

Chapter 4

NRCS PILOT DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

In August of 1995, the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, meeting on the banks of the Maumee River, signed an agreement for NRCS to carry out a pilot demonstration project. This was a historic event in that it was the first time that dredging funds were redirected to upland soil conservation measures to reduce the dredging problem.

The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers funded a pilot demonstration project in the amount of \$750,000. Of the \$750,000, the Corps kept \$50,000 for monitoring and evaluation, and \$700,000 was allocated to NRCS to carry out the demonstration project. The project was for a two year time frame, from October 1995 to October 1997 and represented the 1996 and 1997 cropping seasons. The project became known as the Toledo Harbor Sediment Reduction Demonstration Project, or Toledo Harbor Project for short.

Methods Used For The Project

The method used to carry out the project was modeled after the previously highly successful Lake Erie Phosphorous Reduction Project. Key elements of this model included:

- A voluntary effort
- A locally led process
- Establishment of county goals
- Use of partnerships
- NRCS leadership and coordination
- Grants to local sediment committees to carry out sediment reduction activities

NRCS established a project coordinator position who provided overall leadership for the project. Each county in the basin was asked to form a sediment reduction committee and develop a county sediment reduction strategy. The counties were expected to use the locally led process and involve other conservation partners in developing the strategy. The counties were then invited to compete for grant funds to implement the various action items in their county strategies.

County Sediment Committees and Locally Led Strategies

Twenty-two of the twenty-five counties developed county strategies. The three counties that did not participate had very small fringes of acreage on the edge of the watershed. The average sediment reduction committee consisted of 16 individuals in size. Over 44 different organizations participated as partners on the collective committees.

NRCS utilized project funds for two purposes. The majority of the funds (76%) were allocated to counties for sediment reduction activities (chart 1). Twenty-four percent of the project funds were used to fund the project coordinator position to lead the project.

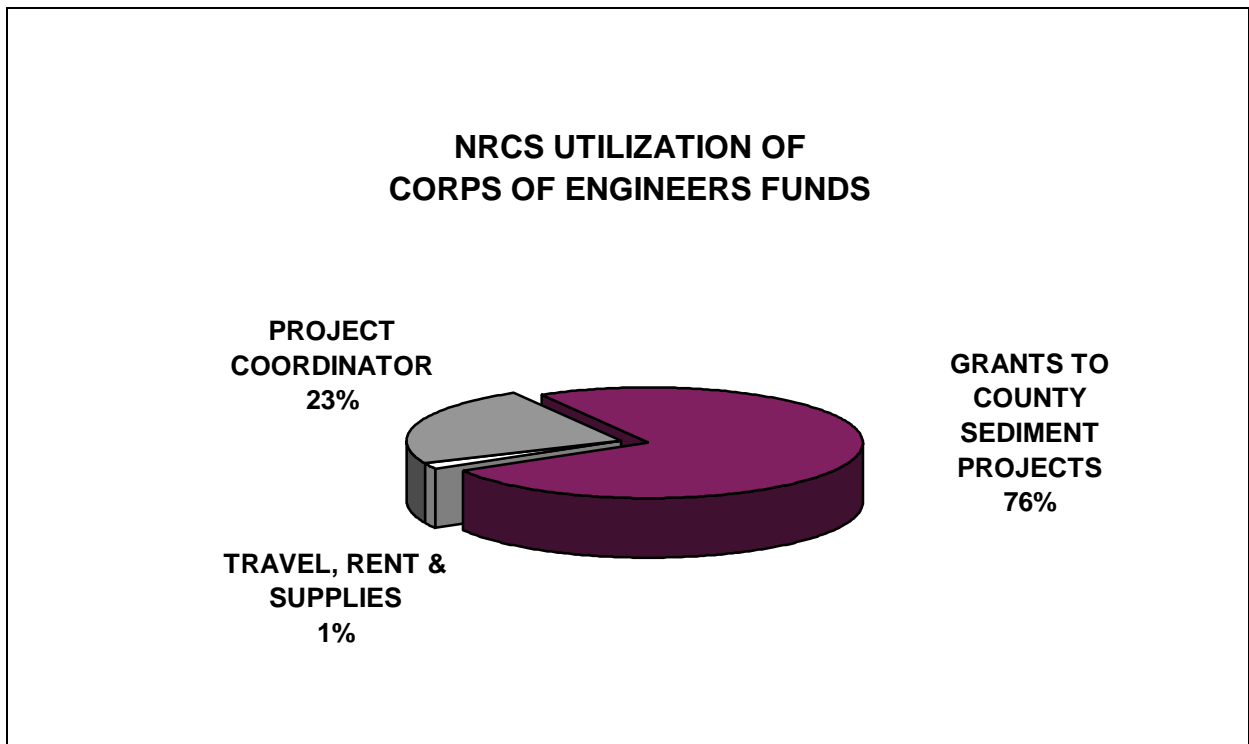


Chart 1 NRCS Utilization of Corps of Engineers Funds.

Grants To Sediment Committees

Each county was awarded \$2000 upon completion of its county sediment reduction strategy. This money was intended to cover the expenses associated with development of the strategies including hosting meetings, postage, printing, etc. The remaining funds were then offered to counties in competitive grants. Two grant cycles were held and some supplemental funding was awarded at the end of the project to balance out remaining needs and assure effective utilization of all grant funds. The distribution of the county funding was as follows:

County Strategies.....	\$ 44,000
Grant Cycle One.....	\$156,200
Grant Cycle Two.....	\$312,400
Supplemental Funding.....	<u>\$ 12,756</u>
Total	\$525,356

Grants were awarded based on merit, innovation, potential for success, and likelihood of contributing to sediment reduction. A project advisory committee was established to review the grants and recommend the grant awards. The advisory committee consisted of:

TOLEDO HARBOR PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE		
Member	State	Affiliation
Ivan Myers	Ohio	SWCD Supervisor and farmer
Ed Crawford	Ohio	ODNR Program Specialist
Richard Kohls	Ohio	SWCD Supervisor and farmer
Steve Moore	Indiana	Farmer
Jerry Storer	Indiana	Farmer
Wayne Peterson	Michigan	SWCD Staff
Dave Sanders	Ohio	NRCS District Conservationist
Dave Lamm	Indiana	NRCS District Conservationist
Tom Van Wagner	Michigan	NRCS District Conservationist
Gerry Landon	Ohio	Formerly, Director Maumee Conservancy District

Table 1 Toledo Harbor Project Advisory Board Members