

Soil and Water Conservation District Funding Needs

About Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs):

Minnesota SWCDs are special-purpose units of government established under state law to carry out conservation programs at the local level. The districts work with landowners to provide technical expertise and financial assistance to landowners to maintain and improve the quality, quantity, distribution and sustainability of natural resources including surface water, groundwater, soil, and ecological resources. Each SWCD has a five-member, locally elected Board of Supervisors to set policies, provide local input, and ensure oversight and accountability for the district.



WHAT IS NEEDED – ONGOING STATE INVESTMENT IN SWCDs

Background. SWCD Capacity Funding in the amount of \$11 million per year was a Clean Water Fund appropriation for FY16-17 and FY18-19. During the 2019 legislative session, SWCDs were appropriated \$12 million per year out of the Clean Water Fund for FY20-21. SWCD Capacity Funding has enabled SWCDs across the state to hire resource professionals to work one on one with landowners to design and install conservation practices in prioritized and targeted areas to help achieve measurable water quality results. But it still falls short of meeting current needs.

Source. Similar to other locally elected units of government who get state aid, SWCDs need an adequate, committed, and ongoing investment from the state. Without it, SWCDs will not be able to fully deliver on their statutory obligations.

Amount. When it started, \$11 million was half of an estimated \$22 million annual shortfall. Revised estimates in November, 2018, showed SWCD funding shortfalls totaling \$28 million per year. The FY20-21 appropriation of \$12 million per year in Clean Water Funds brings the shortfall just under \$16 million per year. This does not include project funding needs.

FISCAL YEAR 2020 SWCD FUNDING

