

Kankakee County Soil and Water Conservation District  
Annual Plan of Work  
Fiscal Year July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

**VISION STATEMENT:** “Showing the public a better way to manage our natural resources.”

**MISSION STATEMENT:** The Kankakee County Soil and Water Conservation District will provide leadership and coordinate programs focusing technical, financial and educational assistance to help the landowner and the public protect, preserve and enhance our natural resources.

**VALUE STATEMENTS:** *What is important as the District conducts business with our client, cooperators, public entities, businesses and employees?*

- Promote and project a friendly atmosphere viewed by all as:
  - Informative
  - Cooperative
  - Selfless
  - Helpful
  - Respectful
- “Go To” organization for natural resources related information and assistance
- Maintain highly motivated staff who enjoy servicing customers and getting conservation on the land

**Objective 1: Water Quality, Conservation, and Management**

**Goal:** To promote the chemical, physical, and biological characteristics of the water resources of Kankakee County to meet or exceed goals as outlined in the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRs), and to maintain and enhance surface and subsurface drainage systems in an environmentally sound manner to improve agricultural production, improve water quality, and minimize adverse effects on urban and rural areas.

**Objective 2: Soil Health and Sustainable Agriculture**

**Goal:** To monitor and reduce soil erosion and sedimentation to ensure long-term productivity of the soil. To promote sustainable and regenerative practices that improve soil health and advance climate resilience.

**Objective 3: Land Use**

**Goal:** To preserve prime agricultural land and through wise land use and development that is compact and contiguous to existing development. To encourage farmland protection through new and existing programs and collaboration with local government.

**Objective 4: Wildlife and Habitat Development**

**Goal:** To increase and enhance both urban and rural areas of the county established in prairie, wetland, and woodland habitats.

**Objective 5: Education and Outreach**

**Goal:** To show the public a better way to manage our natural resources while building climate resilient communities through conservation centric events, hands-on educational programs, and media.

**Objective 6: District Operations**

**Goal:** Identify additional funding sources, including grants and sponsorship, which allow continued operation while fulfilling vision and mission of the SWCD. Manage SWCD-NRCS operations for greatest efficiency in meeting resource objectives.

RC: Resource Conservationist – *Crystal Sauder*; GC: Grants Coordinator – *Emilie Watkins*  
AC: Administrative Coordinator – *Linda Settle*; DC: District Conservationist – *Trenton Rader*; IN: District Intern

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**1. WATER QUALITY, CONSERVATION, AND MANAGEMENT**

To have the chemical, physical and biological characteristics of the water resources of Kankakee County meet or exceed standards as outlined in the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRS), and to maintain and enhance surface and subsurface drainage systems in an environmentally sound manner to improve agricultural production, improve water quality, and minimize adverse effects on urban and rural areas.

Action Items	Lead Person(s)	Time Frame
1. Promote decommissioning wells utilizing PFC funds.	RC	07/25-06/26
2. Promote State, Federal, and Private cover crop programs (i.e., ICCI, FCSS, I-COVER).	DC, RC	07/25-06/26
3. Promote edge of field practices (i.e., buffers, wetlands, bioreactors).	DC, RC	07/25-06/26
4. Plan and host <u>three</u> agriculture outreach events.	RC	07/25-06/26
5. Assist local landowners with drainage issues and concerns.	RC	07/25-06/26
6. Assist local units of government and local citizens to ensure compliance with the Illinois Water Use Act for high capacity wells (responsibilities undefined).	RC	07/25-06/26
7. Conduct Drainage District Meeting with IADD and assist Districts as needed.	RC	Odd number years March 2027
8. Work with organizations working to improve water quality initiatives (i.e. Kankakee River Basin Commission and the Kankakee Riverfront Project).	RC, GC, Board	07/25-06/26
9. Explore Ecosystem Market Programs (i.e. carbon credits) and increase public awareness.	GC, RC	07/25-06/26

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Action Items	Lead Person(s)	Time Frame
10. Explore opportunities to work with local organizations and units of government to develop plans that improve water quality and natural resources (i.e., Regional Conservation Partnership Program).	RC, GC	07/25-06/26

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**2. SOIL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE**

To monitor and reduce soil erosion and sedimentation to ensure long-term productivity of the soil. To promote sustainable and regenerative practices that improve soil health and advance climate resilience.

Action Items	Lead Person(s)	Time Frame
1. Assist farmers with S.T.A.R. Program.	RC	07/25-06/26
2. Promote District’s Partners for Conservation Cost Share (PFC) funds.	RC, GC	07/25-06/26
3. Through Compeer Financial MORE for Agriculture grant program, maintain 8 <i>Soil on Demand</i> project sites, host outreach events, and explore ways to improve farmer communication through SMS outreach and website updates.	GC, RC, IN	07/25-06/26
4. Facilitate quarterly meetings with <i>Kankakee County Conservation Collaborative</i> to inform a proactive strategy in engaging farmers and landowners with conservation programs and practices. Continue to expand and strengthen membership.	GC, RC	07/25-06/26
5. Explore grants and secure funding to grow <i>Soil on Demand</i> project, with emphasis on improving integrity of data collection and interpretation.	GC, RC	07/25-06/26
6. Conduct Conservation Tour with local Legislators and partners.	RC, GC, Board	Every 3 Years: Spring 2026

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**3. LAND USE**

To preserve prime agricultural land and through wise land use and development that is compact and contiguous to existing development. To encourage farmland protection through programs and collaboration with local government.

Action Items	Lead Person(s)	Time Frame
1. Provide NRI reports for County, as necessary or requested.	RC	07/25-06/26
2. Conduct transect survey when required by IDOA.	RC, IN	Yearly: May 2027
3. Monitor progress of county & regional development initiatives and runoff concerns (i.e. Will County Airport and Wind & Solar Farms).	RC, Board	Ongoing
4. Support The Conservation Fund's RCPP by connecting the Fund to local organizations, farmers, and landowners, supporting the Fund's long-term strategy for statewide funding, and supporting the Black Oak Center's farmland restoration plan when possible.	GC, RC	07/25-06/26
5. Work with local collaborators to explore farmland mitigation programs and policy, with a focus on renewable energy development.	GC, RC	07/25-06/26

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**4. WILDLIFE HABITAT DEVELOPMENT**

Increase and enhance both urban and rural areas of the county established in prairie, wetland and woodland habitats.

Action Items	Lead Person(s)	Time Frame
1. Conduct pond management seminar or workshop.	RC	Every Year Spring 2027
2. Encourage habitat establishment with USFWS Wetlands Initiative, Pheasants Forever, and similar agencies.	RC	07/25-06/26
3. Participate in the Kankakee River Basin Commission (KRBC).	RC	07/25-06/26
4. Provide support and encourage 100% re-enrollment of expiring CRP acreage with FSA, tied to the NRCS contribution agreement.	RC	07/25-06/26
5. Continue pursuing partnership and grant opportunities with Kankakee County schools.	RC, GC	07/25-06/26
6. Promote and monitor CREP (per IDNR contract).	RC	07/25-06/26
7. Complete Conservation Planner certification Training. Fulfill CRP agreement with NRCS to create conservation plans and secure funding through IDOA RCPP.	RC	07/25-06/26

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**5. EDUCATION AND OUTREACH**

Showing the public a better way to manage our natural resources through events, hands-on educational programs, and media.

Action Items	Lead Person(s)	Time Frame
1. Support Envirothon regionally.	RC	Spring 2026
2. Support Farm Bureaus' annual Kids Day at the Farm event.	RC, IN	March 2026
3. Present <u>educational programs</u> on environmental focus areas: soil health, water quality, pollinators and habitat.	RC	07/25-06/26
4. Promote and assist with Pheasants Forever and USFWS habitat workshops and events.	RC	07/25-06/26
5. Help host FFA soil judging contest with Iroquois SWCD.	RC	Fall 2026
6. Publish annual newsletter.	RC	January 2026
7. Conduct radio, social media, and newspaper interviews to provide information to the community.	RC	07/25-06/26
8. Write column for Farm Bureau paper, as asked.	RC, GC, IN	07/25-06/26
9. Announce new programs and District news via email, website, social media, etc. to build awareness of existing programs and services.	RC, GC	07/25-06/26
10. Maintain website and all social media, providing outreach reports in January and July.	RC, GC	07/25-06/26
11. Invite elected officials and partners to activities where it applies.	RC, GC	07/25-06/26

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Action Items	Lead Person(s)	Time Frame
12. Expand outreach to Olivet and KCC to identify potential joint educational projects.	RC, GC	07/25-06/26
13. Assist Black Oaks Center’s Pembroke Farmland Restoration plan through outreach, information and technical assistance.	GC, RC	07/25-06/26
14. Attend local elected official Ag Advisory Committee meetings.	RC, Board	07/25-06/26

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**6. DISTRICT OPERATIONS**

Identify additional funding sources which allow continued operation while fulfilling vision and mission of the SWCD.  
Manage SWCD-NRCS operations for greatest efficiency in meeting resource objectives.

**Sub-Goal 1: Operations**

Action Items	Lead Person(s)	Time Frame
1. Assist walk-in customers with information and office services.	RC	07/25-06/26
2. Assist with NRCS Administration.	RC	07/25-06/26
3. Fulfill requirements of NRCS agreements. (CSP, EQIP, and CRP).	DC, RC	07/25-06/26

**Sub-Goal 2: Financial responsibilities**

Action Items	Lead Person(s)	Time Frame
1. Prepare and approve annual budget w/ income plan.	RC, AC, Board	07/25-06/26
2. Compile and maintain all financial records.	AC	07/25-06/26
3. Explore new funding sources, with a focus on collaborative grant projects and sustainable general operations funds.	GC, RC, Board, AC	07/25-06/26
4. Maintain K3SWCD Grant Library resource.	GC, RC	07/25-06/26
5. Conduct tree, fish, flag, and pollinator seed sales.	RC, AC	07/25-06/26
6. Prepare all Federal, State, and local level reports.	AC, RC	07/25-06/26
7. Manage grant reporting and reach deliverables of all active grants.	GC	07/25-06/26

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Action Items	Lead Person(s)	Time Frame
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8. Invest excess funds (i.e. CD).	RC, AC	07/25-06/26
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<b>Sub-Goal 3: Legal requirements and recommendations</b>
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Action Items	Lead Person(s)	Time Frame
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1. Conduct Board/Committee meetings according to open meeting act and Roberts Rules of Order.	Chairman, RC, AC	07/25-06/26
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2. Conduct annual meeting and election of Directors.	Board, RC	February 2026
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3. Adhere to all laws on sexual harassment and employment conditions.	Board, AC, RC	07/25-06/26
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4. Update EEO and Civil Rights file as required.	Board, AC, RC	07/25-06/26
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5. Maintain District policy handbook as required.	Board, RC, AC	07/25-06/26
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6. Adhere to FOIA requirements.	Board, AC, RC	07/25-06/26
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<b>Sub-Goal 4: Personnel recommendations</b>
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Action Items	Lead Person(s)	Time Frame
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1. Conduct employee evaluations, update job descriptions as required.	Board, RC	12/25 & 6/26
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2. Annually review and develop training need for District Staff.	Board, RC	April 2026
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3. Evaluate possibilities with ONU and KCC for spring and summer internships.	RC, Board	07/25-06/26
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Action Items	Lead Person(s)	Time Frame
4. Annually review staffing, succession, and retirement plans.	AC, RC, Board	07/25-06/26

**Sub-Goal 5: Maintain and expand interagency cooperation**

Action Items	Lead Person(s)	Time Frame
1. Review Supplemental Memos of understanding, contribution agreements, and all other agreements between the District, NRCS, IDOA, IDNR, IEPA and the County.	RC, Board	07/25-06/26
2. Continue interaction with FSA CED at monthly SWCD Board meetings.	RC, Board	07/25-06/26
3. Request the attendance of 1 elected District Director at the LUC III quarterly meetings.	Board, RC	09/25, 12/25, 03/26, 06/26
4. Attendance of 1 elected District Director at the AISWCD Annual Meeting.	Board	Summer 2025
5. Virtual attendance of elected District Directors at one training workshop annually.	Board	07/25-06/26

**Sub-Goal 6: Structural evaluation, planning, and reorganization**

Action Items	Lead Person(s)	Time Frame
1. Prioritize new issues as they arise to determine role.	Board	07/25-06/26
2. Develop staffing plan and cost/income scenarios.	Board, RC	06/25 for FY26
3. Review Long Range Plan annually.	RC, Board	March 2026

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Action Items	Lead Person(s)	Time Frame
4. Restructure Board, Ethics, OMA and FOIA Officers, Committees – annual and as needed.	Board	March 2026
5. Review and update the Annual Plan of Work.	RC, Board	12/25 & 6/26
6. Review and update District Policies.	RC, Board	12/25 & 6/26