

Know your audience. Have a plan.
Develop the message. Maintain a consistent image.
Be creative. Pursue new audiences.

Fall 2008



See page 6

the Resource

National Association of Conservation Districts
America's Voice for Conservation

Outreach and Communication: Making the Connection Count



Farm Bill Changes Expected
CRP Action
Disaster Aid Relief
Promoting Conservation
Regional Meetings
New Members





LEADING THE WAY

Dear Fellow Conservationists:

What is communications and whose job is it anyway? These questions may be more complicated than I can address in this short column, but I hope that the feature article of this publication can help a little with that.

As I have attended local, state and national meetings across the country, it is clear that communication is a both a major concern and a priority. This was also evident during our most recent strategic planning session with the NACD Board of Directors, who identified communications as our top priority.

Since then, NACD has made excellent progress in the area of communications and mapped out additional areas for improvement. We've improved existing outreach tools and added new ones, expanded our staff and formed a Communications Committee to focus more Board energy on the area. This new publication is an exciting result of their work.

We've also expanded existing partnerships and added new ones to expand our reach. Take for example the Smithsonian partnership. I can't tell you how excited I am that millions of visitors to the National Museum of Natural History will see conservation districts' names as part of the exhibit and have the option to purchase our correlating education materials.

At the end of the day, however, nothing replaces personal communication.

Do the members of your community understand what a conservation district does and how it impacts them personally? Do your conservation district's board members understand the role of the national association, and understand their role in communicating the work of your district to your community?

Every day we interact with people who are an ideal audience for our message. Take some of your conservation district's education materials to your child or grandchild's school, begin a conservation field day in your community, or improve your relationships with your lawmakers and members of the media. The opportunities to expand the reach of our message are endless, but every one of those opportunities requires work on our part.

A strong, resounding personal message about the importance of conservation and the results coming from the mouths of 17,000 district officials, plus conservation district employees and partners, will carry more weight than thousands of dollars in advertising.

I like to hand out NACD bookmarks to people on the airplane as a conversation starter. I love the opportunity to do a radio interview with my local stations or with national stations representing NACD. I believe the most important part of my job is to tell our story in a consistent, credible and personal way.

It's an exciting time to be a part of conservation, and I hope that you view communications as part of your job, just like I do. Remember, we are America's Voice for Conservation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John H. Redding". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Redding, President, National Association of Conservation Districts



About our cover: Conservation partners from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources discuss conservation practices around the Malecha Rock Outcrop during a Minnesota River Valley Tour hosted by the Renville County Soil and Water Conservation District in Minnesota. Members of the BWSR work closely with the Minnesota Association of SWCDs on conservation program and policy issues.



FEATURE

**Outreach and Communication:
Making the Connection Count**6
Enough of being the "best kept secret" – Conservation districts are working to market themselves in innovative, effective ways, expanding their reach and strengthening their customer bases.

IN EVERY ISSUE

Leading the WayInside front cover
NACD President John Redding

Loud and Clear2
NACD CEO Krysta Harden

Districts at Work10
Marion County SWCD, Indianapolis, IN

Partnering for Success12
The Pollinator Partnership

District Development12
Evaluations: How Does Your District Rate?

Another PerspectiveInside back cover
NAFB President Randy Koenen

CONSERVATION POLICY

Farm Bill Changes Expected3
With implementation deadlines quickly approaching, see what's ahead for 2008 Farm Bill conservation programs.

USDA Announces Action on CRP3
USDA holds its ground on the Conservation Reserve Program early release penalties.

Conservation Districts Aid in Disaster Relief4
From floods to fires, districts are ever ready and increasingly involved in efforts to prevent and respond to natural disasters.

NACD Committees Working for You4
NACD Board Members are hard at work directing the Association's activities through NACD's five foundation committees.

Promoting Conservation on Capitol Hill5
District officials carried a clear, consistent message to lawmakers during NACD's 2008 Summer Legislative Conference.

NACD IN ACTION

**Conservation Leaders Join Forces
at Region Meetings**11
From policy discussions to training to conservation field tours, region meetings across the nation offered many opportunities for district leaders.

NACD Adds Members11
NACD recently welcomed five islands and territories to its board of directors, granting them voting rights and positions on the Association's foundation committees.

**Building a Better Tomorrow
in New Orleans**Back cover



Join us in New Orleans
February 1-4, 2009
for NACD's
Annual Meeting!

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LOUD and CLEAR

This is the first edition of *The Resource* and I feel like we have finally given birth. Since I came to NACD in 2004, I have wanted an updated newsletter. While *News & Views* served our purposes in getting our message out and was a fine publication, it felt old and stodgy to me. It was time our communication tools reflected the “new” NACD.

I wanted something fresh and appealing, a publication that would catch the reader’s eye and pull them in, a publication that would be informative but easy to read and share. I wanted a publication that would say “Conservation districts are getting it done, come read all about them!”

As journalism major in college, a former press secretary on Capitol Hill and a person who loves to talk, I place a high value on communication. It is important to not only do the work but to also make sure others know about it.

Telling our story is how we build on our success, whether we are talking about how districts were formed during the Dust Bowl or how we are addressing the new challenges of today.

It is so easy to just do the work and hope someone finds out. However, in these times of multiple outlets for communicating and information overload, conservation districts have to make sure we are reaching our members, partners and customers.

I hope *The Resource* becomes one of the publications each of you makes time for. I hope you never just look at the pretty picture on front, but instead take the time to read it, learn from it and share it with others. It will be filled with valuable information regarding not only what your national association is doing but also the activities of other districts and partners.

There will be some familiar columns and stories but there will also be new features that will hopefully better address your needs, concerns and challenges. As with every communication tool, the relationship only works if it is two-way.

We can talk and talk to you as our members and readers but if you do not want to hear, we are only background noise. *The Resource* should not be a low rumble in the background but instead your first and most reliable source for conservation district information and it should be loud and clear.

Krysta Harden

Krysta Harden, CEO, National Association of Conservation Districts

In these times of multiple outlets for communicating and information overload, conservation districts have to make sure we are reaching our members, partners and customers.

Living Legacy Project Launched to Honor Olin Sims

Olin Sims served as NACD President from February to December 2007. He was our President, our leader, our friend and a man who lived what he preached. Sims put a high priority on caring for the land on his family ranch in McFadden, Wyoming. As a living legacy to Olin, NACD is encouraging conservation districts, state associations of conservation districts, partners and friends of Olin to plant a tree in his memory. Perhaps you can plant a tree at your conservation district office or in a location Olin toured during his time as an NACD leader. Brass placards will soon be available through NACD's Online Store at www.nacdstore.org. The placards can be engraved to indicate who planted the tree and when it was planted. NACD requests that you share a photo and description of your tree planting. The photos and descriptions will be placed in a book in the NACD Olin Sims Conference Room in Washington, D.C. and shared with the Sims family. Additional information is available on NACD's website at www.nacdnet.org/news/living_legacy.

CONSERVATION POLICY

Farm Bill Program Changes Expected This Fall

Following the enactment of the Farm Bill this summer, the focus has now turned from Congress to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the implementation process. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) will develop regulations and notices that direct field staff on the new and existing programs. The Farm Bill included a 90 day deadline for most conservation program changes, which translates into a September 16, 2008 deadline. While USDA is moving ahead and developing regulations, meeting that deadline will be difficult. According to the bill, many program changes should take place October 1, 2008.

NACD has outlined several issues on conservation program delivery in letters to NRCS and FSA. Specifically, NACD's comments focused on locally-led priority setting, including the use of Local Work Groups (LWG). Conservation districts utilize LWGs and the locally-led process to gather stakeholder input on natural resource priorities in local communities.

In July, the NACD Board of Directors approved key areas of focus for comments to USDA. These include:

- Retaining the locally-led process of implementing conservation programs;
- Ensuring that conservation districts can assist NRCS and FSA with a variety of functions, dependent upon their local knowledge and expertise, through contribution agreements under the Technical Service Providers;
- Ensuring that USDA implements the technical assistance only or zero cost share contracts that were added as new options for the conservation programs;
- Ensuring that programs and software are designed to allow cooperative conservation, achieving more on a landscape wide approach and allowing for multiple producer/landowner contracts; and
- Ensuring that innovation is recognized and promoted. As landscapes change, so must practices and information shared across regions and states, fostering greater information sharing and less duplication.

At the beginning of August, NACD submitted comments on the new Chesapeake Bay Program and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and is in the process of developing additional comments. These comments will be submitted to USDA, most likely before they release official regulations for public comment in the Federal Register. NACD will prepare additional comments once the

regulations are released as "proposed" or "interim final." An interim final rule would allow USDA to operate the program while still accepting comments on the final regulation. It is very important to comment on each step in the regulatory process, to ensure that these programs operate as expected, provide flexibility to meet local resource needs, local practices and are usable for producer and landowner customers.

The 2008 Farm Bill did include significant changes to several programs, specifically in participant eligibility. Details of the provisions of the Conservation Title, the Forestry Title and select provisions of the Energy Title can be found on the NACD website at <http://nacdnet.org/policy/agriculture/farmbill/2007/>. ■

USDA Announces Action on CRP

Over the summer, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) made several announcements regarding the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) relating to emergency use and critical use, resulting in opposition from wildlife and environmental groups. The National Wildlife Federation sued FSA regarding action to open up more than 24 million acres for critical feed use. An agreement was reached in that lawsuit to permit those approved prior to July 8, 2008 to move forward, those applications pending to be processed and new applications to be judged on the value of the investment the operation had made, with a \$4,500 threshold.

Disaster areas were also provided with relief through haying and grazing permitting on CRP acreage. In approved flooded areas, rental rate reduction for grazing are at the standard 25 percent. In approved drought areas, rental rate reductions for haying and grazing were lowered to 10 percent.

USDA Secretary Ed Schafer announced on July 29, 2008 that



Continued on next page

Conservation Delivery Affected by Continuing Resolution

Congress recently passed a continuing resolution (CR) for fiscal year 2009 (FY09) spending. Under a CR, funding levels for federal agencies are extended at current levels for a short period of time until final spending levels can be determined. While operating under a CR, agency activities such as partnership agreements, hiring, training, travel and major purchases are limited. This significantly impacts the conservation delivery system and the ability of federal agencies to conduct business with local partners such as conservation districts. Several factors have combined to

create the current funding situation. The energy debate surrounding offshore drilling created a political standoff, preventing appropriations committees in the House and Senate from addressing several individual appropriations bills. Also, with a major election year looming, Congress has been limited in the amount of time to act on federal spending. There is also speculation that the next administration might react more favorably to spending levels set by Congress. Visit www.nacdnet.org for the most recent appropriations updates.

CONSERVATION POLICY

Continued from previous page

USDA would not provide penalty free early release of CRP contracts. In his press conference, he stated the agency did a thorough review of crop reports and data, but that USDA would continue to assess the situation as necessary. According to USDA, during April and May there was a doubling of acreage breaking contracts and paying penalties, up from an average of 15,000 acres a month to over 30,000 acres a month. NACD reiterated the association's policy against penalty free early release of CRP acreage in a July 10, 2008 letter to Secretary Schafer. ■

NACD Committees Working for You

NACD's new Foundation Committees have laid out aggressive agendas and, working through full committee efforts, task forces, and resource policy groups, are making progress. Recent bylaws changes provided that NACD Foundation Committees consist of board members. The change is providing for a well-informed, engaged Board of Directors actively working for NACD and its members.

A few Foundation Committee action highlights are:

- The **District Operations and Member Services Committee** developed recommendations concerning computer purchases and access to the USDA Common Computing Environment (CCE), the network for accessing NRCS technical information. These recommendations were adopted by the NACD board and forwarded with a letter to NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster. The Committee also redesigned the Associate Member program, which is now called Friends of NACD.
- The **Communications Committee** unveiled a new general NACD brochure defining NACD and conservation districts. Committee members are involved in the transition from *News & Views* to *The Resource*, NACD's new quarterly, magazine-style publication. The committee is also working with the DO/MS committee on the possibility of a "Members Extra" section of the NACD website, and plans to release additional membership-specific brochures in the next year.
- NACD, through the **Education & Stewardship Committee**, has partnered with the Smithsonian and the Soil Science Society of America to develop soils education materials to complement the newly-opened "Dig It! The Secrets of Soil" Smithsonian exhibit. Over 1000 conservation districts purchased education materials to promote the 2008 Stewardship theme. The committee has developed annual stewardship topics for 2009 – 2013. Finally, the Committee also plans to conduct a Conservation Education Inventory to compile current activities and needs of conservation districts.

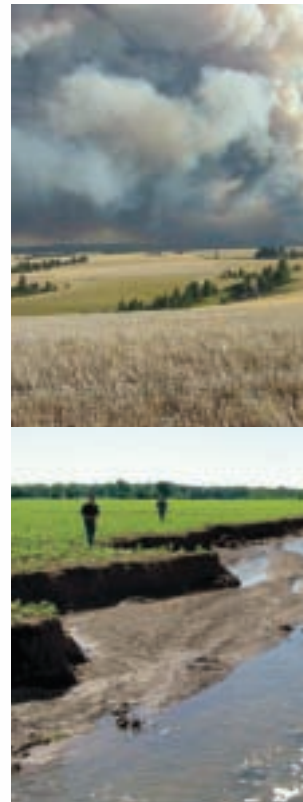
- The **Legislative Committee** has been engaged in providing Farm Bill conservation program comments to USDA ahead of the Department's rulemaking. The Committee also recently recommended a minimum four percent increase for fiscal year 2010 for NACD's three appropriations priorities: Conservation Technical Assistance, State & Private Forestry, and 319 Nonpoint Source Grants. The increase will be based on final FY2009 amounts approved by Congress.
- The **Natural Resource Policy Committee** (NRPC) recently drafted policy on Climate Change, identifying opportunities for conservation districts in areas such as carbon sequestration. Resource Policy Groups (RPG) are working on specific issues under the NRPC. The Urban and Community RPG is working to obtain technical tools for districts and drafting a small acreage program proposal. The Great Lakes RPG is working to promote district involvement in Great Lakes restoration activities. The Forestry RPG is working on the Farm Bill implementation and working with partners to improve technical assistance delivery to forest landowners.

If you have ideas or suggestions for NACD, contact your state representative on the NACD Foundation committees to share your thoughts. The committee structure is designed to assist the needs of conservation districts and your input is important. To find out more about NACD committee functions and actions, visit <http://www.nacdnet.org/about/committees.phtml>. ■

Conservation Districts Aid in Disaster Response Efforts

The costs of recovery following drought, wildfire, flood, hurricane, tornado and other natural disaster totals millions of dollars and inherently comes with administrative hurdles. Conservation districts provide landowners with both technical and administrative assistance in recovery efforts.

Two USDA programs respond to such disasters; the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) and the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program. The programs provide financial and technical assistance to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters and to install disaster recovery measures from wildfires, floods or



Conservation districts are active participating in cooperation with federal, state and local technical and administrative assistance.

Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River Compact Moves in Congress

Among the legislation Congress is moving this session is the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River Compact. Originally conceived and started by the Council of Great Lakes Governors in 2005, the compact provides new protections for the health and vitality of the Great Lakes and also includes a ban on new diversions of water out of the Great Lakes watershed. The compact was ratified by legislatures in each of the eight states in the Great Lakes basin and requires Congressional approval to become law. The Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing on July 30 to hear from stakeholders, and the Senate promptly passed it by unanimous consent on August 1, 2008. Remaining action on the compact shifts to the House of Representatives, but by all indications passage is expected. NACD continues to remain engaged on this issue as the compact continues to move through Congress.

other natural events impairing a watershed. Both programs are funded through fiscal year 2008 (FY08) emergency supplemental spending, with ECP at \$89.413 million, and EWP at \$390.464 million. Conservation districts often sponsor EWP programs that assist landowners in receiving help since the program does not give assistance to landowners

without the representation of a program sponsor.

Conservation districts are active partners in disaster recovery efforts, working in cooperation with federal agencies, state departments of natural resources and forestry, counties, local fire districts, planning commissions and state conservation commissions to name a few. Conservation districts not only address the issues of emergency stabilization but also the long-term recovery and rehabilitation.

Districts without technical staff often direct landowners to sources of assistance while districts with technical staff can be much more involved in the recovery process, such as providing on-site visits to affected lands. District involvement begins with assessing the extent of the damage. When assessments are completed, districts work to match landowners with the right solutions and conservation programs that will fund the recovery.

Common first priority activities following wildfire include fence repairs, installation of water bars and seeding of disturbed soils. However, districts also assist with long-term rehabilitation efforts such as the removal, sale and disposal of burned trees, replanting of vegetation, treatment of invasive weeds and restoration of wildlife habitat. Similarly, following drought, landowners need help re-establishing pastures and developing sources of water. After floodwaters recede, landowners need help fixing levies and stabilizing stream banks.

Districts are also there for long term recovery, planting the appropriate crop cover, reestablishing soil biology and soil structure, and installing structures to maintain the land's integrity.

NACD's District Operations/Member Services Committee recently formed a task force to compile additional information regarding conservation district involvement in disaster response and recovery. If your conservation district has experience in this area, please contact Phylis Vandevere at Phylis-Vandevere@nacnet.org with specific examples. ■



Conservation districts and local entities provide assistance in disaster recovery efforts, working with federal agencies, state departments of natural resources and forestry, counties, local fire districts, planning commissions and state conservation commissions to name a few.

District Officials Promote Conservation on Capitol Hill



Conservation leaders from every corner of the country and several territories attended the 2008 NACD Legislative Conference. Secretary of Agriculture Ed Schafer keyed the event, pictured above (center) with NACD President Elect Steve Robinson (right) and NACD CEO Krysta Harden (left).

More than 200 delegates representing almost every state and territory traveled to Washington, D.C. in July to attend the National Association of Conservation District's (NACD) annual legislative conference. The meeting started on Sunday evening with a reception to welcome district officials from all across the country to D.C.

Early the next morning, meeting goes got down to business. Attendees had the opportunity to hear from a wide variety of speakers on topics ranging from the Farm Bill to energy issues. The speakers briefed districts on current issues that are brewing in Washington, and outlined opportunities for conservation districts to be at the forefront on policy.

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Schafer presented the keynote address at the conference. In his remarks, Secretary Schafer recognized conservation districts as the best source to get conservation on the ground.

After a day of presentations, district officials wore out a little shoe leather on Capitol Hill. They spent Tuesday visiting with Representatives and Senators from their home states. The hill visits allowed districts to take their messages of Farm Bill implementation priorities and conservation funding directly to those who will be making decisions on these important issues.

The conference concluded with a congressional reception in the Capitol, hosted by NACD. It was a packed event with many represented from the House and Senate offices.

Once again, conservation district leaders from across the nation came to Washington and spoke with one voice on issues critical to natural resource conservation in America. Additional information and resources from the conference are available at <http://www.nacnet.org/events/legconference/>.

Outreach and C

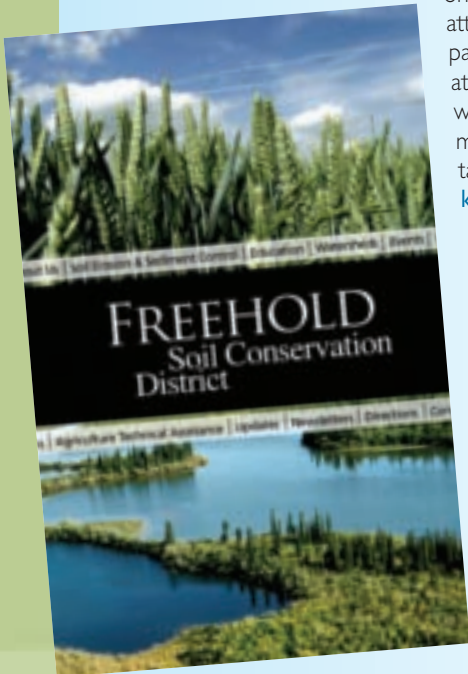
REACHING OUT THROUGH THE WEB

Freehold Soil Conservation District, NJ

After the Freehold Soil Conservation District in New Jersey celebrated their 70th anniversary, they realized that, even though the district had been a part of the community for 70 years, the majority of residents in its two-county area had no idea who the district was or what they did. The district decided they needed to make a change and market themselves to a broader audience.

The change came in the form of a redesign of the district's website. The district felt its website was the communication tool with the most potential to reach the largest possible audience. Freehold SCD also acknowledged that an online presence is important to public outreach and that their 10-year-old site was stagnant and had a dated design. The district hired a web designer and built a new easily-navigable site that had a more polished and professional look and feel and up-to-date, relevant information, including an electronic copy of the district newsletter.

The new site, <http://www.freeholdscd.org/> was launched in early 2008. Since its launch, the district has noticed increased communications from within their two county-range as well as on the state level. They attribute it in a large part to their new attractive and usable website design. For more information, contact Karen Rowe at krowe@freeholdscd.org.



Selective Exposure

*Those that are
Exposed
to the material*



Selective Attention

*Those that
Notice
the material*



Communicating the availability of, need for and successes of conservation districts is one of the most important things a conservation district is tasked with. It determines community awareness, affects funding, builds or tears down image and credibility, impacts customer base and much more. While many aspects of communication seem simple and straightforward, a successful outreach plan can be challenging to implement.

Put on your marketing hat for a moment and think about what it takes to connect with customers. In essence, every member of your community is your customer. In the marketing world, it is understood that only a small portion of the population will be exposed to your materials. Of that portion, only some will pay attention. Only a subset of that smaller group will understand what they see, and even fewer will retain it.

The following checklist highlights some of the most important steps to achieving success in outreach efforts, whether in a one time promotion or an overall communication plan.

Know your audience Just as a one-size-fits-all approach would be a miserable failure in the retail world, trying to reach all members of the population with the same message is not effective. Outreach efforts need to target specific audiences and the message must be tailored to fit that group. Your audience subsets will likely vary on many levels, including the way they prefer to receive information, the information they are interested in and the time they have to absorb information.

Improving your understanding of your audience and adapting your materials will allow more of your audience to reach the retention stage.

ommunication...



Have a plan Strategic communication plans are a critical first step to improving your outreach efforts. Below are a few things that a complete communications plan should include:

- ✓ **Context:** What has happened before? Is there history?
- ✓ **Environmental Scan:** What are others saying and doing?
- ✓ **Stakeholder Analysis:** Who are your stakeholders and how will they react?
- ✓ **Objectives:** What do you want to achieve?
- ✓ **Strategy:** Where are you going and why?
- ✓ **Audiences:** Who are the key audiences?
- ✓ **Messages:** What are you saying?
- ✓ **Tactics:** How will you implement your strategy?
- ✓ **Issues:** What problems may you have to overcome?
- ✓ **Budget:** What will it cost?
- ✓ **Evaluation:** How will you know if you've been successful?

For more information on communication plans, a simple online search will help you locate sample plans and additional questions to answer in each of the above elements.

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SEEKING NON-TRADITIONAL AUDIENCES

Clackamas County Soil and Water Conservation District, OR

Clackamas County Soil and Water Conservation District in Oregon is a great example of how seeking out and targeting new, untraditional audiences can create new opportunities for districts. Over the last several years, the district noticed a higher percentage of the population of their largely rural county were high-income, urban homeowners. Most of these high-income homeowners were more interested in golf-course-green lawns and manicured landscaping than nature-scaping with native plants and backyard conservation. The Clackamas County SWCD recognized that in order to appeal to these non-traditional customers, they had to switch gears and adjust their message.

In the fall of 2006, the district began a campaign to appeal to this new audience. One of its major efforts was to get involved and advertise with the Home Builder

Association's annual "Street of Dreams" event, which draws in thousands of homeowners, home builders, related companies and media.

This involvement resulted in increased media coverage, requests for workshops, new partnerships and new funding opportunities. The district created a half-page ad targeted at urban homeowners, published in the "Street of Dreams"

magazine. The ad's message, "Conservation has curb appeal," was intended to appeal to homeowners who wanted golf-course-green lawns rather than nature-scape landscaping. For more information, contact Rick Gruen at Rick.Gruen@or.nacdnet.net.



...Making the Co

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Develop the message

Effective messages are:

...**clear** - Ask yourself "Who cares?" when preparing your message. Interested parties should be able to read or listen to the information and easily understand the point, and why it is relevant to them.

...**concise** - Providing too much or too little information is confusing, and can cause your customer to lose interest in your materials.

...**consistent** - A consistent message is critical to credibility. Would your conservation district's employees say the same thing as your board members if asked the same question? Ensuring that everyone in your organization is on message will help keep your communication consistent.

...**current** - In the information age, we have come to expect real-time updates. Electronic communication forms such as websites are an effective way to provide up-to-date information that anyone can access.

In addition to being clear, concise and consistent and current, messages must be repeated. Customers cannot retain a message if they miss the exposure stage. Often people need to be exposed to information multiple times before they retain it, so after you tell them, tell them again!

IT'S ALL IN THE BRAND

South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts, SD

South Dakota's conservation districts take seriously the axiom, "You get just one chance to make a first impression." Over the years, the South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts had consistently heard one major grievance from its member districts: no one knows who or what we are. So, in an effort to increase name recognition and consumer buy-in of the conservation districts' message, the South Dakota Association has taken steps to implement a coordinated marketing program with an easily identifiable brand.

The Association hired Insight Marketing of Sioux Falls to assist them in developing a relevant logo and outreach materials. The first materials created focused on daily outreach—letterhead, envelopes, business cards, stick-on labels and informational brochures. Since then, the Association has branded standard items like caps, shirts, jackets, name badges and their website, as well as more unique items such as cable TV public service announcements, vehicles, business card-sized mints/toothpicks, lapel pins and rain gauges.

During this process, the Association not only learned a lot about marketing, but learned the importance of taking every positive opportunity they can to put their brand in front of South Dakotans. People support that which they know, according to South Dakota Executive Director Angela Ehlers, and in this day of information overload, it is crucial to

find creative ways to get people to notice you and understand your message. For more information, contact Angela Ehlers

at sdacd.mail@sdconservation.org

The South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts makes a concerted effort to ensure their name, logo and image is easily recognized. Above is a sampling of the branded products and materials the association and its districts utilize.



Maintain a consistent image

A brand is a name, logo, slogan or design that is associated with a product or service. Branding is critical to get customers to recognize materials as belonging to something they know and are interested in.

NACD encourages conservation districts to use a similar recognizable logo and has artwork available <http://www.nacdnet.org/resources/logos/> for individual districts to use.

Branding can be used in everything you print, record or produce. Suggested places you can include your logo and a common design feel are stationary, envelopes, websites, name badges, apparel, business cards, vehicles, handouts and more.

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Connection Count

Be creative

We are exposed to massive amounts of information each day. Consumers use selective exposure to seek out or avoid information. What if the same methods and messages conservation districts used 15 years ago have lost their edge? Take a critical look at the tools you are using and determine whether or not they will truly capture the attention of your intended audience.

Pursue new audiences

Many of conservation districts' traditional outreach sources are still critical to accomplishing a district's mission. It's imperative to communicate with producers, local media, legislators, community leaders, schools and others. But taking time to pursue unique partnerships in your community could have great payoff. If you live in a college town, form a relationship with the professors in your areas of work or begin a college internship program. Connect with special interest groups or outdoor clubs in your area.

Remember the value of a walking advertisement

Often a "two-legged advertisement" or a person who speaks highly of your conservation district or organization can carry far more weight than a full-blown marketing plan. As you seek to communicate the need for and value of your work within your community, working with community leaders, members of the media and partnering organizations can be a positive and cost-effective way to spread your message.

Establish relationships with lawmakers, provide regular press releases to members of your local media, seek opportunities for joint projects and events with other like-minded organizations. Relationship building is a low-cost addition to your communication efforts that can have a very high payoff.

FOSTERING MEDIA RELATIONS

Muskingum Soil and Water Conservation District, OH

Muskingum Soil and Water Conservation District, winner of NACD's 2008 Communications Award, knows the important role relationships with the media play in getting the district's message out. The district's goal in its media relations is to let the public know what soil and water conservation is all about and who to call with questions about natural resource concerns.

In order to increase the district's presence within the community, Muskingum SWCD has dedicated a lot of time and effort into building and maintaining relationships with their local print, radio and broadcast media outlets. The district actively submits articles for publication in the local paper, sends public services announcements to radio stations and cable providers. The district even has a 10 to 15 minute television interview with the local news channel, aired twice a month. Topics covered include district events and natural resource concerns that affect many of the county residents on a personal level.

The district feels its media outreach efforts have yielded great results. Their public events are always well-attended, and their district office regularly fields questions from local residents who have seen, heard or read about district events or programs. "Muskingum SWCD has a great relationship with local

media outlets and strives to promote conservation district events, activities and important environmental issues," says Muskingum SWCD staff member Denise Liggett. For more information, contact Denise Liggett at denise.liggett@muskingumswcd.org.



Ohio's Muskingum SWCD invests time and effort into maintaining strong relationships with media. In the photo on the left, district staff member Denise Liggett wraps an interview with Brian Wagner of WHIZ TV.



Smithsonian Soils Exhibit Opens for Visitors

Participants at the NACD Legislative Conference were some of the first to see the newly-opened "DIG IT! The Secret of Soil" exhibit at the Smithsonian Natural History Museum. The state soil monoliths featured in the display were like celebrities waiting to have their pictures taken with conservation district supervisors and others. The exhibit's design appeals to all ages. In the exhibit you will be able to help solve a soil crime scene mystery, learn the difference between silt, sand and clay as well as understand the importance of soils across the globe. Education materials designed in partnership with NACD, Smithsonian and the Soil Science Society of America will soon be available at the NACD marketplace and the Museum store. Learn more at www.nacdnet.org.

NACD IN ACTION

DISTRICTS AT WORK...Adapting to Emerging Needs

Marion County Soil & Water Conservation District, Indianapolis, IN



Marion District Supervisor Dennis Slaughter eagerly awaits visitors to the District's Earth Day booth so he can discuss backyard conservation at a downtown Indianapolis Earth Day event.

The Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is working to meet the emerging urban/suburban natural resource needs in Indianapolis, Indiana. Major land use changes have shifted workload priorities to homeowner and development erosion and sediment control, water quality and drainage issues, green space protection and enhancement, and invasive species control. Even with the increased urban/suburban workload, the SWCD still assists its remaining farmers on their 24,000 acres, including the home farm of U.S. Senator Richard Lugar.

The District is using the skills of their staff to meet the more traditional natural resource challenges. They are also finding that with new clients, they need to do a better job of creating awareness about practices like bio-swales and rain gardens. This means the SWCD has had to broaden their technical abilities and focus more on their communication/outreach efforts. Carrying out new outreach activities for new clientele has particularly been a problem, as federal support has lessened, and local and state funding have

remained level for over five years. To reach more people with less resources and funding requires new efforts and skills.

The SWCD Board has vigorously pursued grants, sought new partners, and asked various groups to become affiliate members to help fund their efforts. Staff members have expanded their skills in marketing, website development and print media efforts. A new logo was developed to indicate the increased urban/suburban roles. The SWCD integrates their printed material (quarterly newsletter, letterhead stationary, business cards, fact sheets, etc.) with a similar look, or "branding", so clientele can recognize their identity on all information items. Mark Kautz, District Chair, says, "We're not totally there yet, but we are working on it."

The SWCD improved their website, making it more user-friendly. They also support multiple watershed efforts, helping these groups with their websites. The District developed an annual two-page activities report, with charts, finding a shorter document has more chances of being reviewed by government and community leaders. They produce a short weekly news release that is shared with more than 25 news print media outlets, and electronically sent to more than 250 community and agency leaders. They found it helps to keep the SWCD name in front of the public as often as possible. The District sponsors adult education workshops such as Pond Pro Management, Green Site Planning and Stormwater Management Training.

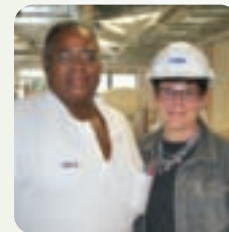
Due to the District's outreach efforts, supervisors and staff have been recruited to assist a variety of organizational efforts such as the Mayor's Green Print Natural Resources Committee, the Marion County Tree Board, Health by Design, and various working committees of the Hoosier Heartland Resource and Conservation Development Council. They participate in booths at Earth Day in Downtown Indianapolis, the Annual Flower and Patio Show, Arbor Day at State Museum, National Science Fair Day at Convention Center, and even helped host an American Society of Agronomy National Land Use Tour.

Examples of programs and activities, including conservation fact sheets, are available on the District website at www.marionswcd.org. For more information, contact the District at ron-lauster@iaswcd.org.



509 Capitol Court Undergoes Renovations

By the time this publication reaches your mailbox, the NACD headquarters office in Washington, D.C. will have received a face lift and conservation districts will have a newly-renovated, fresh, safe, clean, energy-efficient place to call home! NACD's Washington staff worked remotely during the month of August while construction crews stripped down and rebuilt many aspects of the office. The completed office features new energy-efficient windows; a new heating and cooling system; new paint, trim and carpets; a connecting staircase between the basement and first floor and more. We hope you visit soon to see your updated office. Additional information, including photographs of the renovation and fundraising information is available at <http://www.nacdnet.org/events/509campaign/>.



Conservation Leaders Join Forces at Region Meetings

Northeast Region Meeting More than 150 conservation leaders from twelve states gathered in Portsmouth, N.H. for the NACD Northeast Region Meeting, hosted by the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts.

Conference attendees learned about agriculture trends in the Northeast and district opportunities in climate change and biofuels, and heard from their peers about conservation district success stories they could emulate.

NACD President Steve Robinson provided an NACD report at the conference, outlining new resources provided by NACD, urban policy priorities and future challenges and opportunities for NACD. NACD Director of Legislative Affairs Keira Franz discussed elements of the 2008 Farm Bill that are important to conservation districts.

Southeast Region Meeting Over 275 people gathered in Biloxi, Mississippi in August for the NACD Southeast Region Meeting, hosted by the Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts.

Attendees enjoyed presentations on climate change, ecotourism, Canon Envirothon, animal identification and ethanol production. The group also spent time in the field, touring the Chevron Pascagoula Refinery, the Pascagoula River Swamp, a state-of-the-art cattle operation, and the quaint town of Ocean Springs.

Twelve well-deserving individuals were inducted in to the Southeast Region Conservation Hall of Fame which honors conservationists for their lifetime commitment to protecting natural resources.

NACD President John Redding represented the association at the meeting.

South Central Region Meeting "Elvis" rocked the house as more than 200 conservation district officials and conservation leaders from across the South Central Region gathered in Hot Springs, Arkansas to discuss issues facing conservation districts in the coming year.

South Central Region Chair Sonny Jones of Arkansas called the meeting to order. NACD Second Vice President Bob Cordova addressed the group, as well as other members of the conservation partnership.

Rick Jeans of Oklahoma was elected as the new South Central Regional Chairman and will begin his term in February.



NACD's new voting delegates from the Pacific islands and territories joined Hawaii Board Member Skip Cowell in a meeting with Senator Inouye on Capitol Hill.

NACD Adds Members

Recently American Samoa, Guam, Federated States of Micronesia, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the Republic of Palau joined the NACD Board of Directors. Previously, the Pacific Basin represented these entities on the Board; now each is represented individually and has a vote on official NACD matters.

Board members representing these members have been assigned to NACD's Foundation Committees. American Samoa joins the Legislative Committee. Guam is a member of the Natural Resources committee and co-chairs the Coastal Resource Policy Group. Federated States of Micronesia joins the Stewardship and Education Committee. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands will serve on the Communications Committee and the Republic of Palau on the District Operations Committee.

Federated States of Micronesia, American Samoa and Republic of Palau each have one conservation district, Pohnpei State, American Samoa, and Palau Natural Resource Council conservation districts respectively. Guam has two districts, Northern Guam and Southern Guam districts and Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas has three, Rota, Saipan and Tinian districts.

These members have conservation concerns similar to other districts but because each is an island the importance of their conservation issues is heightened. Issues such as the quality and quantity of fresh water; coastal preservation, invasive species, energy and climate change find new meaning. NACD welcomes these new voting delegates to our Board!



Conservation Districts Play Key Role at Envirothon

Conservation districts provided their support, knowledge and sponsorship of local and state teams at the 2008 Canon Envirothon. Envirothon is an environmental education program designed to enhance students' problem solving and critical thinking skills. The competition provides a winning combination for districts, teaching students about natural resources and building community leaders. Delaware was the winning team at this year's competition. Each first place team member received a \$5,000 scholarship sponsored by Canon. Also placing in the top five were Missouri, Pennsylvania, New York and Ohio. Over \$107,000 in scholarships were given out to the top ten winners. Additional information is available at www.envirothon.org.

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

Pollinator Partnership Aids Food and Fiber Production

*NACD values and participates in partnerships to help advance conservation across the nation. Often a national partnership opens the door for state and local partnerships. Local chapters or units of a national agency or organization are often looking for a way to connect to the conservation delivery system that includes districts at the local service level. Districts often engage a state or local affiliate of a national partner in specific projects and events. We plan to highlight a national partnership with opportunities for district participation as a regular feature in future editions of *The Resource*.*

NACD enjoys participating in the Pollinator Partnership. The Pollinator Partnership includes more than 120 affiliated groups who share many common objectives. NACD has a memorandum of understanding that spells out how and what we can do to work together.

For the past two years, NACD has worked jointly with the Pollinator Partnership to recognize a producer that exemplifies success in contributing to the protection or enhancement of pollinators. The work of producers and conservation districts has been showcased in success stories and award presentations. Districts can participate by nominating an outstanding producer in their respective communities.

Conservation districts can also use and distribute the Pollinator Friendly Planting Guides, available on the Pollinator website at www.polinators.org. Currently 15 of the guides are complete, with twenty more under development to complete the 35 planting regions in the U.S.

Ultimately, district interests with the pollinator partnership coalesce at the growing of crops and plants that produce food and fiber for our nation. Approximately one third of the food consumed by humans is dependent on pollinators. Conservation plans and the systems and practices that are implemented to carry out the plans have a significant impact on the health and viability of the wide array of pollinators needed in virtually every community across the nation.

While it is easy to take for granted such a normal or natural process as pollination, conservation districts contribute mightily to the maintenance and enhancement of the pollinator community. The Pollinator Partnership is one example, among many, that highlights the work of conservation districts across the nation and a partnership that offers tools for districts to use, an award to consider making a nomination, a pollinator week to highlight the topic and other activities districts may participate in.

For more information about the Pollinator Partnership or to learn how to become involved in pollinator-related work at the local level, please contact Rich Deusterhaus at Rich-Deusterhaus@nacdn.net.



Nearly 80 percent of our world's crops require pollination. Join NACD in pollinator promotion efforts or begin partnerships at the local level!

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT

Evaluations: How Does *Your* District Rate?

When was the last time your conservation district board sat down and evaluated your district, reviewed its programs, the employees, and took a critical look at individual board members' contributions toward the district's success?

Every conservation district should ask itself a few tough questions, especially in this day and time when funding on every level is spread thin and the demand on governmental entities to prove high levels of credibility and accountability to the community is higher than ever before.


NACD is providing district board members with a valuable tool which will guide you through a thorough evaluation of your district and its effectiveness within your community.

The Conservation District Evaluation is a detailed questionnaire which gives you, a district board member, a chance to examine and rate all aspects of your district and its operations. Conducting the self-evaluation will give the board a better working knowledge of its district as a whole, and may help them become more involved and engaged in all aspects of the district's programs.

By becoming more informed of your conservation district's strengths and weaknesses, you can ensure that your district is a valued and effective arm of the community.

For more information and an example of a Conservation District Self Evaluation form, go to www.nacdn.net.org.

Save a Tree



Receive *The Resource* in your email inbox instead of through the mail. If you prefer to receive an electronic copy of this newsletter, go to:

www.nacdn.net.org/news/publications/resource.

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

Randy Koenen, President, National Association of Farm Broadcasting

Working in the broadcast industry, I know how hard communication can be. Even in radio, we tend to tell other people's stories and sometimes fail to tell our own story. It's always easy to let someone else speak for you, and I'm just as guilty of that as anyone.

Farm broadcasting has changed over years as agriculture has changed. We saw down-sizing and consolidation beginning in the late 1990s and early 2000s. As agriculture and primarily ag businesses consolidated, so did ag radio. We saw a few large historic radio stations across the country cut back or drop agricultural programming all together. With the recent upturn in the ag economy, we're starting to see some of them come back, and there's been a marked interest in farm and rural programming.

The one thing that did not change through it all is the farm broadcaster. Farm broadcasters still hold that special place in rural America, a trusted friend, a companion, and—scary thought here—even an expert.

We realize that in most cases, the majority of our listeners are non-farm listeners who don't have an inside knowledge of agriculture. That puts us in a unique position, as an advocate for agriculture while still being an ag journalist. Even when the news isn't good, we are trusted to get the story right and tell it from an agricultural perspective, without all the hype and sensationalizing.

That relationship with the listener is very useful for conservation districts when you have something that needs to get the public's attention. Use your local farm broadcaster; that's what we're here for. When you send out a press release, follow it up with a phone call to your broadcaster. I would always rather have you tell me about your event than just receive the press release.

Also, if you need help with something, ask. It all boils down to building a relationship. Get to know your farm broadcaster and by all means, make sure he or she knows you. It most likely will lead to you becoming a valued resource that he or she can call to answer a question or provide background information. Either way, you'll get your message out.

Most farm broadcasters also have a spot in their programming for calendar items; make sure your meetings and events are included. Again, it's about communication; if the broadcaster doesn't know about your event, how are they going to tell their audience?

Finally, by all means don't be afraid to talk! That's easy for me to say, but if you haven't had any media training, ask your farm broadcaster for help.

If you don't know or don't have a local farm broadcaster in your area, check out the NAFB website at www.nafb.com for the broadcaster nearest you.

That relationship with the listener is very useful for conservation districts when you have something that needs to get the public's attention. Use your local farm broadcaster; that's what we're here for.





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Building a Better Tomorrow **New Orleans** *February 1-4, 2009*

February is just around the corner, so mark your calendars for NACD's 2009 Annual Meeting in New Orleans, La., February 1-4, 2009. You won't want to miss this once-a-year opportunity to meet face-to-face with fellow conservationists from across the country.

The 2008 conference, held in Reno, Nev., drew over 1000 conservation leaders and partners. We couldn't have asked for a better location for the upcoming 2009 conference. With countless attractions, hundreds of boutiques, art galleries and antique stores and over 900 restaurants, it's no wonder the New Orleans was named one of Sherman Travel's top ten destinations for 2008!

And let's not forget the New Orleans' biggest attraction of 2009: NACD's Annual Meeting. The 2009 NACD conference, themed "Building a Better Tomorrow," is a must-attend event for both beginning and experienced conservationists alike. Don't just take our word for it. NACD Annual Meeting attendee, Carolann Corado from Bowie, Tex. said, "The annual NACD meeting is a most rewarding experience, providing valuable educational and diverse networking opportunities. This conference offers attendees new avenues to implement conservation practices and opportunities to expand conservation partnerships."

Visit <http://nacdnet.org/events/annualmeeting/>
for complete information
and registration details.



NACD09

