

Members of the State Board of Agriculture Research and Education,

Our state's natural resources are heavily utilized to support high revenue generating industries such as agriculture, oil drilling, gas extraction, tourism, and hunting and fishing. That said, it is critical that as a state we actively and purposely work to protect and conserve our air, land, and water resources as well as wildlife and aquatic habitats. The continued extraction of energy resources, although important to our state's economic viability, results in soil and habitat disturbances that may have long-lasting impacts. Without effective, research-based reclamation responses, these continued disturbances have the potential to negatively impact the environment, eventually minimizing future productivity capabilities.

NDCC statute 4.20-01 states that "It is the policy of this state . . . to provide conservation of the soil and soil resources of this state and for the control and prevention of soil erosion, and to preserve the state's natural resources, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, assist in maintaining the navigability of rivers, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of this state." The State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC) supports this policy as well as the mission of the 54 Soil Conservation Districts across the state of North Dakota. These locally-led organizations exist to protect our most precious resources and to educate the community using evidence-based research. Districts are charged with supporting conservation education and best management practices on lands not only impacted by farming practices, but also natural areas such as forests, grasslands, and wetlands.

If we continue to ask more from our land and its abundant resources, then we must strive to protect it through continued innovative research on wildlife habitat management, land reclamation, and conservation programming of natural areas in addition to increased public outreach and conservation education. The leaders and citizens of North Dakota have demonstrated a positive record of supporting conservation of our natural resources. As a Land Grant University, NDSU has a responsibility to be on the forefront of cutting-edge research necessary to further reclamation and conservation practices while advancing agriculture and energy development.

The SSCC supports a state-wide initiative to provide a NDSU main campus faculty position with a split appointment and two new Extension Specialists at the Research Extension Centers. NDSU Extension has demonstrated its ability to conduct and collect research and share information with Agents and Soil Conservation Districts across the state. The local structure of the SCD organization allows best management practices to be widely communicated to community stakeholders. Further, districts have developed an extensive network of partners whom they frequently collaborate with when putting conservation practices on the ground. The State Soil Conservation Committee respectfully requests that SBARE support this state-wide initiative to ensure continued economic success and conservation of our state's natural resources.

Sincerely,

State Soil Conservation Committee
Wesley Frederick
Jodi DeLozier