

# THE REPORTER

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## Understanding the Source & Benefits of SWCD Conservation Cost-Share Funding

St. Charles County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) employees have recently been asking cooperators (landowners participating in SWCD cost-share), if they are aware of the source of the money for the state cost-share program. Many of them have said they are not. So the Reporter is offering today this explanation.

### Missouri is Unique

There are soil and water districts all over the country, but Missouri is the only state with a state-wide sales tax dedicated to soil and water conservation. SWCDs were born out of the Dust Bowl era, when

legislators realized that the future of American farming (and consequently, the ability to feed all Americans) depended on the protection of healthy soil and water resources. When farms fail, communities fall apart, and consumers pay more for scarcer products. The Midwest portion of the country, often referred to as the "bread basket", not only feeds Americans, but also many people around the world who depend on the health of farms in that region.

In 1984, Missouri voters approved a one-tenth-of-one-percent

See [Cost-Share](#), pg. 2



Gully erosion on a farm.

## St. Charles County SWCD Cost-Share Allocations and Information

The St. Charles County Soil & Water Conservation District will receive \$27,956.00 in FY16 Cost-Share funding. These funds may be applied in the amounts listed for the following resource concern categories:

- Grazing Management- \$4,750.
- Sensitive Areas- \$1,900.
- Sheet/Rill & Gully Erosion - \$14,606.
- Woodland Erosion- \$1,900.
- Cover Crops- \$4,800.

If you are interested in one of the above practices, contact the district at 636-922-2833, ext. 3.

### Contracts Paid in FY 2015

For Fiscal Year 2015 (July 2014 through June 2015) the St. Charles County SWCD approved nine contracts and paid out \$24,551.93. These funds were used for practices in three categories:

Sheet/Rill & Gully Erosion: WASCODs (water and sediment control basins) installed on two properties.

Sensitive Areas: Wells were decommissioned and properly closed on two properties.

Pilot Cover Crop: Five properties took part in the cover crop pilot program. Due to great success across the state in implementing cover crop programs, and also due to the fact that cover crops have proven to not only hold the soil but also improve it's health, the Soil & Water District Commission has voted to implement Cover Crops as a regular and permanent cost-share program.

### Soil Fact

One cup of soil may hold as many as **6 billion bacteria**. In one acre of soil, all that bacteria can equal the weight of one or two cows.

## Permanent Practice

The SWCDs across the state have offered cover crops as a pilot program over the past year. The program has been so well-received, that the Soil and Water District Commission has decided to make it a permanent practice offered to all farmers wishing to improve soil health while reducing soil erosion.

Cover crops **reduce soil erosion** and have a significant **positive impact on soil health and water quality**. In addition, cover crops:

- promote microbial biomass and activities involved in decomposition, leading to increased soil carbon retention
- increase soil aggregate stability, total porosity, and water availability
- increase hydraulic conductivity and the water holding capacity of soil
- reduce bulk density
- control weeds
- provide nutrients for a succeeding crop

SWCD is an equal opportunity employer and provider

**Cost-share**, from pg. 1

Parks, Soils, and Water sales tax to fund SWCD conservation efforts AND state parks, with one-half penny of every 500 dollars worth of sales funding 114 Missouri SWCDs.

State parks use the funds to protect land resources, and provide recreation opportunities. By preserving

large swaths of land throughout the state, they are able to protect and preserve historic and natural places for all to enjoy.

SWCDs use the funds as financial incentives for landowners to implement conservation practices that help prevent soil loss, improve soil health, and protect water resources. Prior to the passage of the sales tax, Missouri had the second highest rate of erosion in the nation. Since then, the erosion rate has dropped more than any other state, with more than 148 million tons of soil kept on the land and out of waterways. Voters reauthorized the sales tax in 1988, 1996 and 2006. In Fiscal Year 2015, the Soil and Water Conservation Program funded more than \$2.44 million worth of projects throughout Missouri.

## Cost-Share Practice Categories

“Cost-share” is the sharing of the cost of a conservation practice on agricultural land. There are seven categories of cost-share offered by the Soil and Water Conservation Program.

- Sheet/Rill and Gully Erosion
- Grazing Management
- Irrigation Management
- Animal Waste Management
- Nutrient and Pest Management
- Sensitive Areas
- Woodland Erosion

Each category has specific “practices” that apply. An agricultural producer may receive up to 75% of the cost of installing one of these practices. A “practice” is either the physical structure that conserves soil and water



(like a terrace or waterway), or it is a behavior that brings about the desired conservation outcome (managing grazing, following a nutrient application plan, decommissioning a well).

### Program Benefits All Citizens

Farm conservation not only benefits the farmer by improving the productivity of his/her land, but it also benefits the entire community AND the lives of all future Missourians.

### Benefits to the Farm

- Keep valuable topsoil in place
- Optimize the use of natural water systems and protect them from pollution
- Improve efficiency of grazing, optimize the health of livestock and protect local streams
- Control runoff, decrease pollutant loads in streams, and optimize plant health with proper amounts of water and nutrients
- Recycle animal waste for use on the land
- Protect groundwater on farms

### Benefits to the Community

- Availability of fresh local food
- Cleaner drinking water resources
- Cleaner recreational water features
- Less sediment in storm water runoff
- Less nutrients in storm water runoff
- Protection of aquatic animals in creeks and rivers
- Preservation of productive soil for future generations

## Missouri Team Wins National Envirothon

A five-member team of students from Pembroke High School in Kansas City, Missouri, earned top honors at the NCF-Envirothon held in Springfield, Mo., this summer. The NCF-Envirothon is the third and final tier of competition in which teams compete in natural resource areas with a central theme. This competition’s theme was Urban and Community Forestry. Each of the members of the team received a \$3,000 scholarship provided by Smithfield Foods..

Soil and Water District employees are the sponsors for the Envirothon at the regional level. Since the national event was in Missouri this year, several district employees were able to give their time to this worthwhile outreach program. Pictured below are some of



the folks who volunteered to help Theresa Dunlap and Van Beydler (not pictured) with some of the media coverage. Back row from left are Janice Dunlap, Kelly Dunlap, Samantha Dunlap and Nick Lathrom. Front row from left are Lori Nowak, Franklin County District Manager; and St. Charles County SWCD employees: Theresa Dunlap (Info/Ed/Tech), Charlie Perkins (Tech) and Frankie Coleman (Manager).



The winning team from Pembroke Hill High School in Kansas City, Mo., includes (from left) Saurabh Goel, Domenico DiMare, Francesco DiMare, Deveon Dietrich and Eric Koch.