



**Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District
2023 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 4th Floor
Buffalo, NY 14208

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FINANCIAL CONTACT: Mark C. Gaston

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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: 80 Years

FUNDING INFORMATION

2023 Erie County Funding Requested: \$ 306,600

2022 Erie County Funding Requested / Received \$292,000 / 292,000

Applicant's Fiscal Year Start Date: 1/1/2023 ; End Date: 12/31/2023

Erie County funding will be used in which fiscal year: 2023

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-nine 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 twenty years. 2023 County funds in the amount of \$306,600 will be used to pay the base salaries of seven District employees, Board of Directors operations, fund our annual Erie/Wyoming Joint Watershed Board responsibilities and provide administrative financial support to the Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance. The base salaries of these seven District employees are projected to cost \$398,600 in 2023. When benefits for employees' and board expenses are added to this figure, \$584,000 is required to maintain necessary minimum staffing needs. 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 21% of the District's revenue in 2023. ***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 \$292,000 last year enabled the District to continue pertinent District service to county and municipal highway department through a roadside revegetation program, hydroseeding high priority ditches to mitigate erosion improve water quality. In addition, expanded services were continued to the agricultural community through the access to a new No-Till seeder and drill that is available for rent, thus reducing landowner expenses and improving conservation efforts on the farm. In 2022 the District secured grant funds to evaluate and complete and in depth planning effort of our urban farms and a soil health/ conservation planning needs assessment. The hope is the resulting planning efforts will prioritize project and funding opportunities to better meet the urban farming needs. Through the District's participation on the Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance (LEWPA) the District continues construction management of \$600,000 in federal funding to implement green infrastructure practices to improve and protect water quality along Lake Erie beaches in partnership with Chautauqua County SWCD. This is in addition to the implementation of \$250,000 in state funding for various water quality improvements throughout the watershed. Funding also allowed the District to maintain our regular technical and financial assistance to landowners and municipalities in Erie County through current staffing levels. The 2022 funding amount allowed the District to secure, directly or indirectly, nearly \$7 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 2022 paid salaries for seven 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.

2022 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 \$45,000 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 and Roadside Revegetation Program for the DPW as well as assistance with emergency project implementation as necessary to protect county infrastructure from erosion and localized flooding. The District completed engineering and design of the Zoar Valley Road Streambank Stabilization, required long term wetland monitoring for the reconstruction of Goodrich Road along with various other erosion sediment control projects and permits.

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, the Environmental Management Council and the Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance. The District has served as the contract agency for the administration of \$250,000 (per year) of a state grant for the implementation of Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance priority projects. This project has been funded for a seventh year, and it is a hope that this funding allocation will become an annual appropriation through the Environmental Protection Fund. In addition, \$25,000 in 2023 funding from Erie County will go to support administrative functions for the Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance to ensure the majority of funding is available for implementation projects which leverage additional state and federal funding.

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 in the protection and restoration of county park land at Como Park. The District assisted with erosion control efforts as well as a riparian buffer enhancement in the park adjacent to Cayuga Creek including wildflower seeding of no-mow/ low-mow areas. The District has reviewed a number of additional projects for future consideration including, Ellicott Creek Park living shoreline project, Sprague Brook Park streambank stabilization and invasive species control at Hunters Creek Park and Seneca Bluff.

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 2023 we anticipate spending over \$1 million in state funding within Erie County. 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	2023 Anticipated
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	\$10,000
Conservation Securities Program (CSP)	\$10,000
Conservation Technical Assistance	\$50,000
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (WRP, GRP, FRPP, HFRP)	\$10,000
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	\$600,000
TOTAL	\$680,000

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 **769,330 dollars** in total construction costs through two multi-year contract through this program with an additional **594,040 dollars pending** in the most recent grant applications. The District is also the *only* avenue farmers have for accessing the Climate Resilient Farming Program and CAFO Waste Storage funds through the NYS Environmental Protection Fund. The District is currently administering **2.2 million dollars** in total construction costs through four multi-year contract to mitigate green-house gas emissions and improve water quality on farms. An

additional **487,978 dollars** in funding are currently pending in the most recent grant application. Both 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, restoration and watershed management 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 **over 1.1 million dollars** in local, state and federal multi-year contracts to address erosion and improve water quality.

Budget Page A

REVENUE

Earned Income

- 1 Admissions:
- 2 Memberships
- 3 Fundraising Events (Gross)
- 4 Tuition (Workshops)
- 5 Contracted Services
- 6 Facility Rental
- 7 Advertising sales
- 8 Proceeds: Goods Sales
- 9 Other:(interest/refunds/reimb)

10 Total Earned Income

%Earned Income to Total Revenue

Private Contributions

- 11 Individual Donations
- 12 Corporate Support: *
 - Sponsorships
 - Donations
- 13 Foundation Support *

14 Total Private Contributions

%Private Contributions to Total Revenue

Public Funding

- 15
- 16 Other Federal
- 17
- 18 Other State
- 19
- 20 City of Buffalo
- 21 Erie County - Annual Appropriation
- 22 Erie County(other) - DPW stream maintenance program

23 Total Public Funding

%Public Funding to Total Revenue

				Projected 2023
				6,000
				92,000
				12,000
				110,000
				7.5%
				3,000
				3,000
				3,000
				0.2%
				150,000
				800,000
				306,600
				100,000
				1,356,600
				92.3%

24 TOTAL REVENUES

				1,469,600
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Budget Page 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/ Training
- 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/Program Project Implementation

30 Total Programming

%Programming to Total Expenses

				Projected 2023
				160,000
				424,000
				584,000
				39.6%
				In-kind
				2,500
				5,000
				5,000
				10,000
				8,000
				25,000
				55,500
				3.6%
				5,000
				6,000
				747,100
				758,100
				52%

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

%Fundraising/Mkting to Total Expenses

37 TOTAL EXPENSES

				Projected 2023
				2,000
				70,000
				72,000
				4.8%
				1,469,600