



McHENRY-LAKE COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT LONG RANGE PLAN

(Board approved July 7th, 2015)

Introduction:

The McHenry – Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District is a subdivision of state government created to administer conservation work within its boundaries. We are local people working toward improving land, water, and related resources in McHenry and Lake County. Funding for the District comes from numerous sources some of which include the State of Illinois, McHenry County and in-kind benefits (such as office space) from the federal government. Over the years the SWCD created income producing programs to help supplement funding shortfalls.

Updating the Long Range Plan:

Updating the Long-Range Plan is intended to accomplish the following major items:

- Set District goals, policies and priorities for the next 10 years (2015 – 2025)

- Provide guidance and direction for programs and activities.

- Provide the framework and direction for future SWCD Board members and staff to follow.

This Long Range Plan was developed due to the ever-changing land use issues facing our county. Our Board of Directors felt it was important to look to the future, while incorporating lessons learned from past experience.

This document will serve as the long range plan for District programs and short term goals will be established annually. We realize that this plan is not all encompassing, but it addresses most of our program responsibilities and future efforts.

Vision Statement:

Protecting and Enhancing our Natural Resources

Mission:

The McHenry – Lake County SWCD provides leadership, education and service for the stewardship and conservation of the county's natural resources.

Function:

To provide technical, financial and educational resources, to help county residents conserve soil, water and related natural resources.

We serve:

McHenry and Lake County residents

Why:

The McHenry – Lake County SWCD was organized at the request of county citizens interested in:

- Conservation of soil, soil resources, water and water resources of the State,
- Control and prevention of soil erosion,

- (c) Prevention of air and water pollution, and
- (d) Prevention of erosion, floodwater and sediment damages and thereby to conserve natural resources, control floods, prevent impairments of dams and reservoirs, assist in maintaining the navigability of rivers and harbors, conserve wildlife and forests, protect the tax base, protect public lands, and protect and promote health, safety and general welfare of the people of the State."

Programs Administered:

Construction Site Erosion & Sediment Control Inspections
Natural Resource Information Reports
Soil Suitability testing for septic suitability and construction
Wetland consulting services
Map services (historic, wetland, GIS data)
Tree seedling sale
Fish sales for pond stocking

Additional Responsibilities:

Transect survey
Assistance to local watershed groups
Environmental Education programs (Envirothon, mobile classroom)
Soil survey maps and information
Assistance to local landowners, contractors, engineers, and municipalities

Actions:

The Long Range Plan and Annual Plan of Work should be evaluated on a regular basis to determine if changes need to be made. The District's Annual Plan of Work lists specific actions required to accomplish their objectives. With the present constraints on time, funding, and personnel, constant evaluation should ensure that the most efficient actions are used.

Public information activities should continue to stress the severity of the soil erosion problems in McHenry and Lake Counties as well as the benefits provided by the application of soil conservation practices. Landowners and operators as well as the general public should be made aware that a definite need exists.

Implementation of soil conservation practices should remain a high priority for District action as well as follow-up on earlier conservation planning.

The District's Annual Plan of Work lists a number of educational and informational activities as follows:

1. News Releases are distributed to papers with circulation in the County.
2. The Annual Report is published each year in January.
3. E-mail blasts and website posts and publicize special events.
4. Presentations to Groups include FFA Chapters, high school classrooms, McHenry County College classes, adult education groups, contractors (erosion control professionals) and civic groups.
5. Distribution of pamphlets and brochures includes yield results, technical information sheets, and pamphlets on the District and conservation education materials.

- 6. Tours, demonstrations, and displays are targeted at a wider range of the general public. These activities will be conducted on an as needed basis.

Although this is only a partial listing of informational and educational activities, this constitutes the majority of programs used by the District in the promotion of soil and water conservation in McHenry County. The District Board feels that education of specific groups and the general public is an integral component of any successful program developed to encourage wise land use and management.

Funding:

Funding of the District's programs and activities should be carefully planned and reviewed on a regular basis. The District Budget is prepared annually and a budget "up-date" is reviewed at each monthly Board meeting.

Funds to meet expenses of District programs and activities are secured from a number of sources.

Federal Partnership Acknowledgement:

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides many in-kind services that should be acknowledged as beneficial to the Districts funding source. These in-kind services include office space, office equipment, communications services, supplies and personnel.

The following goals and objectives were updated during a special meeting on January 29th 2015. Two public meetings were held to garner input from the public, one in McHenry County on April 1, 2015 and a second one in Lake County on May 13th, 2015. Those comments were incorporated into the Long Range Plan.

In priority order.

- 1. *Promotion of Soil Health, Cover Crops, Educate landowners on innovative soil & water conservation practices, sustainable agriculture, minimum till and no till, and promote field border vegetation.*

Strategy	Goals
Promote no-till/minimum till, cover crops through education and demonstration	Increase awareness of soil health and increase use of conservation tillage.

(McHenry County) The rapid destruction of shelter belts, woodlands and wildlife habitat.

- 2. *Maintain sustainable funding and strive for financial independence.*

Strategy	Goals
Seek alternative funding sources	Become independent of state funding and other "soft" funding sources.

(McHenry County) Secure reliable funding source, i.e. property tax, fee when property is sold (state or countywide).

(Lake County) Put together a foundation to help raise money for projects

- 3. *Provide education of youth and adults.*

Strategy	Goals
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Offer schools educational programs consistent with SWCD goals and objectives	<i>To reach 2000 students per year</i>
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(Lake County) What kind of education programs does the SWCD offer? Work closer with other education programs so there is no duplication of programs. Tag team with other agencies with education programs.

(Lake County) Don't know how successful Sand County Almanac program was in the 80's and 90's. Could there be a similar Educational Program initiative done today if SCA was successful. What is the local SWCD Council doing? Council 16? AISWCD?

(McHenry County) Working closer with MCCD on education projects.

(Lake County) Need more education for townships and municipalities and perhaps more coordination with other agencies doing the same such as Extension. .

(Lake County) Provide programs through local Libraries.

(McHenry County) Teach more about crop rotations and weed resistance. There is a growing concern about weeds such as palmer amaranth and other herbicide resistant weeds.

4. Better Marketing to the public, promote awareness of the SWCD – what we do and what we offer. Increase the use of the Dean Street facility

Strategy	Goals
Advertise, offer SWCD services and facility to not-for-profit environmental groups and agencies	<i>Use Dean Street facility at minimum 20 times per year.</i>

(Lake County) Write a series of newspaper articles for our anniversary year in 2017.

5. Continue existing partnerships and develop new partnerships: Current examples include Wetland consulting with McHenry County, Erosion and Sediment Control inspection program with the Illinois Environmental Agency, and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Strategy	Goals
Continue to look for opportunities to partnership with agencies with similar goals	<i>To expand the SWCD's outreach and provide technical assistance to non-traditional partners.</i>

(Lake County) Need to work closer with other regulatory agencies.

(Lake County) Collaborate more with other agencies.

(Lake County) Some services are already being done by other agencies. Work closer with municipalities such as inspection services. No reason to add another agency into the fray.

(Lake County) Conduct DECI work for municipalities.

(Lake County) Regular participation or presentations to local units of government (Village Boards, etc.).

(Lake County) Partnership with similar groups.

(Lake County) Work on watershed partnerships and be a leader on these partnerships and coordination.

(Lake County) Work with the Northwest Regional Water Planning Alliance on aquifer recharge areas.

(Lake County) Work with Fox Waterway Agency on how to sell dredged material as fertilizer on fields, etc.

(Lake County) Contact Lake County Health Dept. Lakes Management Unit – Mike Adams to discuss and coordinate issues with lake owners, pond owners, public properties and private properties dealing with erosion, nutrients and ways to coordinate funding/practices.

(Lake County) Partnerships with other agencies to provide the soil expertise

(Lake County) Partner with the municipal park districts

(Lake County) Call on Village Boards & County Board to let them know what we do.

(Lake County) Partner with other Environmental groups in the county

6. Continue to be the “go-to” agency for natural resource data (such as drain tile and historic aerial photography). Function as a clearinghouse/coordinator for natural resource issues. Provide expertise and support services for landowners.

Strategy	Goals
<i>Continue to collect natural resource data and make it available to general public</i>	<i>Collect and archive all aspects of natural resource information for dissemination to the public for the wise use of natural resources.</i>

- (Lake County)* Be the lead agency or facilitator with FEMA letters of map revisions (LOMR).
- (Lake County)* Be the lead agency for wetland work and projects
- (Lake County)* Work to get FEMA floodplain maps to help homeowners opt out of the floodplain
- (Lake County)* Drainage District formation and records of drainage districts.
- (McHenry County)* Contact should be made with the Historical Society for drain tile information.

7 - Define who we are – Ag, Farmers, Everyone.

Strategy	Goals
<i>Create an identity using brochures, logos, media that follows our goals and objectives</i>	<i>Insure a consistent brand and separate identity</i>

- (Lake County)* The SWCD has somewhat of an identity crisis, some people often mistake us for U of I extension or Farm Bureau.
- (Lake County)* Begin preparing a news story for our seventy year anniversary.
- (McHenry County)* District director elections, the poor turnout of voters at district elections.

8 - Continue existing (successful) programs and evaluate effectiveness. (Examples include; soil borings, fish and tree sales, Army Corp and IEPA program and County wetland program)

Strategy	Goals
<i>Evaluate existing programs for conservation effectiveness</i>	<i>Increase income and customers served through various existing programs.</i>

- (Lake County)* Do soil boring for home sites for foundation suitability.

9 - Decide between water quality or water quantity. Advocate programs that promote either quantity or quality.

Strategy	Goals
<i>Decide how to prioritize water related issues</i>	<i>Develop programs to address water quality/quantity concerns.</i>

- (McHenry County)* Implement conservation/water quality policies.
- (McHenry County)* Water quality issues, lawn, ag field – impervious surface runoff.
- (McHenry County)* Irrigation and its effects on groundwater drawdown.

10 - Aquifer problem solving – groundwater.

Strategy	Goals
<i>Work closely with County groundwater Task force, IEPA and other agencies that deal with groundwater issues.</i>	<i>Educate McHenry and Lake county citizens about groundwater issues. Promote water conservation practices on farm and in home.</i>

- (McHenry County)* Farmland preservation for the purposes of aquifer protection
- (McHenry County)* Need to address road salt issues and how that affects groundwater quality.

11 – Prioritize Nutrient Loss Reduction Example - drain water management.

Strategy	Goals
<i>Identify areas of priority for nutrient loss reduction</i>	<i>Contact landowners in priority areas and write effective</i>

	<i>nutrient loss plans.</i>
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(McHenry County) USEPA is requiring nutrient reductions with all new NPDES permits for wastewater treatment plants. Landowners must also reduce nutrients, work to implement these policies and get paid to do it.

(McHenry County) Municipalities need to step up more to limit their contributions of nutrients. There is concern that farmers tend to take too much of the blame for nutrient loss where maybe contributing more

(McHenry County) Drainage and Tile Issues

(McHenry County) River and creeks nutrients

12 - Continue technical assistance to public.

Strategy	Goals
<i>Advertise technical assistance and resources available</i>	<i>Provide TA to 200 landowners per year.</i>

(Lake County) SWCD should be the organization that helps with organic certification.

(Lake County) Be the lead agency for watershed groups.

(Lake County) Advocate more strongly for soils. You are already referenced but your credibility needs to be upgraded especially for hydric soils.

(McHenry County) Develop more wetland services for residents on a fee basis thus utilizing the expertise of existing staff.

(McHenry County) The need to preserve wetlands by paying landowners to restore them.

(McHenry County) Changing construction practices whereby topsoil is stockpiled then sold leaving very little to re-spread over the finished construction site.

13. Support students toward future careers in conservation & agriculture – Careers Days

Strategy	Goals
<i>Educate youth on the importance or natural resource conservation</i>	<i>Reach 2000 students each year</i>

14. Continue to advocate farmland protection and preservation.

Strategy	Goals
<i>Promote preservation of prime and important farmland</i>	<i>Provide timely and accurate information to all that request it.</i>

(Lake County) Your purpose should be to try to preserve the current farm land from becoming the detention or retention ponds for every municipality, industry and new and old subdivision.

15. Target Landowners absentee landowners (phantom people) for Conservation based incentives.

Strategy	Goals
<i>Identify and contact absentee landowners</i>	<i>Contact a minimum of 50 absentee owners</i>

16. Keep pace up with technological advances, maintain and increase the use of technology information systems and agricultural technical advances.

Strategy	Goals
<i>Attend workshops, subscribe to publications concerning tech advances in ag.</i>	<i>Stay educated in tech advances to better inform landowners of conservation issues and solutions.</i>

17. Reaching out to land owners and their needs. Assist farmers & rural landowners with issues of urban/rural conflicts and natural resource problems. Resolve with facts, remain unbiased

Strategy	Goals
Identify landowners with urban/rural conflicts.	<i>Provide assistance to anyone with issues.</i>

- (Lake County)* Begin relations with Lake County residents and Homeowners Associations. HOA assistance
- (McHenry County)* Horse farms and small landowners not informed of programs. Reach out to small landowners.
- (McHenry County)* Hold a seminar for absentee landlords
- (Lake County)* Work to educate Home Owners Associations
- (McHenry County)* Tile line crossings and ditch cleaning.
- (McHenry County)* Subdivision drainage, making sure that no more water is directed onto farm fields causing crop damages.

18. Investigate incentives and support new incentives that promote loss of nutrients on farmland.

Strategy	Goals
Contact lawmakers to establish rapport on providing conservation incentives	<i>Too ambiguous to define goals</i>

- (Lake County)* Begin the process of collecting data on Field tile by using statutes
- (Lake County)* Push to have any field tile work documented utilizing the Illinois Drainage Code

