

Guidelines on the use of SWCD Aid payments

Minn. Stat. § 477A.23, subd. 4(b)

Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Aid payments will be used by Hennepin County, in its capacity as a Soil and Water Conservation District, to pursue the mission and conservation goals of the Environment and Energy Department, as described in its Natural Resources Strategic Plan, and consistent with Minn. Stat. § 477A.23 (2023).

Soil and Water Conservation Districts are authorized under Minn. Chapter 103C, the Soil and Water Conservation District Law, which enumerates the following authorities and duties

- perform resource surveys;
- implement voluntary soil and water conservation measures on private property;
- provide conservation equipment and supplies to partners and residents;
- construct, install, improve, maintain, and operate conservation structures;
- conduct comprehensive and annual planning;
- acquire land for conservation projects; and
- work in cooperation with the local, state, and federal government on conservation projects.

The state's soil and water conservation policy (Minn. Stat. § [103A.206](#)) is to encourage "land occupiers" to conserve soil and water, and the natural resources they support, through the implementation of practices that:

- (1) control or prevent erosion and sedimentation;
- (2) ensure continued soil productivity;
- (3) protect water quality;
- (4) prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs;
- (5) reduce damages caused by floods;
- (6) preserve wildlife;
- (7) protect the tax base; and
- (8) protect public lands and waters.

Hennepin County will implement strategies that assist land occupiers in accomplishing these goals. In addition, soil and water conservation districts must fulfill duties prescribed by law, including:

- (1) provide technical and financial assistance to landowners;
- (2) provide technical assistance to implement the Soil Erosion Law (Minn. Stat. § [103F.401](#) to [103F.48](#));
- (3) serve on technical evaluation panels to implement wetland laws (Minn. Stat. § [103G.2242](#));

- (4) administer the Reinvest in Minnesota Reserve Program (Minn. Stat. § [103F.515](#));
- (5) administer elements of the Wetland Conservation Act (Minn. Stat. § [103G.221](#) to [103G.2375](#));
- (6) participate in water planning and implementation (Minn. Stat. § [103B](#));
- (7) participate in the comprehensive watershed management planning program (Minn. Stat. § [103B.801](#));
- (8) participate in disaster response efforts (Minn. Stat. § [12A](#));
- (9) provide technical recommendations to the Department of Natural Resources on general permit applications (Minn. Stat. § [103G.301](#));
- (10) implement the agricultural water quality certification program (Minn. Stat. § [17.9891](#) to [17.993](#));
- (11) provide technical assistance for the agricultural land preservation program under (Minn. Stat. § [40A](#));
- (12) maintain compliance with section (Minn. Stat. § [15.99](#)) of deadlines for agency action;

In carrying out the aforementioned duties, Hennepin County will use SWCD Aid payments to support delivery of the following services as outlined in Minn. Stat. §103C.332, subd. 2. Including but not limited to:

- (1) performing administrative services, including comprehensive and annual work planning, administering grants, leveraging outside funding, establishing fiscal accountability measures, reporting accomplishments, human resources management, and staff and supervisor development;
- (2) entering into cooperative agreements with the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and other United States Department of Agriculture agencies to leverage federal technical and financial assistance;
- (3) providing technical expertise, including knowledge of local resources, performing technical evaluations and certifications, assessing concerns, and providing oversight in surveying, designing, and constructing conservation practices;
- (4) providing information and education outreach, including increasing landowner awareness and knowledge of soil and water conservation program opportunities to protect soil and water resources and publicizing the benefits of soil and water conservation to the general public;
- (5) facilitating regulatory processes for impacted landowners and providing technical review and comment on regulatory permits and development plans for regulations relating to soil and water conservation;
- (6) administering projects and programs, including but not limited to the nonpoint source pollution abatement programs; Reinvest in Minnesota Reserve conservation easement program; disaster response; local water management and comprehensive watershed

management planning; and projects related to floodplains, lakes, streams and ditches, wetlands, upland resources, and groundwater resources, to maintain and improve the quality, quantity, distribution, and sustainability of natural resources, including surface water, groundwater, soil, and ecological resources;

- (7) monitoring and inventorying to collect data that provide a baseline understanding of resource conditions and changes to the resources over time and analyzing and interpreting the data to support program implementation; and
- (8) maintaining a modern technology infrastructure that facilitates planning and projects, including geographic information systems, modeling software, mobile workstations, survey and design equipment and software, and other technology for linking landowners with conservation plans.

These guidelines are based on a template provided by the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and are based on statutory language defining the roles and responsibilities of SWCDs.

Adopted by the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners on November 28, 2023, and approved as Guidelines for 2024 by the County Administrator on June 20, 2024