

Honorable Chairman Monson and Members of the House Appropriations Committee - Education and Environment Division,

My name is Barton Schott and I farm near Kulm, North Dakota. I also serve as Chair of the State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC). In both of these roles, I see firsthand the value of NDSU Extension programs and Soil Conservation Districts (SCDs) across the state.

I am writing to provide my personal support for SB 2020, the Senate-approved budget for NDSU Extension and the SSCC. I am also asking this committee to consider restoring the SSCC allocation within this budget to the level approved in the 2017 session (\$1,212,800), which has since been cut by 10%. The funds allocated to the SSCC are distributed directly to SCDs across the state. Districts use these funds to provide technical assistance and conservation planning support to residents, creating a direct, voluntary, locally-led conservation impact in every corner of the state.

Many SCDs are able to leverage these funds as match dollars for federal grants, more than doubling the impact of the state dollars they receive. I've recently seen the excellent return on investment numbers that ag research provides the state, and I am confident that funds allocated to SCDs produce a similar return.

Thanks to the District Activity Reporting Tool (DART), recently built to advance district accountability, I am able to report that in 2020 SCDs in North Dakota:

- Presented conservation and ag literacy educational programs to more than 9,600 K-12 students and 900 college students
- Seeded more than 7,300 acres of cover crops and nearly 4,000 acres of grasslands for soil health, livestock forage and wildlife habitat
- Planted more than 700 miles of erosion-reducing windbreaks, including more than 32,000 hand-planted trees
- Provided conservation-based workshops, programs and field days to more than 4,000 attendees
- Tested more than 1,400 water samples to ensure the safety of people and livestock
- Planned and installed more than 25 miles of water pipeline to improve livestock distribution and increase ranch profitability
- Conducted more than 900 hours of soil testing and nearly 800 hours of soil mapping for ag producers

These activities were completed despite the logistical and budgetary constraints that we all faced in 2020, and are just a few of the many important things SCDs do for our state. Your support for the restoration of the SSCC budget will allow SCDs to expand these programs and continue to preserve our most valuable natural resources, our soil and water.

Thank you for your hard work in support of our great state, and for your consideration of this letter. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Barton Schott
State Soil Conservation Committee Chair
Kulm, ND
701-647-2272
bartonschott1@gmail.com