Coshocton Soil and Water Conservation District
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April 4, 2014

State Match Task Force
C/O Irene Moore
Jefferson SWCD
587 Bantam Ridge Rd, Ste. A
Wintersville, OH 43953

Dear Task Force Committee,

The Coshocton Soil and Water Conservation District would like to offer feedback to the Task Force Committee regarding SWCD funding. We appreciate the opportunity to provide our input.

Coshocton SWCD has worked hard over the years to establish a working relationship with our County Commissioners and educate them and our community on the work of the district. Our funding has fluctuated during these years but that follows trends for county funding. During the recession years of 2008-2009 we took a "hit" at the local level which affected our state matching funds. We worked with our County Commissioners to get through these lean years and our funding has improved in the past several years. The Commissioners appreciated our efforts to keep spending in line during this time. To do this we worked with a smaller staff to accomplish our goals by not filling a vacancy for a district technician. Our funding has just now allowed us to advertise and hire this additional employee.

We strongly believe that SWCD funding should **always** begin with **local** appropriations. The system works and historical data proves that. State matching funds allow us to leverage the local appropriation and show local funding partners a return on their investment. Our County Commissioners have told us how much it means to multiply their dollars and not many other agencies have the ability to do this.

Each SWCD is different and there is no "one size fits all" funding option that is going to please everyone. Larger counties are always going to have larger budgets than smaller counties. We believe that our local funds need to address **local issues** dealing with soil and water conservation. What's important in Hamilton County may not be the same in Coshocton County. We don't believe that our employee's time should be spent on state-wide issues **unless** it is affecting us in our own community.

Coshocton SWCD has been accountable at the local and state level and ODNR has given us the tools to show this with SWIMS. Our Program Specialist, Chad Amos has been instrumental in helping staff understand the importance of SWIMS. He has provided training on entering information and also showed us how to query information to use in reports and presentations. The

Coshocton SWCD board members are provided a monthly query that summarizes staff hours and projects they are working on. This keeps all of us accountable: employees to board members and our SWCD to our community.

For many years the OSWCC has worked hard to make grants available to those SWCDs that were not funded at the local level. We would like to see 88 soil and water conservation districts in the State of Ohio but maybe the day has come to take a harder look at this. If the folks at the local level aren't working to get funding; why should everyone else be penalized for this? And that is essentially what we are doing by making those state match dollars available to them. One of the items mentioned in your February minutes under weaknesses was complacency of some boards. Maybe this problem would take care of itself if everyone realized that SWCDs would only be matched on actual appropriations.

Even **if** a dedicated funding source could ever be found, it won't change the fact that we **must be accountable** for that funding. Yes, it would be wonderful to know what your budget would be in the next 5-10 years but is this realistic? The success of any district lies in the fact that people in the community support the programs and services provided by the SWCD. This requires leadership of the SWCD board members and staff working in the community to educate citizens about our services. We have a good system that works in Ohio and there is a reason other States look at us with envy. We would urge you not to re-invent the wheel just to satisfy a few squeaky ones.

Thank you for this opportunity to express our ideas and concerns. Please contact our office if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Greg Waters by PB

Greg Waters, Chairman
Board of Supervisors