



Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice and Access Action Plan

Adopted by the Madison SWCD Board of Commissioners on March 29, 2024

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice and Access Philosophy

The Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) formally denounces racism and discrimination in any form. We are committing to gain greater awareness and understanding of issues important to diverse communities, and we support actions to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and access in conservation. We prioritize equity and environmental justice by championing fair access to resources and opportunities in order to make conservation delivery accessible and available to all residents of Madison County.

Our mission to conserve, protect, and enhance resources for present and future generations means we focus our programming on engaging diverse partnerships and stakeholders, offering tailored solutions, addressing disparities, and empowering communities through education. Through our conservation planning, monitoring, and outreach efforts, our goal is for all residents of Madison County to benefit from our natural resources equitably and sustainably.

Our action plan will include encouragement of non-agricultural and historically underserved members of our county to become involved in SWCD activities to help us grow equality and inclusion of underserved communities in our district's soil and water conservation efforts. We believe opportunities and benefits of programs are strengthened for customers and employees when working towards the common good by improving outreach for all through our conservation funding, benefits, and enrichment opportunities.

Diversity Equity Inclusion Justice and Access (DEIJA) Goals

Madison SWCD's Priority Goals as listed in our *MSWCD 5-year Soil and Water Resource Conservation Plan* (with sub letters addressing DEIJA goals within these goals):

1. Inform the community through outreach and education.
 - a. Strive to have outreach attendance diversity percentages mirror that of Madison County's diversity percentages from the U.S. Census.
 - b. Seek or create programming that fosters relationships with historically underserved community members.
 - c. Sponsor at least one school-aged outreach / education event a year.
 - d. Seek and create urban outreach opportunities to display soil and water conservation techniques to those not traditionally exposed to agriculture or conservation on a broad scale.
 - e. Our educational outreach will continue to include traditional agricultural conservation resources and information. Our DEIJA goals will encourage thought that creates more non-agricultural and urban outreach opportunities with our educational programming to include the 90.31% of our county's population that is considered non-agricultural, as conservation of natural resources should be of high value to everyone.
 - f. Seek or create programming to benefit non-traditional and specialty farms.
 - g. Understand funding opportunities that specifically target underserved communities.

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2. Conserve, protect, and enhance our SOIL through education, technical and financial assistance, assessment, and practical application of the best conservation practices in agricultural, rural, and urban areas.
 - a. Sponsor at least one “open to the public” soil outreach / education event a year.
 - b. Improve awareness in historically underserved communities through diverse partnerships with entities that share our common goals in order to increase our conservation footprint.
 - c. Understand funding opportunities that specifically target underserved communities.

3. Conserve, protect, and enhance our WATER through education, technical and financial assistance, assessment, and practical application of the best conservation practices in agricultural, rural, and urban areas.
 - a. Sponsor at least one “open to the public” water outreach / education event a year.
 - b. Improve community awareness by attaining funding to install signage for streams and/or watershed boundaries on paved county roads in our district.
 - c. Understand funding opportunities that specifically target underserved communities.
 - d. Improve awareness in historically underserved community members through diverse partnerships with entities that share our common goals in order to increase our conservation footprint.

4. Conserve, protect, and enhance WILDLIFE HABITAT and LANDSCAPE DIVERSITY through education, technical and financial assistance, assessment, and practical application of the best conservation practices in agricultural, rural, and urban areas.
 - a. Sponsor at least one “open to the public” wildlife habitat / landscape diversity outreach / education event a year.
 - b. Partner with county government and municipalities to develop plans that encourage conservation as well as outdoor recreation opportunities to all residents.
 - c. Understand funding opportunities that specifically target underserved communities.

5. Be an Outstanding District!
 - a. Take the lead in developing innovative ideas to integrate DEIJA into our education and outreach efforts.
 - b. Madison SWCD relies heavily on commissioners and staff working as a cohesive unit. The SWCD board of commissioners are elected by the public, which makes it difficult to implement DEIJA goals related to board demographics. Our board commits to support DEIJA through assistant commissioner recruitment of qualified historically underserved individuals in order to increase diversity. We plan to recruit assistant commissioners by identifying projects that the district needs assistance with, identifying individuals who possess skills and experience that would benefit the project, and inviting those individuals to join the board to assist with those efforts in a capacity they are comfortable with. As these individuals gain experience and familiarity with the SWCD, they will be more prepared to run for office as elections occur.
 - c. Create diverse partnerships with entities that share our common goals to increase our conservation and outreach footprint.
 - d. Be aware of members of our office that are bilingual, and what languages are spoken, to hasten dialogue with customers when language barriers are present.
 - e. Learn from past events and strive to make each event better than the last. Well-organized events increase attendance at future events, allowing us to focus on the educational opportunities.

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- f. Seek diverse input within our Local Working Group.

DEIJA Outreach Strategy

The Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District includes rural areas as well as the following urban municipalities: Winterset (county seat), Bevington, Earlham, East Peru, Macksburg, Patterson, St. Charles, Truro, and a small portion of rapidly expanding West Des Moines. Madison County is also one of five counties that make up the Greater Des Moines-West Des Moines Metropolitan Statistical Area.

In the 2022 Agricultural Census, Madison County showed 13 historically underserved individuals of minority race. With only 0.1% of our county total population being historically underserved ethnicities operating farms, educational outreach is the best way to reach the group of 562 residents that do not identify as white. As the West Des Moines Metropolitan municipalities grow further into our county, racial diversity could increase to increased metropolitan population centers being where minorities historically reside. We will position ourselves to be prepared to welcome greater diversity into our county and programming.

Madison County Producers by race according to the 2022 Agricultural Census:

| | |
|---|-------|
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 2 |
| Asian | 3 |
| Black or African American | 2 |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | 0 |
| More than one race reported | 6 |
| Producers of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin... | 19 |
| White | 1,964 |

The 2022 Agricultural Census Madison County showed 700 female individuals operating farms. This historically underserved demographic is the category we could most encourage improving diversity and equity with our programs in Madison County. Women comprise 50% of our total population, but only make up 35.4% of the agricultural operators category.

Madison County Producers by gender according to the 2022 Agricultural Census:

| | |
|--------------|-------|
| Male | 1,277 |
| Female | 700 |

Another demographic perceived as underserved by our district are those not currently involved in agriculture. The urban/non-ag sector of our population is by far the most underfunded demographic in Madison SWCD. If we plan to advocate for and better align institutional equity into the work and practices of the SWCD to ensure every customer is put into a position to succeed in a diverse government world and notably feel inclusiveness to agency programs and services, this demographic should be considered.

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| Non Ag / Urban population..... | 15,059 |
| Ag Producers..... | 1,977 |

Madison SWCD could engage historically underserved producers and community members through a wide range of opportunities. Our educational and outreach programming could be specifically tailored to encourage attendance by underserved groups. We could also increase participation by encouraging and supporting chapters, associations, and groups such as “Women, Land, & Legacy” in Madison County.

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Our recruitment goals include an annual outreach to 200+ school-aged youth to encourage agriculture and conservation efforts while historically underserved children are still in their formative years. Through our annual outreach at the Madison County Fair and other community events, we seek to share influence toward 50+ potential urban/acreage customers. The board of commissioners commits to inviting 3 new assistant commissioners in the next year to bring added diversity into our awareness and efforts. Lastly our office will continue to make an effort to bring traditionally underserved individuals into our programs and provide knowledge and financial assistance.

Budget

The majority of Madison SWCD’s DEIJA plan can be worked into existing programs with funding already on the books by modifying our programming without any added budget adjustments. If needed, added funds for outreach (e.g., website, publications) it could come from general funds raised by cultipacker rentals, product sales (soil sampling bags, etc.), and/or general fundraising and donations.

Measurable Outcomes

Madison SWCD will compile of summary of public events including event name, date, location, attendance (including attendance numbers by gender and race) and comments relevant to improve future events. The event summary will be filed with meeting minutes. The SWCD will track historically underserved producers that have been served through our programs and services by notation within our monthly meeting minutes. Additionally, the annual report will summarize the year’s efforts and track progress toward goals.

Madison SWCD’s efforts will be quantified by comparison of outreach attendance diversity numbers and employment monitoring compared to the most current numbers included in the United States Census of Agriculture and the United States Census Bureau as provided by the United States Government as listed in the chart below.

| Demographic | Total 2022 US Census | % of total US Census * | Total of 2022 US Agricultural census | % of total US AG census ** | % of 17,036 county population that are Ag producers in each category |
|------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Total Population | 17,036 | - | 1977 | - | 11.6% |
| Men (gender) | 8,518 | 50% | 1277 | 64.6% | 7.5% |
| Female (gender) | 8,518 | 50% | 700 | 35.4% | 4.1% |
| White (race) | 16,474 | 96.7% | 1964 | 99.3% | 11.5% |
| Other (race) | 562 | 3.3% | 13 | 0.7% | 0.1% |

*Green highlight indicates column should be targeted diversity %’s of public outreach and educational programming attendance.

**Yellow highlight indicates column should be targeted diversity %’s of employment recruitment and ag directed programming attendance.

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Board Mentorship Program Plan

Madison SWCD's active policies, goals, and strategies promote equal opportunities and representation for all of our county's population diversity throughout programming and hiring.

The board will mentor participation of underserved community candidates through the use of the assistant commissioner position. Qualified DEIJA assistant commissioners will be sought out by the board and asked to participate in an advisory capacity to elected board members while fostering opportunities for them to become elected officials of the SWCD.

Madison SWCD is an equal opportunity employer and these hiring policies will provide just and equitable consideration to eligible underserved or minority candidates. The DEIJA plan will not give bias to weaker candidates during hiring in order to meet its goals, but it will give weighted consideration to minority candidates of similar education and experience in order to achieve workplace equity.

The Madison Soil and Water Conservation District will perform and record in their meeting minutes bi-annual demographic assessments of the district's board of commissioners, assistant commissioners, and SWCD employees in order to compare the social matrix of race and gender during hiring and recruitment to be compared to the diversity matrix of the most recent United States Agriculture Census for Madison County. The schedule of these assessments will be observed as follows: January 1 (calendar year start) and July 1 (fiscal year start).

Roles and Responsibilities / Accountability

All members of the Madison SWCD office are, at our core, responsible for actively engaging all members of our local communities to better understand conservation issues important to all diverse populations within the state of Iowa. We should also strive to encourage greater diversity in our local elections and create an even greater transparency and open dialogue in Madison SWCD's outreach, funding, and programs.

The Conservation Assistant (CA) holds accountability for posting the DEIJA Plan where required or helpful to maintain transparency and consistency of message, to set up and monitor programs and outreach efforts, and assign responsibility to document program attendance diversity counts in an event summary added to meeting minutes.

The board of commissioners is responsible for maintenance and upkeep to the DEIJA Plan document including an annual review of the document including review of goals by our Planning Committee. The board is also responsible to conduct bi-annual staffing demographic assessments. The board is also responsible for documenting DEIJA efforts in meeting minutes.

The board's secretary or co-secretary are responsible for recording minutes that reflect and document any focused efforts towards our DEIJA plan including bi-annual demographic assessments of the SWCD's board of commissioners, assistant commissioners, and SWCD employees and programming attendance diversity numbers.