

AMC Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee Environmental Partner Report

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

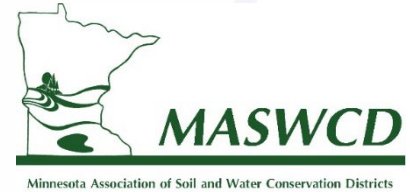
Sheila Vanney, Assistant Director



MASWCD

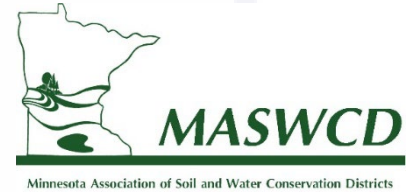
Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Discussion overview



- About **MASWCD** – who we are and what we do
- About **SWCDs** –governance, funding, and the work they do
- More about MASWCD – **our board and staff**
- **MASWCD Focus Areas** for 2022
 - **SWCD Funding**
 - Comprehensive Watershed Management Planning/1W1P – Implementation Funding (watershed-based implementation funding, **WBIF**)

About MASWCD



The Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) is a 501(c)(3) non profit association.

We provide leadership and a common voice in representing Minnesota's 88 soil and water conservation districts.

- **Policy Development.** MASWCD provides a forum for local issues and direction for legislative and administrative goals. An organized [resolutions process](#) is utilized for this purpose.
- **Advocacy & Legislative Outreach for Conservation Programs.** MASWCD advocates for funding and programs which enhance SWCDs abilities to conserve and enhance Minnesota's soil and water resources. Some of these programs come directly from MASWCD policy development.
- **Information on Conservation Issues.** MASWCD provides information to policy makers, key agencies, soil and water conservation district board members and staff. Information is distributed through our monthly e-mail newsletter and other communications.
- **Coordination of Training for SWCD Personnel.** MASWCD provides education and training to SWCD supervisors and staff in everything from administrative to technical to [leadership skills](#).
- **Annual Meeting and Trade Show.** The [MASWCD annual meeting and trade show](#) is attended by soil and water conservation district board members and staff, federal and state agencies, state legislators, members of Congress and conservation organizations.

About SWCDs: Governance

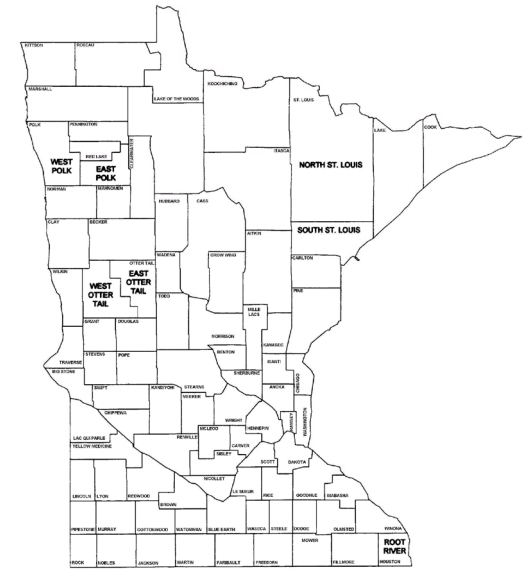
Political subdivisions of the state. Established under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103C.

Statewide coverage. There are 88 SWCDs in Minnesota. There is at least one SWCD in each of the 87 counties, with the exception of the two most populated counties - Hennepin and Ramsey Counties, while a few of the larger counties have more than one:

- Otter Tail County - East Otter Tail SWCD and West Otter Tail SWCD;
- Polk County - East Polk SWCD and West Polk SWCD; and
- St. Louis County - North St. Louis SWCD and South St. Louis SWCD.

SWCD boards. Each SWCD board has 5 elected supervisors who set overall policy and long-term objectives for their district and work with the SWCD staff to see that policies and plans are implemented.

They are not paid a salary; however, they do receive compensation for attending meetings and are reimbursed for expenses.



About SWCDs: Funding

Soil and Water Conservation Districts are funded through a variety of sources.

Program and project dollars and funding for landowner projects are typically state dollars allocated by the legislature and passed-through the State Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), usually competitive in nature, as well as federal dollars through our partners at USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

General operating funds are obtained from:

- the state through BWSR;
- Counties;
- fees for service; and
- grants or partnership agreements with the federal government or other conservation organizations.

*Funding the operations of SWCDs is a shared commitment of both state funding and county funding, and **we greatly appreciate our partnerships with counties!***

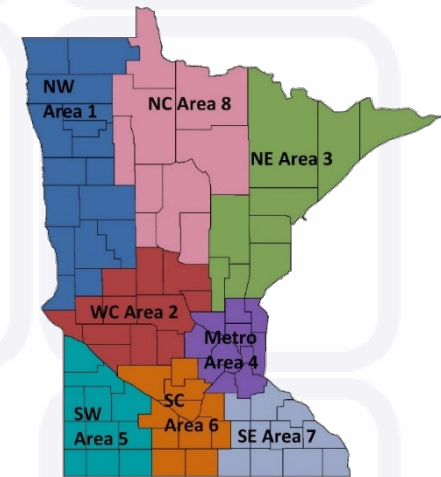
About SWCDs: The Work of Districts

- Statewide network of locally based professional conservationists. They offer science-based solutions that benefit both the landowner and the environment.
- Primary source of conservation information, technical expertise, and financial assistance for landowners and other local units of government.
- Understand their specific communities' needs and help landowners navigate conservation programs from start to finish.

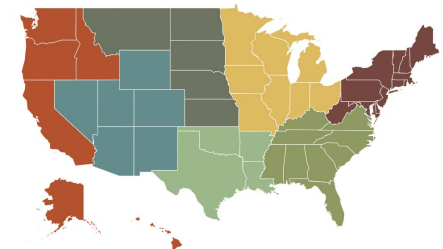


About SWCDs: The Work of Districts

- 88 SWCDs, each with an elected board of 5 Supervisors
 - 440 SWCD Supervisors
 - > 480 SWCD employees
- ~ 70 of the 88 SWCDs are co-located with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - leveraging federal resources, programs and funding



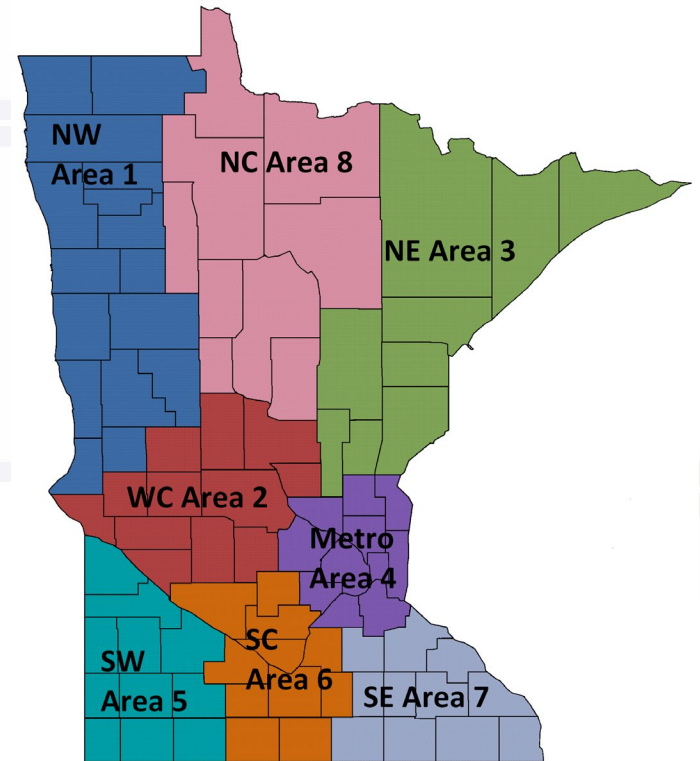
MN SWCDs are part of a nationwide network of conservation districts



About MASWCD

MASWCD is led by a board of directors with representation from each of the 8 MASWCD Areas.

MASWCD staff include Executive Director LeAnn Buck, Assistant Director Sheila Vanney, and financial support staff Stefanie Martinez.



MASWCD President
Paul Krabbenhoft
Clay SWCD Supervisor

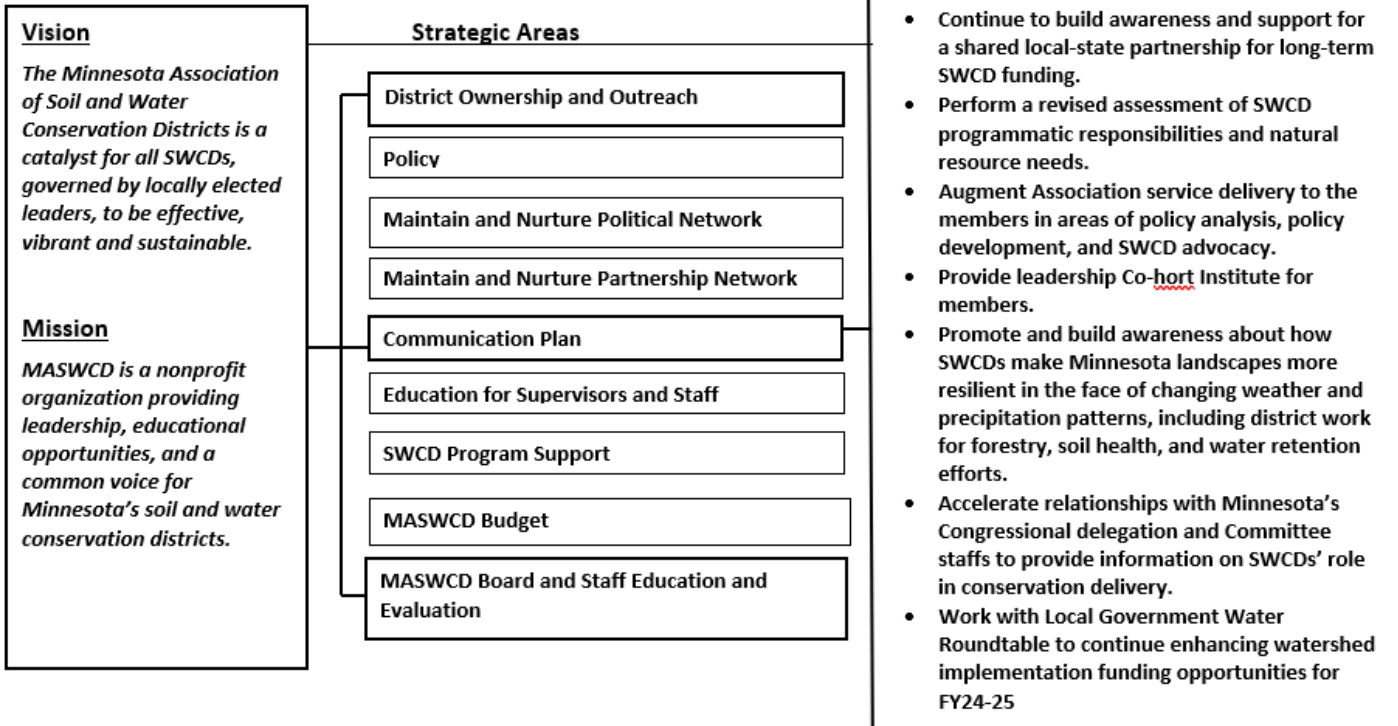


MASWCD Vice President
Chuck Rau
Benton SWCD Supervisor

MASWCD Focus Areas for 2022



The Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts



DEFINITIONS: Vision = The ideal future if MASWCD could fulfill its utmost wish Mission = The business we are in; answers the question "What good do we do for whom?" Strategic Areas = The primary ways that work is done Focus Areas = High priorities naming what is relevant for time and attention

MASWCD Focus Areas: SWCD Funding

Continue to build awareness and support for a shared local-state partnership for long-term SWCD funding.

Updated needs assessment: statewide SWCD funding needs for delivering essential services at base capacity: >\$70 million

LOCAL CAPACITY – DEFINING WHAT ARE THE NECESSARY ESSENTIAL SERVICES OF A MODERN SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

OPERATIONS AND BOARD GOVERNANCE	TECHNICAL EXPERTISE	PUBLIC INFORMATION/EDUCATION	REGULATORY SUPPORT	PROJECTS/PROGRAMS (GEOGRAPHIC & RESOURCE DRIVEN)	MONITORING/DATA COLLECTION	TECHNOLOGY
<p>District strategic and annual planning and budgets</p> <p>Board notices, meetings, proceedings,</p> <p>Human resources – laws, rules and regulations handled properly</p> <p>Ensure fiscal accountability - accounting, reporting, & auditing</p> <p>Intergovernmental communication, coordination, and agreements</p> <p>Coordination with county board and departments</p> <p>Required public notices, reporting, and web site</p> <p>Knowledge of existing funding streams</p> <p>Grant and contract management</p>	<p>Expert knowledge of local land and water resources</p> <p>Training, credentialing and licensure of staff</p> <p>Skill and ability to perform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource management planning Technical evaluations and assessments of resource concerns Survey, design, and construction oversight of conservation practices <p>Ecological/engineering approval and/or signoff authority for conservation practices</p> <p>Maintain resource specific expertise (agronomy, soils, forestry, limnology, etc.)</p> <p>GIS/mapping skills for targeting and measuring implementation and data analysis</p>	<p>Increase landowner awareness and knowledge of soil and water conservation program opportunities to protect soil and water resources.</p> <p>Make known the benefits of soil and water conservation to the public.</p> <p>Media relations.</p> <p>Community/partner relations.</p> <p>Communication and marketing of programs</p> <p>Public/landowner program outreach, communication, and promotion</p> <p>Strong web-site and social media presence.</p> <p>Youth education such as Envirothon, school events, fairs, etc..</p>	<p>Expert knowledge of federal, state, and local regulations</p> <p>Facilitate local processes for impacted/regulated landowners</p> <p>WCA including TEP</p> <p>Technical review and comment on permits, and development plans</p> <p>Buffer Law compliance and landowner assistance</p> <p>Delegated program responsibilities such as, feedlot, SSTS, shoreland/floodplain, and drainage</p> <p>Support for MS4 permit and SWPPP implementation</p>	<p>PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-Point Source Pollution Abatement Program (Cost-Share) Conservation Easements (RIM/CREP) Disaster Response 1W1P/ Local Water Planning/WBIF Feasibility Studies/Program Buffer Law <p>PROJECTS THAT ADDRESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Floodplains Lakes Streams & Ditches Wetlands Upland Resources Groundwater Forestry Soil Health Water Retention Climate Resiliency 	<p>Baseline understanding of resource conditions and trends.</p> <p>Measurement of Progress</p> <p>Design and carry out local monitoring program</p> <p>Data to support local programs and support coordination with other partners.</p> <p>Analyze, interpret and present data to support program/project evaluation and implementation</p> <p>Data and trend analysis</p>	<p>GIS software capability</p> <p>Technology infrastructure that allows for use of mobile workstations.</p> <p>Technology for linking producers/landowners with conservation plans.</p> <p>Modern survey equipment & CAD software</p> <p>Licensed drone operations</p> <p>Virtual meeting capability</p>

MASWCD Focus Area: SWCD Funding

- Proposal for SWCD Aid – 2022 legislative session
- **Concept:** State funding for SWCDs should be a standing, statutory, general fund appropriation through Department of Revenue to SWCDs: SWCD Aid
- **Purpose:** Provide a more reliable and more sufficient form of state funding to SWCDs, which are tasked with various state statutory duties and services delivery
- **Mechanics:** Proposal for 2022 was \$22 million per year in state aid to SWCDs, similar to other state aids to local government; a portion distributed equally to all SWCDs, and a portion distributed based on non-public acres in the SWCD

*Thank you to
AMC for
supporting this
proposal for the
state to invest in
the work of
SWCDs*



Thank you!

**Sheila Vanney
MASWCD Assistant Director
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651-485-1229**

www.maswcd.org