

Conservation Workforce Development in Great Lakes States: Needs & Opportunities

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) play an essential role in protecting water quality in the Great Lakes region, working with agricultural producers and communities to implement conservation practices that stop nutrients from entering waterways. SWCDs operate with varying access to resources, which can make it challenging to promote broad adoption of the practices needed to reduce nutrient pollution and build a resilient Great Lakes basin.

This project will identify the obstacles that most significantly limit the effectiveness of SWCDs and document how these obstacles vary among SWCDs in the region. The project will further highlight the conditions under which SWCDs overcome or sidestep these obstacles, with a particular focus on the recruitment and retention of talented conservation professionals.

A social science study will be conducted by a project team led by Great Lakes Commission staff with researchers from the Ohio State University and bolstered by the expertise of state conservation district association executives from each of the eight Great Lakes states.

Historic GLC efforts to understand our region's SWCDs are also informative to our work today and will be provided as background.