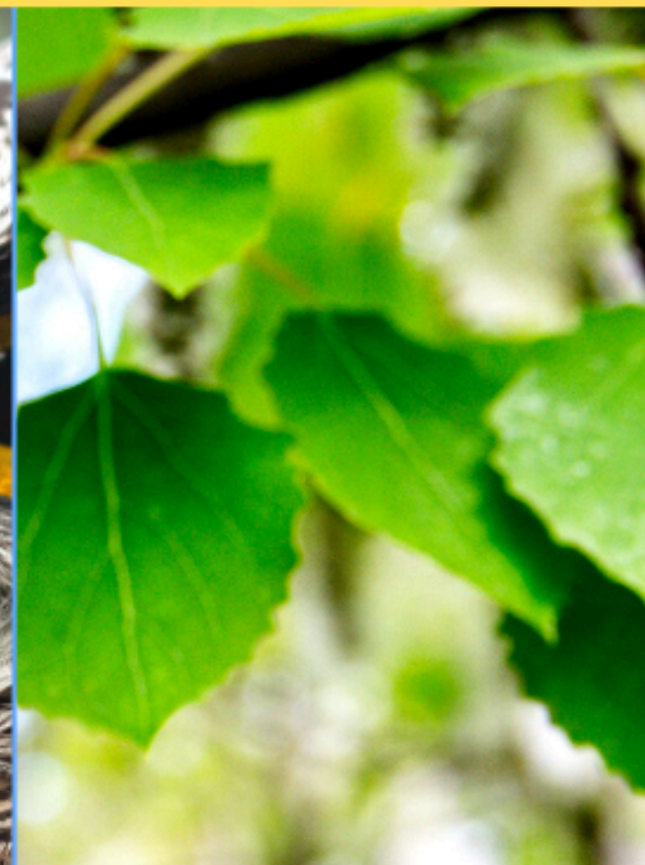




MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION ^{of} CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Let's grow!



What are Conservation Districts?

- Michigan's 75 Conservation Districts (CDs) are the private lands conservation delivery system of **natural resource management** services.
- **They** help fellow Michiganders conserve their land and water so our environment can be a cleaner, healthier, economically stronger place to live, work and grow for our community.
- Authorized by Michigan Public Act 297 of 1937, Conservation Districts are **locally organized special purpose units of state government** that leverage state, federal, and private sector resources to solve today's conservation challenges.



Conservation District Mandates

Michigan Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act 451 of 1994 defines the board's responsibilities:

- Provide technical assistance to landowners for development of plans and implementation of conservation practices to reduce nonpoint in surface waters resulting from soil erosion and sedimentation.
- Provide landowners and managers with information and educational materials to address mismanaged land and convert those lands to productive uses.
- Enhance and protect the basic ability of land to produce food and fiber.
- Assist landowners and managers to make changes in land use based on USDA Land Capability Classes and users' goals.
- Encourage use of effective methods of surface and groundwater management



Conservation District Programs

Conservation Districts provide a wide range of services, which may include:

- **MAEAP** Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program
- **CSP** Conservation Stewardship Program
- **EQIP** Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- **Produce Safety**
- **FAP** Forestry Assistance Program
- **Michigan Envirothon** Youth Environmental Science
- **RCPP** Regional Conservation Partnership Program
- **WLEB – Farmer Led Group** for mentoring farmers
- **CISMA** Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area
- **Soil and Sedimentation Permits**
- **Transition to Organic Partnership Program**
- **MI Farm Link** supporting preserving ag land through succession planning and mentoring

and many more based on local needs assessments!



What Does MACD Do?

We are a non-profit organization that represents Michigan's 75 Conservation Districts, serving all 83 counties. MACD provides state-wide coordination for locally-driven efforts, and helps identify opportunities for collaboration and partnership between districts and with partners.

Our Mission:

To strengthen Conservation Districts through leadership, information, and representation at the state level. We do this by providing outreach and advocacy, educational programming, and business services to help Conservation Districts thrive.

Our Leadership:

MACD Executive Director, Rivka Hodgkinson, is supported by an Executive Committee, State Council comprised of regional representatives throughout the state, and various committees for specific initiatives and goals.



Conservation District Structure

- Led by 5-member elected Board of Directors
- Provide locally-led conservation for each county in Michigan
- Districts conduct Conservation Needs Assessments of their communities, which guides program development
- Results from 74 CNAs were submitted in fiscal year 2022 with over 11,700 individuals participating. Statewide, the top six priorities identified were:

1. **Water quality improvement**
2. **Forest management**
3. **Invasive species management**
4. **Agriculture management**
5. **Wildlife management**

These priorities align with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) whose main focus is on expanding economic opportunities for agriculture, inspect and enforce animal health practices, and to eradicate plant pests and diseases.

The Operations Grant requires districts to conduct a biannual audit and submit a board approved budget to maintain accountability for delivering results.



Built on Partnerships

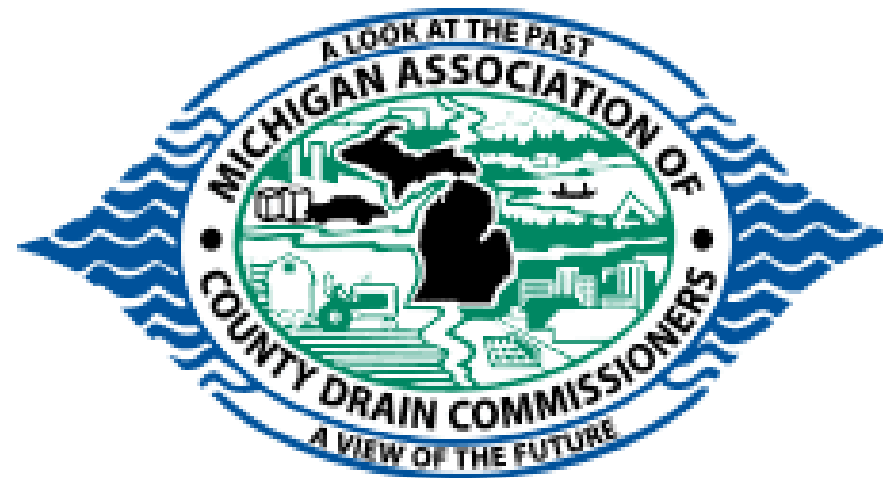
Local Conservation builds local delivery systems alongside our many partners – creating an ecosystem for addressing local needs



NRCS



Michigan Forest
Association



and many more...

Why Conservation Works!

- Michigan's \$104.7B agricultural economy relies on conservation to keep land productive and natural resources protected.
- Conservation Districts (CDs) are able to respond to local needs through local leadership and developed trust with communities, farmers, and other stakeholders.
- CD-led projects create jobs, restore forests and habitats, and educate communities on sustainable land use.
- With 72% of Michigan land privately owned, CDs are essential to meeting water quality, soil health, and conservation goals.

Outreach in Action:

- In FY22, CDs held 1,791 outreach events reaching 129,000 people, and attended 1,146 local government meetings to advance conservation priorities.*

**Taken from FY24 MDARD Legislative Report*



What is the Return On Investment?

- According to MDARD*, every \$1 the State invests in Conservation District operations leverages \$5.10 from other sources, **a minimum 5:1 ROI.**
- CDs help landowners navigate complex federal programs, increasing participation and success rates. When including federal conservation funds delivered through districts, the return increases dramatically, **up to \$43 for every \$1 invested.**
- Investing in CDs means investing in local jobs, resource protection, and the ability to attract and retain skilled conservation professionals – especially critical as federal staffing declines.
- Conservation practices also reduce the need for costly environmental cleanup, flooding damage repair, and degraded water infrastructure. As just one example, Michigan's wetlands provide \$4.77 billion annually in flood mitigation benefit**, saving public money over time.

**Taken from FY24 MDARD Legislative Report*

***From reporting by the Michigan Advance*



How are Conservation Districts Funded?

The State of Michigan currently provides \$3 million annually in direct operational funding through MDARD grants – just \$40,000 per district.

Additional funding sources vary by district and may include:

- Local millages
- County and township allocations
- Competitive state and federal grants
- Private foundations
- Individual donors

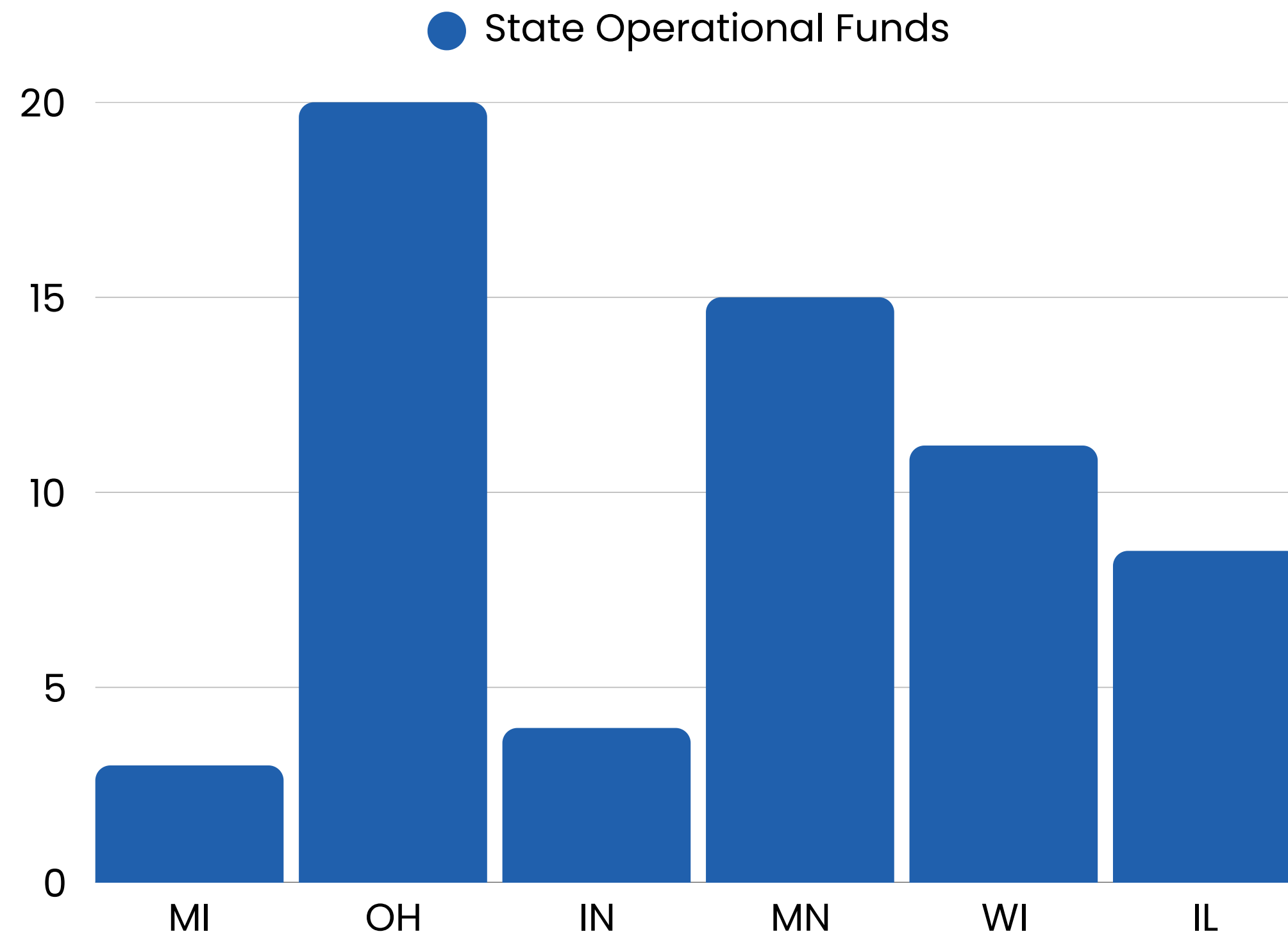
However, without stable operational funding to support and retain staff, many districts lack the capacity to pursue and manage these additional funding streams.

This creates a competitive, scarcity-driven environment that limits the effectiveness of statewide conservation efforts.

Increased investment in operational funding will strengthen Michigan's economy, create jobs, and protect the natural resources critical to the well-being of our state.



Great Lake States Comparison State Appropriated CD Funding



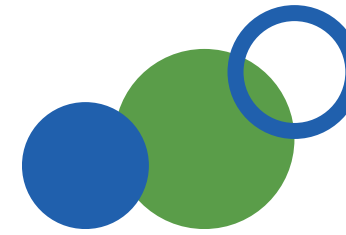
Investing in Michigan's Conservation Future

The current \$3 million investment has provided a starting point for Conservation Districts that has allowed districts to make capital investments, build capacity, and support staff funding.

Conservation Districts are seeking an additional \$10 million in funding on an annual basis, which would provide a total of **\$173,333 per district**, putting MI funding on par with other Great Lakes States.

Additional \$10 million investment will allow districts to:

- Hire a full time District Manager for each district to build operational capacity
- Hire a full time conservation planner to allow MI to maximize bringing Farm Bill and other dollars to the state
- Provide stability and support equity across the state, particularly in areas such as Wayne and Macomb that have not been able to secure additional capacity building funding
- Support benefits for CD employees to attract and retain talented professional staff



Renewing the Freshwater Protection Fund

The renewal of the Freshwater Protection Fund is imperative to the future success of Michigan's Conservation Districts as well as adjustments to pesticide fees.

- 5-year cycle required to be renewed NLT 31 December 2025
- \$1.0/ton on fertilizer
- Currently, \$270.00 on each of approximately 16,000 pesticides registered in MI (farm, lawn, golf course, household, pet and so forth). An increase would allow continued support of the program.

These adjustments support MAEAP, CTAI, Clean Sweep (recycling) and MDARD staff supporting CDs.

There was no fee increase when it was renewed in 2016 or in 2020. Inflation has taken a toll, resulting in MDARD eliminating 2 CTAP positions in FY25.



CONTACT US!

Rivka Hodgkinson **MACD Executive Director**

rivka.hodgkinson@macd.org

(616) 279-7662

www.mad.org



MICHIGAN
ASSOCIATION of
CONSERVATION
DISTRICTS

Jerry Miller **MACD President**

pedology@live.com

(515) 291-3442

www.mad.org