

SOIL AND WATER Resources

October 2013 Issue

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Gaw puts experience as attorney and cattleman to work for Soil and Water Districts Commission

As a semi-retired attorney and a cattleman, H. Ralph Gaw knows quite a bit about law: those of man and of nature.

Gaw, the most recent appointment to the Soil and Water Districts Commission, works 45 head of cattle on his 107-acre farm south of Tipton in Moniteau County where he also occasionally keeps a “hand in the law business.”

Gaw, 71, was first appointed to the commission in January 2013. He was reappointed by Gov. Jay Nixon in August 2013 to a full three-year term.



His previous agricultural experience included hog production and row crop farming, but his focus now is on his herd, which he began building in the 1990s.

“I had two cows – somebody gave them to me as a fee in a divorce case – and I saved heifers out of that,” he said. “This was in the ‘90s when I started and that’s what this herd came from – those two cows.”

His rural upbringing on a farm three miles north of Laddonia, Mo., in Audrain County provided him with the desire to be involved in agriculture and the right outlook to build a successful law career in Tipton, he said.

“In order to practice law in the country, you have to have been raised in the country. I’m sure there are exceptions, but how you meet people, how you deal with people – that’s something you learn when you’re eight years old,” he said. “Folks in the country have a certain way, and they make their decision about you pretty quick.”

Gaw admits there’s still much to learn about the many programs and elements of Missouri’s soil conservation efforts, but it is obvious the state is serious in its attempts to curb topsoil erosion.

“I think Missouri is lucky,” he said. “We’re putting resources into this that other states don’t have available to them.”

Gaw noted that after years of decreasing levels of erosion in Missouri, recent trends have shown an increase.

“Erosion of topsoil has gone up for the first time in 20 years, and in my opinion the reason is we’re farming extremely marginal ground now,” he said. “I think a lot of the ground coming out of CRP [federal conservation reserve program] is not as productive obviously as the rest of the farm.”



**Missouri Department
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Soil and Water Conservation Program

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As it has been in the past, education will be key to turning the trend, Gaw said. As a commissioner, he is becoming more familiar with the state's soil conservation and water quality protection offerings. He believes getting that same information out to farmers is a primary function of the commission.

"One of the main things our commission can do is try to educate people and encourage districts to educate the farmers as to what is available," he said.

That education doesn't end with the rural community. Relaying the importance of soil conservation and its effect on water quality to city dwellers is also important to maintain voter support of the sales tax that supports both soil and water conservation and Missouri's state parks and historic sites.

"The thing that I think we need to understand is in order for us to continue, we have to have the support of urban people, because they get to vote on the tax that supports this thing," he said.

Pembroke Hill High School takes third at 2013 North American Envirothon

Pembroke Hill High School, Jackson County, took third place at the 2013 North American Envirothon, a week-long environmental education competition held in August in Montana.

The five-member team advanced to the North American competition by winning their regional competition and then taking first place honors at Missouri's state event.

The 57 teams in the North American competition represented 47 U. S. states, nine Canadian provinces and one Canadian territory. The winning team was announced Aug. 3 during closing ceremonies at Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana.

The Pembroke Hill team members are Riley Sloan, Jeffrey Rubel, Ryan Hrinya, Wanda Czerwinski and Vincent Czerwinski. All of the team members except for Vincent Czerwinski participated in and won first place at the North American Envirothon in 2012.

"This team had tremendous respect for each other, enjoyed being together, and pushed each other hard," said SueAnn Wright, who, with her son Richard, served as team advisor. "I am very thankful that I have the opportunity to work so closely with wonderful students like these as they develop a true passion for and appreciation of our natural resources."

Each student on the winning team received a \$3,000 scholarship, for a team total of \$15,000 in Canon scholarships. Teams competing in the event tested their knowledge on five areas including soils, wildlife, forestry,



aquatics and a special topic chosen for each year's competition based on a current environmental issue. For 2013, the special topic was sustainable rangeland management: achieving a balance between traditional agricultural uses with non-agricultural uses on Montana rangelands.

Sponsors for the Missouri Envirothon are: the Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Soil and Water Conservation District Employees Association, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Missouri Department of Conservation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, University of Missouri Extension and the Show-Me Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society.

FY15 Needs Assessment

To assist the commission in allocating cost-share funds for fiscal year 2015, it is time for districts to update their Needs Assessments.

The due date for submission of the Needs Assessments is Nov. 25. A change has been made for submission of the narrative portion of the Needs Assessment in order to standardize the information and improve the process for submittal. To complete the Needs Assessment narrative, a fillable form and instructions are located on the Intranet site. The board signed narrative will need to be submitted to district coordinators by close of business Nov. 25. This narrative should support the requested dollar amounts entered into the Needs Assessment in MoSWIMS.

Districts that determine their resource needs have not changed from FY14, can resubmit similar numbers for FY15. For district staff unfamiliar with the Needs Assessment process or those who would like a refresher, reference the background information and narrative template located at <http://swcd.mo.gov/internal/needsassessment.htm>.

District staff should validate the numbers in MoSWIMS to make certain it is an accurate reflection of the district's needs requests in the various resource concern areas.

The Needs Assessment process requires both the narrative and entry into MoSWIMS to be complete.

Fiscal Year 2014 Supplemental Allocations

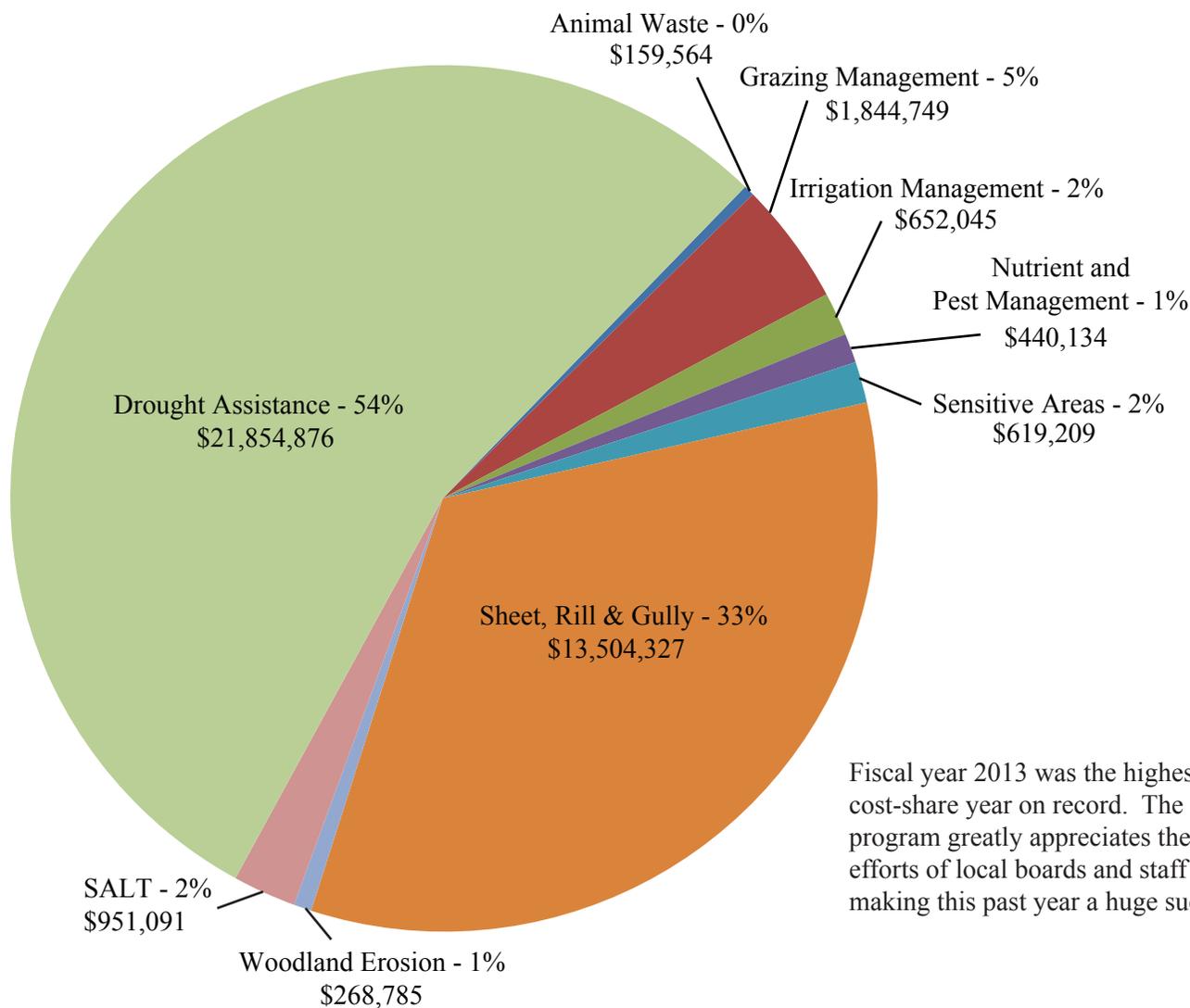
The Soil and Water Districts Commission supported two supplemental allocations for the 2014 Fiscal Year at its Aug. 14 meeting.

Per memorandum 2014-004, districts with 70 percent Obligated plus Pending on the Master Fund Status Report in MoSWIMS, at close of business on Oct. 15, were eligible for supplemental funds within each resource concern category which met the minimum requirements. The Soil and Water Conservation Program loaded supplemental cost-share allocations on Oct. 17 into MoSWIMS. Many districts were above 90 percent obligated in multiple resource concern areas, therefore, the supplemental allocations were provided as planned to allow for continued planning and implementation of conservation practices.

The Soil and Water Districts Commission indicated that they will review the status of district contracts at the Oct. 30 meeting, and may take further action due to interruptions caused by the government shutdown. Districts are encouraged to continue to work toward the threshold of 70 percent Obligated plus Pending prior to the Commission's consideration on Oct. 30.

The second planned supplemental will be based on obligated totals only from the Master Fund Status generated at the close of business on Dec. 13. To be eligible for the second supplemental allocation in any resource category, districts must have 80 percent of the funds obligated. As with the first supplemental, an analysis will be conducted after the close of business on Dec.13.

FY13 Total Cost-Share Payments Summary



Fiscal year 2013 was the highest cost-share year on record. The program greatly appreciates the efforts of local boards and staff in making this past year a huge success.



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