



**NORTH DAKOTA ASSOCIATION
OF SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**
OWNER AND OPERATOR OF LINCOLN-OAKES NURSERY
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Ref: SCD Appropriation Support for Full Funding
Program Initiatives #5 for and additional \$300,000 in Operational Support to NDSSCC
House Bill #1020 (March 2nd, 2023)

To Senate Appropriations Committee,

Good Afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Senate Appropriations Committee members. For the record, my name is Rhonda Kelsch and I represent the North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts. A grass roots organization that represents the 54 Soil Conservation Districts in North Dakota directing our focus on all aspects of natural resources, youth and adult education, along with urban conservation. Soil Conservation Districts are responsible for carrying out a program of soil and water conservation with all cooperating rural and urban residents within the district boundaries.

We ask for your continued support for full funding along with the additional \$300,000 in operational support to the North Dakota State Soil Conservation Committee (NDSSCC). The funding through this allocation is directly tied to conservation deliverables through our North Dakota State Soil Conservation Committee. To highlight a few of our locally led deliverables that Soil Conservation Districts have achieved through the District Activity Reporting Tool (DART) represents 3.3 million feet of conservation tree planting installations, 8,000 hours of free Technical Assistance to landowners, 24,565 school-age attendees by educational programs, 1,000 hours of urban and agriculture programs, 5,500 hours of producer cost share programs, 16,248 acres of grass seedings, and 7,800 landowner attendees to various agricultural meetings. These funds provide direct staff support to the local Soil Conservation Districts.

The ND Soil Conservation Districts work in partnership with various local, state, and federal partners to achieve programmatic goals and facilitate cost share programs to address natural resources within their counties. Like many organizations struggling to provide an adequate wage and benefits package to their employees – this funding allocation helps ease the burden of the local budgets and increase staff capacity. The Soil Conservation Districts in North Dakota have the unique advantage to tailor their staffing needs, cost share programs, and outreach activities based on their local work group priorities voiced by the participants in their respective county. These funds are distributed on a ranking scale that is provided by the North Dakota State Soil Conservation Committee to determine the exact funding needs of the individual district.

We encourage your continued support to the 54 Soil Conservation Districts in North Dakota along with the additional funding request outlined in the NDSU Program Initiative #5. I would be happy to take any questions you may have moving forward.