

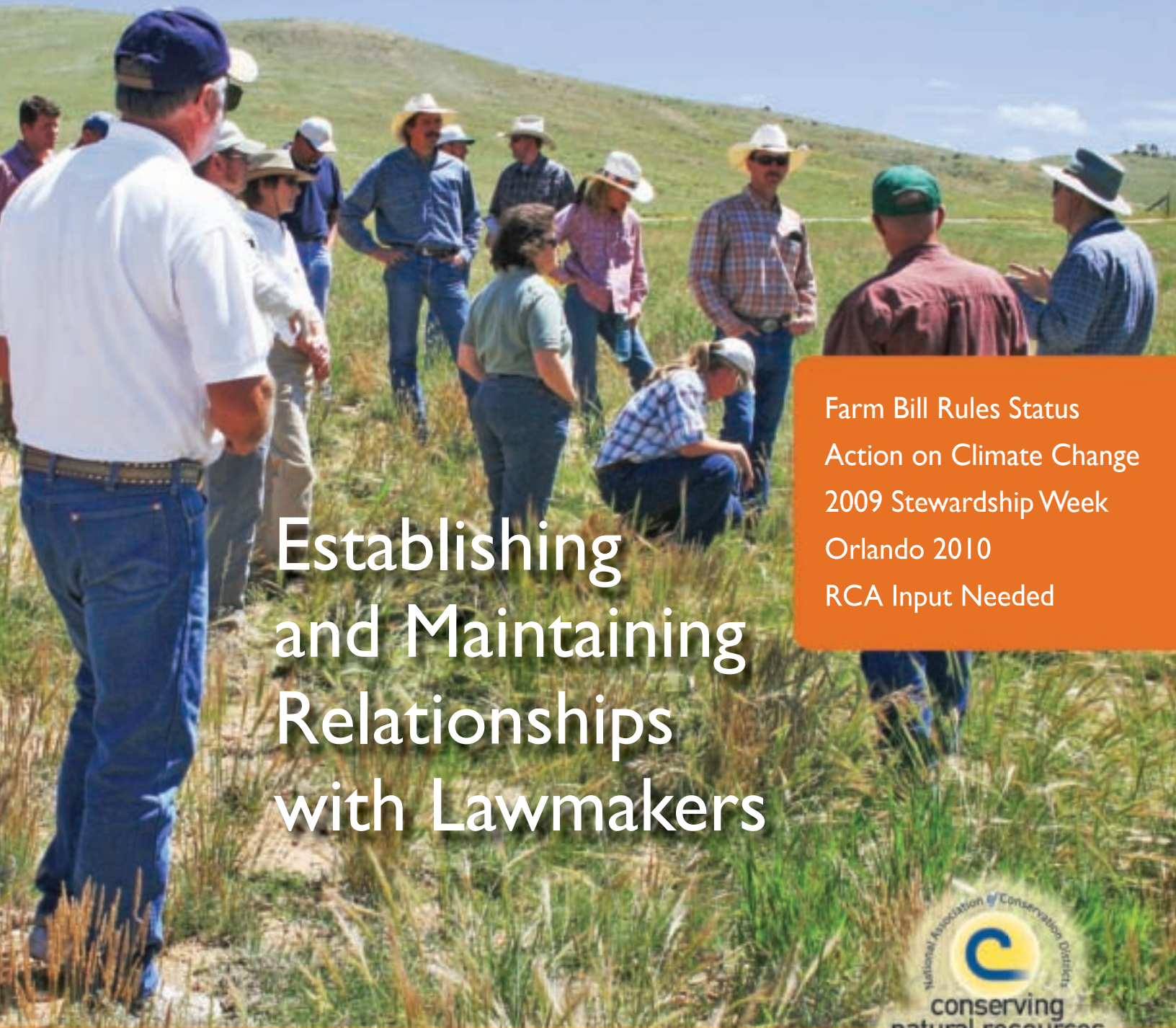


Strong relationships with lawmakers are key to maximizing your impact

See page 5

Resource

National Association of Conservation Districts
America's Voice for Conservation



Establishing and Maintaining Relationships with Lawmakers

- Farm Bill Rules Status
- Action on Climate Change
- 2009 Stewardship Week
- Orlando 2010
- RCA Input Needed





LEADING THE WAY

Dear fellow conservationists,

We have all learned over the years that change can be good. I do many things differently today than I did last year, even five years ago. We are always learning, and we constantly have new ideas. I am always amazed upon returning from a short trip the change I can see in my two grandsons. If you have been around three- and four-year-olds, you likely know what I am talking about.

Conservation districts, too, are continually changing. Newly elected board members bring change, new ideas and different ways of doing things. When we hire new employees, they also bring new ideas and change. After we attend state meetings and national meetings or visit with our peers, we learn, grow and change. Our customers' needs change, and as a result, district services or programs often change.

We at NACD experience many changes similar to those that districts face. As many of you know, our CEO Krysta Harden has taken a job at USDA. As I look back on the change that has taken place during Krysta's time with us, I feel proud. We have evolved and grown in many ways. We have more credibility across the country, our members are more involved in the Association, and the NACD Board of Directors has more ownership and more responsibility.

This brings me to the process of hiring a new CEO. I formed a search committee to help in the selection process. After this committee has narrowed the candidates to the number that the Executive Board has specified, the Executive Board will interview each of them and make the final decision.

Our goal is to be able to introduce that person at the summer board meeting. I want to take this opportunity to thank "KH" as we have all come to know her for the direction and leadership she has given to NACD. We wish her the best as she moves on in her career and know that conservation will always be well-represented.

In my mind, change is what we make it. It can make us stronger and help us further our mission to be the unified voice for natural resources conservation. I look forward to leading NACD into our future.

See you at NACD's Legislative Conference in a few weeks!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Robinson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Steve Robinson, President, National Association of Conservation Districts



About our cover: Local officials, county commissioners, and conservation district board members join together for a summer tour to see stream bank stabilization and riparian and habitat improvement in the mountains west of Colorado Springs, Colorado. The Teller-Park Conservation District co-hosted the tour with the Colorado Section of the Society for Range Management and the Colorado Chapter of Soil and Water Conservation Society. Photo by Mary Miller, USDA-NRCS.



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LOUD and CLEAR

It is easy to look back and think about the changes in NACD over the last five years. When I joined the Association in March 2004, it was truly a time of transition and rebuilding. The Board had made tough decisions including closing the service center in League City, Texas and the down-sizing of NACD's staff. Membership, morale and participation in NACD were low. Some felt the organization had lost its focus. After 60-plus years, many were asking if NACD had served its purpose.

I was brought in to help answer some tough questions and, if possible, to either redirect the organization or help it end in a graceful way. I came with only a slight awareness of the depth of the concerns, but I was eager and excited to learn and help.

While those first years were filled with many challenges—some that almost got the best of me—I soon felt a sense of recommitment by members to NACD and its mission. There was a new desire to make the Association vibrant again. Leaders and members generated fresh ideas and new opportunities and old challenges became exciting changes. Our grassroots truly began to lead again and took ownership of NACD. Success followed.

Space doesn't allow me to list everything NACD has accomplished over the last five years, but several come to mind. We achieved improvements for conservation in the 2008 Farm Bill, fostered a more focused and invested Board of Directors, and renewed our emphasis on member services and contemporary and useful communication tools. All of these results were member-led and member-implemented.

Many of you have taken the time to thank me for the changes and accomplishments of NACD. I am flattered and humbled by your graciousness. However, I know that I was only a catalyst and lasting and meaningful change comes from within. You, as conservation district members, employees and partners, made NACD the strong and viable organization it is today. I am just proud to have been part of the team.

I am moving on to my next challenge a better conservationist, a stronger leader and a wiser manager. I have a new family that reaches into every county across our country and a rich appreciation of the work of conservation districts. Thank you for taking a chance on me five years ago and for nurturing me, teaching me and supporting me. It has been an honor and pleasure to work for NACD.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Krysta Harden". The script is fluid and cursive.

Krysta Harden, former Chief Executive Officer, National Association of Conservation Districts

Editor's Note: Krysta Harden served as NACD CEO from March 2004 to May 2009. She is now the USDA Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations.



NACD, Partners Launch Joint Forestry Team Website

Representatives from NACD, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters teamed up to launch a dynamic new website showcasing the partners' work as members of the Joint Forestry Team. The Team collaborates to improve delivery of conservation and forestry assistance. The website contains reports and news, success stories, resources and more. Visit the website at www.jointforestryteam.org. NACD President Steve Robinson represented the Association at the Team's most recent meeting in May, where partners reviewed several of the JFT activities as outlined in the JFT memorandum of understanding, participated in a JFT Webinar and prepared to launch the website.

CONSERVATION POLICY

Farm Bill Rule Status Chart				
Farm Bill Programs	Proposed Rule	Interim Final Rule	Comment period	Request for Proposal/ Notice of Funding
Agricultural Management Assistance		✓	Closed 1/20/09	
Environmental Quality Incentives Program		✓	Closed 4/17/09	
Conservation Stewardship Program		Expected soon		
Conservation Reserve Program		Expected soon		
Farm and Ranchland Protection Program		✓	Closed 3/17/09	
Healthy Forest Reserve Program	✓		Closed 2/13/09	
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program		✓	Closed 4/17/09	
Wetlands Reserve Program		✓	Closed 3/16/09	
Grasslands Reserve Program		✓	Closed 3/23/09	
Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative			Closed 4/9/09	✓
Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program				✓
Agricultural Water Enhancement Program				✓
Conservation Innovation Grants				✓
Non Program Rules				
State Technical Committee/Local Working Group		✓	Closed 1/26/09	
Technical Service Providers		✓	Closed 3/17/09	

Technical Services Definition Expanded

Conservation districts across the country provide varying levels of technical assistance — or technical services — for federal, state and local programs and many other natural resource initiatives. In the 2008 Farm Bill, the definition of technical services was expanded to allow districts to perform more activities under contribution or cooperative agreements.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can contract with Technical Service Providers, including conservation districts, for conservation planning; conservation practice design, layout, and installation; and certification of conservation practices. New provisions also allow NRCS to contract for related technical assistance services including activities or services that accelerate conservation program delivery. Eligible services could include development, processing or implementing program contracts (i.e. recording conservation planning decisions and specifications).

Technical assistance is defined as expertise, information and tools necessary for the conservation of natural resources on land

active in agriculture, forestry or related uses. Technical assistance includes technical services provided directly to farmers, ranchers and other eligible entities. Technical assistance can also include technical infrastructure including activities, processes, tools and agency functions needed to support delivery of technical services (i.e. technical standards, resource inventories, training, data, technology, monitoring and effects analysis). ■

Action Continues on Climate Change

Climate change has been a widely discussed topic over the last few months, both in Washington, D.C. and around the country. The glossary of terms (on next page) is a resource to help clarify the language included in the debates, regulation and legislation. NACD remains abreast of regulatory and legislative action related to climate change in order to ensure conservation districts' interests are well-represented.

Continued on next page

Local Working Groups—What is your District's Role?

Clarifications in the 2008 Farm Bill have resulted in alterations to the Local Working Groups and Stakeholder Input Sessions. Previously, these two sessions needed to be separate, with only federal, state and local government employees and officials participating in Local Working Groups. Now, the public session should be combined into the Local Working Group, allowing for one open session and participation by all interested parties. Conservation districts generally chair Local Work Groups. Be sure your district is taking advantage of the opportunity to set local priorities; establish criteria for conservation activities and Farm Bill Conservation Programs; and provide input to the State Technical Committee and your District and State Conservationist.

CONSERVATION POLICY

Continued from previous page

Regulation The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is taking action to regulate greenhouse gas emissions and will likely proceed regardless of whether or not Congress takes action on climate legislation. In April, the EPA released a proposed finding that greenhouse gases endanger public health. The Supreme Court ruled in 2007 that greenhouse gases were pollutants under the Clean Air Act, which opened up the potential to regulate automobile emissions. The EPA's endangerment finding was the Agency's first response to the Supreme Court ruling which required EPA to make a determination.

Legislation Both the Obama Administration and leaders in the House and Senate have indicated their interest in addressing climate change legislation quickly. The House Energy and Commerce Committee has been the most aggressive, releasing a draft proposal in early April. The Committee completed their review of the American Clean Energy and Security Act on May 21, 2009. Other congressional committees will soon review the bill prior to a June 19 deadline.

The initial proposal included potential offsets for agriculture and forestry, but lacked certain details and a defined role for USDA. NRCS practice standards and the work of the Forest Service and other agencies within the Department are utilized by voluntary carbon markets today, and it is important that USDA retains a role in future efforts. The draft also presents problems for ongoing efforts and existing voluntary carbon markets, such as the Chicago Climate Exchange.

The House Agriculture Committee is active in the climate debate to ensure a role for agriculture through offset credits. The Committee requested public comments on a questionnaire with twenty nine specific questions on climate legislation, regulation and sequestration practices and held a hearing on June 11 where NACD testified.

NACD advocates ensuring the ongoing work of conservation districts can continue. Specifically, conservation districts are verifiers of carbon sequestration practices. NACD is participating in general coalitions on agriculture and forestry and working with our partners to ensure that agriculture and forestry are treated fairly; there is a role for USDA; we build on existing carbon markets; and that agriculture and forestry are not regulated emission sources under any federal legislation. Additional information on NACD's action is available on the climate change section of the website at www.nacdnet.org. ■

Climate Change Glossary of Terms

Allowance: The amount of emissions a source can release.

Allocation: A key discussion point is how to distribute allowances. Should they be given away, sold or auctioned to the highest bidder?

Offsets: Relates to an activity that sequesters or reduces carbon and the subsequent credit generated by the activity. Emitters pay for the credit generated through a carbon sequestration practice that offsets the emissions.

Cap & Trade: A cap—or maximum emission allowance—is placed on overall emissions and sources can trade allowances. An emissions source can generally reduce emissions through new technology, purchase offsets or buy, sell or trade allowances.

Adaptation: Agriculture, forestry, individuals and businesses will undergo change to weather patterns, wildlife habitats and migration patterns, vegetation ranges, cropping patterns, water use and future availability as the climate changes. Research is ongoing in these areas and others to determine how systems will change in response to anticipated altered climate patterns.

Permanence: Discussed in terms of the length of time the carbon remains sequestered and not found in the atmosphere (i.e. Timber stands, no-till, etc. How long is the practice maintained preventing the release of carbon to the atmosphere?).

Leakage: Refers to the true accounting of sequestration and emissions reductions and potential for carbon emissions outside the project area.

Additionality: Activities resulting in new or added carbon sequestration above and beyond what is already being done.

Verification: Carbon sequestration practices and activities must be verified by field testing, a role currently being performed by conservation districts in several states.

Aggregators: Individual carbon sequestration credits (and individual producer contracts) are grouped together—or aggregated—into larger units to be traded in a market system. Some conservation districts and associations and several commodity associations are pursuing roles as aggregators. ■



ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LAWMAKERS

Each year, a small group of conservation district officials made visits to their U.S. Congressional Representatives' offices. As they walked between appointments, discussion typically revolved around whether or not the last visit was a good one. The group measured their success by how well the legislator or staff member seemed to understand the message they delivered. After leaving one particular appointment with a relatively new Congressman, the district officials were frustrated that he just didn't "get it."

He was in the room, but he really didn't seem to relate to our issues," stated one district official. The others agreed.

Another district official exclaimed, "It was the same with our second appointment this morning, and we have met with him every year for the past five years during these trips!"

If this conversation sounds familiar to you, it is time to examine your relationship with your elected officials. Developing and maintaining personal relationships with elected officials at all levels is an important part of successfully delivering your conservation message and influencing legislation, policy and budgets. Developing a strong personal relationship with decision makers is critical, and it does not have to be difficult.

Over the years, NACD has conducted a variety of surveys of conservation districts. A vast majority have indicated that "lobbying for federal conservation programs that provide resources for conservation districts" is the most important function that NACD carries out. Similarly, a high percentage of the responses indicate that conservation districts are highly satisfied with the services NACD provides in legislative affairs and helping districts with access to Congress.

However, sometimes districts indicate that they would rather focus on state and local issues and rely on NACD to work on issues at the national level. Ironically, it is *you*, our members who are needed to

carry out grassroots advocacy on the national level by personally contacting your members of Congress. They want to hear from you on all conservation-related issues. The NACD Board is responsible for fostering a single, unified voice for conservation, but it is *your* responsibility to take that voice to Capitol Hill. To your member of Congress, yours is the only voice that matters!

An important part of NACD's legislative efforts is grassroots advocacy. When legislation related to NACD's legislative priorities begins to move, NACD calls upon conservation districts across the country to communicate with elected officials and their staff about issues that impact local conservation efforts. It is a similar process when working with state and local levels of government. Conservation districts work with state legislators or county officials to ensure natural resource conservation policy is written in a way that works and that conservation programs have adequate funding.

A key to having the greatest impact when participating in grassroots advocacy is building relationships with lawmakers and their staff. Lawmakers are always interested in hearing from constituents, and conservation district officials possess a great deal of influence and credibility related to natural resource programs. The next few pages include some valuable resources that can be used to develop and maintain strong relationships with decision makers at all levels.

Establishing Relationships

Legislative bodies at all levels of government are constantly changing. New lawmakers are elected frequently and legislative staff members are always coming and going. If you have never met or do not know your lawmakers or their staff, it is never too late to find an opportunity to introduce yourself and get acquainted. Specific opportunities can include:

- Contact the lawmaker's district office to schedule a personal meeting with him or her when they are back home meeting with constituents;
- Attend a town hall meeting held by your lawmakers;
- Request a meeting with a member of your lawmaker's staff. Staff members are often more accessible for scheduling face-to-face meetings; and
- Attend events attended by lawmakers that are hosted by state or local associations, charitable organizations, or political parties to which you belong.

Check your local newspapers or visit your lawmaker's website for announcements of meetings or other opportunities.

Maintaining Relationships

The work involved in establishing a relationship with your lawmakers is only half of the equation. There are many people seeking to build relationships with lawmakers in an effort to advance a variety of policy agendas. As a result, efforts to maintain established relationships should be ongoing and persistent. Below are some methods for maintaining your established relationship.

- Provide regular constituent correspondence with federal lawmakers by participating in NACD Action Alerts and providing information that is specific to your local area. It is important for lawmakers to know how programs will work back home.
- Participate in NACD's Legislative Conference and meet with your federal lawmakers in Washington, D.C.
- Host conservation tours to highlight successful implementation of programs.



(left) North Carolina conservation leaders James Ferguson and Franklin Williams welcomed North Carolina Congressman Howard Coble to NACD's 2008 Congressional Reception. (right) NACD Board Member Andrew Wargo discusses state conservation issues with Arkansas Congressman Marion Berry at NACD's 2008 Congressional Reception.

- Serve on relevant advisory committees that your lawmakers might convene.
- Host issue forums and invite lawmakers to participate.
- Attend and participate in town hall meetings.

Remember that lawmakers are people too. Make sure that any contact with them is in the appropriate context and does not infringe upon their personal or family life.

Hosting Conservation Tours

Inviting your lawmakers and their staff to participate in a conservation tour is a valuable opportunity to maintain a mutual relationship. Your lawmakers will develop a better sense of how the conservation programs they influence are implemented on the ground and see first-hand the benefits of sound natural resource management for the community. Tours also provide opportunities to highlight program successes, suggestions for improvement, or provide education on emerging issues. The following are some key points in planning a tour:

- Plan tours during Congressional recess periods. Lawmakers will have the most time to take tours during this time.
- Send a written letter of invitation to lawmakers and staff. Offer several dates for the visit to accommodate the lawmaker's schedule. Sometimes it can require several invitations before the lawmaker accepts.

(left) Partners from across Wyoming gathered last summer for the Sublette County Conservation District's Ecological Site Description tour. The SCCD Board served as host to the County Commissioner, representatives from Wyoming Game and Fish, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, Wyoming Grazing Association, Natural Resources Conservation Service and others.



- Confirm the visit with your lawmaker's scheduler or district manager. This may require several telephone calls. Make sure to also invite key staff, such as the legislative assistant for agriculture or natural resource issues.
- Ask your state association representative to help plan and participate in the tour.
- Invite local news media to participate in the tour.
- Consult with NACD Government Affairs staff for guidance on current federal issues to discuss with the lawmaker.
- Develop an agenda that allows enough time for the tour and a briefing on the issues of concern to your conservation district. There also should be ample time for the lawmaker to meet and talk with cooperators along the way.
- Use the tour as an opportunity to communicate with your lawmaker about the issues affecting conservation districts and how these issues affect natural resources. Be sure to prepare handouts for the lawmaker and staff to take home with them.
- Arrange to have a photographer take pictures of the lawmaker and district officials during the tour. The pictures can be useful in future district or state association communications or when creating a press release about the tour.
- Send a note of thanks to your lawmaker after the tour is over. Do the same thing for any staff who also attended.

Information Gathering

For meetings and tours, it is always good to be prepared and to speak knowledgeably about the topic on which you are meeting. This involves making sure you have adequate information about what you want to share with your lawmakers. Thoroughly research the topic you want to talk about, try to know your lawmaker's position by looking at his or her past legislation, news releases, or editorials on the topic, and look for areas of current activity on the topic in your lawmaker's district

Congressional Schedule

Knowing when Congress is in and out of session can help you plan meetings and tours more effectively with federal lawmakers. Members of Congress generally are in Washington, D.C. while Congress is in session and return home during recess and after adjournment. While specific dates vary from year to year, Congress generally follows the following schedule for recess periods:

January – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

February – Presidents' Day

April – Spring District Work Period

May – Memorial Day District Work Period

July – Independence Day District Work Period

August – Summer District Work Period

September – Labor Day

October – December – Target Adjournment*
(*varies on an annual basis)

Things You Should Do and Not Do

Do:

- Schedule your appointment well in advance
- Be punctual for your meeting
- Dress appropriately for the occasion
- Prepare adequate materials, handouts and a brief leave behind
- Stay focused on your issue
- Provide relevant, specific examples from the legislator's home district
- Follow up after your meeting to answer any questions or unresolved issues

Don't:

- Show up 15 minutes late
- Talk about your recent doctor's appointment
- Wear your work boots
- Bring everyone you know to the meeting
- Get upset if you only get to meet with staff
- Wear out your welcome
- Mix personal and professional agendas



(center) In October 2008 the Pecan Bayou SWCD joined forces with local, state and federal partners to host Texas Congressman Mike Connaway on a field tour showcasing local flood control structures and EQIP projects. In the picture on the left, SWCD Director Jule Richmond and a local FFA student discuss native grass identification with Congressman Connaway.

(right) Congressman Jerry Moran brought together various partners for a "Partners in Conservation" tour last spring in Kansas. Pictured at left with the Congressman are FSA County Executive Director Aaron Fall, NRCSS State Conservationist Eric Banks, and Kansas Association of Conservation Districts board member Bevin Law.

Checklist

Make sure to review your plans before any meeting with lawmakers. Double check to be sure you:

- ✓ Know the date, time and location of the meeting;
- ✓ Have specific topics to discuss;
- ✓ Prepare materials and handouts for lawmakers and staff; and
- ✓ Bring plenty of business cards.

Ideas for Effective Tours

Tours are a great way to give lawmakers first-hand experience with conservation programs. Some ideas for effective tours include:

- Visiting with local producers who have utilized conservation district services to enroll in federal or state conservation programs;
- Conducting a boat tour to talk about water. This can include water quality or quantity, riparian habitat, streambank erosion and any number of other issues;
- Showcasing demonstration projects or other innovative conservation practices;
- Walking tours to highlight neighborhood conservation projects or opportunities to implement conservation practices; and
- Tours of forestland to show sustainable forest management, wildfire risk or impact, and wildlife habitat.



"It all begins with Soil and Water!" explained Hardin Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Board Chair Jerry McBride to Cliff Hite (pictured above). Mr. Hite was running for a seat in Ohio's General Assembly, but he had never heard of a conservation district. The Hardin SWCD did not wait until Mr. Hite was elected; they introduced themselves while he was on the campaign trail and educated him about the importance of conservation and districts. Since elected, Representative Hite has become a major supporter of the Hardin SWCD, attending the Districts' various meetings, conservation tours and Customer Appreciation Days. Hite was also instrumental in securing a substantial funding increase for Ohio's 88 SWCDs.

Regardless of the type of activity, be sure to do your homework, prepare relevant information sheets or handouts, and be ready to answer questions.

Establishing and maintaining quality working relationships with your elected officials is not difficult, but it is extremely important! For you to have an effective dialogue and the ability to influence legislation, policy and funding, your elected officials need to know you on a first-name basis. As a locally-elected conservation district official, one of your many duties and responsibilities is to work with local, state and federal elected officials to help carry out your conservation program. NACD counts on your engagement and participation as a local leader to develop these close personal relationships.

To learn more about how your district can develop and maintain successful relationships with your lawmakers, visit NACD's website at www.nacdnet.org.

Minnesota State Representative Rick Hansen (left) and Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts President Steve Sunderland (right) participate in a legislative tour in Southeast Minnesota. The tour gave Rep. Hansen and other participants an opportunity to view soil and water conservation district projects and on-the-ground results.



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Weaverville Community Forest Recognized by Department of Interior

The Weaverville Community Forest (Forest) achieved national recognition from the U.S. Department of Interior (DOI) at the 2009 Partners in Conservation Awards program in Washington, D.C. on May 7, 2009. The Trinity County Resource Conservation District in northern California has worked with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to implement the Weaverville Community Forest.

The Forest consists of approximately 1,000 acres of forested public land administered by BLM and adjacent to the town of Weaverville. Using a stewardship contract, and with the support of the community, the District has treated hazardous fuels making Weaverville less prone to fire damage. The stewardship contract provides for a commodity to be sold that provides funding for other projects. Recently, the U.S. Forest Service also joined the partnership, adding another 12,000 acres of forested public lands to the community endeavor.

NACD IN ACTION

DISTRICTS AT WORK...Helping Customers Manage Organic Waste

South Dade Soil and Water Conservation District, Florida City, Florida

Florida's South Dade Soil and Water Conservation District (SDSWCD), working through a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grant, is helping major community stakeholders improve organic waste management. Through an innovative pilot project, the District will utilize in-vessel aerobic composting equipment to compost organic waste materials on-site at Florida International University, University of Miami, Miami-Dade MetroZoo and the Breakers Resort.

The SDSWCD will use a portable Model 408 in-vessel aerobic composter from Bio-Mixer Company to test various recipes of organic waste products including food waste, yard waste, animal waste and paper waste. The partners—all producers of large volumes of organic waste—will contribute in-kind services. The joint effort will reduce waste disposal and fertilizer costs for participants, and will have long-term environmental benefits in the community.

The District will help educate these large organic waste producers through active involvement in the project and noticeable results. Project leaders will encourage participants to begin on-site organic waste composting programs, reusing the finished compost on-site as a valuable soil amendment. For example, the District will help MetroZoo compost animal waste, food waste and yard waste and then use the finished compost in the Zoo's extensive landscaping. The closed-loop system will also reduce odor and vector attraction at the Zoo.

The environmental benefits extend beyond the participants; the community wins as well. Improved organic waste management processes will benefit water quality, air quality and more. Fewer organic waste prod-

ucts will go to local landfills, reducing not only the amount of waste within the landfill but also the adverse affects of transporting the materials between sites. Reduction of organic waste in landfills will also decrease the amount of methane gas produced at landfills, eliminate odors and vector attraction. The results will also help protect the Biscayne Aquifer from leachate that can pollute the area water supply. Leachate, carbon dioxide and methane reduction is important to the Everglades Restoration Plan and the health of surrounding communities and national parks.

In addition to environmental benefits, the on-site composting process reduces operating costs. Food, yard and animal waste composting will reduce solid waste disposal and commercial fertilizer costs. Large organic waste producers will also learn how to market surplus compost to agricultural interests as an excellent soil amendment that can reduce the volume of commercial chemical fertilizers required. The pilot project will demonstrate that participants could purchase their own in-vessel aerobic composting equipment and the investment would pay for itself within two to three years.

As part of the EPA grant, the District will measure the volume of organic waste processed and the composition of organic feedstock. They will determine the pathogen content using lab analysis. The finished compost will also be analyzed for volume, composition and pathogen reduction. Finally, SDSWCD will create an in-vessel aerobic composting manual that can be used to educate and train future collaborators.

The District plans to share the final project report with all conservation districts across the country. For additional information, visit the SDSWCD website at www.southdadeswcd.org or contact District Administrator Morgan Levy at mlevy@southdadeswcd.org. ■



Members of the South Dade Soil and Water Conservation District in Florida are working with four major partners in the community to establish on-site organic waste composting and reuse processes.



NACD Legislative Conference Info on Web

NACD's 2009 Legislative Conference is scheduled for July 19 - 21, 2009. Time still remains to register for what promises to be an exciting conference and important meeting for conservation districts. In addition to an impressive line-up of invited speakers including Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, this year's conference will feature a Resources Conservation Act Forum (see *related story below*). The conference will conclude on Tuesday with an NACD reception on Capitol Hill. Whether you are attending or staying close to home, keep up with NACD's Legislative Conference at www.nacdnet.org/events/legconference. Additional resources and photos will be posted following the event.

NACD IN ACTION



Orlando 2010: Show Your Commitment to Conservation!

More than a thousand conservationists are expected to gather January 31 – February 3, 2010 in Orlando, Fla. for NACD's 64th Annual Meeting.

NACD is excited to announce the theme for the conference will be "Committed to Conservation."

General sessions, breakouts and other meeting events will highlight landowners, conservation districts, employees, district officials, NACD and partner organizations from across the country that are committed to conservation.

It's courageous and it's contagious. It's about community and it's about Congress. Being committed to conservation requires collaboration, communication and cooperation. Our mutual commitment to conservation is what keeps us enthusiastically working through challenges, overcoming obstacles and embracing opportunities, all for the benefit of our nation's natural resources.

NACD hopes that our commitment to conservation is also catchy; we want you to join us in Orlando in January! Additional details will be posted soon on NACD's website at www.nacdnet.org. Share your personal experiences and ideas about how to showcase districts' commitment to conservation with NACD via email at 2010@email.nacdnet.org.

RCA Stakeholder Input Needed

Congress reauthorized the Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act (RCA) in the 2008 Farm Bill with the intent to conduct evaluations to inform development of future conservation policy. The RCA provides broad strategic assessment and planning authority for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) leading to the development of a Presidential Policy Statement along with a national soil and water conservation strategy that gives direction for USDA soil and water conservation activities. Time is short; the assessment process develops an Appraisal Report due to Congress by January 2011. The Appraisal Report will then be used to draft the plan and policy statement, which is due January 2012.

Nationwide stakeholder involvement is a central element of the RCA process. USDA will hold listening sessions this summer to ensure stakeholders are informed of the RCA and its likely scope and process; provide stakeholders the opportunity to comment on conservation priorities, program approaches and future conservation needs; and solicit recommendations for improving the RCA Appraisal Report process. Stakeholders are also encouraged to submit written comments for consideration. More information is available on NACD's website, including RCA history and background, listening session details, questions from USDA and instructions for submitting comments. Check it out at www.nacdnet.org/events/rca/.

2009 Stewardship: Did You DIG IT?

Keeping true to a 54-year tradition, NACD's 2009 Stewardship Week—themed "DIG IT! The Secrets of Soil"—was a huge success. More than 1,267,000 individual products, including student booklets, bookmarks, posters and more, were distributed in local communities across the country. More than 1,000 conservation districts ordered education materials based on the "DIG IT!"



NACD staff and NRCs Chief Dave White (pictured above) taught soils lessons at Brent Elementary School in D.C. joining the students to plant new flowers and shrubs outside their school during 2009 Stewardship Week.

NACD Seeks New Chief Executive Officer

NACD is in the process of hiring a new Chief Executive Officer to lead and oversee the Association's operations. The search began in May, following former NACD CEO Krysta Harden's move to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Harden was selected by President Obama to become the USDA Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations. The application period has closed and NACD's CEO Search Team and Executive Board are in the process of narrowing down the candidate pool and conducting interviews. Staff member Brad Ross is serving as NACD's Interim CEO during the transition. Ross can be reached at Brad-Ross@nacd-net.org. Association leadership hopes to complete the search process by mid-summer. NACD will update you through our website and newsletters when a new CEO is selected.

theme from the NACD Marketplace at www.nacdstore.org. The result will be a greater appreciation for soil and how it impacts each of us daily.

Soil is the foundation for the products we use each day and conservation districts and educators delivered the message to audiences of all ages. Conservation districts scheduled activities and delivered educational materials to individual classrooms, field days, ministerial associations, radio announcements, proclamations, local senior centers and libraries!

NACD Officers and staff also delivered programs to both youth and adults during Stewardship Week. They visited classrooms in Louisiana, Mississippi, Virginia, the District of Columbia, South Dakota, Ohio and Indiana, teaching the importance of soils and carrying out various hands-on activities to pique students' interest. National leaders also participated in live radio broadcasts regarding Stewardship Week that aired across the West and Midwest.

Soils education materials can be used for many years to come to increase awareness and appreciation for soils. Visit <http://www.nacdnet.org/education/resources/soils/> to view the online soil educators guide, worksheets and more.

Many conservation districts are already making plans for the

next Stewardship themes. Stewardship materials for 2010 will focus on Wildlife and Habitat with a conservation focus. If you have ideas for the official wildlife and habitat related topic, please email stewardship@nacdnet.org.

The United Nations has declared 2011 the International Year of the Forests. To join forces with a variety of partners to promote forestry, NACD's Stewardship theme for 2011 will also focus on forestry.

Additional information regarding NACD's stewardship and education efforts and resources is available on NACD's website at www.nacdnet.org. ■

2009 NACD Events Calendar

June 14-16, 2009	Northern Plains Region Leaders Meeting Bismarck, ND
July 18-19, 2009	NACD Summer Board Meeting Washington, D.C.
July 19-21, 2009	NACD Legislative Conference Washington, D.C.
July 26-29, 2009	Northeast Region Meeting Solomon's Island, MD
August 12-14, 2009	South Central Region Meeting Baton Rouge, LA
August 23-26, 2009	Southeast Region Meeting Charleston, SC
August 27-29, 2009	State Association Executive Directors' Conference Santa Fe, NM
September 22-25, 2009	Pacific and Southwest Joint Region Meeting Dubois, WY



NACD Secretary/Treasurer Jack Majeres taught a lesson on soils to a classroom of 3rd grade students in Dell Rapids, South Dakota during Stewardship Week.

Conservation Districts Provide Input to NACD

Recently, NACD Officers, Executive Board members and staff conducted phone surveys of a random sampling of conservation districts across the country. The phone calls were made with two goals in mind: to make personal contacts with individual districts and to establish a baseline of understanding of NACD members' satisfaction level with and need for the services NACD provides.

The phone conversations provided an excellent opportunity to connect with members and hear firsthand their thoughts and concerns. "I appreciated the opportunity to speak directly with our conservation district members, some of who don't always have an opportunity to travel to an NACD meeting," stated NACD President Steve Robinson. "The comments they shared were insightful and will help provide NACD's Board of Directors with information about what is important to them locally." Survey results will be shared at NACD's Summer Board meeting.

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

NASCA Partnership Strong at National, State Levels

The National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA) is a key partner to conservation districts at both the state and national levels. NASCA—created over forty years ago—strives to serve America's state and territory conservation agencies. NASCA's member agencies fill varying roles in state and territory governments. In addition to responsibilities for conservation districts, these state agencies administer a variety of other soil, water and related natural resource conservation programs.

At the national level, NASCA works to facilitate communication and information sharing among its members, as well as provide needed training, forums for policy development and representation. Together, NASCA and NACD seek to partner to bring needed services and tools to states and districts. NASCA has been a joint sponsor of national diversity and leadership training sessions. The partners participate together in a national information technology task force that addresses conservation district IT issues.

At the state and local level, districts often have daily interaction with their respective state agencies. NASCA members, these state agencies, typically oversee the appointment and or election of district governing officials. In many states, the state agency is the administrator of state funds that are passed on to conservation districts.

In some states, employees working in local district offices are state agency employees. Since districts and state agencies were usually created with the same legislation, working together within a state usually comes naturally. The way most state legislatures appropriate funds through a state agency is also a significant force for districts to be in tune with their state agency.

NACD values NASCA as a partner and will continue to partner with the organization on activities that benefit conservation districts. We encourage you to strengthen existing partnerships at the state and local level with your respective state agencies. ■

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT

Expanding Your District's Reach through Local Media

Members of the local media can and should be an integral part of conservation districts' outreach efforts. Media outlets in your community can help you expand the reach of your message, promote your conservation district's events and tours, increase landowner awareness of your mission and programs and help you influence community perception of your conservation district.

It takes more than a fill-in-the-blank press release that blankets every reporter or broadcaster in the area. It's about building and fostering relationships, serving as a reliable source of information, letting real people do the talking, having a consistent message, being creative, respecting deadlines and having a plan.

Countless ways exist to reach out to members of local media. Invite a local reporter to your conservation tour; meet your local broadcaster for coffee, or find out if your district supervisors or employees have contacts that you can build upon. If and when an interview is arranged, be prepared, have a purpose, and stay on message.

NACD has created a new resource for conservation districts that includes tips for honing your message and then using effective relationships with the media to expand your district's reach. Check it out today at

www.nacdnet.org/resources/.

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.nacdnet.org/news/publications/resource.

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

Claire Ayer, Vermont State Senator

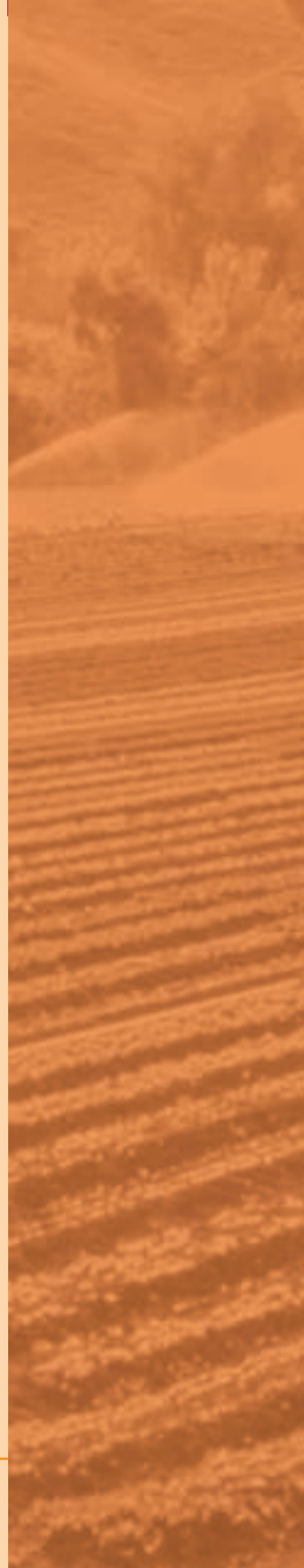
While serving as a conservation district official, I quickly learned the importance of weighing in with Washington officials about conservation issues. Through Vermont's membership in NACD, I gained valuable techniques to influence national conservation policy through strong relationships with legislators. District officials must help legislators understand how rules and regulations affect land use and users.

Government policies affect private lives. What seems like a good idea to a lawmaker will remain that unless we have real on-the-ground examples from constituents. Call us. When a constituent calls, we listen. As constituents at the local and state level, you **can** influence legislation.

Below are a few suggestions for building relations with elected officials:

- Contact your legislator as soon as you hear of an issue. If you wait, decisions may be made without your input. Do your homework. Don't worry that you don't know every detail. Many elected officials have staff to conduct additional research.
- Tell your story. Your personal experiences really help me understand issues. The fact that you're in my district brings it all home. I represent you and try to do what's best for the state. Numbers are good, but I don't need a stack of statistics for every issue. A summary and explanation of how proposed legislation impacts you is a good start.
- Don't use form letters. After I read several of the same letters, I tune out. Include your contact information on every contact. My constituents carry the most weight and I want to be able to follow up. I prefer email, but each legislator has a preference. Ask what it is.
- If you run into me around town, tell me what's up and that you'll send something in writing soon. Be mindful of the time. Give me a business card with the issue and date written on the back. Tell me you'll send a follow up, and do it right away.
- Offer to testify and ask me to help you set it up if necessary. Although we take written testimony and by speaker phone in committee, face-to-face testimony is most effective.
- Send a thank you note. It not only makes me feel appreciated, but also keeps your name and issue on the front burner. If you don't hear from me, send another note or call and ask for information.
- Use your state's website to follow proposals through the process. It lets me know you're doing your homework and that you're serious about the issue.
- Once you make a good contact, nurture it. If I sponsor a local forum on conservation or agriculture, you should attend. Reintroduce yourself and give me one of your business cards. It's helpful to put a face with a name and an issue. You may become a resource I trust in given policy areas.

Remember; we want to hear from constituents. You vote for us. Your connection to your elected officials is direct; just use it. You can make a real difference. ■





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Become a Friend of NACD

Becoming a Friend of NACD by joining our revamped personal membership program not only shows your support for your national association and its mission, it also puts you in touch with other professional conservation-minded individuals and partnering organizations. Make a personal investment in NACD today!

Consider one of the following membership levels of participation:

- ✓ Student (\$15/year)
- ✓ Steward (\$50/year)
- ✓ Champion (\$100/year)
- ✓ Lifetime (\$1,000 one-time fee)

For member benefits and application, please visit the NACD website at:

<http://www.nacdnet.org/membership/friendsfnacd>

