



Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts

4696 West Overland Road, Suite 232
Boise, Idaho 83705
ph: (208) 344-1711 or (208) 344-1221
fx: (208) 344-1177

2012 Board of Directors

President
Randy Purser
3600 North 3935 West
Moore, ID
83255
(Division VI)

Vice-President
Kit Tillotson
Box 701
Lava Hot Springs, ID
83246
(Division V)

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PO Box 293
St. Maries, ID
83861
(Division I)

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17603 Morscheck Rd.
Genesee, ID
83832
(Division II)

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Vacant
(Division III)

Director
Rick Rodgers
2805 North 700 East
Castleford, ID
83321
(Division IV)

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Bret Rumbeck

Executive Assistant
Nancy Weatherstone

January 18, 2012

The Honorable Senator/Representative
Idaho State Senator/Representative
State Capitol
Boise, ID 83720-0081

Dear Sir/Ma'am,

Last week, Governor Butch Otter released his Fiscal Year 2013 budget that included funding for the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWC). The SWC uses state funds to assist the fifty soil and water conservation districts in Idaho preserve, sustain, and enhance the state's natural resources.

The fifty soil conservation districts we represent have a remarkable track record in working with farmers, ranchers, private land owners, rural and city residents, and communities to protect and preserve our state's natural resources. The work accomplished by our districts, in partnership with the SWC and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, is an example of good public policy and is proven, responsible government. This partnership provides useful information about land use change, soil erosion and health, water quality and quantity, and wildlife habitat.

As you are probably aware, Idaho state statute 22-2727 requires the SWC distribute \$8,500 of base funding to each district at the beginning of the fiscal year. The districts then can acquire funds from counties, services allocated, organizations, and other local units of government for conservation projects. The State of Idaho can match two dollars for every one dollar, and districts cannot receive more than \$50,000 in match funds from the state.

What you may not know is the same statute requires the SWC to "*consider the needs of each soil conservation district and shall base its request for state funds for the soil conservation district upon the budgets... district programs and work plans, and work load analysis of the various soil conservation districts.*" The budget the SWC submitted to Governor Otter requested funds to provide the full match to local conservation districts because of district's high work load preserving and enhancing our state's natural resources and to be

consistent with the state code. However, Governor Otter's budget is \$174,300 short of the full two-to-one match.

We know the difficult economy continues to linger across our nation and our state. Idahoans continue to make tough financial decisions regarding their small businesses or with their family checkbook. Governor Otter, the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee, and all of your colleagues have done outstanding work to keep our state's budget balanced.

The state dollars invested in the district match ripple out into our communities and impact all facets of our economy. We are requesting an increase of \$174,300 to the SWC's FY13 budget in order to fully meet the two-to-one state match set in state code. This additional funding will allow districts to put more conservation projects on the ground, and continue to be the state leader in natural resource issues.

You will soon be hearing from your local soil conservation district about how they can do more for our state with the full funding for the two-to-one match. Please feel free to contact your local district or IASCD if you have any questions. We can be reached at 208-344-1221.

Sincerely,

Randy Purser
President

Kit Tillotson
Vice President

Steve Becker
Treasurer

Rick Rodgers
Director

Billie Brown
Secretary