



MASWCD Accomplishments 2011: Working for our Members

POLICY FORUM - MASWCD provides a forum for SWCDs to present policy initiatives to enhance the implementation of conservation programs on private lands. *In 2011, twenty resolutions were submitted and voted on by the membership* to address SWCD funding, governance and conservation program enhancements. This process not only sets grass-roots policy for your SWCD and the organization, it also serves as an education and communication tool for the membership to share issues and ideas with their peers.

POLITICAL NETWORK - MASWCD spent significant time during the 2011 legislative session working with key legislators for SWCD conservation policy and funding. The MASWCD worked diligently to protect SWCD conservation programs in the face of a five billion dollar state general fund shortfall. The MASWCD 2011 legislative platform, based on SWCD resolutions, also included Legacy/Constitutional Amendment funding through the Outdoor Heritage Fund & Clean Water Fund, policy recommendations of the Local Government Water Roundtable, and the supplemental bonding bill. Through the efforts of the Association's legislative committee, board of directors, and staff, MASWCD continues to help districts inform their legislators about the important and growing role of SWCDs. In addition, MASWCD Area Directors provided opportunities for SWCDs to meet policy and agency leaders during Area meetings.

PARTNERSHIP NETWORK - During the year, MASWCD continued to enhance dialogue between the MASWCD, the Association of MN Counties (AMC) and the MN Association of Watershed Districts (MAWD). The three Associations created the *Local Government Water Roundtable* and are committed to collaboration efforts with the intent of increasing efficiencies and effectiveness. In September, an array of partners came together to celebrate 25 years of implementing long-term conservation practices through the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve program. MASWCD co-hosted the event with BWSR and NRCS in cooperation with numerous conservation organizations and agencies. The RIM Reserve program has been a critical component of the state's effort to restore wildlife habitat on private lands and protect and improve our state's water quality. The event was an opportunity to acknowledge how SWCDs work with private landowners. In addition, the Association has representatives providing the SWCD perspective to: the Shade Tree Advisory Committee; the Forest Stewardship Committee; the Drainage Work Group; the U of M Citizen's Advisory Committee; MDA's Noxious Weed Advisory Committee; NRCS's State Technical Committee; and the Great Lakes Committee. The Association supports federal conservation policy efforts through our work with the National Association of Conservation Districts Board of Directors, Farm Bill Task Force and TMDL Task Force.

TRAINING/INFORMATION AND EDUCATION - During 2011, the MASWCD developed training opportunities for SWCD staff and board members to learn about new issues, exchange ideas, and invest in the future. In February, the *Legislative Briefing & Day at the Capitol* provided 130 SWCD board members and employees with information and facilitated discussions on conservation policy issues, and a coordinated way to meet with legislators. In September, the *Governance 101 Workshop* was a dynamic educational experience designed to provide new SWCD Supervisors with the tools and techniques needed to fulfill their responsibilities as local conservation leaders. The December *annual convention* provided information on emerging issues, recognition of conservation achievements, and the opportunity for SWCD supervisors to cast their votes on business items. The MASWCD Area meetings are a forum to provide SWCD members the latest information and training from partners, agencies and association committee members.

COMMUNICATIONS WITH DISTRICTS & PARTNERS - In 2011, the MASWCD web site continued to provide SWCDs and partners with timely and relevant information. Along with the monthly e-mail newsletter "Bits of Tidbits," legislative updates, regular mailings, and SWCD participation in Association standing committees, MASWCD is keeping its members throughout the state informed of SWCD activities.

DISTRICT CAPACITY: DISTRICT ASSESSMENT TOOL - A high priority for the Association is to continue to assist SWCDs with district capacity efforts. The MASWCD board of directors directed a workgroup of district peers to refurbish a **District Self Assessment tool** for SWCDs to review their work and increase district capacity. This tool is replacing the District Capacity Score Sheet previously used with our awards program. The purpose of this voluntary tool is to stimulate leadership within the SWCD to go above and beyond the base capacity.

AND MORE... MASWCD assisted with the continuation of the State Envirothon as coordination of the event transitioned, and the Association maintains support of this important youth education program through proceeds of the annual MASWCD Auction. MASWCD also processed over \$1 million in grants to SWCDs through USDA-NRCS contribution agreements for conservation plan writing components of the federal Conservation Reserve Program.