

## State Soil Conservation Board Business Plan

2010-2015

**The mission of the State Soil Conservation Board (SSCB)** is to provide information, advice and consultation to soil and water conservation district supervisors to assist them in carrying out their powers and programs. The SSCB will also provide policy and funding direction to the Indiana Department of Agriculture-Division of Soil Conservation (ISDA-DSC) on the administration of the Clean Water Indiana Program (CWI), to help address statewide natural resource concerns.

**The SSCB has identified the following as statewide priority natural resource concerns** to be addressed over the next five years:

- **Soil Quality Degradation** which includes the loss of top soil due to erosion, the depletion of organic matter, as well as soil compaction and other soil biology impacts that degrade soil quality.
- **Water Quality Impairments** including sediment, nutrients, pesticides, *E-coli* and other non-point sources of water pollution found in our streams, rivers and lakes.
- **Other soil and water related natural resources concerns** including forest lands, wildlife habitat areas, pasture and forage lands and air quality.

There are geographical areas within all watersheds of Indiana that have critical natural resource concerns related to soil and water conservation. The SSCB will work with the ISDA-DSC, districts and all partners to address these. The SSCB will give special attention and assistance to initiatives in the following priority watersheds:

- **Tippecanoe, Upper White and Pigeon Highland** - The SSCB will continue to support the existing Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) in these watersheds.
- **Wabash River Watershed** - In a special effort to help address the national concern about nutrient loadings which are causing the hypoxia problems in the Gulf of Mexico, the SSCB will assist in the start-up and implementation of an expansion of CREP into the Wabash River Watershed. We will also assist USDA with the new Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI) which includes a portion of the Wabash River Basin in Indiana.
- **Western Lake Erie Basin** –We will continue to assist the Western Lake Erie Basin Partnership and our conservation partners in efforts to reduce sediment entering Maumee Bay. Sediment in the bay must be removed at a high cost every year to keep the Port of Toledo open to shipping (including grains). We will also support efforts to reduce blue-green algal blooms in the bay. Several districts and partners will be utilizing special funding available under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) to implement projects that will reduce sediment and nutrient runoff from entering the bay from Indiana.

- **Other Watersheds** - We will continue to monitor other watersheds across the State of Indiana for future inclusion into SSCB priority watersheds.

In a strategic effort to address the top three resource concerns identified above both directly and through local soil and water conservation districts, the SSCB has developed the following goals and strategies. These goals and strategies are consistent with the board's general authority and duties outlined in the District Law as well as its specific authority to provide direction to the department on the administration of the Clean Water Indiana Program:

- **By 2011 work with IN Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) and other water quality monitoring agencies and organizations, as well as the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to share baseline data of current pollution load conditions.**
  - Share data with Districts to help them identify priority areas.
  - Help to gage the environmental impact of soil and water conservation efforts.
- **By 2012 have a tracking tool/model in place for measuring load reductions as practices and technologies are applied on the land.**
  - Work with the ISDA-DSC to establish mechanism for tracking load reductions.
  - Strongly encourage the ISDA-DSC to have all their technical staff using the reduction tracking tool.
  - Require districts to use the same tracking tool for reporting practices applied with CWI grant funding assistance.
  - Encourage districts and other partners to use the reduction measuring tool for practices and technologies applied with assistance from other programs.
- **By 2012 provide districts with a standardized reporting procedure for reporting income and expenses, accomplishments, federal, state and local dollars leveraged as well as state and district program needs for the coming year.**
- **By 2012 the State Soil Conservation Board and ISDA-DSC staff will work with the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD) and other Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP) partners in developing a reporting format.**
  - SSCB will annually provide a consolidated report to the general assembly including program and funding needs.
- **By 2013 there will be a measurable increase in the number of district supervisors actively engaged in district program planning and development, community outreach, local, state and federal conservation policy and legislative affairs.**
  - Continue to support the Leadership Institute four Corners of Leadership Workshops series.

- Work with the Leadership Institute Program Committee and the ICP Leadership Development Workgroup to identify additional training needs and assist with implementing additional training based on needs identified and prioritized.
  - Continue to work with the ICP Leaders to develop and implement the draft 5 Star Program proposed by the ICP Leadership Workgroup.
  - Develop a score card for recognizing districts that increase their local program capacity, accomplishments and accountability, and in turn incrementally increase their state match over and above the \$10,000 currently provided for operations based on their scorecard results.
- **By 2014 there will be a measurable increase in the number of districts employing district staff with skills in program development and revenue enhancement (ie; grant writing and project management), adult education, technical assistance, marketing and public relations**
    - Provide special training targeted to the training needs of district program managers.
    - Work with the ICP to continue to develop and implement the technical training program initiated by ISDA-DSC with assistance from Ray Ledgerwood in 2009. This training program will be based on the plan laid out in the timeline developed in our ICP planning meeting and subsequently developed “white paper” developed by a sub-committee for this initiative.
    - Pursue opportunities for joint training with partners as well as opportunities to utilize trainers from other partners and states.
    - Investigate and evaluate training programs already in place in other states that could be modified for use in Indiana.
    - Provide CWI incentive grants to districts for the purpose of developing or adding staff capacity for program development, revenue enhancement, etc. if funds are available.
    - Offer specific CWI incentive grants to limited resource districts willing to share program development and/or technical staff if funds are available.
- **By 2015 there will be a measurable increase in the number of joint sediment and nutrient reduction projects among districts.**
    - Offer specific CWI grants for joint district projects targeted at sediment and nutrient reduction if funds are available.
    - Work with ISDA-DSC, IASWCD, and local districts to Increase in the number of cooperative conservation projects with non-governmental organization and private industry.
    - Continue to support the Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI).
    - Explore opportunities to work with Certified Crop Advisors (CCAs) and private sector to help promote agronomic conservation practices and technologies.
    - Provide opportunities for division employees to increase their proficiency and assistance in promoting agronomic conservation practices and technologies.
- **By 2015 SWCD’s with limited resources are actively pursuing the benefits of and opportunities to consolidate.**

- Provide education to districts regarding benefits and opportunities of merging.
- Provide special CWI incentive grants to limited resource districts that are willing to merge to increase program capacity and effectiveness. Consider offering an incentive of two times the current state match for each of the merged districts for first year and then 1 ½ times the combined matching grant each year thereafter if funds are available.
- **By 2015 annually increase federal leveraged funds by an average of 5% per year for conservation implementation in the state**
  - Continue to commit state matching dollars for CREP from CWI funds.
  - Continue to work with the partners to leverage federal funding from all federal sources.
  - Work with our partners to develop a strategic plan to expand CREP to other areas of the state.
  - Work with the ICP and other traditional and non-traditional partners to enroll 26,250 acres into CREP.
- **Key actions for 2010 to make progress in implementing each the goals.**
  - Continue to solidify partnership.
  - Make a concerted effort to help IDEM and DNR become fully vested partners in the ICP.
  - Met with top leadership of ISDA and other state government officials as appropriate to discuss district needs and Clean water Indiana funding.
  - Support the division in filling critical vacant positions that impact district assistance.
  - Initiate discussions with IDEM and ISDH about septic issues.
  - Continue to help resolve the role of districts in the implementation of Rule 5.
  - Continue to improve communication with districts by occasionally holding board meeting out in the regions areas of the state and by the use of the ISDA-DSC websites, partner newsletters, webinars, etc.
  - Pursue opportunities to meet with other state and local government organizations and agencies and others dealing with soil and water issues.
- **Desired Outcomes for the State Soil Conservation Board Business Plan**
  - Clean drinking water
  - Clean rivers, lakes and streams
  - More productive soils
  - Enhanced quality of life
  - Increased cooperation with partnership
  - Improved soil and water quality
  - Districts have increased capacity to deliver conservation programs locally
  - Stronger state economy
  - Expanded partnerships and conservation partners