

MASWCD POLICY HANDBOOK December 2016

A. MASWCD Mission Statement

The mission of the Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts is to promote the conservation of soil and water resources, and assume active leadership in promoting conservation education in the state.

B. Resolutions

A call for resolutions will be issued in August each year, with a deadline for submission of September 1. After categorizing and reviewing for duplicates, a slate of resolutions for the next Annual Meeting will be sent to all District offices for Board review. Resolutions submitted after September 1 will be considered from the floor at the Annual Meeting. All resolutions coming from the floor must receive a 2/3 vote to be considered for discussion. Amendments to the by-laws cannot be brought from the floor; they must be sent to each District at least 10 days prior to the meeting. Resolutions that are passed at the Annual Meeting will be incorporated into MASWCD policy.

C. MASWCD Policy

1. Animal Waste

The EPA NPDES permits will require many confined animal and bird operations to construct or enlarge costly manure storage facilities. Financial assistance available to producers through NRCS is not sufficient to cover the increased need. EPA and USDA should make available adequate funds to support the increased need for alternative manure management systems.

2. Budgets / Allocations

MASWCD and the Soil and Water Districts Commission support districts that remain in their respective county due to USDA office closings as they would any other district.

Districts should be funded at sufficient levels to provide a full time technician and district clerk/manager.

MASWCD supports changing the method of allocating funds to the district assistance grants by increasing the grants annually at the same growth rate of the Parks and Soils Tax. The annual increase would allow the districts more stability in the annual budget planning process.

MASWCD supports reinstating the Matching Grant Program on a one to one basis to be utilized for staffing, district programs or the purchasing of conservation equipment to be made available to landowners and operators for rent.

MASWCD supports a supplemental disbursement program for the 04 administrative funds for info/ed activities.

MASWCD supports an increase in the 04 funds to pay the expenses of supervisors for the annual Training Conference if not paid by DNR directly to the hotel and MASWCD.

3. Conservation Reserve Program

The Conservation Reserve Program contracts should be honored to the full extent of the contract, or encourage the use of alternative methods.

Filter Strips and Riparian Buffers should allow the option of including the entire field in the CRP practice, if the buffer takes at least 75% of a field.

The rules for the continuous CRP sign-up changed in June 1999 to make existing cover a part of the overall width of a filter strip or riparian buffer. This rule change made the continuous CRP sign-up more undesirable to producers. The old rule allowed existing cover plus the maximum width of 100 feet for filter strips and 150 feet for riparian buffers. Existing cover should not be part of the overall width of the buffer practices.

MASWCD supports allowing land (cropland or pasture) under an expiring Conservation Reserve Program contract, which will be brought into cropland production, be eligible for state cost share funding during the first year out of the CRP program. Justification will be based upon the calculated erosion rate of the land while it was cropped prior to being enrolled into CRP. Eligible land will have a pre-CRP erosion rate greater than T.

4. Coordinated Resource Management

Policy was discussed on Coordinated Resource Management. The re-writing of the plan for northern Missouri is being handled by NRCS, and until the plan is re-written, the Board will not set a policy. It appears that the plan for southern Missouri will be re-written as well.

5. Cost-Share

Geographic Cost-Share Allocation

We encourage Districts to develop ideas for programs to meet their particular needs. We also support allowing 10% flexibility of each District's annual cost-share allocation. (Example: if a district receives \$100,000 cost share allocation, \$10,000 could be moved between resource concerns by the District Board.)

Cost-Share Resource Concerns

MASWCD supports districts being allowed to transfer funds from one resource concern to another if funds are all claimed in one area, but they have funds in another area not being used.

Cost-Share Carry Over

We encourage Districts to claim all their cost-share funds in the fiscal year they are allocated.

MASWCD supports requesting the Soil and Water Commission and DNR to use the available reserve funds to allow continuous operation of the cost-share program.

MASWCD supports allowing money paid back from a landowner for failing to properly maintain their practice be put back into that district's current year allocations to be reissued for cost-share in that county.

Cost-Share Docket

MASWCD supports use of the cost-share items from the State Cost-Share Docket without a signed request for each item to be used.

Cost-Share Incentive Program

Those who try to farm correctly already reduce soil loss and so are often ineligible to receive cost-share. MASWCD supports the development of programs for those who are following correct procedures. This would encourage them to continue their policies of good stewardship.

Maintenance of Cost-Share Practices

The county where land is physically located, but administratively carried in an adjoining county, is responsible for administering the state cost-share moneys unless the adjoining county agrees to administer the Cost-share Program. The county who cost-shares should be responsible to handle maintenance issues for the life of the practice and work with the landowner to resolve the maintenance problem.

Cost-Share with Operators

We support allowing operators to sign and receive cost-share on land of which an operator has a notarized agreement, which covers the life span of the practice.

Cost-Share Certification

We support cost-share certification for payment without additional map evidence, and that technical certification remains a responsibility of adequately trained and certified field office staff.

We feel program policy changes should be worked through the proper Commission channels.

Fencing Rates

We support using the county average cost for all fencing rates.

Use Exclusion

We support cost-sharing on a livestock watering tank and pipe added to an existing pond being fenced for exclusion, to make livestock water available outside the excluded area.

Stream bank Stabilization

Stream bank erosion is a statewide problem. We encourage the development of practices for stream bank stabilization applicable statewide, preferably in coordination with conservation partners. MASWCD supports having the Missouri Soil and Water Commission and the Missouri Department of Conservation to add to their stream bank erosion guidelines the removal of gravel and obstructions from the existing stream channel to prevent stream bank erosion. Further, this material can be used to repair the eroded stream banks greatly reducing the material costs of those projects.

MASWCD supports an allocation of cost-share funds toward efforts to prevent and alleviate the escalating issue of soil erosion and depositing of sediment through severe streambank erosion in each county, and also supports cost-share allocations on the basis of research and evaluation on which characters of that county best fulfill the goal of saving soil and water.

We oppose the deliberate dumping of thousands of tons of soil by the Corps of Engineers into the Missouri River.

Cost-Share for Planned Grazing Systems

We support planned grazing systems with water source development, a \$60 per acre limit, and a requirement of the landowner and 2 SWCD board member's attendance at grazing school. We also support addressing the amount of the per acre maximums for grazing systems to reflect the state average cost-share costs and increase those per acre costs accordingly as the state average cost increases.

MASWCD supports policy that does not require landowners to meet the Prescribed Grazing (528) guidelines contained in the Field Office Technical guide if all other qualifications are met to qualify to install the DSL-2 practice.

MASWCD supports portable livestock shades eligible for cost-share funding when used as a component of a proposed or existing managed grazing system.

Seeding

We support DNR creating its own seeding practice that would include interseeding legumes without the 512 and 528 NRCS standards and specs so that smaller acreage farms in Missouri can benefit from the state Cost Share program and ensure that the funds for this new practice are properly utilized and the practice properly maintained.

We also support cost-share components for warm season grass as well as cool season grass.

Lime Cost-Share Practice

Since the soils on which most of the permanent pastures in Missouri are established are more acidic than other regions of the state, and the application of ag-lime would improve stands of desirable pasture grasses and legumes, and the proliferation of the desirable plants would reduce sheet and rill erosion, the application of ag-lime would improve the plant's ability to utilize nutrients (chemical fertilizer and animal waste), thus reducing runoff of these nutrients

causing related water quality problems. We support a lime only cost-share practice for acidic soils on which permanent pasture is established.

We support allowing a 3-6 month range for advance liming. Properly managed pastureland is a source of long term erosion control and current cost-share practices do not allow a lime maintenance program for the grazing management system. We support formulating an incentive practice based on maintaining the lime requirements needed for a properly managed pasture resource management system. This practice would address the need for keeping pastureland up to soil test for lime.

Since changes in DSP-2 require landowners to put at least half of the limestone on six months ahead if pH is 5.7 or less and according to MU Guide 9102, pH requirements for establishment of legumes varies according to species, MASWCD urges the Commission to adjust the DSP-2 practice policies to minimum pH requirement according to species.

Landowners have great difficulty getting limestone applied even by the deadline for their seeding practices, and cost-share approval will be required for a DSP-2 practice 8 to 10 months ahead of the practice completion. However, this is impossible with fall seeding when no cost-share obligation can be made to a landowner until after July 1. MASWCD supports reconsideration of the requirement of applying half of lime 6 months ahead of planting.

MASWCD supports allowing landowners to use pelletized lime and to allow pelletized lime to be cost shared at a county average pelletized lime cost on practices that do not exceed five acres in size.

MOSWIMS

MASWCD supports not requiring the use of the MOSWIMS software program until such time as the complete program has been fully tested by ten districts and seven of those ten districts certify to the Commission that the MOSWIMS program fully meets their management needs and expectations.

Waterway Repair

MASWCD supports making cost-share funds available on waterways for repairs after the 10 year life span has expired and repairs should be completed to current standard and specifications.

Ponds

Cost-share for Cleaning Out Old Ponds--We support adding as eligible components, earthwork, stock-water pipe, tank and pad for cleaning out old ponds. These components will promote more exclusion of livestock from streams and wooded areas thus by preventing soil erosion, improving water quality, and providing water in a good location for better grazing distribution.

Ponds in Timber Areas--MASWCD believes the policy of not building ponds in timber should be eliminated because:

- ◆ There is severe erosion in our timber,
- ◆ Ponds do provide some flood control,
- ◆ Ponds provide for wildlife and recreation,
- ◆ Ponds prevent damage to road culverts and water gaps,
- ◆ Even though some of these ponds would be built for absentee landowners, they too pay taxes and vote in the city for the soils and parks tax,
- ◆ Ponds are a storage for topsoil,
- ◆ The cost of soil saved in a pond would certainly look better if a more realistic life of the practice was used. Pond life could easily be extended to 20 years and thus cut the cost per ton of soil saved in half.

Life of a Pond—MASWCD supports increasing the service life of a pond to 20 years instead of the present 10 years for calculating the cost per ton of soil saved.

6. Demonstration Practices

We encourage the use of demonstration practices to test the feasibility of a practice and to gather soil loss and cost data, as well as show the benefits of a particular practice to landowners.

7. Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

The Department of Natural Resources, Soil and Water Program, provides invaluable service to the advancement of the objectives of conservation districts. Adequate staffing and funding are essential. We will work with DNR to encourage an ever-increasing role in the development and delivery of high quality training of conservation district employees and board members.

MASWCD supports requesting DNR provide an itemized and detailed financial report of the Program Office administration costs each fiscal year by August 1.

We strongly urge DNR to provide a structured schedule committed to offering baseline Technician II certification and allow adequate time to achieve the Certified Conservation Planner course as provided by NRCS.

8. District Operations

We believe legal representation should be available to the SWCD's through the Attorney General's office.

We believe programs should meet emerging resource and environmental needs and be directed toward improving the quality of natural resources, local participation and decision-making, and partnerships between private and public interests at all levels of government.

We believe District Boards should not relinquish local control to state or federal conservation agencies and should continue to provide supervision to SWCD employees.

We believe District funding should not be tied to unattainable goals determined by state agency staff.

We believe that District Boards should work together with the DNR Program staff and the Soil & Water Commission and sister agencies or conservation partners to review proposals before acting on any major changes that would hinder our combined conservation efforts.

We believe the matching grants for district owned no-till equipment should be reinstated.

We believe the funds necessary to pay for outsourcing payroll should be paid from a district's administrative fund, not be additional funds reimbursed by the Program Office.

9. Education and Information

The major purpose of MASWCD is to stimulate, foster and support effective programs of natural resource conservation and environmental improvement carried out by people in every community throughout the state.

MASWCD and the conservation districts have a major responsibility to help promote both formal and informal learning opportunities in conservation education for people of all ages as they relate to natural resources.

Districts should receive grant monies for established and proven info/ed programs. We support a supplemental disbursement program for the 04 administrative funds for info/ed activities. Districts should also be encouraged, not discouraged, to conduct various "hands-on" info/ed programs to schools within their counties which has been highly supported by tax-payers.

10. Employee Benefits

Every conservation district employee should have access to health insurance and retirement programs. We also believe this health insurance should be affordable for the employees and their families.

We believe the Commission should decide who is/is not a District employee and they should receive their benefits as was believed to be the case when the search for better health insurance began.

District employees, as deemed by the Districts/Commission, should be funded for salaries and benefits in full, not only the state's portion for matching grants in FY-07, as districts were led to believe. Districts should not be given partial funding because of the long-time problem of under-funding districts in the first place.

MASWCD supports Missouri SWCD employees receiving the same percentage of cost of living or salary increase as State of Missouri employees when one is given by the State.

11. Eroding Land

Erosion has caused serious damage to private property and associated resources. Conservation is essential for maintaining a resource base to meet our long-term food and fiber needs, fight inflation, meet environmental goals, maintain a favorable balance of trade, protect our national security and maintain our standard of living.

Areas with excessive erosion and poor water quality, such as abandoned confinement areas (cattle and hog feed lots), where the landowner wants to put the area back to a permanent vegetative state should be authorized for treatment through the critical area seeding practice.

12. Exotic Plants

The intent of the Invasive Species Act is to prevent the introduction of invasive species and provide for their control and to minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts that invasive species cause. We believe the identification and management of undesirable species should be determined on a local, state or regional basis by those closest to the situation.

13. Farm Bill

The changes in farm programs brought about by the passage of the various Farm Bills have and continue to advance the cause of natural resource concerns. Implementation of the Farm Bill should expand the local conservation partnership decision-making authority and foster a coordinated approach that addresses other federal legislation and does not result in contradictory and onerous regulations that discourage conservation.

14. Forestry

The Board supports NACD policy on Forestry issues with the addition of support for the Missouri fencing cost-share program.

15. Legislation

We support renewal of the Parks and Soils Sales Tax in its current form. We support legislation for placing renewal of the Parks & Soils Sales Tax before the voters 2 years prior to expiration of the tax. We also support a 10-year sunset clause.

16. Local Funds

It is the responsibility of each SWCD Board to lead the local conservation effort and discretionary funds are needed to meet certain goals and objectives of the local conservation effort, local SWCD Boards should be allowed to use locally generated funds to carry out conservation business.

17. MASWCD

Cooperative Agreements with Federal & State Highway Departments

Soil and water conservation practices are part of natural watersheds and drainage and runoff concerns and/or issues may involve public roads and right-of-ways.

Conservation practice water conveyance systems may necessitate cooperative working and maintenance agreements with units of government. MASWCD supports developing reasonable and workable memoranda-of-understanding or cooperative

agreements to streamline conservation practice installation and long term maintenance.

Long Range Planning Committee

MASWCD supports the work of a long range planning committee for the purpose of:

- determining what soil erosion and water quality practices will be needed
- defining the level of funding required to initiate and maintain these practices
- evaluating the impact of the tax loss on practices determined to be needed
- developing a plan of activities to prepare for any new legislation that may need to be enacted, and
- any other action deemed appropriate by the committee.

18. MDC

The Missouri Department of Conservation plays a vital role in the conservation partnership in Missouri. MASWCD encourages soil and water conservation districts to make use of their assistance and expertise.

19. MOPERM

The Missouri Public Entity Risk Management (MOPERM) program offers low cost liability insurance coverage to Missouri public entities. Soil and water conservation districts are encouraged to participate with MOPERM for this liability insurance coverage.

20. NACD

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) is the national voice for the nation's nearly 3000 conservation districts. Its programs and activities are aimed at advancing the resource conservation cause of the local district and the millions of cooperating landowners and land managers served by them. MASWCD supports this national organization and encourages the Missouri soil and water conservation districts to support this organization as well.

21. No-Till

MASWCD and the conservation districts support conservation tillage including variations such as no-till, ridge-till and mulch-till. These tillage practices reduce erosion, reduce energy requirements and cut farm costs.

22. Soil & Water Commission

In order to serve as a Missouri Soil and Water Districts Commissioner, we believe one must have had local experience by previously or presently serving on the local soil and water conservation board. MASWCD supports legislation to change the statute with this requirement.

MASWCD supports districts receiving a written copy of the current Soil and Water Commission policies that govern the operation of the Missouri SWCD's as per sections 278.060 to 278.300 RSMo.

The mission of the Soil and Water Conservation Program is to administer the policies and general programs developed by the Soil and Water Commission for the saving of Missouri soil and water through the soil and water conservation districts in their work with landowners. We feel the Soil and Water Commission should focus only on issues concerning soil and water.

23. Supervisors

MASWCD supports changing MO Statute Chapter 278, Soil Conservation, Section 278.110.4, to read: A soil and water supervisor shall receive no compensation for his services, but he shall be entitled to expenses, including travel expense and health insurance for self and family through the Missouri DNR provider.

24. SWCD Boards

Structure of SWCD Boards

MASWCD believes soil and water district boards should be comprised of agricultural landowners to conform to the statutory requirements.

25. Urban

MASWCD supports the urban work of conservation districts and will provide conservation education and information materials targeted to urban audiences.

MASWCD supports developing legislation to protect private property rights of landowners, provide additional protection from eminent domain, and strengthen Missouri's right-to-farm provisions.

26. Watersheds

The Board believes the construction should be completed on what can be finished with the amount of money available, a few at a time, and don't continue planning until caught up a little with the construction.

MASWCD supports funding of the PL-566 Small Watershed Program as they consult with NACD and elected officials of the state and federal government.