

Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs)

There are 98 soil and water conservation districts making a difference in your community. No matter how big or small each of the 102 counties is represented equally. From educating homeowners on practical utilization of water, to helping rural landowners save soil and improve water quality; it takes everyone working together to protect our soil and water! Without these vital resources our communities could not thrive!



Yearly Rainfall Totals

Average Rainfall in
Springfield = **35.56 inches**

- 2007 - 31.72 inches
- 2008 - 53.70 inches
- 2009 - 52.62 inches
- 2010 - 40.32 inches
- 2011 - 22.57 inches up to May 30



THIS ISSUE

Conservation Cost Share Money
Drowning in Illinois P.1

Yearly Rainfall Totals P.1

Districts' Spotlight P.2

SWCDs Help Solve Problems
and Educate to Avoid Tomorrow's P.2

Conservation Cost Share Drowning in Illinois

Rain costing everyone money? Illinois' wetter than normal weather during the past two years and so far this year, has created a multitude of runoff and pollution problems, particularly for soil and water conservation districts.

Abundant and often heavy rain fall events have caused significant soil erosion on farm fields that would not normally experience such erosion rates. The same can be said for developments where massive soil movement from stormwater runoff has overwhelmed conservation measures that would normally retain the eroded soil on site.

State and federal funds used to help share the cost of soil conserving practices are tied up in contracts, but are going unspent because contractors can't do the earthwork necessary to construct the practice due to excessively wet conditions.

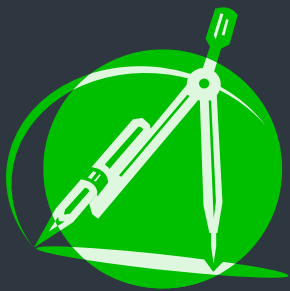
Weather statistics show October 2009 as the wettest October on record for Illinois with more than 11" of rain. See totals in left hand column. In 2008, Springfield alone had 11.48" of rain during April, May and June (spring). During October, November and December (fall) there was 11.34" of rain. These six months are typically when conservation practice construction takes place. Again in 2009, the two wettest periods were the spring and fall months with more than 15.3" in the spring period and 16.8" in the fall. Not only has the abundant rainfall

delayed planting of crops in many parts of the state but it has effectively stopped any earthwork for conservation practice installation. Rainfall in 2010 was nearly identical to 2009 during the two construction seasons and 2011 is shaping up much the same.

Rain costing everyone money. With reduced funding levels and an eleven month delay in full FY11 payments to the SWCDs, layoffs and reduced hours have led to a severe shortage of available staff to plan the timely installation of practices. Lack of available staff means that there may be no one to oversee the construction that is already backlogged due to the weather. Therefore, contracts that have been in effect since 2009 for which work has not been able to be completed, may have to be cancelled under the requirements of the Grant Funds Recovery Act (30 ILCS 705/). Once the funds have been returned to the state, they are lost for conservation purposes.

Loss of these funds for conservation purposes creates a problem for Illinois since erosion problems can not be addressed and also for the landowner since problems not being addressed will continue to worsen.

Fact: Newly disturbed bare soil often found in construction areas can be eroded at a rate of more than 200 tons per acre per year. Soil loss on all of Illinois' Agricultural land averages less than 4 tons per acre per year. This year's frequent, heavy rains may cause localized losses in excess of the average.



Soil and Water Conservation Districts Work With Municipalities And Schools To Help Solve Current Problems And Show Others How To Avoid Them In The Future

- The ability to leverage federal funds to assist with local problems is an advantage that the SWCDs have capitalized on for many years. In FY07 SWCDs leveraged \$44.15 million in federal and other funding to assist with water quality issues. In FY10 SWCDs were able to garner just \$6.37 million due to the loss of experienced staff.
- Illinois SWCDs continually strive to provide educational opportunities for students and adults. SWCDs believe an educated and informed public will make wise decisions about our natural resources that will benefit everyone.



NOTE: SWCDs DO NOT have taxing authority and must rely on state source funding to employ staff to administer programs.

The \$10 million line in SB0744 will allow SWCDs to be funded at a sustainable level for the first time in 74 years.

PROTECT & CONSERVE

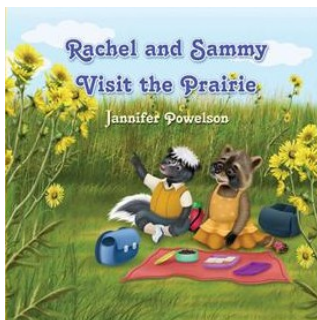
Districts' Spotlight



McDonough County:

The Soil & Water Conservation District has entered into a Section 319 Financial Assistance Agreement with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to improve water quality in Spring Lake by significantly reducing sediment and nutrient loads from surface runoff and erosion on areas adjacent to the Lake. Although much work has already been completed in the watershed, water quality problems do still exist and there are significant opportunities to further reduce additional pollution loads. Spring Lake is located in McDonough County Illinois and is

approximately 240 acres in size. The watershed area draining to the lake is 13,700 acres made up primarily of agricultural land with forested areas surrounding the lake. Agricultural areas make up 76% of the watershed or approximately 10,300 acres. Spring Lake is a source of drinking water, fishing, and boating for local and regional residents. Nutrient loading and sedimentation impact the use of the lake for recreation and drinking water. Cost-share projects such as water & sediment control basins, grassed waterways and terraces will be implemented under the grant. The project will include a Phosphorus study to determine the source of additional Phosphorous and to identify where farm programs will be focused in the future. The McDonough County Soil & Water Conservation District, along with the City of Macomb and IEPA, is cost-sharing on the project. The Phosphorous study is being conducted by Western Illinois University under a contract with the Soil & Water Conservation District.



Stephenson County:

The Stephenson County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is pleased to announce that it recently donated copies of "Rachel and Sammy Visit the Prairie" and "Rachel and Sammy Visit the Forest" books to elementary school libraries in Stephenson County. The Rachel and Sammy books were not only chosen because they are wonderful educa-

tional nature books but because they were written by Jannifer Powelson, Resource Conservationist of the Stark County Soil and Water Conservation District. These two books are the first in a series of educational children's books being written by Jannifer.

Both books contain an entertaining storyline, with Rachel Raccoon teaching Sammy Skunk how to identify a variety of common, native plants featured in the books. "Rachel and Sammy Visit the Prairie" features 20 prairie plants, and "Rachel and Sammy Visit the Forest" features 15 spring woodland wildflowers. Although these books are fictional, they contain facts for all of the plants in the books. Colorful and realistic illustrations accompany each plant, along with vivid photographs; taken by the author; make it the perfect junior field guide.

Below are two examples of thank-you notes that have been received from the various school librarians and their thoughts about these wonderful books.

"I'm sure our students will enjoy learning more about the prairie, forest and the plants and wildflowers that grow there." Lori Holden; Center Elementary School

"Thank-you for the wonderful Rachael and Sammy books; with our study of Illinois they will come in handy. The illustrations are awesome!" Mrs. Stoehr, Empire School



Pictured is Ross Bremmer, director of Stephenson SWCD delivering the books to Pearl City Elementary.

