



## Conservation Districts of Iowa

Our Mission:

*"CDI supports Iowa's SWCD Commissioners in protecting our natural resources."*

The membership of CDI overwhelmingly passed two priority resolutions at their annual meeting on November 18, 2004. The goal of those resolutions, given in full below, is to ensure that natural resource protection programs will continue to be offered through an efficient, voluntary, locally-led delivery system. Our members are very concerned about the insecurity of the current administrative process. Accordingly, we would welcome opportunities to discuss with our elected officials any proposed solutions. CDI seeks to ensure funds are available to provide for the necessary administration of soil and water protection programs, as well as ensure technical assistance is accessible for land users who strive to provide natural resource protection on private working lands.

1. The CDI Board knows it is important that Commissioners have funds to carry out their SWCD program this fiscal year. SWCD Commissioners are elected officials that represent the local connections to land users and are an important core member of the conservation partnership. They cannot be expected to fulfill their obligations without state support.

**CDI shall seek Legislative approval within the 2005 supplemental appropriations bill, or similar legislation, that calls for the use of \$(to be determined, approximately \$250,000) from the District Initiative program of the infrastructure budget for Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner operations (formerly the 1M budget).**

This resolution is a short-term solution for the current budget crisis. Currently there are sufficient funds available in the District Initiatives budget to pay district expenses retroactive to July 1, 2004. This is only a language change or clarification, no additional state funds will be necessary.

2. The CDI Board understands it is important to stabilize the necessary funds for staff support to carry out Iowa's Soil and Water Quality objectives. With the current administrative system the DSC budget remains an unknown. The District operation funds (1M) also needs appropriate and stable funds to continue SWCD programs.

**A. CDI will seek the re-creation of a separate and distinct budget line item for the Division of Soil Conservation within the annual budget of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (until 2002 this is the way it was).**

**B. CDI will also seek, within the Infrastructure Appropriations Bill, distinct language that calls for the use of \$(to be determined, approximately \$400,000) from the District Initiative program of the infrastructure budget for Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner operations (formerly the 1M budget).**

It is important that the state continue to uphold the current Memorandum of Understanding between the NRCS, SWCD and IDALS-DSC. One of DSC's obligations is to ensure each SWCD office has a secretary that is an essential member of the local conservation team. Other staff within DSC are vital to continuing the voluntary cost share programs available through the districts to Iowa producers and providing technical assistance. The program will not continue to be viable without stable and appropriate funds to continue the program.

The permanent line item language for District operations funds should be moved from the general funds budget to the Infrastructure budget. There it will be less prone to across the board cuts during state budget crisis.