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**Directors**  
John Mills, Chairman, Co. Legislator  
Pending, Co. Legislator  
Calvin Kohn, Grange  
Stanley Travis, Farm Bureau

***Erie County Soil & Water Conservation District***

50 Commerce Way, East Aurora, New York 14052-2185  
Phone: (716) 652-8480 Fax: (716) 652-8506

CE

Mr. Robert Graber  
Clerk of the Erie County Legislature  
92 Franklin Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Buffalo, NY 14202

January 30, 2012

Re: Budget Accountability Act

Dear Mr. Graber,

Enclosed for your review is the Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District 2012 Budget Plan. This document is being submitted to comply with the Erie County Legislature's 2012 Budget Accountability Act.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at the telephone number listed above should you require any additional information.

Mark C. Gaston  
District Field Manager

Cc: ECSWCD Board of Directors

3M-16



**Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District  
2012 Budget Plan**

**Presented to the Erie County Legislature  
Authorized by the Budget Accountability Act**



**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

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

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: 69 Years

**FUNDING INFORMATION**

2011 Erie County Funding Requested/Received: \$ 190,000

2010 Erie County Funding Received \$ 190,000

Applicant's Fiscal Year Start Date: 1/1/2012 ; End Date: 12/31/2012

Erie County funding will be used in which fiscal year: 2012

## 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 sixty-eight 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 several years. 2012 County funds in the amount of \$190,000 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 \$277,195 in 2012. When benefits for employees' and board expenses are added to this figure, \$375,134 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 19% of the District's revenue in 2012. Federal, state, and private grants are projected to represent 74%, and fundraising/donations are projected to represent 7% of the District's revenue in 2012. *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 \$190,000 last year enabled the District to maintain minimum technical and financial assistance to landowners and municipalities in Erie County through current staffing levels. The 2011 funding amount allowed the District to secure, directly or indirectly, over \$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 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 2011 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.*

2011 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 few 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 has been the topic of discussion in recent months and may be subject to modification over the next few years. In all, 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 managed the Countywide Stream Maintenance Program for the DPW as well as assistance with FEMA and FHWA project implementation as necessary.

**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 and the formation of the Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance

**Erie County Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry-** the District is facilitating the development of Phase II of the Erie County Forest Management Plan.

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 2012 we anticipate spending \$700,000 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:

<b>FEDERAL PROGRAMS</b>	<b>2012 Anticipated</b>
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	\$20,000
Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)	\$20,000
Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)	\$20,000
Conservation Technical Assistance	\$300,000
Federal Farmland Protection (FFP)	\$100,000
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	\$600,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,060,000</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 and implementation 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. 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.

**ERIE COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT 2011 ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**Projects that result in the protection and enhancement of the Buffalo River Harbor**

1. Applied for and secured cost-share funding to twelve farm operations in the Buffalo Creek Watershed for the implementation of best management practices and environmental protection on their farms. Total project cost for the Buffalo Creek Agricultural Implementation Project is \$1,225,010 and is funded through the New York State Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program and private landowners.

1. Fulfilled annual inspection and maintenance obligations for the Erie/Wyoming Joint Board project, which includes inspection of streambank protection projects located on 60 miles of streambank in the Buffalo River Watershed in order to reduce sedimentation in the Buffalo Harbor.
2. Applied for and secured additional federal grant funding to further protect water quality on 7 sites in the Buffalo River Watershed in order to reduce sedimentation in the Buffalo Harbor. \$180,000 secured from the Great Lakes Commission Great Lakes Basins Program.

**Projects that strengthen interagency and regional cooperation**

1. Continued the eight year of the Erie County Highway Department Stream Maintenance Program. A total of 55 projects have been completed as a result of the August 2009 flood event to remove snags, debris, and control erosion on sites that threaten Erie County highway structures.
2. Assisted the USDA-NRCS (District's Federal Partner) in securing \$6 Million in Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) dollars to mitigate severe erosion on twenty five sites in Southern Erie County Watersheds and on the Seneca Nation to mitigate damage from the August 2009 flood event.
3. Continued to work cooperatively with Erie County Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry, on development of the Erie County Forest Management Plan – Phase II, specifically 200acre lot #1.
4. Maintained the willow plantation at the Erie County Correctional facility in partnership with Erie County Corrections. The plantation will provide plantings for streambank stabilization projects and future bioengineering projects. Cutting stock is available for use by other county departments.
5. 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.
6. Continued role as lead agency for the Erie County Water Quality Committee (ECWQC). The committee attempts to coordinate environmental project throughout Erie County, such as proper disposal of unwanted agricultural pesticides, stream clean ups etc.
7. Supported DEP and the Western New York Stormwater Coalition in assisting municipalities and contractors in meeting US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Phase II stormwater regulations.
8. Supplemented District staff through the University at Buffalo Environmental Studies Internship Program and through utilization of West Seneca Americorps members.

**Technical assistance, watershed planning outreach and educational projects**

2. Providing cost-share funding to five 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 \$183,152 and is funded through the New York State Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program.
3. 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 will exceed 1.4 million dollars and is funded through the New York State Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program.
4. Continued work on the Eighteenmile Creek Partnership Program Phase II. The program aims to continue efforts to reduce sediment load throughout the Eighteenmile Creek Watershed. The District will receive \$292,342 in State funding to implement the program. Local matches will be provided through participating landowners and municipalities.
5. Distributed over 47,500 trees and shrubs to over 695 landowners throughout Erie County through the 2011 Conservation Tree and Shrub Seedling Program.

6. Stocked over 8,825 fish in Erie County ponds and distributed over 100 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 to over 250 residents.
7. Provided technical assistance to 3 Erie County residents for pond site evaluations, planning and design.
8. Provided technical assistance on 1 sites to Erie County fire departments for planning and design of dry hydrant systems.
9. Provided support to the Erie County Farmland Protection Board and assisted 83 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.
10. 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.
11. Educated approximately 10,000 Erie County residents about local natural resources topics at county-wide educational events including two booths at the Erie County Fair.
12. 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.
13. Hosted the ninth 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 the Buffalo Homeschool to represent Erie County at the state level Envirothon, where they again placed 7th out of 47 teams.
14. Assisted over 70 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.
15. Completed work on the Eighteenmile Creek Watershed through the Great Lakes Basin Program. The program aims to reduce erosion and sediment load throughout watersheds in the Great Lakes Basin. The District has received \$30,000 in funding to implement the program on one project site in the Town of Concord.
16. Received cost-share funding for one large farm operation in the Seven Creeks Watershed for the implementation of best management practices and environmental protection. Total project cost for the Seven Creeks Agricultural Implementation Project is \$268,195 and is funded through the New York State Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program.



				Projected 2012
<b>REVENUE</b>				
<b>Earned Income</b>				
1 Admissions:				
2 Memberships				
3 Fundraising Events (Gross)				6,000
4 Tuition (Workshops)				
5 Contracted Services				
6 Facility Rental				
7 Advertising sales				
8 Proceeds: Goods Sales				80,000
9 Other:(Interstet/refunds/reimb)				1,000
<b>10 Total Earned Income</b>				<b>87,000</b>
%Earned Income to Total Revenue				6.88%
<b>Private Contributions</b>				
11 Individual Donations				
12 Corporate Support: *				3,000
Sponsorships				
Donations				3,000
13 Foundation Support *				
<b>14 Total Private Contributions</b>				<b>3,000</b>
%Private Contributions to Total Revenue				0.31%
<b>Public Funding</b>				
15				
16 Other Federal				
17				
18 Other State				800,000
19				
20 City of Buffalo				
21 Erie County - Annual Appropriation				190,000
22 Erie County(other) - DPW stream maintenance project				50,000
<b>23 Total Public Funding</b>				<b>1,040,000</b>
%Public Funding to Total Revenue				92.81%
<b>24 TOTAL REVENUES</b>				<b>1,130,000</b>

**EXPENSES**

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

1 Administrative

2 Artistic

3 Educational

4 Technical

5 Bonus or Incentive Payments

**6 Total Salaries & Fees**

%Salaries & Fees to Total Expenses

**Administration/Operations**

7 Rent

8 Utilities/telephone

9 Office Supplies

10 Office Equipment Rental

11 Postage/Postal Box Rental

12 Security/Maintenance

13 Travel

14 Insurance

15 Legal/accounting

16 Duties & Association Memberships

17 Office printing/copying

18 Service contracts

19 Interest Paid on Operating Loans

20 Other (i.e., consultant):

**21 Total Admin/Ops.**

%Admin/Ops. To Total Expenses

**Programming**

22 Production Expenses

23 Educational Expenses

24 Facility/ Equipment Rental - (Field Equipment)

25 Printing

26 Accommod./interpreters

27 Scholarships/awards

28 Copyright/Licensing fees

29 Other (specify) -Grant Projects/Project

Implementation

**30 Total Programming**

%Programming to Total Expenses

				Projected 2012
				70,000
				305,134
				375,134
				36.67%
				1,500
				5,000
				4,000
				10,000
				8,275
				28,775
				2.68%
				3,000
				6,000
				678,091
				687,091
				56.79%

Budget Page C

**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 2012
				3,000
				36,000
				39,000
				3.86%
				1,130,000