

North Dakota State Soil Conservation Committee Testimony to SBARE

Members of the State Board of Agricultural Research and Education, I am Dennis Renner, Chairman of the State Soil Conservation Committee. I am here today with Bruce Schmidt Extension Watershed and Soil Conservation Program Leader to update this Committee on the State Soil Conservation Committee recent Legislative Review held on Dec. 19th and to request your continued support for the State Soil Conservation Committee and the Soil Conservation District Assistance Program.

Brief Review SCDAP

A major responsibility of the State Soil Conservation Committee is to distribute the Soil Conservation District Assistance Program (SCDAP) monies allocated by the North Dakota Legislative Assembly. These monies are awarded biennially on a competitive basis to the 54 Soil Conservation Districts taking in considerations for discrepancies in County mill levy and property valuation.

The maximum amount a Soil Conservation District can apply for is \$40,000 for the biennium. Prior to 2013, requests were capped at \$25,000. The requested funds are used for salaries and benefits of District staff. The local Soil Conservation District Supervisors are responsible for hiring and any matters related to the District staff employment. This allows local decision-making and leadership in the program. All funds appropriated each biennium are allocated 100% to Soil Conservation Districts.

Listed are some of the practices reported by the Soil Conservation Districts as a result of funding for District staff through the SCDAP. These practices have effectively reduced the damages of wind and water erosion:

Cropping systems	Pastureland management plans	Tree planting
Residue management	Livestock waste management	Renovating windbreaks
Crop Rotations	Water distribution plans	Cover crops
Conservation tillage	Wildlife habitat	Conservation Planning
Soil health and quality	Grazing systems	

The District Funding Allocation / Request History, is included your packet. The State Soil Conservation Committee would like to request your support for SCDAP funding for 2019 – 2020 to be \$1.3 million. This was the same request as for the last biennium.

Need for the State Soil Conservation Committee

During the December 19th Legislative Review the stakeholders support for the State Soil Conservation Committee and the role NDSU Extension has with the Committee was very positive. In your packet we have included copies of the letters of support from NRCS, Corn Growers Association, ND Grain Growers Association, and ND Soybean Growers Association.

Supporting testimony was also provided by Jim Gray NDSU Extension, Doug Goehring ND Agriculture Commissioner, Kevin Kading ND Game and Fish, representatives from the ND Association of Soil Conservation Districts, and representatives from the ND Conservation District Employees Association.

The testimony and letters explained to the Agriculture Committee the need for the State Soil Conservation Committee and that the committee responsibilities are far more than just a grants administrator. There was also strong support for the Soil Conservation Program Coordinator position with the NDSU Extension Service, who works directly with the State Soil Conservation Committee.

The duties of the Soil Conservation Program Coordinator are to direct the work according to the policies of the Committee and the laws of the State of North Dakota. This will include administering the Soil Conservation Districts Law, Agency Budget, Surface Mining Reports Law, Soil Conservation District Assistance Program, other laws and agreements that are applicable to the Committee.

Additional responsibilities of the Soil Conservation Program Coordinator include assisting District Supervisors throughout the state in all matters of soil conservation, to speak before interest groups and disseminate information for use by District supervisors, other government agencies, organizations and the general public.

As a result of preparing for the Legislative Review, several areas have been identified by the State Soil Conservation Committee needing improvement. During the months leading up to the next Legislative Session the State Soil Conservation Committee will be working on the following:

- Duties and role of members of the State Soil Conservation Committee
- Better communications with the SCD's, our Advisory Groups the State Soil Conservation Committee and the ND Legislators in regards to how the District Assistance funding is being utilized and the impact it has to the Districts.
- Memorandum of Understanding with NDSU Extension outlining the assistance and role of the Extension Program Leader and request for continued support for 1.6 FTE
- Legislative Line item for operating and salary for State Soil Conservation Committee and separate line item for SCDAP funding
- As requested by Agriculture Committee reviewing the need for the Surface Mining Report.

It is our request that the State Board of Agricultural Research and Education would support the State Soil Conservation Committee as we move forward. Thank you, we would be happy to answer any question you might have.

DAP Funding History

	# SCD Request	# SCD Funded	State Approp.	\$ SCD Requested
83 - 85	41	22	\$ 425,000	\$ 802,500
85 - 87	50	35	\$ 825,000	\$ 1,139,460
87 - 89	49	13	\$ 286,123	\$ 1,078,300
89 - 91	46	29	\$ 690,251	\$ 1,002,750
91 - 93	50	33	\$ 745,386	\$ 1,175,500
93 - 95	49	31	\$ 745,386	\$ 1,095,000
95 - 97	51	29	\$ 500,000	\$ 1,034,000
97 - 99	51	26	\$ 580,000	\$ 1,019,640
99 - 01	51	24	\$ 580,000	\$ 1,084,750
01 - 03	42	26	\$ 580,000	\$ 960,343
03 - 05	43	23	\$ 580,000	\$ 985,500
05 - 07	52	26	\$ 630,000	\$ 1,235,500
07 - 09	51	45	\$ 730,000	\$ 1,147,900
09 - 11	52	47	\$ 837,800	\$ 1,240,500
11 - 13	54	54	\$ 987,800	\$ 1,310,000
13 - 15	55	55	\$ 1,137,800	\$ 2,011,000
15 - 17	55	49	\$ 1,212,800	\$ 2,073,000
17 - 19	51	51	\$ 1,133,362	\$ 1,953,000
		Total	\$ 13,206,708	\$ 22,348,643

Letters of Support (attached)



Natural Resources
Conservation Service

December 7, 2017

Bismarck State Office
PO Box 1458
Bismarck, ND
58502-1458

To: Honorable Members of the N.D. Legislative Agricultural Committee

RE: Legislative Management Study-
Soil Conservation Committee and NDSU position

Voice 701.530.2000
Fax 855-813-7556

State and Federal technical assistance to private landowners (farmers and ranchers) was born from the Great American Dust Bowl. This delivery of both funds and interdisciplinary specialists (range management, agronomists, engineering, and local experience) is a system that is the envy of other agencies and organizations.

The system consists of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), North Dakota State Soil Conservation Committee (NDSCC) (representing 54 Soil Conservation Districts), North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts (NDASCD), North Dakota Resource Conservation and Development Association (NDRC&DA), and the North Dakota Conservation District Employees Association (NDCDEA). See enclosed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

The Staff North Dakota State University (NDSU) designates as Soil Conservation Specialist has been an extremely valuable member of the Conservation System by:

1. Representing Soil Conservation Districts (SCDs) and NDSCC at meetings with State and Federal partners
2. Communicating the conservation message
3. Assisted in developing MOA language for each District so that they can reside in Federal office space and utilize Federal vehicles; thus - leveraging State conservation dollars.
4. Instrumental in problem solving and assistance to SCDs to resolve human resource (HR) issues.
5. Works directly with State Conservationist on resolution of challenges related to locally led conservation needs and field offices.

One cannot evaluate the effectiveness of the SCC and NDSU Staff without considering the success of SCDs. It is not a linear communication line, but for purposes of clarity, I will start with the State SCC and NDSU position.

1st NDSCC

- This group sets priorities and communicates a State Conservation Vision per Century Code
- They are also the key to ensuring compliance to State Laws and responsibilities.

(More)

Helping People Help the Land

2nd NDSU Soil Conservation Specialist

- This position carries out the mission of the NDSCC.
- Ensures accountability by Soil Conservation Districts to the State of North Dakota.
- Provides daily assistance regarding laws, policy, and all topics associated with running an SCD, including HR and administration.

One of the strengths in North Dakota is quality and fairness in Conservation Delivery.

The NDSU Staff adds communication, knowledge, and day to day guidance and assistance to SCD's! The SCDs have been able to leverage their mission and conservation goals with a multitude of organizations.

3rd Soil Conservation Districts

- 54 Districts – 52 co-located with NRCS
- Conservation Agreements for every SCD that requested at a value of over \$300,000 to be matched at 50 percent by NRCS to put conservation practices on the ground.
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) program delivery for local led conservation needs – funded at almost \$15 million in the past 3 years for water quality, flood control, rangeland management, cover crop demonstrations, and more.
- Education of youth, young adults, and adults
- Soil Health education/workshops/facilitation of education for all land uses and all types of agriculture.

This is just capturing a minimum amount of what each Soil Conservation District does with limited dollars in cooperation with NRCS. SCDs work with multiple State and local partners, including water quality efforts with an EPA-319 program, purchasing conservation equipment and technology to test, or provide, windbreak plantings and renovation.

4th Farmers and Ranchers, and rural communities of North Dakota

- Soil Conservation Districts have locally elected farmers/ranchers/community members on the SCD boards knowledgeable about local natural resource concerns
- They communicate conservation needs to the SCD, to the NDSCC

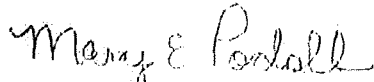
Each of the 4 communication steps can be done in any order, at any time. A most critical position in communication and leadership is the Soil Conservation Specialist.

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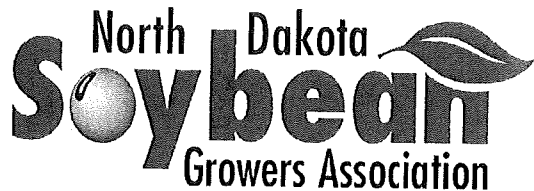
Soil Conservation Districts are governed by State Law and have accountability, authorities, and quality that allows me, as State Conservationist, to choose to enter into agreements with SCDs. I attribute this quality and accountability to the role of the NDSU Soil Conservation Specialist and the State Soil Conservation Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary E. Podoll".

MARY E. PODOLL
State Conservationist

Enclosure



North Dakota Soybean Growers Association
1555 43rd Street South, Suite 103, Fargo, ND 58103
(701) 640-5215 | www.ndsoygrowers.com

December 12, 2017

ND Legislative Interim Agricultural Committee:

This is in regards to a letter of support from the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association (NDSGA), for support to retain the North Dakota Soil Conservation Committee (NDSCC) and the NDSU Extension staff position assigned grant administration of these important programs.

North Dakota farmers have a long history of effectively using conservation programs offered through local, state and federal governments. The North Dakota Soil Conservation Districts provide local leadership for conveying conservation values and proven practice educational opportunities across our state. Their successes, with assistance from the Extension Soil Conservation Specialist and North Dakota State Conservation Committee members, have provided critical pathways and assistance to farmers accessing these important programs.

We ask for your continued support for the outstanding grant administration work of the North Dakota Soil Conservation Committee and their Extension Soil Conservation Specialist position.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Craig Olson".

Craig Olson, President
North Dakota Soybean Growers Association



You Raise. We Represent. www.ndgga.com

December 18, 2017

Honorable Dennis Johnson
Chairman
North Dakota Legislative Interim Agriculture Committee
State Capitol
600 East Boulevard
Bismarck, ND 58505-0360

Dear Chairman Johnson,

I write on behalf of the North Dakota Grain Growers Association (NDGGA) to support the retention of the NDSU Soil Conservation Specialist position for the North Dakota Soil Conservation Committee. This position serves a vital function for the North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts (NDASCD) the loss of which would negatively impact NDASCD programming which provides an essential service to North Dakota and North Dakota agriculture.

North Dakota farmers and ranchers are the state's first and primary conservationists; providing North Dakota agriculture the conservation tools through the NDASCD, the Soil Conservation Committee and their grant writing process benefits all of North Dakota's citizens. Having the staff position in the NDSU Extension Service, with its vast outreach, not only enhances the process but also highlights the critical need it serves.

Therefore the North Dakota Grain Growers Association respectfully requests that the North Dakota Legislative Interim Agriculture Committee support the funding of the Soil Conservation Specialist within NDSU Extension.

Sincerely,

Jeff Mertz
President

North Dakota Grain Growers Associatio

NDGGA provides a voice for wheat and barley producers on domestic policy issues – such as crop insurance, disaster assistance and the Farm Bill – while serving as a source for agronomic and crop marketing education for its members.



December 11, 2017

ND Legislative Agricultural Committee:

This is in regards to a letter of support from the North Dakota Corn Growers Association (NDCGA), for support to retain the Soil Conservation Committee and the NDSU staff position appointed to that role.

The North Dakota farmer has a long history of benefitting from conservation programs offered through the state and federal levels of government. One of the leading organizations supporting the education and values of conservation is the Soil Conservation Districts of North Dakota. This group, along with help from the of the NDSU Soil Conservation Specialist (SCP) and the Soil Conservation Committee (SCC) has provided additional educational value to assist farmers in obtaining access to various programs.

By using the resources offered through the vast reach of NDSU Extension and Research along with a sound SCC direction, allows for dynamic messaging of the concerns and needs of farmers with accessing a multitude of private, state and federal programs. The value of grant writing and education that this position and committee has held over time is highly valued.

We ask for your support to continue the fine work of the Soil Conservation Committee and funding for the Soil Conservation Specialist position at NDSU.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carson Klosterman".

Carson Klosterman, President
North Dakota Corn Growers Association