

PROPOSAL COVER SHEET

Please complete and submit this Cover Sheet with your grant. The completed Cover Sheet can be scanned and emailed to Thomas.anderson@mass.gov. Responses can also be sent in by regular mail to Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs, Division of Conservation Services, 100 Cambridge St., 10th Floor, Boston MA 02114.

Organization information to be used for the contract:

Organization Name: Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts (MACD)

Mailing address: 319 Littleton Road, Suite 205
Westford, MA 01886

Phone: 413-326-6353

Email: MLEffMACD@gmail.com

Website: massacd.org

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Vendor Code: VC6000174534
(if our organization has one)

CHIEF EXECUTIVE or authorized signatory:

Michael Leff, Executive Director

PRIMARY CONTACT FOR THIS GRANT REQUEST AND POSITION (provide name, phone, e-mail and address if different from above):



Authorized Signature

Michael Leff
Print Name

MACD Executive Director
Title

FY 25 GRANT PROJECT INFORMATION

GRANT AMOUNT REQUESTED:

Total \$ 80,000.00

TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET (from all sources, including grant.)

\$ 106,400.00

Total project match

\$ 26,400.00

Project name: MACD Healthy Soils Program

SUMMARY OF GRANT PROJECT (limit to 75 words) (Please also forward this summary of project electronically to thomas.anderson@mass.gov so we can easily cut and paste it in summary reports:

The Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts plans to launch the MACD Healthy Soils Program, which will advance the Massachusetts Healthy Soils Action Plan by enhancing the capacity of Conservation Districts and expanding healthy soils initiatives statewide. Led by a dedicated Program Coordinator, the initiative will promote collaboration, deliver targeted outreach and educational programming on sustainable practices, and develop web-based resources to improve access to soil health information across all sectors and all land uses.

EEA Challenge Grant Round Two proposal

MACD Healthy Soils Program

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts seeks funding to launch a new MACD Healthy Soils Program. This proposal reflects a revised and enhanced version of our original unsuccessful proposal, submitted for the EEA Challenge Grant First Round earlier this year. We have addressed the reviewer feedback on that original proposal and have made additional enhancements to craft what we believe is a strong and compelling proposal for this submission.

Key changes include:

- Additional details as requested on various components, including methodology, outreach, outcomes, metrics, and sustainability.
- Dropped our original plan to host a statewide soil test database from this phase of the program.
- Incorporated MACD's efforts to reestablish "inactive" Conservation Districts in eastern portions of the state as part of our outreach on this program.

Goals and Objectives

Our overall goal is to advance the Massachusetts Healthy Soils Action Plan (HSAP) to make information about the importance of soil health widely accessible to all stakeholders, including land managers, agricultural producers, partnering organizations, and interested individuals. In addition to providing basic education and outreach, MACD will provide technical assistance and guidance on implementing activities that protect and promote healthy soils. As a result of our programmatic efforts, we expect to see actions taken by those stakeholders that result in concrete and quantifiable benefits in all land uses across the state.

Our initiative will be led by an MACD Healthy Soils Program Coordinator, who will be responsible for improved communication, coordination, and collaboration with and between Conservation Districts as well as other organizations across the Commonwealth for more efficient and effective outreach to landowners, producers, and the general public.

To achieve our objectives, MACD's Healthy Soils Program will include the following activities:

- **Provide Soil Health Education and Technical Assistance:** Deliver workshops, training sessions, and resources tailored to various stakeholders, including agricultural producers and community members.
- **Convene Cross-Sector Meetings and Presentations:** Host regular forums that bring together diverse stakeholders to discuss best practices, share insights, and foster collaboration.
- **Develop a Statewide Clearinghouse of Soil Health and Conservation-Related Information:** Create an accessible online repository of resources that includes educational materials, Best Management Practice (BMP) guidelines, and case studies.

- **Compile and Disseminate Soil Test Results:** Gather and share soil health data from individual Conservation Districts and other entities to inform best practices and encourage informed decision-making.
- **Expand Healthy Soils Programs across All Counties:** Ensure that healthy soils initiatives reach all regions of Massachusetts, especially focusing on underrepresented areas.
- **Conduct Targeted Outreach in Counties Without Active Conservation Districts:** Identify and engage communities lacking direct Conservation District support to promote soil health awareness and practices.
- **Identify and Engage with Underserved Communities:** Develop targeted outreach strategies to involve and empower historically underserved populations in soil health initiatives.
- **Forge Connections among Disparate Entities:** Collaborate and build networks among agricultural organizations, conservation groups, and other stakeholders working on soil health and related issues.
- **Engage in Multi-Channel Communication Strategies:** Utilize social media, newsletters, and community events to increase awareness and participation in soil health programming.
- **Pursue Other Opportunities for Outreach and Education:** Remain flexible and proactive in seeking new partnerships and funding opportunities to expand the reach and effectiveness of the program.

Project Alignment with the Massachusetts Healthy Soils Action Plan

The creation of the MACD Healthy Soils Program will enable the active Conservation Districts to deliver soil-health programming more efficiently and effectively. Our program will also help revive the inactive Districts in eastern areas of the state (see map in Attachments section), which MACD is currently pursuing through complementary initiatives. And by utilizing our broad connections with conservation-related entities across the state, we will advance the Massachusetts Healthy Soils Action Plan in all regions and across all sectors. In particular, the MACD Healthy Soils Program aligns with the following HSAP goals:

- **Promote Soil Health:** MACD aims to enhance soil health resources through outreach, education, and technical assistance, serving as a clearinghouse for soil health information statewide.
- **Sustainable Land Management:** MACD supports Conservation Districts in promoting Best Management Practices (BMPs) among agricultural producers and will broaden the dissemination of these practices. Additionally, collaboration with other partnering organizations will extend educational programming to various landowners and industry professionals.
- **Community Engagement:** The MACD Healthy Soils Coordinator will actively engage with the conservation community, facilitating collaboration between partner Conservation Districts, related organizations, and their constituents throughout all regions of Massachusetts. This includes outreach to agricultural, residential, and other land managers, as well as diverse individuals and community organizations.

Methodology

The MACD Healthy Soils Program aims to advance the Massachusetts Healthy Soils Action Plan (HSAP) by boosting the capacity of individual Conservation Districts, strengthening the overall statewide Conservation District network, and expanding Healthy Soils initiatives statewide. To achieve these goals, the MACD Healthy Soils Coordinator will undertake the following actions:

1. Capacity Building and Communication:

- Promote and coordinate communication and collaboration among active Conservation Districts and other partnering conservation organizations to support the delivery of outreach programs that advance MA Healthy Soils Action Plan objectives and boost the capacity of Districts.
- Identify and connect with other entities engaged in conservation efforts, facilitating the expansion of Healthy Soils programs in areas currently lacking Conservation Districts and helping to reestablish active Districts in those counties (Bristol, Essex, Nantucket, Norfolk, Suffolk).

2. Outreach, Education, and Technical Assistance:

- Engage in direct outreach, education, and technical assistance to actively promote soil health resources and information across the state.
- Create, identify, and/or adapt educational programming for varied audiences on all land uses, including such topics as composting, organic lawn care, lawn conversion, climate resiliency for homeowners; soil-friendly landscape design for the nursery industry; regenerative agricultural practices for producers; and practices for non-producer landowners (residential, commercial, and institutional) that minimize soil disturbance, maximize soil cover, encourage biodiversity, and enhance carbon sequestration.
- Collaborate with Conservation Districts to encourage agricultural producers to adopt Best Management Practices (BMPs), such as cover crops, reduced tillage, and restoration of degraded farmlands.

3. Web-Based Resource Development:

- To ensure access to soil health tools and information for individuals and organizations throughout the Commonwealth, we will enlist the services of a professional Web Designer/Manager to create enhanced online resources stemming from outreach programming.
- This will include the development of an interactive resource library on the MACD website (www.massacd.org), featuring user-friendly web-based resources, recorded webinars, and educational materials generated by Conservation Districts and their partners.

4. Community Engagement:

- Actively work within the conservation community to facilitate engagement between partner Conservation Districts and their constituents across Massachusetts. Target groups will include agricultural and residential land managers as well as industry professionals, ensuring broad outreach and education.

- Support the broad dissemination of healthy soils resources, fostering community engagement and awareness.
- To reach diverse communities, we will collaborate with other conservation organizations throughout the state and especially in counties without active Conservation Districts. Potential collaborating organizations include Agricultural Commissions, American Farmland Trust, Massachusetts Land Trust Alliance, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation, Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Urban Farming Institute, and other regional and local conservation organizations.

This comprehensive methodology is designed to effectively support the goals of the MACD Healthy Soils Program, fostering a collaborative approach to soil health and sustainable land management across the state.

Expected Outcomes and Deliverables

- **Outcomes:**

- **Increased Awareness and Understanding of Soil Health:** Enhanced knowledge among stakeholders regarding the importance of soil health across various land uses.
- **Improved Collaboration among Conservation Entities:** Strengthened relationships and communication between active Conservation Districts and partnering organizations.
- **Expansion of Healthy Soils Program:** Successful establishment of Healthy Soils initiatives in regions that previously lacked active Conservation Districts.
- **Engagement of Underserved Communities:** Increased participation and access to soil health resources among underserved and diverse communities statewide.
- **Adoption of Best Management Practices (BMPs):** More agricultural producers considering BMPs that promote sustainable land management and soil health.
- **Facilitated Connections among Conservation Organizations:** Improved collaboration and resource sharing among various entities addressing soil health.
- **Enhanced Availability of Soil Health Resources:** Increased access to educational materials and resources related to soil health and sustainable practices.
- **Strengthened Technical Assistance:** Improved quality and availability of technical assistance regarding soil health practices for all stakeholders

- **Deliverables:**

- **Soil Health Education and Technical Assistance Programs:** Organized training sessions, workshops, and direct assistance focused on soil health education.
- **Statewide Clearinghouse of Information:** A comprehensive online repository of soil health and conservation-related resources on the MACD website.

- **Outreach Programming Materials:** Identification, adaptation, and distribution of materials related to composting, organic lawn care, climate resiliency, and other relevant topics.
- **Interactive Resource Library:** Creation of an interactive online library on the MACD website, featuring recorded webinars and educational resources.
- **Best Management Practices Guides:** Dissemination of guidelines for agricultural producers on adopting BMPs and sustainable practices.
- **Community Engagement Activities:** Targeted outreach initiatives aimed at fostering engagement with agricultural, residential, and industry stakeholders.
- **Collaborative Partnerships:** Formal partnerships with organizations such as Agricultural Commissions, American Farmland Trust, and many other conservation entities to enhance program reach and effectiveness.

BUDGET

Item	Challenge Grant	Cash Match	In-Kind Match
Healthy Soils Program Coordinator	\$60,000.00		
Web Designer/Manager Services	\$6,000.00		
Team Leader (1 hr/wk, 18 mos @ \$100/hr)	\$3,900.00	\$3,900.00	
Outreach-associated costs (supplies, postage, printing, etc.)	\$2,100.00		
MACD Board (5 members, 5 hrs/mo, 18 mos @ \$50/hr)			\$22,500.00
Overhead (10%) general operating expenses and grant management	\$8,000.00		
Totals:	\$80,000.00	\$3,900.00	\$22,500.00

In addition to the Cash and In-Kind Match indicated above, there are several other possibilities for leveraging MACD-funded projects:

- Our ongoing NRCS staffing agreement includes one staffer whose time is evenly split between their responsibilities as NRCS Program Assistant and Coordinator of the Statewide Local Working Group initiative, which is entirely complementary to the work described in this proposal. (Estimated cash value = \$37,500)
- Our collaboration on the American Farmland Trust Regenerative Ag RCPP involves informational outreach valued at \$15,000/year.
- We have submitted an NACD TA grant proposal to the National Association of Conservation Districts for \$120,000 to support complementary outreach targeted at the five Massachusetts counties without active Conservation Districts.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Previous Achievements, Qualifications, and Expertise

For the past several years, the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) has been an active participant in the Healthy Soils Program Advisory Group, which assisted in the development of EEA's Healthy Soils Action Plan (HSAP). The ad hoc group is comprised of numerous conservation organizations including American Farmland Trust, Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), Franklin Conservation District, the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC), NOFA/Mass, Regenerative Design Group, and others. All partners recommended that MACD play a leading role in HSAP implementation, and the group had proposed a robust budget for our involvement.

MACD has a long and successful history of experience managing numerous other conservation initiatives, including those summarized below:

- **Conservation District statewide network:** Since our founding in 1988, our fundamental role as the state association of Conservation Districts has been to support, represent, coordinate, and generally boost the capacity of all active Conservation Districts across the Commonwealth. Under the leadership of MACD's Executive Director, Michael Leff, MACD is engaged in vigorous outreach and close collaboration with all active Conservation Districts across the state, including such activities as convening periodic virtual and in-person group meetings, offering individualized guidance, as well as circulating a monthly newsletter and managing a revamped and highly active website (www.massacd.org) featuring events, funding opportunities, and other resources.

MACD worked with multiple Conservation Districts to help encourage, facilitate, and support their proposals for the EEA Healthy Soils Challenge Grants. (See attached Letters of Support from several Conservation Districts in support of our proposal for this MACD Healthy Soils Program.) We are now increasing our efforts to help revive Districts that have fallen inactive over the years due to varying factors inherent in such underfunded, volunteer-based organizations. The MACD Healthy Soils Program proposed here will greatly benefit our efforts in both areas of focus, promoting healthy soils while bolstering the statewide network of Conservation Districts.

- **Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP):** Since 2014, MACD has overseen a team of consultants conducting outreach to farmers in various watersheds across the state under MassDEP's 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution program. These projects encourage voluntary actions by agricultural operations to minimize water quality impacts through NRCS-designed Best Management Practices (BMPs). In addition, MACD has served as Agricultural Regional Coordinator for a related MassDEP 319 project, coordinating outreach and assessment activities among multiple partners (Regional Planning Agencies, Conservation Districts, and engineering consultants).
- **Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR):** For many years, MACD has led a year-round Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) monitoring program for MDAR through an experienced team of consultants. Each year has seen an increase in the total properties undergoing monitoring reflecting new easements that were

acquired and evaluated. MACD's APR monitoring program continues to showcase Massachusetts as a national leader in this field. Compliance monitoring by MACD staff affords a key oversight tool for the Commonwealth and its partners to ensure that the programs remain on track.

- **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS):** Under an ongoing agreement with NRCS Massachusetts, MACD employs several Program Assistants who serve in various NRCS Field Offices. In addition, MACD provides NRCS with a Forestry & Wildlife Implementation Specialist and a Statewide Local Working Group Coordinator, who serve constituencies in all regions. All these positions are designed to increase NRCS' capacity, enabling the agency to offer increased services across the Commonwealth.
- **Massachusetts Envirothon:** MACD serves as fiduciary for the Envirothon environmental education program in Massachusetts. In that role, MACD manages grant funding and serves on the Envirothon Council as an advisor.

Key Personnel, Qualifications, and Roles

- **Team Leader:** The Project Team will be assembled and led by Michael Leff, who joined the organization as MACD Executive Director in September 2020. In this capacity, he is responsible for a wide range of duties involved in managing a nonprofit organization – including developing and implementing strategy, financial management, organizational development, human resource management, partner communication and collaboration, and community/governmental outreach. He serves as project manager on all MACD work related to the organization's contracts and agreements with multiple agencies, including those listed above. In addition, he represents MACD on several standing committees, including the NRCS State Technical Committee, the EEA Healthy Soils Action Plan Workgroup, and the State Commission for the Conservation of Soil, Water & Related Resources. His extensive environmental background and leadership experience are highlighted in his resumé, attached.
- **Program Coordinator:** The MACD Healthy Soils Program Coordinator, funded by this grant, will play a crucial role in advancing the Massachusetts Healthy Soils Action Plan. The ideal candidate will have a background in environmental science, agriculture, or a related field, along with proven experience in program management and community outreach. Strong communication and organizational skills, as well as familiarity with agricultural practices and soil health principles, are essential for success in this position. Key responsibilities include:
 - **Program Coordination:** Oversee the delivery of outreach programs, ensuring effective communication and collaboration among Conservation Districts and partner organizations.
 - **Outreach and Education:** Develop and implement educational initiatives focused on soil health, sustainable practices, and Best Management Practices (BMPs) for diverse stakeholders, including agricultural producers and community members.

- **Resource Development:** Guide the creation of online resources, including interactive tools and educational materials, to promote soil health information and facilitate access for various audiences.
- **Community Engagement:** Actively collaborate with diverse communities and stakeholders to promote broad participation in Healthy Soils initiatives.
- **Performance Evaluation:** Apply an adaptive management approach to assess program effectiveness, model results, and make necessary adjustments to achieve desired outcomes.
- **Web Designer/Manager:** The Web Designer/Manager will play a vital role in developing and enhancing online resources that complement the outreach programming coordinated by MACD in collaboration with Conservation Districts and other organizations. This professional will be responsible for designing and posting a variety of digital materials, ensuring they are engaging, interactive, and user-friendly. They will assist with the recording and editing of webinars, making these valuable educational resources accessible on MACD's website, partner Conservation District sites, and platforms like YouTube to broaden public accessibility. In addition to content creation, the Web Designer/Manager will implement effective Search Engine Optimization (SEO) strategies to maximize the visibility and discoverability of conservation resources. Their expertise will ensure that stakeholders and the general public can easily locate and access critical information related to soil health, sustainable practices, and best management techniques.

PROJECT TIMELINE

Milestones (see Budget Notes * below table)

FY 2025	January - March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant award executed and project kickoff • Hire Program Coordinator * • Create strategic plan outlining activities and objectives • Submit quarterly progress report on initial actions
	April - June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Coordinator conduct general outreach • Establish collaborations with diverse partners • Identify and contract Web Designer/Manager ** • Submit quarterly progress report on outreach and partnerships
FY 2026	July - September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch enhanced web-based resources and interactive library • Develop and deliver educational programming • Develop methods to promote resources and participation • Submit quarterly progress report on resource usage and engagement

FY 2026	October - December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to deliver education programming and refine content based on feedback • Facilitate workshops in collaboration with partners • Conduct informal evaluations of programming effectiveness • Submit quarterly progress report summarizing activities and engagement outcomes
	January - March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and refine educational programming, focusing on community needs • Collect feedback from participants to inform future content and approach • Engage with community partners for expanded outreach • Submit quarterly progress report detailing educational efforts and results
	April - June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a final evaluation of project impact and effectiveness • Prepare and submit final report summarizing project activities, outcomes, lessons learned, and recommendations for sustainability • Host a closing event to share outcomes and celebrate achievements

Budget Notes:

- * First several months of Program Coordinator salary will fall within FY25, enabling EEA to expend portions of the full grant award during FY25, if helpful for EEA financial management. (For example, \$20K in FY25, \$40K in FY26.)
- ** Web Designer/Manager fees (\$6K) could be entirely front-loaded and paid in full before end of FY25, if helpful.

PROJECT EVALUATION AND MONITORING

Project evaluation and monitoring will be integral to the success of the MACD Healthy Soils Program. This will be achieved through regular meetings and ongoing communications with project partners and contractors, fostering a collaborative environment to assess progress. Key performance indicators will be established to track the development of various project components, ensuring they align with the goals and objectives outlined in the proposal.

In addition to routine check-ins, the team will collect and analyze feedback from stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of outreach and educational efforts. This continuous feedback loop will allow the Program Coordinator to make informed adjustments and improvements to programming as needed. By maintaining a strong focus on accountability and transparency, the

MACD Healthy Soils Program will effectively measure its impact and ensure that all activities remain on track and responsive to the needs of stakeholders.

Performance Metrics

1. **Number of Outreach Programs Conducted:** Target = 8-12 outreach programs per year.
2. **Participants Engaged in Educational Initiatives:** Target = 150-200 individuals attending workshops, webinars, and training sessions annually.
3. **Online Resource Engagement:** Target = 200-300 unique visitors to the MACD website and associated partner sites annually.
4. **Webinars Recorded and Posted:** Target = 1-3 webinars recorded and made available online each quarter.
5. **Stakeholder Feedback Collection:** Target = Achieve 70-90% positive feedback from participants regarding the quality and effectiveness of educational materials and outreach efforts.
6. **Community Engagement Initiatives:** Target = 5-10 partnerships developed with local organizations, especially in underrepresented communities each year.
7. **Progress Monitoring through Regular Evaluations:** Target = Produce quarterly progress reports shared with partners evaluating completion rates of project milestones throughout the project duration.

Reporting

Reporting of project progress will be conducted quarterly as described in milestones above, with a comprehensive final report at the conclusion of the grant period. Each quarterly report will include an overview of completed activities, key performance metrics, stakeholder engagement insights, and any challenges encountered along the way. This structured approach will ensure transparency and enable timely adjustments to the project's activities as needed. The final report will consolidate findings from the entire project period, highlighting significant accomplishments, lessons learned, and recommendations for future initiatives.

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

The proposed MACD Healthy Soils Program reflects a statewide initiative of growing importance, guided by the Massachusetts Healthy Soils Action Plan. As awareness of climate-related issues continues to grow nationally, MACD's active participation is essential for the longevity and effectiveness of soil health initiatives.

- **Post-Grant Project Sustainability Assessment:** To ensure the ongoing success of the MACD Healthy Soils Program, a sustainability assessment will be conducted towards the end of the grant period. This assessment will evaluate the project's key activities, stakeholder engagement, and overall impact on soil health. Findings will inform strategies for maintaining momentum beyond the grant period.
- **Partner Roles:** Collaboration with various partners will be crucial for sustaining this initiative. MACD will work closely with Conservation Districts, agricultural organizations, and community groups to foster a network of support for ongoing outreach programs.

These partners will play integral roles in implementation, knowledge sharing, and resource mobilization, ensuring that the principles established during the grant period continue to thrive.

- **Community Engagement:** Community engagement will remain a cornerstone of the sustainability plan. MACD will actively involve local residents, land managers, and industry professionals in continued outreach efforts, ensuring that the initiatives are responsive to community needs and priorities. This will involve engaging in multi-channel communication strategies, utilizing social media, newsletters, and community events to raise awareness and participation in soil health programming. By building strong relationships and encouraging local stewardship, we aim to create an enduring culture of soil health awareness and practice throughout the Commonwealth.

To sustain this project, MACD will actively pursue a variety of funding opportunities that align with its mission of promoting soil health and sustainable land management. This ongoing commitment will ensure that supplemental support is continually provided to Conservation Districts, enabling sustained outreach and education efforts. By embedding these activities into MACD's broader mission, we aim to secure the long-term impact of the MACD Healthy Soils Program and foster a resilient culture of soil health awareness and stewardship in all land uses and all sectors across the state.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Identification of Risk Considerations: Several potential risks may impact the successful execution of the MACD Healthy Soils Program, particularly given the virtual nature of much of the work. Key risk considerations include:

- **Weather-Related Disruptions:** Outdoor activities and in-person outreach events may be affected by adverse weather conditions, potentially leading to cancellations or delays.
- **Public Health Concerns:** Ongoing or future public health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, could limit in-person interactions and necessitate adjustments to outreach strategies.
- **Resource Availability:** Limited availability of resources – such as funding, personnel, volunteers, or technology – may affect the implementation of project activities.

Mitigation Strategies: To effectively manage these risks, MACD will implement the following mitigation strategies:

- **Flexible Scheduling:** Project scheduling will include alternate dates for any outdoor activities or events that may be impacted by weather conditions. This flexibility will help minimize disruptions.
- **Virtual Engagement Alternatives:** In the event of public health concerns, MACD will pivot to virtual engagement strategies, leveraging online platforms for workshops, webinars, and outreach activities. Lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic will inform the development of effective remote engagement methods.

- **Collaborative Resource Management:** MACD will foster strong partnerships and maintain open communication with project partners to identify potential resource gaps early and strategize collectively on solutions. This collaborative approach will help ensure that critical project components are sustained despite fluctuations in availability.

Through proactive risk assessment and mitigation planning, MACD is committed to navigating challenges effectively and ensuring the successful implementation of the Healthy Soils Program.

ATTACHMENTS

Letters of Support:

- NRCS Letter of Collaboration
- Conservation Districts:
 - Berkshire County Conservation District
 - Franklin County Conservation District
 - Hampden-Hampshire Conservation District
 - Worcester County Conservation District
 - Middlesex County Conservation District
- Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC)

Massachusetts County map: Active/Inactive Conservation Districts

Resumé: Michael Leff, MACD Executive Director

NRCS State Office

451 West St
Suite 1
Amherst, MA 01002

Nov. 18, 2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Division of Conservation Services
100 Cambridge Street, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Review Committee:

This letter of collaboration outlines our commitment and plan to work with the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) to support this initiative to promote awareness and adoption of practices that preserve and improve soil health across the Commonwealth.

MA NRCS partners with MACD and the Conservation Districts across the state and relies on these partnerships for a local connection to land stewards through effective outreach to landowners, producers, and the public. As part of the proposal MACD intends to take steps to help reestablish several inactive Conservation Districts in the eastern part of the state (Bristol, Essex, Nantucket, Norfolk, Suffolk) helping to reach communities that NRCS would continue our partnership in.

NRCS is focused on addressing the soil and water quality of the Commonwealth in partnership with the Conservation Districts. This proposal is consistent with that vision and the MACD staff and conservation districts will partner with NRCS to share financial and technical assistance information to landowners enabling them to address conservations resources on their properties.

We will continue to support the conservation districts with computer, and internet access, and office space where available. This project as proposed will further conservation work in the Commonwealth and benefit its citizens and natural resources.

Sincerely,

Dan Wright
State Conservationist



November 15, 2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Division of Conservation Services
100 Cambridge Street, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Letter of Support – MACD Healthy Soils Challenge Grant proposal

Dear Review Committee:

Please accept this letter of support for the proposal submitted by the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts titled “MACD Healthy Soils Program.” The Berkshire Conservation District is pleased to support this initiative to promote awareness and adoption of practices that preserve and improve soil health across the Commonwealth.

We understand that the goals of the project are to improve communication, coordination, and collaboration with and between Conservation Districts for more efficient and effective outreach to landowners, producers, and the general public. That could include such activities as providing technical assistance, convening cross-sector meetings, offering enhanced web-based resources, and other targeted activities.

As part of that effort, we appreciate that MACD intends to take steps to help reestablish several inactive Conservation Districts in the eastern part of the state (Bristol, Essex, Nantucket, Norfolk, Suffolk), building overall District capacity for improved access to soil health resources for land managers in these areas. By reviving the Districts, MACD will help to improve service to all communities and enhance soil health and other conservation efforts on their behalf.

All of the Conservation Districts across Massachusetts, and the communities they serve, have long benefitted from MACD’s efforts to improve collaboration among Districts and with other conservation organizations. The additional efforts outlined in MACD’s Challenge Grant proposal can play a major role in helping to advance the state’s Healthy Soils Action Plan by enhancing the impact of Conservation Districts and other organizations that are focused on preserving and improving soil health conditions in Massachusetts. We strongly support MACD’s proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam Galambos". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Adam" and last name "Galambos" clearly distinguishable.

Adam Galambos
Chair, Berkshire Conservation District



FRANKLIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT
59 MONTAGUE CITY RD, BOX 1 GREENFIELD, MA 01301
FRANKLINCONSERVATIONDISTRICT.ORG

November 13, 2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Division of Conservation Services
100 Cambridge Street, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Letter of Support – MACD Healthy Soils Challenge Grant proposal

Dear Review Committee:

Please accept this letter of support for the proposal submitted by the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts titled “MACD Healthy Soils Program.” Franklin Conservation District is pleased to support this initiative to promote awareness and adoption of practices that preserve and improve soil health across the Commonwealth.

We understand that the goals of the project are to improve communication, coordination, and collaboration with and between Conservation Districts for more efficient and effective outreach to landowners, producers, and the general public. That could include such activities as providing technical assistance, convening cross-sector meetings, offering enhanced web-based resources, and other targeted activities.

As part of that effort, we appreciate that MACD intends to take steps to help reestablish several inactive Conservation Districts in the eastern part of the state (Bristol, Essex, Nantucket, Norfolk, Suffolk), building overall District capacity for improved access to soil health resources for land managers in these areas. By reviving the Districts, MACD will help to improve service to all communities and enhance soil health and other conservation efforts on their behalf.

All of the Conservation Districts across Massachusetts, and the communities they serve, have long benefitted from MACD’s efforts to improve collaboration among Districts and with other conservation organizations. The additional efforts outlined in MACD’s Challenge Grant proposal can play a major role in helping to advance the state’s Healthy Soils Action Plan by enhancing the impact of Conservation Districts and other organizations that are focused on preserving and improving soil health conditions in Massachusetts. We strongly support MACD’s proposal.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Shores Ness, Chair



Hampden-Hampshire Conservation District
195 Russell St, Suite B6
Hadley MA 01035
T: (413) 362-4720

November 8, 2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Division of Conservation Services
100 Cambridge Street, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Letter of Support – MACD Healthy Soils Challenge Grant proposal

Dear Review Committee:

Please accept this letter of support for the proposal submitted by the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts titled “MACD Healthy Soils Program.” Hampden-Hampshire Conservation District is pleased to support this initiative to promote awareness and adoption of practices that preserve and improve soil health across the Commonwealth.

We understand that the goals of the project are to improve communication, coordination, and collaboration with and between Conservation Districts for more efficient and effective outreach to landowners, producers, and the general public. That could include such activities as providing technical assistance, convening cross-sector meetings, offering enhanced web-based resources, and other targeted activities.

As part of that effort, we appreciate that MACD intends to take steps to help reestablish several inactive Conservation Districts in the eastern part of the state (Bristol, Essex, Nantucket, Norfolk, Suffolk), building overall District capacity for improved access to soil health resources for land managers in these areas. By reviving the Districts, MACD will help to improve service to all communities and enhance soil health and other conservation efforts on their behalf.

All of the Conservation Districts across Massachusetts, and the communities they serve, have long benefitted from MACD’s efforts to improve collaboration among Districts and with other conservation organizations. The additional efforts outlined in MACD’s Challenge Grant proposal can play a major role in helping to advance the state’s Healthy Soils Action Plan by enhancing the impact of Conservation Districts and other organizations that are focused on preserving and improving soil health conditions in Massachusetts. We strongly support MACD’s proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leon R. Ripley". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Leon Ripley, Chair



Worcester County Conservation District
52 Boyden Road Holden, MA 01520
www.worcesterconservation.org

November 12, 2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Division of Conservation Services
100 Cambridge Street, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Letter of Support – MACD Healthy Soils Challenge Grant proposal

Dear Review Committee:

Please accept this letter of support for the proposal submitted by the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts titled “MACD Healthy Soils Program.” Worcester County Conservation District is pleased to support this initiative to promote awareness and adoption of practices that preserve and improve soil health across the Commonwealth.

We understand that the goals of the project are to improve communication, coordination, and collaboration with and between Conservation Districts for more efficient and effective outreach to landowners, producers, and the general public. That could include such activities as providing technical assistance, convening cross-sector meetings, offering enhanced web-based resources, and other targeted activities.

As part of that effort, we appreciate that MACD intends to take steps to help reestablish several inactive Conservation Districts in the eastern part of the state (Bristol, Essex, Nantucket, Norfolk, Suffolk), building overall District capacity for improved access to soil health resources for land managers in these areas. By reviving the Districts, MACD will help to improve service to all communities and enhance soil health and other conservation efforts on their behalf.

All of the Conservation Districts across Massachusetts, and the communities they serve, have long benefitted from MACD’s efforts to improve collaboration among Districts and with other conservation organizations. The additional efforts outlined in MACD’s Challenge Grant proposal can play a major role in helping to advance the state’s Healthy Soils Action Plan by enhancing the impact of Conservation Districts and other organizations that are focused on preserving and improving soil health conditions in Massachusetts. We strongly support MACD’s proposal.

Sincerely,

Tristan Lundgren, Chairman, Supervisor



Middlesex Conservation District

319 Littleton Road, Suite 205
Westford, MA 01886
(978) 303-8272

November 12, 2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Division of Conservation Services
100 Cambridge Street, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Letter of Support – MACD Healthy Soils Challenge Grant proposal

Dear Review Committee:

Please accept this letter of support for the proposal submitted by the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts titled “MACD Healthy Soils Program.” The Middlesex Conservation District is pleased to support this initiative to promote awareness and adoption of practices that preserve and improve soil health across the Commonwealth.

We understand that the goals of the project are to improve communication, coordination, and collaboration with and between Conservation Districts for more efficient and effective outreach to landowners, producers, and the general public. That could include such activities as providing technical assistance, convening cross-sector meetings, offering enhanced web-based resources, and other targeted activities.

As part of that effort, we appreciate that MACD intends to take steps to help reestablish several inactive Conservation Districts in the eastern part of the state (Bristol, Essex, Nantucket, Norfolk, Suffolk), building overall District capacity for improved access to soil health resources for land managers in these areas. By reviving the Districts, MACD will help to improve service to all communities and enhance soil health and other conservation efforts on their behalf.

All of the Conservation Districts across Massachusetts, and the communities they serve, have long benefitted from MACD’s efforts to improve collaboration among Districts and with other conservation organizations. The additional efforts outlined in MACD’s Challenge Grant proposal can play a major role in helping to advance the state’s Healthy Soils Action Plan by enhancing the impact of Conservation Districts and other organizations that are focused on preserving and improving soil health conditions in Massachusetts. We strongly support MACD’s proposal.

Sincerely,

Miryam Becker, Supervisor for the Middlesex Conservation District



Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions

protecting wetlands, open space and biological diversity through education and advocacy

November 18, 2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Division of Conservation Services
100 Cambridge Street, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Letter of Support – MACD Healthy Soils Challenge Grant proposal

Dear Review Committee:

Please accept this letter of support for the proposal submitted by the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) titled “MACD Healthy Soils Program.” The Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC) is pleased to support this initiative to promote awareness and adoption of practices that preserve and improve soil health across the Commonwealth.

We understand that the goals of the project are to improve communication, coordination, and collaboration with and between Conservation Districts for more efficient and effective outreach to landowners, producers, and the general public. That could include such activities as providing technical assistance, convening cross-sector meetings, offering enhanced web-based resources, and other targeted activities.

We are especially excited that MACD intends to take steps to help reestablish several inactive Conservation Districts in the eastern part of the state (Bristol, Essex, Nantucket, Norfolk, Suffolk), building overall District capacity for improved access to soil health resources for land managers in these areas. By reviving the Districts, MACD will help to improve service to all communities and enhance soil health and other conservation efforts on their behalf.

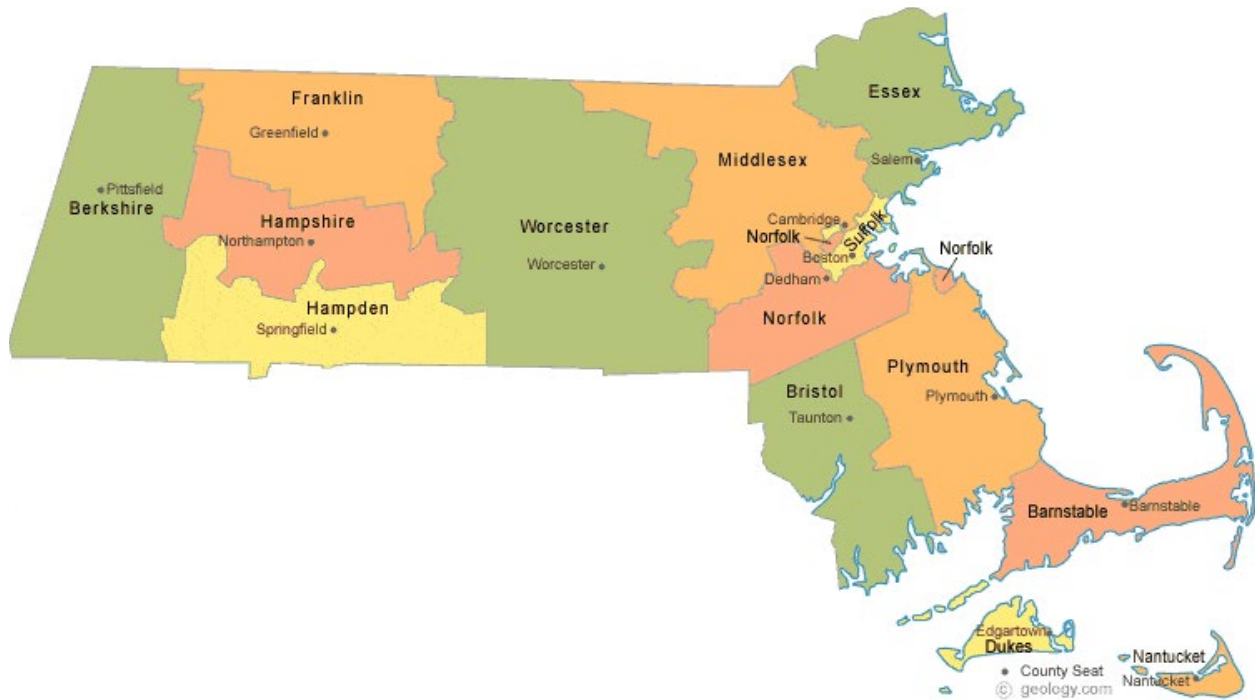
All of the Conservation Districts across Massachusetts, and the communities they serve, have long benefitted from MACD’s efforts to improve collaboration among Districts and with other conservation organizations.

We look forward to future “cross-pollination” between MACC, MACD, and the newly active Conservation Districts. Together, we all can work to soil health conditions in Massachusetts. We strongly support MACD’s proposal.

Sincerely,
Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions

Dorothy A. McGlincy
Executive Director

Massachusetts Counties – with and without active Conservation Districts



Counties with **active** Conservation Districts:

Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden/Hampshire, Worcester, Middlesex, Plymouth, Barnstable (Cape Cod), Dukes (Martha's Vineyard)

Counties with **inactive** Conservation Districts:

Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Suffolk, Bristol, Nantucket

Michael Leff



ENVIRONMENTAL WORK EXPERIENCE

Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts (<https://massacd.wordpress.com>) (2020 to present)

➤ **Executive Director**

- Responsible for the overall administration and operation of the MACD and its associated programs. Primary duties and responsibilities include outreach and communications, government affairs, and nonprofit management and revenue development.
- Hire and supervise all MACD staff, including performance reviews and professional development.
- Identify, secure, and manage all grants and contracts, providing oversight of all consultants.
- Provide leadership on strategic planning, policy development, and organizational development.
- Recruit and sustain vibrant network of local conservation districts across the Commonwealth.
- Develop and maintain effective working relationships with elected officials, agency staff, and other organizations in support of local conservation districts.

Ecological Connections, Chesterfield, MA (www.ecologicalconnections.com) (2015 to present)

➤ **Independent Environmental Consultant**

- Sole proprietor of a skilled and versatile environmental consulting service dedicated to making connections across landscapes and between people.
- Focus areas: Landscape Connectivity & Cross-Border Collaboration / Environmental Education, Outreach & Research / Partnership Management / Ecological Restoration / Watershed Protection / Urban & Community Forestry / Climate Resiliency / Environmental Sustainability
- Services include: Project planning, implementation, and management / Program development / Partner and stakeholder engagement / Communications and editorial services / Team leadership / Organizational Development (See www.ecologicalconnections.com for key projects.)

Davey Institute / USDA Forest Service, Philadelphia, PA (2012-2015)

➤ **Research Urban Forester, Ecosystem Services Team**

- Lead the development of “[The Sustainable Urban Forest: A Step-by-Step Approach](http://treesarethekey.org/background/),” a comprehensive guide for communities of all sizes, and one of the key goals of the USFS *Vibrant Cities & Urban Forests* call to action. (<http://treesarethekey.org/background/>)
- Serve as Founding “Ambassador” of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership for the Delaware River Watershed, an initiative co-led by USFS, NPS, NOAA, EPA, and other federal collaborators, and involving coordination with cross-sector partners at all levels. (www.urbanwaters.gov/delaware)
- Help integrate i-Tree assessment and management software into community forestry programs, and guide development as an ecological restoration and green infrastructure tool. (www.itreetools.org)

Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, Philadelphia, PA (2006-2011)

➤ **Urban Forestry Program Manager, Philadelphia Green**

- Direct Southeast PA TreeVitalize partnership, an urban forestry program launched by PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. (<http://www.treevitalize.net/aboutus.aspx>)
- Lead organizational efforts to explore, develop, and coordinate urban ecological restoration activities, drawing on affiliation with Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) and an extensive network of experts.
- Oversee various environmental stewardship projects and special initiatives, with a focus on project planning and implementation, as well as partnership management.

– more –

➤ **Watershed Programs Manager**

- Facilitate watershed partnerships; work with municipal officials, state and federal government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community groups; and coordinate water resource projects in areas such as stormwater management, watershed restoration, and educational outreach.
- Serve as Acting Executive Director of TTF Watershed Partnership, leading its incorporation as a multi-municipal, tax-exempt nonprofit organization, still thriving after 13 years. (<http://ttfwatershed.org/>)

Awbury Arboretum, Philadelphia, PA

(2001-2005)

➤ **Land Manager**

- Direct program to restore and maintain 55-acre urban green space as aesthetically pleasing, ecologically beneficial, and historically sensitive landscape. Develop and manage various ecological restoration projects – including a model, multi-partner, urban watershed restoration. (<http://awbury.org/about/>)
- Determine optimal methods and oversee efforts to control invasive plants, both exotic and native.
- Help identify funding sources and prepare grant proposals for land management projects and equipment.

➤ **Job Training Coordinator**

- Work with colleagues in Awbury's Landscape Maintenance and Horticulture Job Training Program to offer hands-on education and provide employment skills and opportunities to homeless adults.

PREVIOUS EDITORIAL WORK EXPERIENCE

InteliHealth.com, Aetna Inc., Blue Bell, PA

(1999-2001)

➤ **Internet Product Manager and Editorial Director**

- Work with editorial team of leading consumer health website to ensure that all content meets user needs and company goals, including *The Johns Hopkins Health Insider*, a monthly print and online newsletter.

Consumer Reports on Health, Consumers Union of U.S. Inc., Yonkers, NY

(1988-1999)

➤ **Founding Editor and Manager**

- Guide development of highly respected 12-page monthly newsletter, from initial launch to sustained profitability and growth. Responsible for staff recruitment and leadership, financial management, editorial development, and administrative oversight. Manage all organizational resources. (<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/health/index.htm>)
- Collaborate on production/design, marketing/promotion, media outreach, and advocacy activities.

Freelance writer and editor, Burlington, VT

(1981-1988)

- Wide range of communications, from technical reports to marketing materials to feature articles.

EDUCATION & AFFILIATIONS

Society for Ecological Restoration, New England Chapter, Board Chair	(since 2018)
Society for Ecological Restoration, Mid-Atlantic Chapter, Past-President	(since 2005)
Society for Ecological Restoration International, Northeast North America Regional Rep	(2011-2015)
Urban Ecology Collaborative, Urban Forestry Workgroup and Steering Committee	(2008-2015)
International Society for Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborist (PD-1975A)	(since 2010)

University of Virginia, B.A., Psychology, 1979



(11/2020)

NRCS State Office

451 West St
Suite 1
Amherst, MA 01002

Nov. 18, 2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Division of Conservation Services
100 Cambridge Street, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Review Committee:

This letter of collaboration outlines our commitment and plan to work with the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) to support this initiative to promote awareness and adoption of practices that preserve and improve soil health across the Commonwealth.

MA NRCS partners with MACD and the Conservation Districts across the state and relies on these partnerships for a local connection to land stewards through effective outreach to landowners, producers, and the public. As part of the proposal MACD intends to take steps to help reestablish several inactive Conservation Districts in the eastern part of the state (Bristol, Essex, Nantucket, Norfolk, Suffolk) helping to reach communities that NRCS would continue our partnership in.

NRCS is focused on addressing the soil and water quality of the Commonwealth in partnership with the Conservation Districts. This proposal is consistent with that vision and the MACD staff and conservation districts will partner with NRCS to share financial and technical assistance information to landowners enabling them to address conservations resources on their properties.

We will continue to support the conservation districts with computer, and internet access, and office space where available. This project as proposed will further conservation work in the Commonwealth and benefit its citizens and natural resources.

Sincerely,

Dan Wright
State Conservationist