



**Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District  
2016 Budget**

**Presented to the Erie County Legislature**



**GENERAL INFORMATION**

LEGAL NAME: Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District

Mailing Address: 50 Commerce Way  
East Aurora, NY 14052

Website Address: WWW.ECSWCD.ORG

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MANAGER, OR VOLUNTEER CONTACT: Mark C. Gaston

(Phone/Fax/E-mail): 716.652.8480 or mark.gaston@ny.nacdnet.net

PREPARER OF THIS APPLICATION: (Name, Title) Mark C. Gaston, District Field Manager

(Phone/Fax/E-mail): 716.652.8480 or mark.gaston@ny.nacdnet.net

BOARD CHAIRPERSON: Legislator John Mills

Mailing Address: 92 Franklin Street 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Buffalo, NY 14208

(Phone/Fax/E-mail): 716.655.5650

FINANCIAL CONTACT: Mark C. Gaston

Mailing Address: 50 Commerce Way  
East Aurora, NY 14052

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APPLICANT'S FEDERAL TAX IDENTIFICATION NO.: 16-6002616

Date of incorporation as a not-for-profit organization: January 1, 1943

Does the applicant have §501(c) 3 status? Yes  No  . If so, date given: \_\_\_\_\_

For how long has the applicant provided services in Erie County: 73 Years

**FUNDING INFORMATION**

2016 Erie County Funding Approved: \$ 208,075

2015 Erie County Funding Received \$ 205,000

Applicant's Fiscal Year Start Date: 1/1/2016 ; End Date: 12/31/2016

Erie County funding will be used in which fiscal year: 2016

## **FUNDING REQUEST BACKGROUND**

Soil and Water conservation Districts are local government subdivisions established under State Law to carry out programs for the conservation, use and development of soil, water and related natural resources. Districts are resource management agencies that coordinate and implement environmental programs at the local level in cooperation with federal and state agencies.

From Article I, Section 2, of Chapter 9-B of the Consolidated Laws of Soil and Water Conservation Districts:

### **Declaration of Policy**

- (1) Preservation of soil and water resources. It is hereby declared to be the policy of the state legislature to provide for the conservation of soil and water resources of this state, and for the improvement of water quality, and for the control and preservation of soil erosion and for the prevention of floodwater and sediment damages and for furthering the conservation, development, utilization and disposal of water, and thereby to preserve natural resources, control and abate nonpoint sources of water pollution, assist in the control of floods, assist in the drainage and irrigation of agricultural lands, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, assist in the maintaining the navigability of rivers and harbors, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base, protect public lands and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of this state.
- (2) Utilization of resources to enhance the quality of life. It is further declared the policy of the legislature to encourage the use of agricultural land for recreational uses which are consistent with the primary use of such land while, at the same time, promoting additional tourism and employment opportunities and income for landowners in rural areas enhancing the quality of life of persons not otherwise able to obtain access to agricultural land for recreational uses.

In 1943, the Erie County Legislature created the Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District. Our mission is to protect and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the present and future generations of Erie County residents through the conservation of soil, water, air, plant and animal resources by delivery of sound science-based, locally-directed technical and educational assistance. For the past seventy one years, the District has been preserving the soil and water resources of Erie County by implementing conservation projects that keep the water clean, promote viable agriculture, and enhance the county's overall quality of life. As an economic development agency, we support Erie County's environmental quality, recreation, tourism and employment opportunities.

With the requested funds, the citizens of Erie County benefit from science-based environmental stewardship and the leveraged federal, state, and private grant funds that the District has been so successful in securing over the past dozen years. 2016 County funds in the amount of \$208,075 will be used to pay the base salaries of six District employees, Board of Directors operations, and our annual Erie/Wyoming Joint Watershed Board dues. The base salaries of six District employees' are projected to cost \$320,280 in 2016. When benefits for employees' and board expenses are added to this figure, \$467,150 is required to maintain current minimum staffing levels. The difference in personnel expenses for the District staff, retirement benefits and operating expenses will be paid for through state, federal, and private grants; and fundraising/donations. County funds received through this administrative process are projected to represent only 18.2% of the District's revenue in 2016. ***Although county funding does not represent the majority of the District's revenues, it is the foundation that all other revenues are leveraged against in order to maintain stable staffing levels needed to support soil and water conservation district services and grant programs for Erie County residents.***

Funding in the amount of \$205,000 last year enabled the District to maintain minimum technical and financial assistance to landowners and municipalities in Erie County through current staffing levels. The 2015 funding amount allowed the District to secure, directly or indirectly, nearly \$10 in federal and state assistance for every \$1 in county funds expended by the District. These additional leveraged dollars enabled the District to provide unique funding assistance opportunities to Erie County residents, municipalities and landowners that has resulted in further conservation of the county's natural resources. Leveraging of state and federal grant funds allowed the District to supplement our current staff, which in turn enabled us to provide more services to county residents and municipalities. County funding in 2015 paid salaries for six District employees: these county funds did not include benefits for current employees. ***All funds leveraged by the District are added to the local economy as direct payments to agricultural businesses, local contractors, material suppliers, landowners, municipalities, and consulting firms for natural resource and public works improvements.***

2015 county funds have also been used to satisfy our regional agreement for the Erie/Wyoming Joint Watershed Board project which costs \$5,000 per year. The "Joint Board" was formed in response to the Flood Control Act of 1944. Joint Board projects involve inspection of 60 linear miles of streambank stabilization projects in the Buffalo River Watershed and maintenance of failing projects that were originally constructed in the 1950's to control sediment in the Buffalo Harbor. The Wyoming County Soil and Water Conservation District contributes \$2,500 per year from their county appropriation. Each year staff from both counties performs an inspection of the Joint Board sites and a report is provided to the Board of Directors. Annual appropriations from both counties limit repair work to one project every couple of

years at best. Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District has been successful in supplementing these funds with grant monies over the past several years.

## **MISSION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF PROGRAMS, SERVICES, AND ACTIVITIES**

### **Mission Statements:**

It is the mission of the Erie County Soil & Water Conservation District to protect and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the present and future generations of Erie County residents through the conservation of soil, water, air, plant and animal resources by delivery of sound science-based, locally-directed technical and educational assistance.

### **Vision:**

To be the recognized leader and source of natural resource and conservation expertise in Erie County through efficient, proactive and responsible assistance to its constituents.

### **Goals:**

1. Increase both rural and urban community's awareness of soil erosion and water quality protection in Erie County.
2. Provide conservation services and information to the public to address water quality and natural resource related concerns.
3. Develop and carry out the planning and implementation of water quality and natural resource improvement programs within Erie County.
4. Work with other cooperating agencies, organizations and local units of government to implement conservation practices that are consistent with the Mission Statement of the District.
5. Actively seek funding from state, federal and private grant sources to offset the financial burden of implementation of conservation practices, which are consistent with the Mission Statement of the District.

### **Objectives:**

- I. **To operate the Erie County Soil & Water Conservation District in a publicly responsible manner.**
  - A. The District will conduct operations in a manner consistent with Conservation District Law, established policies and procedures and the mission statement of the District.
  - B. The District will identify, control and reduce the exposure to liability.
  - C. The District will take a proactive approach to addressing the financial condition of the organization.
    1. Annual and Special Appropriations
    2. Earned Income Programs
    3. Current Grants / Programs
    4. Future Grants / Programs
- II. **To administer Erie County Soil & Water Conservation District Programs in a manner consistent with the mission statement.**
  - A. The District will develop and implement a comprehensive Conservation Education and Outreach Program.
  - B. The District will maintain a leadership role in the preservation and protection of soil, water and other natural resources in Erie County.
    1. The District will work cooperatively with NRCS and encourage cooperation, communication and coordination among Federal, State, Local and non-governmental conservation partners.
    2. The District will provide conservation technical assistance in a manner consistent with Conservation District Law, established policies and procedures, the mission statement of the District and cooperative working agreements with its conservation partners.

The Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District is located at the USDA Service Center in East Aurora, NY which houses the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), and the District. Our Cooperative Working Agreement with the USDA-NRCS allows the District to be co-located at the service center at a minimum cost to the county. This is a significant savings for the District and Erie County, as we pay for utilities, communications, and rent through a combination of technical and administrative services. This agreement continues to be a topic of discussion and may be subject to modification in the future. Currently, the Cooperative Working Agreement with USDA-NRCS currently saves the District and Erie County over \$40,000 per year.

The District collaborates with many organizations and agencies in an effort to provide the highest quality services at the most cost effective price to the residents of Erie County. By combining agency efforts on similar projects, more can be accomplished in a cost effective and efficient manner. Of particular importance over the past year were:

**Erie County Department of Public Works-** the District continues to manage the Countywide Stream Maintenance Program for the DPW as well as assistance with emergency project implementation as necessary to

protect county infrastructure from erosion and localized flooding.

**Erie County Department of Environment and Planning** – the District is responsible for technical support and participation to the Western New York Stormwater Coalition, the Water Quality Coordinating Committee, Environmental Management Council and the development and the Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance. The District will become the contract agency for the administration of \$250,000 state grant for the implementation of the Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance priority projects over the next year. It is a hope that this funding allocation will become an annual appropriation through the Environmental Protection Fund.

**Erie County Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry-** the District has developed a stewardship management plan of Erie County Forest Lot #1 and stands ready to assist in assessing additional lots for sustainable management. The District has also provided technical assistance to various projects in the park and will continue to lend our expertise when needed

The Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District was created with the purpose of conserving soil and water resources, controlling and preventing erosion, and preventing floodwater and sediment damages in Erie County. Landowners, municipalities, and other agencies receive technical assistance from the District to further soil and water conservation on public and private properties; enter into agreements to further conservation efforts; receive assistance in developing individual as well as watershed-wide conservation plans; and implement projects involving best management practice (BMP) installation that prevents soil erosion and protects water quality. By implementing best management practices municipalities and landowners benefit economically and socially through on the ground capital improvements which in turn increase property values. By developing conservation plans project partners are educated in the wise use of public and private natural resources. By furthering conservation efforts municipalities and landowners may also comply with increasing regulatory pressures at a cost effective price.

The Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District, in addition to providing valuable technical assistance to individual landowners and municipalities, brings substantial financial assistance to Erie County. In 2016 we anticipate spending \$750,000 or more in state funding within Erie County. See Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District Accomplishments for complete project descriptions. Through the District’s Cooperative Working agreement with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Erie County residents may be eligible to receive cost share assistance through the following federal programs:

FEDERAL PROGRAMS	2016 Anticipated
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	\$10,000
Conservation Securities Program (CSP)	\$10,000
Conservation Technical Assistance	\$100,000
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (WRP, GRP, FRPP, HFRP)	\$200,000
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	\$600,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$920,000</b>

Farmland protection and, greenspace planning and preservation are important issues in Erie County. Farmers and rural landowners face incredible development pressure and urban sprawl which creates increased costs to the county and municipalities as they deal with the need to expand or upgrade infrastructure. Communities are becoming increasingly aware of the effects that their activities and decisions have on our environment and the rural landscape.

The Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District has become a valuable resource in the county by assisting in the design, implementation and cost share of conservation practices. The District, which has broad authority under state law, is the *only* agency that provides farmers and landowners with on-site survey and design assistance for all types of conservation practices. The District is also the *only* avenue farmers have for accessing the Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program funds through the NYS Environmental Protection Fund. The District is currently administering **4.7 million dollars** in total construction costs through four multi-year contract through this program. These funds assist farmers in meeting regulatory requirements and thus keep them farming in Erie County.

The District also assists urban and suburban landowners and municipalities in accessing other state and federal assistance program funds. Streambank stabilization and restoration is a primary concern throughout the county and the District provides technical guidance to many throughout the year. In an effort to address some of these as watershed concerns the District is administering **680,000 thousand dollars** in state and federal multi-year contracts to address erosion and improve water quality.

**ERIE COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT 2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

1. Secured cost-share funding for four farm operations in the Clear Creek Watershed for the implementation of best management practices and environmental protection on their farms. Total project cost for the Clear Creek Watershed

Protection Project is \$1,256,090 and is funded through the New York State Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program and private landowners.

2. Fulfilled annual inspection and maintenance obligations for the Erie/Wyoming Joint Board project, which includes inspection of steambank protection projects located on 60 miles of steambank in the Buffalo River Watershed in order to reduce sedimentation in the Buffalo Harbor.
3. Implemented additional federal grant funding to further protect water quality on 8 sites in the Eighteenmile Creek Watershed in order to reduce sedimentation in Lake Erie. \$271,405 secured from the Great Lakes Commission Great Lakes Basins Program.
4. Administering a \$270,655 Clean Water Act section 604b grant via Southern Tier West Regional Development Planning Board to develop the Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance. This grant supports a coordinator for planning activities housed in ECDEP for the Lake Erie Watershed in Erie, Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties.
5. Continued the twelfth year of the Erie County Highway Department Stream Maintenance Program to remove snags, debris, and control erosion on sites that threaten Erie County highway structures.
6. Stands ready to continue to work cooperatively with Erie County Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry, on development of the Erie County Forest Management Plan – Phase II. A stewardship plan for lot #1 has been completed as a template for future work.
7. Maintained the willow plantation at the Erie County Correctional facility in partnership with Erie County Corrections. The plantation will provide plantings for steambank stabilization projects and future bioengineering projects. Cutting stock is available for use by other county departments.
8. Partner with DEP to support Geographic Information System (GIS) utilization in Erie County including: information technology, and website development/maintenance. Provided GIS assistance to several other agencies in Erie County.
9. Continued role as lead agency for the Erie County Water Quality Committee (ECWQC). The committee attempts to coordinate environmental projects throughout Erie County
10. Supported ECDEP and the Western New York Stormwater Coalition in assisting municipalities and contractors in meeting US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Phase II stormwater regulations.
11. Supplemented District staff through the University at Buffalo Environmental Studies Internship Program and through utilization of West Seneca Americorps members.
12. Providing cost-share funding for seven farm operations in the Tonawanda Creek Watershed for the implementation of best management practices and environmental protection on their farms. Total project cost for the Tonawanda Creek Agricultural Implementation Project is \$576,380 and is funded through the New York State Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program.
13. Providing cost-share funding for seven farm operations in the Eighteenmile Creek /Lake Erie Watershed for the implementation of best management practices and environmental protection on their farms. Total project cost for the Eighteenmile Creek/Lake Erie Direct Agricultural Implementation Project is \$1,431,565 and is funded through the New York State Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program
14. Providing cost-share funding to ten farm operations in the Cattaraugus Creek Watershed for the implementation of best management practices and environmental protection on their farms. Total project cost for the Cattaraugus Creek Agricultural Implementation Project is 1,489,327 dollars and is funded through the New York State Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program.
15. Completed work on the Eighteenmile Creek Partnership Program Phase III in 2015. The District will receive \$292,342 in federal funding to implement phase III of the program. Local matches will be provided through participating landowners and municipalities.

16. Distributed over 37,100 trees and shrubs to over 600 landowners throughout Erie County through the 2015 Conservation Tree and Shrub Seedling Program.
17. Stocked over 4,775 fish in Erie County ponds and distributed over 89 bluebird houses to persons interested in bringing bluebirds back to Western New York. Also distributed other conservation items including bat houses, wood duck boxes, wildflowers seed packages and guide books.
18. Provided technical assistance to 4 Erie County residents for pond site evaluations, planning and design.
19. Provided technical assistance to Erie County fire departments for planning and design of dry hydrant systems as necessary.
20. Provided support to the Erie County Farmland Protection Board and assisted 82 landowners with their applications for Agricultural Assessments through the preparation of soil group worksheets. The District is the only agency in the county to provide this service.
21. Maintained and expanded the Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District website: [ecswcd.org](http://ecswcd.org). The website offers Erie County residents efficient and easy access to a broad scope of natural resources information and District programs.
22. Educated approximately 12,155 Erie County residents about local natural resources topics at county-wide educational events including two booths at the Erie County Fair.
23. Published *Conservation Connections*, a semi-annual newsletter to educate readers on District programs, projects, and local natural resource issues. The newsletter's mailing list consists of nearly 1400 landowners, public officials, educators, and agribusinesses. Continued publication of *Conservation Connections Update*, a supplemental monthly newsletter for county legislators and other elected officials.
24. Hosted the thirteenth annual Erie County Envirothon at Elma Village Green. The Envirothon is an outdoor natural science competition that is open to all Erie County high school students and involves schools from both rural and urban areas. Sent the winning team of students from East Aurora to represent Erie County at the state level Envirothon.
25. Assisted over 63 Erie County landowners with soil and water related concerns on their land. Assisted with other concerns such as locating septic systems, home sites, pond designs, agricultural drainage, agricultural assessments, wetlands restoration, and stormwater management.

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				Projected 2016
<b>REVENUE</b>				
<b>Earned Income</b>				
1 Admissions:				
2 Memberships				
3 Fundraising Events (Gross)				
4 Tuition (Workshops)				10,500
5 Contracted Services				
6 Facility Rental				
7 Advertising sales				
8 Proceeds: Goods Sales				70,000
9 Other:(Interstet/refunds/reimb)				1,500
<b>10 Total Earned Income</b>				<b>82,000</b>
%Earned Income to Total Revenue				7.1%
<b>Private Contributions</b>				
11 Individual Donations				
12 Corporate Support: *				4,000
Sponsorships				
Donations				4,000
13 Foundation Support *				
<b>14 Total Private Contributions</b>				<b>4,000</b>
%Private Contributions to Total Revenue				0.4%
<b>Public Funding</b>				
15				
16 Other Federal				30,000
17				
18 Other State				720,000
19				
20 City of Buffalo				
21 Erie County - Annual Appropriation				208,075
22 Erie County(other) - DPW stream maintenance program				100,000
<b>23 Total Public Funding</b>				<b>1,058,075</b>
%Public Funding to Total Revenue				92.5%
<b>24 TOTAL REVENUES</b>				<b>1,144,075</b>

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**EXPENSES**

**Personnel Salaries and Fees (Incl. benefits)**

				Projected 2016
1 Administrative				109,850
2 Artistic				
3 Educational				
4 Technical				357,300
5 Bonus or Incentive Payments				
<b>6 Total Salaries &amp; Fees</b>				<b>467,150</b>
%Salaries & Fees to Total Expenses				40.8%
<b>Administration/Operations</b>				
7 Rent				
8 Utilities/telephone				1,800
9 Office Supplies				5,000
10 Office Equipment Rental				
11 Postage/Postal Box Rental				
12 Security/Maintenance				
13 Travel				4,000
14 Insurance				10,000
15 Legal/accounting				
16 Duties & Association Memberships				8,000
17 Office printing/copying				
18 Service contracts				
19 Interest Paid on Operating Loans				
20 Other (i.e., consultant):				
<b>21 Total Admin/Ops.</b>				<b>28,800</b>
%Admin/Ops. To Total Expenses				2.5%
<b>Programming</b>				
22 Production Expenses				
23 Educational Expenses				5,000
24 Facility/ Equipment Rental - (Field Equipment)				7,000
25 Printing				
26 Accommod./Interpreters				
27 Scholarships/awards				
28 Copyright/Licensing fees				
29 Other (specify) -Grant Projects/Project Implementation				582,625
<b>30 Total Programming</b>				<b>594,625</b>
%Programming to Total Expenses				52%

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**Fundraising/Marketing/Retail**

- 31 Paid Advertising
- 32 Direct Mail
- 33 Fundraising Events
- 34 Cost Goods for sale
- 35 Other (specify):
- 36 Total Fundraising/ Marketing/Retail**
- %Fdraising/Mkting to Total Expenses
- 37 TOTAL EXPENSES**

				Projected 2016
				3,500
				50,000
				53,500
				4.7%
				1,144,075