



Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts

2026 General Assembly Session

1996 to 2017:
\$1,150,000 - \$975,000
General Fund Dollars

2018 to 2023:
\$907,300 - \$900,000
Tobacco Settlement Dollars

2024-2026:
\$1,000,000
Tobacco Settlement Dollars

2027-2028:
\$886,500 - \$819,300
Direct Aid Funding

Funding Request
\$2 Million Annually

For more information,
visit our website:
www.kyconservation.com

DID YOU KNOW?

- Grassroots Conservation: **80+ Years** Strong in Kentucky!
- **Every citizen** in Kentucky is **represented** by a Conservation District.
- There are **121 Conservation Districts** across KY.
- **847 locally elected officials** across the Commonwealth, serve on county district boards.
- Every Kentuckian **lives within a watershed**.
- Districts **protect 150+ Watershed Dams** statewide.
- **Thousands of landowners** are **supported** through cost share programs.
- Conservation Education **impacts thousands of students** annually across the Commonwealth.
- Each district tailors its programs to **meet the unique needs** of its local community!

Lasting Impact: Stronger Soils ~ Cleaner Water ~ Reduced Flooding

Direct Aid for Conservation Districts

1. Statutory Compliance

- Direct Aid funds support each county's conservation district in meeting statutory responsibilities.
- Funding distribution is based on compliance with oversight requirements of the Soil and Water Conservation Commission (audits, reports, scheduling, etc.).
- Direct Aid funds help cover the cost of the statutorily required audits of conservation districts.

2. Leveraging Federal & Local Resources

- Direct Aid provides the local match for federal agreements, enabling districts to hire essential technical and administrative staff.
- An 80% federal agreement is available to districts for technical assistance, but due to limited availability of the 20% local match, only 28 technicians have been hired statewide.

3. Maintaining Local Presence

- These funds help sustain district offices in **EVERY** Kentucky county—including those without an NRCS office—ensuring services remain accessible to citizens.

4. Proven Local Investment

- With the support of Direct Aid funds, districts can provide additional local cost share funds, as well as environmental programs to their communities, such as household hazardous waste collections, metal recycling, fallen animal pickup, soil testing, etc.
- Since 2001, 111 conservation districts have distributed \$145,705,450 in TSA Funds to implement various local conservation projects and programs.
- 67 Districts across the Commonwealth administer CAIP programs in 70 counties, in partnership with the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board and the Kentucky Office of Agricultural Policy.
- Direct Aid dollars are proven to facilitate reinvestment in the local communities across the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

State Funding of PL-566 Watershed Structures Rehabilitation & Repair

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (PL-566) authorizes USDA NRCS to assist local governments with watershed projects. We request special funds to establish a Matching Watershed Dam Infrastructure Revolving Fund to leverage federal and local dollars for rehabilitation and repair of high-hazard watershed dams across the Commonwealth.



Funding Request -
Budget Line Item of \$5 Million Annually

Kentucky Soil Erosion & Water Quality State Cost Share Program

High Demand, Limited Funding, Critical Conservation



1. Supporting Farmers & Compliance

- Provides landowners and producers with financial assistance to implement best management practices (BMPs) and maintain compliance with their Agricultural Water Quality Plans.
- Assists landowners under the "Bad Actor Clause" of the Ag Water Quality Act in taking corrective action to achieve compliance.

2. Protecting Ky Soil & Water Natural Resources

- Strengthens soil health, improves water quality, and builds agricultural resilience while reducing erosion and nutrient runoff across the Commonwealth.
- Clean water is essential for farmers to supply safe food for our growing population.

3. Leveraging Funds & Benefitting Local Economies

- Every state dollar invested leverages additional local and federal funds.
- Generates economic activity for contractors, farm supply businesses, seed and fertilizer dealers, and other local industries.

4. Unmet Demand & Urgent Need

- FY 2025 Applications:** 699 requests totaling \$7.97 million.
- Approved:** 363 projects, allocating \$3.96 million.
 - Farmers are ready to act, but limited funding delays implementation.

Funding Request: \$3 Million Annually

Expanding appropriations will reduce nutrient runoff, increase soil productivity, and protect Kentucky's water resources.



Fencing



Bo Renfro Structure



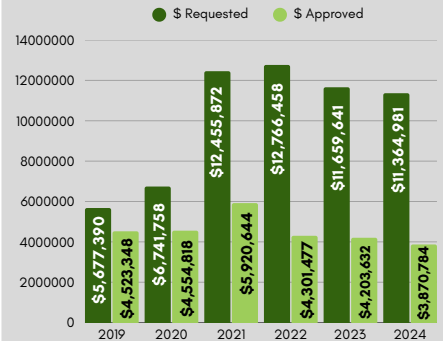
Pipeline & Tank



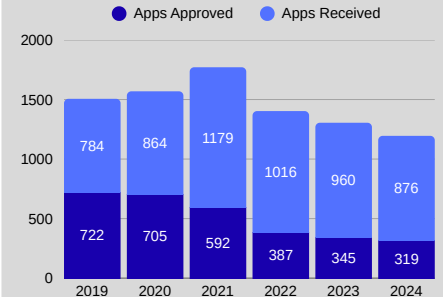
Heavy Use Area

Program Years 2025 & 2026: \$2,000,000
Appropriated from Tobacco Settlement Funds

Program Years 2019 to 2024: \$2,500,000
Appropriated from Tobacco Settlement Funds



Average requests far exceed available funding each year.



In the previous 6 years, thousands of applications were unable to be approved due to the lack of available funding.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Kentucky has experienced **multiple billion-dollar flood disasters** in the past decade.
- The **2022 Eastern Kentucky floods** damaged or destroyed **over 9,000** homes.
- Repeated flooding increases recovery costs and risks for families year after year.
- EWP Home Buyouts **save taxpayer dollars** by removing homes from high-risk floodplains and restoring natural flood buffers.
- Eastern Ky EWP Home Buyout Program has received nearly 600 applications, successfully purchasing 110 properties at almost \$15 million **supporting the revitalization of the lives** shattered by the 2022 floods.
- Conservation Districts provide **local expertise and trusted community connections**, making recovery faster and more effective.

April 2025 Flooding Events and Impact on PL 566 Watershed Dams

Kentucky received an unprecedented amount of rainfall event, with some areas receiving nearly 16 inches of rain in April 2025 alone. Of the 200 P.L. 566 Watershed dams in Kentucky, 197 of them received an alert on NRCS's DamWatch system, 136 had auxiliary spillway flow, six dams were over-topped, 70 dams had sustained damage caused by the rainfall event, and 49 dams were eligible for federal Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) matching funding to repair the structures. This federal program requires 75% of federal funds to be matched by 25% state or local funds. To assist local sponsoring districts in this effort, the Soil and Water Conservation Commission Utilized funds from a special 2022 \$5 Million KY Legislative Appropriation to assist meeting the required match. The Commission has approved 44 dam repair request, assisting 14 watershed conservancy or conservation districts, for \$2,306,275.90 to match the estimated \$12.5 Million federal dollars to make the required repairs to these important infrastructure dams.

USDA NRCS - Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Home Buyout Program

The EWP Program provides federal assistance to communities impacted by natural disasters. The EWP- Home Buyout Program allows eligible homeowners in flood-prone areas to voluntarily relocate, protecting lives, reducing future disaster costs, and restoring natural floodplains.

Role of Conservation Districts

- Serve as local sponsors and assist with outreach, application support, and coordination with NRCS.
- Provide on-the-ground expertise to help counties navigate the program's requirements.
- Ensure funds are invested quickly and effectively to safeguard communities.
- Support long-term land management after buyouts to restore natural resources and reduce future risk.

Why It Matters

- Protects Kentuckians from repeat flood damage.
- Saves taxpayer dollars by reducing disaster recovery costs.
- Strengthens local resilience while conserving natural resources.

Request: Support Conservation Districts in serving as trusted local partners in federal disaster programs, ensuring communities receive timely assistance and protection.