

COLLABORATION CAN PROTECT SOURCES OF DRINKING WATER

TOGETHER WE CAN

- Align our work for multiple benefits in agricultural, forested, and urban areas, focusing on soil health, watershed management, and open space preservation that protects water quality and quantity of underground and surface drinking water sources, and the overall health of communities
- Work together with partners to leverage and share resources, tools, and funding to achieve and demonstrate results in priority areas
- Provide education, outreach, and technical assistance on voluntary (non-regulatory) programs for private landowners/operators and local governments

SOURCE WATER PARTNER*

- Shares data and information on delineated source water protection areas, priority contaminants, sources of contamination, and water quality monitoring results
- Helps leverage potential funding sources
- Assists with implementation and helps target USDA initiatives (e.g., identifying priority areas and potential benefits of conservation practices to drinking water sources)
- May assist in conducting outreach to private landowners and operators
- State, Regional, and Local Source Water Contacts:
 - » State Source Water Coordinator: <https://www.asdwa.org/sourcewatercontacts/>
 - » Regional Source Water Coordinators, US Environmental Protection Agency: <https://www.epa.gov/sourcewaterprotection/source-water-contacts-epas-regional-offices>
 - » State, regional, and local Source Water Collaboratives: <https://sourcewatercollaborative.org/how-to-collaborate-toolkit/map>

CONSERVATION DISTRICT PARTNER

- Local entities set up by state statute, often corresponding with counties
- Recognized local leader in nonpoint source water quality and quantity, soil health, and watershed planning on agricultural, forested, and urban lands
- Provides technical assistance and education and is a trusted resource for farmers, private landowners, and local governments on soil and water conservation projects
- Participates in USDA/NRCS State Technical Committee and leads Local Working Groups to assist in identifying state and local priorities for NRCS funding and technical assistance
- Integral part of the Conservation Partnership implementing the Farm Bill
 - » State Association of Conservation Districts: contact the Executive Director or President <https://www.nacdnet.org/general-resources/conservation-district-directory/>
 - » State Conservation Agency: find staff contact <https://www.nascanet.org/find-your-state-rep/>
 - » State Office of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service: contact the Assistant State Conservationist for Programs <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/contact/states/>



MOVING AHEAD TOGETHER

- Participate in NRCS State Technical Committee and Local Working Groups to help prioritize source water protection concerns and opportunities
- Ensure that watershed plans developed under the EPA 319 Nonpoint Source Protection Program and other programs include healthy watersheds and groundwater as well as impaired waters
- Participate in or initiate state, regional, and local source water collaboratives (examples: <https://sourcewatercollaborative.org/how-to-collaborate-toolkit/map/>)

***Note:** Many groups are invested in protecting the public's sources of drinking water. Depending on your area, Source Water Partners might include water utilities, local watershed groups, technical assistance providers, non-governmental organizations, or local governments, e.g. planning commissions.

The Source Water Collaborative, twenty-nine national entities representing federal, state, and local partners, works together to protect drinking water sources for generations to come.

The 2018 Farm Bill emphasizes protection of drinking water sources: The conference report reserves 10 percent of covered conservation funding for the protection of sources of drinking water, allows community water systems to work with State Technical Committees to identify local priority areas for source water protection, and allows additional incentives for practices that protect source water. (House-Senate Conference Report)

Opportunities:

- Participate in State Technical Committee identification of priority source water watersheds;
- Identify partners and help develop applications for key programs (National Water Quality Initiative, Regional Conservation Partnership Program, Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Partnership, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, easement, and other conservation programs);
- Provide outreach to engage landowners in priority areas.

Conservation Districts play an important role in providing technical assistance, identifying funding, and bringing partners to source water protection projects:

Rhode Island: The Northern Rhode Island Conservation District partnered with the Providence Water Supply Board and the state of Rhode Island on a source water protection project to protect Providence Water Supply Board's Scituate Reservoir, funded by a \$3.9 million US Forest Service Forest Legacy program grant. The project established conservation easements on 716 acres on 14 key properties in the Scituate Watershed. The Scituate Reservoir Watershed spans five towns in western Rhode Island and is arguably the most important forested area in the State; providing drinking water for 60 percent of the State's population (962,570 residents) and is the location for 61 percent of commercial timber harvests in the last 10 years. The Northern Rhode Island Conservation District played an essential role in outreach to landowners.

Supporting parties: Providence Water Supply Board; Rhode Island Woodland Partnership; The Nature Conservancy; Rhode Island Audubon Society; Scituate Conservation Commission; Scituate Land Trust; Rhode Island Land Trust Council; RI Dept. of Administration, Division of Planning; and North West Rhode Island Supporters of Open Space.

https://www.nacdnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/SR_Fall19.pdf

Iowa: Plymouth County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) partnered with the City of Remsen, Iowa to reduce nitrate in municipal drinking water wells. The Plymouth County SWCD played a key role in the development of the source water protection plan, and made the local community contacts that initiated the planning process. The District provided substantial technical support in the plan's development, including identifying and providing a GIS map of critical lands near the public wells, making initial contact with landowners, contacting the local Pheasants Forever president and chapter members, providing cost estimates of a native grass seeding plan for the critical lands, enrolling eligible Conservation Reserve Program acreage, and providing information on proper maintenance of the lands.

Supporting parties: Remsen Utilities Board; Local landowners; Plymouth County Sanitation; Plymouth Soil & Water Conservation District; USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; Plymouth County Pheasants Forever with Youth Council; Iowa Department of Natural Resources; Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship; Division of Soil Conservation; Watershed Improvement Review Board; Sioux Rivers Resource Conservation & Development, Iowa Department of Natural Resources Drinking Water State Revolving Fund.

https://sourcewatercollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/RemsenIowa_FINAL.pdf

Pennsylvania: Schuylkill River, drinking water source for nearly 2 million people

Agriculture: Berks County Conservation District led a workgroup that completed farm improvement projects such as streambank fencing, riparian buffer plantings, animal crossings, and worked with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on the selection of projects for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding. They implemented a "whole farm" approach, addressing all of the major pollution problems at each site.

Acid Mine Drainage: The Schuylkill County Conservation District and the Schuylkill Headwaters Association led an effort resulting in significant progress in remediating or eliminating abandoned mine drainage, restoring floodplains, and educating and involving the public in the effort to improve the quality of the river as a resource.

Stormwater: The workgroup partners with municipalities, government agencies, water suppliers, other watershed organizations and schools to implement best management practices. Montgomery County Conservation District helped install a large rain garden to process stormwater from a parking lot and athletic fields at a local high school.

For more information on the Schuylkill Action Network: www.schuylkillwaters.org