



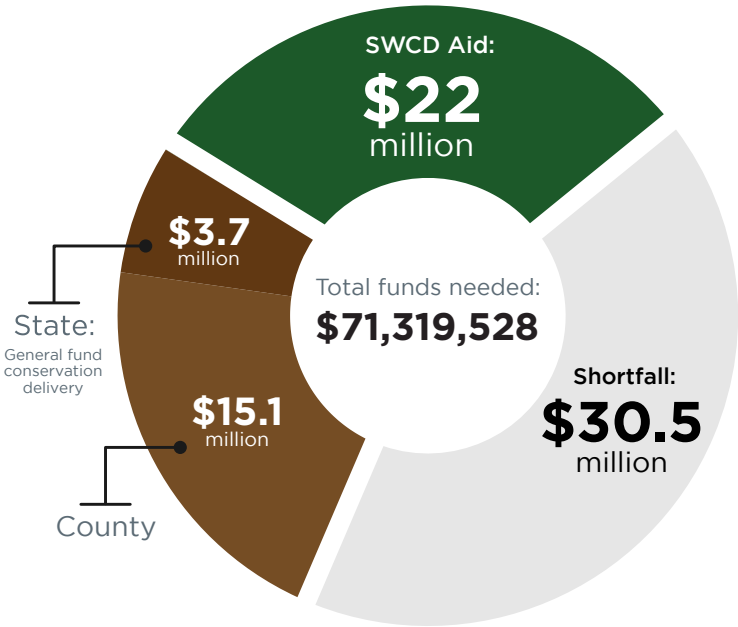
# SWCD STATE AID: What is local capacity for SWCDs?

## Defining the essential services of a modern soil and water conservation district (SWCD)

The Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) define “local capacity” as the readiness of soil and water conservation districts to plan, identify, and successfully implement district statutory obligations and private lands conservation. Funding local SWCD capacity leads to districts that can execute priorities and commitments. SWCDs are Special Purpose Local Units of Government organized under Minnesota Stat. Chapter 103C.

## SWCDs facing shortfall to deliver essential services

BWSR and Houston Engineering, Inc. completed a needs assessment in summer 2022 and calculated a total annual funding need of \$71.3 million. This funding amount represents the cost of operating at base capacity to deliver the essential services outlined in the table for all 88 Minnesota SWCDs and the SWCD duties at Hennepin and Ramsey Counties. With state capacity support of \$22 million in SWCD Aid, there remains a \$30.5 million unmet need to fully fund the essential services of SWCDs. The statewide investment of \$22 million in SWCD State Aid is a step toward building greater ability of our state’s SWCDs to continue advancing our shared clean water and soil health goals through locally led conservation projects on private lands.



| OPERATIONS, BOARD GOVERNANCE & POLICY   | TECHNICAL EXPERTISE   | PUBLIC INFORMATION EDUCATION  | RESOURCE PROJECTS & PROGRAMS IMPLEMENTATON   | TECHNICAL ROLE WITH REGULATORY PROGRAMS   | DATA & MONITORING   | TECHNOLOGY & EQUIPMENT  |
|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| District strategic planning & budget development<br>Board notices, meetings, proceedings & elections<br>Board policy development<br>Policy support & advocacy with local, state & federal officials/ partners<br>Required public notices & reporting<br>Personnel & human resources management, recruitment, laws, rules & regulations<br>Grant & contract management<br>Financial policies, accounting, reports & audits<br>Intergovernmental communication, coordination & agreements<br>Coordination with county board & departments<br>Training for board & staff | Knowledge of local land, soil, water, forestry, plant & wildlife resources<br>Technical evaluations & assessments of resource concerns<br>Resource management planning at field, watershed or landscape scales<br>Knowledge of conservation practice standards<br>Survey, design, construction, & inspection of practices & projects<br>Ecological training, job approval authority & credentialling<br>Engineering training, job approval authority & credentialling<br>GIS/mapping skills for data analysis, targeting & measuring implementation | Public awareness of the district role & benefits of conservation<br>Public engagement & support for locally led soil & water conservation solutions<br>Landowner knowledge of conservation program opportunities through one-on-one assistance/engagement<br>Landowner knowledge of conservation program opportunities through general outreach<br><b>Outreach strategies include:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Website/social media</li><li>Field events/tours</li><li>Local media relations</li><li>Newsletter, mailings, marketing, promotions</li><li>Youth education events</li><li>Invitations to resource planning events</li><li>Surveys</li></ul> | <b>Resource programs:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Erosion control &amp; water management e.g., cost-share</li><li>Conservation easements e.g., RIM/CREP</li><li>Comprehensive water management e.g., 1W1P/ Local Water Planning/WBIF</li><li>Feasibility studies</li><li>Disaster response</li><li>Equipment rental</li></ul> <b>Resource projects:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Improved surface &amp; ground water quality &amp; quantity</li><li>Reduced soil erosion &amp; sedimentation</li><li>Increased soil health</li><li>Improved or created forestry landscapes</li><li>Improved or created wildlife &amp; pollinator habitat</li><li>Climate resiliency</li><li>Water retention</li></ul> | Knowledge of federal, state & local regulations<br>Facilitate local processes for impacted/regulated landowners<br>WCA landowner assistance & technical evaluation panel<br>Buffer Law landowner assistance & compliance<br>Technical review & comment on permits, planning & ordinances<br>Delegated program responsibilities by other authorities (e.g., feedlot, SSTS, drainage & shoreland/floodplain)<br>Support for MS4 permit & SWPPP implementation | District baseline knowledge of resource conditions & trends analysis<br>Analyze, interpret & present data to support program/ project implementation & evaluation<br>Monitoring & data sharing to support local programs & coordination with other partners.<br>Measurement of progress | Technology, communications infrastructure for office & mobile workstations<br>Technology for linking producers/landowners with conservation plans<br>Computer hardware, software & licenses<br>GIS software capability<br>Modern survey equipment & CAD software<br>District office space, storage, furniture, equipment & supplies<br>Vehicles<br>Field equipment<br>Licensed drone operations |