



MASWCD

PRESIDENT

CHARLES RAU
Rice, MN
(320) 493-9503
chuck.rau@maswcd.org

VICE PRESIDENT &
SW AREA 5 DIRECTOR
CLARK LINGBEEK

Comfrey, MN
(507) 920-9884
clark.lingbeek@maswcd.org

SECRETARY/TREASURER &
SC AREA 6 DIRECTOR

MARK SCHNOBRICH
Hutchinson, MN
(320) 587-3760
mark.schnobrich@maswcd.org

NW AREA 1 DIRECTOR

RANDY SCHELLACK
Glyndon, MN
(701) 238-8121
randy.schellack@maswcd.org

WC AREA 2 DIRECTOR

TOM GREGORY
Kimball, MN
320-398-7312
tom.gregory@maswcd.org

NE AREA 3 DIRECTOR

KURT BECKSTROM
Milaca, MN
(612) 390-2459
kurt.beckstrom@maswcd.org

METRO AREA 4 DIRECTOR

LAURA ZANMILLER
West St. Paul, MN
(651) 270-2856
laura.zanmiller@maswcd.org

SE AREA 7 DIRECTOR

RANDY SMITH
Adams, MN
(507) 438-4570
randy.smith@maswcd.org

NC AREA 8 DIRECTOR

KEN LAPORTE
Pillager, MN
(218) 746-3927
ken.laporte@maswcd.org

IMMEDIATE PAST

PRESIDENT
PAUL KRABBENHOFT
Moorhead, MN
(701) 799-0369
paul.krabbenhof@maswcd.org

STAFF

Executive Director
LEANN BUCK

Assistant Director
SHEILA VANNEY

Office Manager
STEFANIE MARTINEZ

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

255 Kellogg Boulevard East, Suite 101, St. Paul, MN 55101 | 651-690-9028 | www.maswcd.org

April 26, 2023

Sen. Ann Rest
Chair, Senate Taxes Committee

Chair Rest and Senate Taxes Committee Members,

On behalf of the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD), I'd like to express our gratitude for the Soil and Water Conservation District Aid provisions included in SF 1811, as amended. SWCD Aid would establish a desperately needed standing, statutory appropriation of general funds from the Department of Revenue to Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) statewide, similar to state aids for other elected units of local government.

We do, however, need to express concerns about the level of funding in the bill. At \$12,723,000 per year, SWCDs will continue to be significantly limited in their ability to hire and retain the staff needed to work to tackle water quality and soil health priorities. The \$22 million per year in Sen. Klein's SF 526 is not a bloated funding request. It's the result of an in-depth funding assessment we conducted in cooperation with the Board of Water and Soil Resources.

The attached handout explains the essential services our SWCDs provide in order to meet their statutory duties. It also highlights the corresponding funding needs, and sources of existing and proposed funding. Even at \$22 million for SWCD Aid, our statewide conservation delivery system will still be facing a shortfall. We are seeking a reasonable step forward in the state's share of funding SWCDs, and not asking for a complete solution to our funding challenges.

In the coming months, Minnesota SWCDs will be working hard to leverage federal funding from the Inflation Reduction Act and climate smart agriculture initiatives. But like so many other funding opportunities, these are project dollars and do not fund the people – the boots on the ground – necessary to work cooperatively with private landowners to get the projects implemented. At \$22 million per year, our SWCDs will have a chance to hire and retain the conservation professionals needed to deliver state programs and to compete for federal project dollars.

Again, thank you for including SWCD Aid in the Senate Omnibus Tax Bill, and for your support of this important funding mechanism for Minnesota's statewide conservation delivery system. We urge you to reconsider the funding level and to establish SWCD Aid at \$22 million per year.

Sincerely,

Chuck Rau
President, Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts