to boost public knowledge of conservation programs and resources.
- Policy and governance: Lead grassroots policy development and provide required oversight and administration for key human resources, accounting, legal and reporting functions.
- Resource projects and program implementation: Plan and implement resource programs and projects to meet local, state and federal conservation goals and outcomes.
- Data and monitoring: Measure progress, monitor and report outcomes for programs and projects.
- Technology and equipment: Serve as a resource for landowners and partners with modern survey equipment and software, vehicles, field equipment, and licensed drone operations.



The Economic Impact of Conservation Funding

2021 IMPLAN Report Results



The 2021 IMPLAN Report

When a landowner enters into a Farm Bill agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or a state-funded agreement with one of its partners, the entire community benefits. This is demonstrated in the IMPLAN report for NRCS Minnesota and its partners' conservation work in 2021. To get an accurate picture of the economic impact of conservation funding, NRCS Minnesota, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) worked together to find an answer.

What is IMPLAN?

IMPLAN is an economic impact analysis and modeling program that measures the economic impact of actions taken by government agencies, business and other institutions to understand their direct and indirect effects in an area.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service utilizes IMPLAN to understand how it and its partners' financial assistance benefits not just producers, but their surrounding communities. The 2021 IMPLAN report has just recently been completed.

Results

In 2021, NRCS Minnesota, BWSR, and local SWCDs spent \$228,448,531 on conservation programs. Some of this money left the state for a variety of reasons, but when all said and done, \$186,916,423, over 80 percent, directly benefited the Minnesota economy.

This influx of funding in Minnesota, through direct effects (such as buying cover crop seed) and indirect effects (such as a seed supplier buying gas) resulted in an output of \$413,692,920 generated in Minnesota from conservation-related expenditures. This meant that for every \$1 spent by the NRCS and its partners, \$1.81 was generated in the local economy. This funding also supported new jobs for Minnesotans. According to the analysis, 2,527 jobs were supported in 2021 as a result of conservation expenditures.

Whatever numbers you pull from the IMPLAN report, one thing is clear throughout: conservation work amounts to substantial benefits for the state of Minnesota. Yes, the work landowners do with the NRCS and its partners helps the land and improves the efficiency of individual agricultural operations; but it does so much more than that. It puts money in the pockets of Minnesotans across the state.

\$228,448,531

Spent on conservation programs

\$413,692,920

Output into the Minnesota economy

\$1.81

Generated for every \$1 spent

2,527

Jobs supported

Conservation Expenditure and Total Output

