

# The National Catalyst

Volume XXI, Issue 1

MAY 2008

A Publication of the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils



## Alabama Legislature Passes Resolution in Support of RC&D Funding

The Alabama House of Representatives and State Senate recently passed a resolution urging full funding for the RC&D program by the U.S. Congress. The resolution was presented by State Senator Roger Bedford (D-Russellville), Chair of the Senate General Fund Appropriations Committee, State Representative Gerald Allen (R-Tuscaloosa), and member of House General Fund Appropriations Committee and State Representative James Fields (D -Cullman) to NARC&DC President Joan Smith Freeman and NARC&DC Co-Legislative Liaison



Pictured from Left to Right, State Representative Gerald Allen, State Representative James Fields, NARC&DC President Joan Smith Freeman, NARC&DC Co-Legislative Liaison, Robert Harbison, and State Senator Roger Bedford.

Robert Harbison at the Alabama State Association meeting on April 14, 2008.

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## NARC&DC Elects New Officers

On February 24, 2008 the National Board of the NARC&DC held elections. The following new officers were elected to serve two year terms:

Joan Smith Freeman, President  
Jeanette Jamieson, First Vice President  
Ed Miller, Treasurer  
Robert Harbison, Co-Legislative Liaison

Ms. Smith Freeman is a member of Ore-Cal RC&D Council of California and a representative from the Pacific Rim Region. Ms. Jamieson is a member of the Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Council of Georgia and President of the Southeast Region. Mr. Miller is a member of the Glacierland RC&D Council of Wisconsin

and representative of the North Central Region. Mr. Harbison is a member of the Alabama Mountains, Rivers and Valleys Council and a representative of the Southeast Region.

The Executive board of the National Association also includes:

James Sipperly, Secretary  
Pearlie Reed, Legislative Liaison.

In addition, the National Board also reappointed Ms. Mary Thompson, a member of the Southwestern NC RC&D Council of North Carolina, as an At-Large Representative.

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# President's Report



Joan Smith Freeman

By Joan  
Smith Freeman

I am honored to be your new President of the National Association of RC&D Councils – elected February 28, 2008. I have been involved with

my Council, Ore Cal RC&D, since its inception and am very proud of the good work we do. I am a firm believer that RC&D is the best program around for getting things done on the ground! I look forward to meeting you as I travel to State and Regional meetings.

As you all know, this is a very challenging year for RC&D. At the Leadership Forum, we were informed by Mark Rey, USDA Undersecretary of Natural Resources and Environment, that he recommended the President's Budget zero out RC&D Program funding for the next fiscal year. He said the program was never designed to give permanent funding but only to provide a catalyst for local efforts.

Everyone at the Leadership Forum hit Capitol Hill with a vengeance. We talked with key Congressmen and Senators and their staff and found good support, but we cannot let up. We need to continue the dialog with them as they go through this difficult budget year. One concern that surfaced this year, was that some legislators told us they do not hear from all the councils in their area and they wanted to make certain that all councils are active and performing.

As President of the National Association I intend to be a strong advocate for

local councils in DC and will be meeting with Members of Congress and their staff. We are all in this together! Marketing RC&D nationally is a priority of the National Association board.

Remember the old adage "All Politics is Local" (Tip O'Neill). Your help to market RC&D locally will help us get past these funding issues. Be vocal and take credit for what you do. Please work with your local media and place articles in local newspapers. Take your projects on local radio talk shows and to other service organizations. Expand our partnerships! Brag about our wonderful RC&D program and the good things we accomplish! This will help us generate support in Congress. Remember everyone wants to be part of a winning team.

As part of our effort to tell our RC&D story, I challenge every council, nationwide, to celebrate RC&D week in the third week in September. Councils are encouraged to hold events, write an article for your local paper, or encourage the passage of resolutions by local and state government in support of RC&D. Invite elected officials to your events. The Alabama State RC&D Association is to be commended for their recent efforts with state government. It can serve as a model for how to get this done in your state.

As your national President I also pledge to be a strong and vocal advocate of RC&D Councils by exploring new partnership opportunities, strengthening our existing partnerships and meeting frequently with the Administration throughout my tenure.

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## **The National Catalyst**

Published quarterly by the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils, Inc.

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# **Executive Director's Report**

By Roberta Jeanquart

The Agriculture Appropriations subcommittees will act in late spring or early summer on funding for agriculture programs, including RC&D. The President has requested zero for RC&D, which means that only Congress can restore funds to keep RC&D in business beyond October 1.

Your national association has been visiting key Members of Congress to bring our message of \$56 million for existing councils. However, restoring the funds takes a joint effort of local councils and your National Association. We can make contacts nationally, but if Congress does not hear locally about what your council is doing and the importance of funding for your council, in this tight budget year, your council could lose funding.

It is critical that we keep calling and writing letters throughout this spring and summer so that RC&D receives necessary funds helps to sustain and grow the program.

Here are some of the frequent questions that we hear:

**My Member of Congress did not sign the Dear Colleague letter, does this mean they do not support RC&D?** Call your Member of Congress or their staff and ask what they did to support your request. Members of Congress have several options. They can sign a Dear Colleague letter, they can write an individual letter to the Chairman of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee or they can send a program level funding request. The key is to ask what they did to follow-up on your request. Let us know – we are tracking this information.

**I haven't written a letter or made a phone call on RC&D.** Is it too late? Absolutely not. While the subcommittee has internal deadlines (March 19) on Member requests, Members of Congress are elected to represent their constituents' interests and should respond to your request. The subcommittee will draft and pass their bill in late May or early June. Write a letter today and follow it up with a phone call. It is clear from the discussions we have had on Capitol Hill,

that any council that is not actively talking with their Member of Congress will be vulnerable for elimination this year.

And now for the **myths** about the program that have accompanied the Administration's budget proposal and testimony to Congress and how to respond if someone brings them up to you:

**RC&D was designed to be a temporary program.** Not True! RC&D has permanent legislative authority (granted in 2002 the Farm bill) and the 2008 Farm bill will further clarify that every council should have a coordinator. Congress has made it clear through the Farm bill that this program should be on-going and in fact has authorized up to 450 Councils (we currently have 375 designated and 38 applicant areas).

**RC&D duplicates programs.** We have yet to see evidence of the programs it duplicates. In fact, RC&D provides a delivery mechanism for federal grants in rural communities where there may be no other delivery system. The 2008 Farm bill also reemphasizes the original premise of RC&D – that its job is to bring to bear U.S. Department of Agriculture resources in a community. This means it helps deliver USDA programs – not duplicate them.

**RC&D will continue without federal support.** RC&D was designed by Congress to be a partnership effort to address conservation and economic development. The investment needs to be from both the federal government in providing a full time coordinator, and from the volunteers who serve on a council to provide leadership, and find funds for council projects. The National Association has encouraged councils to be more sustainable in the face of level budgets – but there is a federal role in providing a coordinator.

In tight budget years Congress weighs where their investments will go the farthest. RC&D is invaluable in that it uses volunteers to deliver services, and for every dollar the federal government invests, \$7.50 are returned to a community. What other federal programs show this kind of leverage?

*Exec. Dir. Report cont. on Page 7*

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# NARC&DC Presents National Awards at Leadership Forum

On Monday, February 25, 2008, the NARC&DC presented deserving individuals and groups with its highest awards, the NARC&DC National Awards. Each year, the NARC&DC awards deserving individuals and groups who have shown that they are effectively meeting the needs of the RC&D program and the constituents they serve with these prestigious awards.



**VA Dept. of Ag. and Consumer Affairs nominated  
by the Eastern Shore of VA RC&D Council**

The first award, for Supporting Organization of the Year, went to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs, nominated by the Eastern Shore of Virginia RC&D Council. Over the years the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs has supported many of the innovative projects of the Eastern Shore of Virginia RC&D Council, including the purchase of Development Rights and agricultural plastic recycling.

The second award, for Outstanding Youth Involvement, went to the Bemidji School District Art Teachers, whose continuing participation is indicative of their strong commitment to both community involvement and improvement to the quality of life of those living within the Giziibii RC&D Area.

The RC&D Program Assistant Award went to Ms. Dee Robinson, who has assisted the Northwest Oregon RC&D Council. Ms. Robinson volunteers and serves on numerous community committees and is highly respected within the RC&D Area. She developed the original Council's request for assistance and produced informational brochures that explain the work of the Council.



**George Swentik on behalf  
of Bemidji School District Art Teachers**



**Sandy Chenal, Crossroads RC&D  
Joan Smith Freeman, President**

The Coordinator of the Year Award went to Ms. Sandy Chenal of the Crossroads RC&D Council. Her efforts include providing grant writing workshops, introducing the council to the VISTA program, and recruiting non-members to serve on project committees. She has been an advocate for ensuring that the Council strives to provide service to all. An excellent facilitator, this coordinator, like many others, dedicates her heart and soul to the betterment of the council.

The 2005 Council Member of the Year went to Ms. Martha Watts of the Southwest Mississippi RC&D Council. Ms. Watts has given countless years of service to RC&D and has led her council to the strong

financial base from which it operates. Her involvement in forest recovery as a result of Hurricane Katrina has led to the development of 3,000 recovery plans covering 700,000 acres. She does an outstanding job eliminating barriers to the completion of RC&D tasks, whether it be for forestry or energy efficiency.



**Martha Watts  
Southwest Mississippi RC&D**

The Council of the Year Award went to the Cumberland Valley RC&D Council. This deserving Council has accomplished a wide range of projects that address many local issues related to social, economic, and environmental concerns. The Council is unique in its coordination of projects from the PRIDE Program (Personal Responsibility in a Desirable Environment) and the Mill Branch Stream Reconstruction Project. It also established the Southeast Kentucky Agricultural Marketing Cooperative.

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# North Dakota Partnership Receives President's Award

Immediate past President Sharon Ruggi spent the 2007 "RC&D Week" in North Dakota where she attended the annual State meeting and toured RC&D Council projects. Nine newspaper, radio and television interviews were conducted statewide during the tour. She awarded the North Dakota State Association and the North Dakota NRCS with the NARC&DC's President's Award to recognize their efforts to work with media and market RC&D activities in their state. Ms. Ruggi noted that the collaboration serves as an example for other states to "Make Things Happen!"



ND Association of RC&D Councils and ND State Conservationist

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## New Inductees: RC&D's Hall of Fame

The National Association has inducted three new members into its distinguished Hall of Fame. These deserving individuals are Mr. James Costello, Mr. John Rife, and Ms. Nedda Simon.

Mr. Costello has been involved with RC&D since the inception of the Glacierland RC&D Council back in 1993. He has remained a strong and positive influence in the RC&D Program, ensuring that the decision making ability for an RC&D Area remains with the local residents whom he feels "knows best what they need, want, and can achieve it!" Mr. Costello has sacrificed his personal and financial resources to promote the RC&D Program. He has talked with local, state, and national elected officials on behalf of the RC&D Program and continually keeps all leaders informed of Council activities.



James Costello



John Rife

Mr. Rife has been a strong advocate of the RC&D process, including both aspects of its name: Conservation and Development. Mr. Rife has been active in the RC&D community since its inception and has provided encouragement, guidance, and leadership for RC&D Councils across the Nation. Mr. Rife is the only surviving member of the original RC&D Committee that was assembled in 1963 in Minnesota to develop a new pilot program that would lead to one of the first RC&D Councils – West Central RC&D (which later would become WesMin RC&D & Prairie Country RC&D). John also worked to complete the first RC&D project in the nation – the Crow Wing River Canoe Trail. Mr. Rife has been critical in promoting the incorporation of diverse individuals and cultures, introducing

countless partners to RC&D Councils across the state of Minnesota, and encouraging many members of his local community to become active in the RC&D Program.

Ms. Simon truly embodies the spirit of RC&D. Ms. Simon has served her local Council, her State, and the National Association of RC&D Councils. She has led various Councils and Associations through a multitude of planning processes and has helped them to focus their work by helping them develop their mission and vision statements. She is a staunch believer in using the proper tools to help an organization succeed and is always there to help provide those tools. She has urged cultural diversity on the Council level, as well as on the State and Regional levels. She believes that Council strength comes from a diversified membership and diversified skill set. Ms. Simon has been critical in developing corporate partnerships, such as Pioneer Hi-Bred and John Deere, for the National Association, and she was Chair of the Training and Marketing committees. She has always been one to nurture partnerships and has selflessly traveled the country in the name of RC&D to help Councils be nurtured and to help nurture their partnerships.



Nedda Simon

*We commend James, John and Nedda for their exemplary dedication to our RC&D Community!*

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# President Smith Freeman and NRCS Chief Lancaster Sign Agreement

## Meetings

### **NARC&DC National Board Meeting**

June 7-8, 2008  
Washington DC

### **Southeast Regional Meeting**

September 11-13, 2008  
Wytheville, VA

### **Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting**

September 21-24, 2008  
Clinton, NJ

### **Pac-Rim Regional Meeting**

October 19-23, 2008  
Portland, OR

### **New England Regional Meeting**

October 23-25, 2008  
Mystic, CT

### **National RC&D Conference**

June 14-18, 2009  
Albuquerque, NM

On April 18, 2008, President Joan Smith Freeman and NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster signed a Cooperative Agreement designed to bring services to local RC&D Councils nationwide. The agreement assists the NARC&DC offering free training sessions at State and Regional RC&D meetings. Training sessions include Area Planning I and II, Directors Training, Financial Management, Sustainable RC&D Councils I, II, III, & IV, and Working with Tribes. The agreement also provides funding for stipends to limited resource and socially-disadvantaged



Arlen Lancaster, NRCS Chief  
Joan Smith Freeman, President

RC&D Council members to attend training sessions, forums and conferences. On farm energy audit training and marketing materials will also be produced for local councils.

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## Virgin Islands RC&D Council Receives EPA Quality Award

The Virgin Islands (V.I.) RC&D Council has received recognition by the U.S. EPA for demonstrating an outstanding commitment to protecting and enhancing environmental quality in EPA's Region 2. The Environmental Quality Award is the highest recognition presented to the public by the U.S. EPA Region 2 office. The award was presented to the Council on April 25, 2008 in New York City.

The Council received this award for its many innovative projects in the USVI. One of V.I. RC&D's most recent projects is the installation of a rain garden at the Greenhouse Program in Estate Lower Love, St. Croix. The project served as a hands-on training during its installation and is used for public tours and outreach events to demonstrate how rain gardens can decrease water pollution and flooding

while conserving valuable freshwater resources.

The V.I. RC&D also provides technical training to the community. The V.I. RC&D, in partnership with DPNR, UVI, USDA, and We Grow Food, sponsored a Pond Design & Construction Training to provide education to improve farm water supply and minimize storm water flooding and NPS pollution. The V.I. RC&D, working with the V.I. Waste Management Authority, also helped to foster the creation of the St. Croix Recycling Association an association of individuals dedicated to conserving our natural resources and saving energy, money, and land space by promoting recycling in the territory.

The V.I. RC&D brings together federal and local incentives and initiatives and

*Virgin Islands cont. on page 7*

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# Regional Happenings . . .

## **Pacific Rim**

### **Bob Jones, President**

The Pacific Rim was well represented at the National Leadership Forum held in February by members from most states. RC&D council members attended various training sessions and “Hit the Hill” to begin our 4th consecutive year of restoring RC&D program funding. Dee Robinson of Northwest Oregon RC&D was the recipient of the National Award for Program Assistant.

The Pacific Rim Regional Association’s next annual meeting and conference will be held at Doubletree Hotel in Portland, Oregon, October 19-22, 2008. Planning is already underway by the hosting council, Northwest Oregon RC&D. This year’s conference will last three full days to make more time for training and sharing of success stories. The theme of this conference is “Expanding Partnerships for a Renewable Future”. We will continue to stress financial sustainability, building of partnerships, conserving our resources and “Making Things Happen” in our communities. Some great tours are being planned to show examples of renewable energy, and local RC&D projects. We invite all RC&D council members, coordinators, and other supporters to visit and share the Northwest experience. Check our website for more info: [www.pacrimrcd.org](http://www.pacrimrcd.org).

## **Southeast States**

### **Jeanette Jamieson, President**

The Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Council is proud to announce the creation of a new

program, rainwater harvesting. The name of the program is called North Georgia Rainkeepers. The entire Southeast has been experiencing extreme drought conditions. As a result of this need, the Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Council proposed to adopt this as a worthwhile project.

This program was brought before the State Association for RC&D in fall 2007, which was received with great enthusiasm state wide. Since that time, the rain barrel program has generated much interest from all over the Southeast Region. Partnerships have begun with the Coca-Cola Company, Lowe’s Corporation, local technical colleges, and the Department of Natural Resources.

The program has received calls from RC&D Councils in South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee regarding how to establish a rainkeeper program in their Council Area.

The rainkeeper program is an

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### *President’s Report cont. from page 2*

Volunteers do great work in their communities, but I firmly believe that RC&D is a partnership effort and the investment in RC&D cannot be one-sided by volunteers alone. Investment in RC&D needs to be made by both the federal government and volunteers. NARC&DC will continue our efforts to strengthen the program. Please help us by continuing to make the case locally – together we can “Make Things Happen.”

opportunity to educate and provide outreach services to communities about water conservation practices.

To find out more about the rain barrel program, go the Council’s website at [www.chestchattrcd.org](http://www.chestchattrcd.org).

## **Southwest States**

### **Marva Beck, President**

Kathryn Braden, President of the Missouri RC&D Councils, sent out an invitation to “Meet Me in St. Louis.” And so we did. The Southwest Region members arrived en masse. The meeting was well attended, and all state presidents were there, as was our new national president, Joan Smith Freeman. And then the blizzard hit. The hotel made sure we didn’t miss a meal or want for anything. We closed the conference with a business meeting for the Southwest, where elections were held. Marva Beck, from Texas, is the new president of Southwest. Kathryn Braden will serve on the National board with Marva. We all managed to get out of St Louis just before the floods hit! And we got home in time to send the message to our congressmen that RC&D does great things!

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### *Exec. Dir. Report cont. from Page 3*

Keep the national office advised about your local contacts. Call on us whenever we can help. And most importantly, thank you for your dedication to your communities and to RC&D.

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### *Virgin Islands cont. from page 6*

state of the art expertise – both in large and small ways – with grassroots groups and efforts to “Make Things Happen” in the Virgin Islands.

Giziibii RC&D  
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# RC&D - Making Things Happen!



## Become an Associate Member of NARC&DC

### Partnership Alliance Registration Form

Please indicate if this is a new membership or a renewal:

New Membership       Renewal

Sign up for (circle your choice):

Out of This World (Lifetime)	\$500.00	_____
Diamond (Yearly)	\$250.00	_____
Platinum (Yearly)	\$100.00	_____
Gold (Yearly)	\$ 75.00	_____
Silver (Yearly)	\$ 50.00	_____
Regular (Yearly)	\$ 25.00	_____
Additional Donation	\$	_____
	<b>Total \$</b>	_____

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

You will receive a card that shows you are a member in good standing. So act today!

Please mail to:

Partnership Alliance Program  
National Association of RC &D Councils  
444 North Capitol St. NW, Suite 345  
Washington, DC 20001

Any questions?

Please contact Monica Johnson  
Phone: 1-202 434 4780  
Fax: 202 434-4783  
Email: narcdc@rcdnet.org.

