

The National Catalyst

Volume XVI, Issue 1, Spring 2006

President's Update

By Sharon Ruggi, President, NARC&DC



Sharon Ruggi,
President,
National Association
of RC&D Councils

As I write this article, we are once again embroiled in a battle for RC&D survival. Just as we had to rely upon all of you writing letters to Congress last year, we are turning to you for the second year in a row; and, I am confident that you will respond with the same fervor as last year. Last year we were told by Congressional staff that they got more letters on the RC&D program than any other program within the Department of Agriculture. That is truly an accomplishment we can all be proud of. In fact last year, our budget for RC&D was the single largest increase over the President's budget request for any program in USDA. You did it last year, and I am confident we can do it again.

Despite our action and that of Congress, the President is again proposing to cut our budget in half. There can be no doubt that this is simply a budget-cutting tactic and is not based upon a belief that RC&D is not adequately serving local communities. We can be successful, but our success will definitely depend upon your willingness to tell our great story to Congress, particularly what your local RC&D council has done for your local community. And everyone should be extremely proud of the fact that in 2005, we leveraged the federal dollars eight to one—a fact that shows that we are great stewards of the public's money.

The NARC&DC held a board meeting in February and I'd like to welcome our newest board members. Mary Thompson from North Carolina and former NRCS Chief, Pearlie Reed from Arkansas are our new national at-large board members. Nels Werner from Utah, joined the national board from the Western region. Elections of officers were held in February. Our current officer team includes First Vice President Joan Smith Freeman, Second Vice President Jeanette Jamieson, Secretary Nedda Simon, Treasurer Jerry Laffin, Co-Legislative Liaisons Nels Werner and Leroy Dangeau. I want

to express my appreciation for the confidence this board and the councils have shown in allowing me to serve a second term. It is truly an honor to serve as your President, and I look forward to the next two years.

As I begin my second and final term as President, I am focused on making sure that the National Association will be even stronger in the future. To that end, the Board began a visioning process at the February Board meeting. We are tackling difficult issues that have the promise of strengthening the National Board and association and that will ultimately allow us to better serve local

Councils. It is our aim to have the results of the visioning process finalized in time to share them with you at our National Conference in June. The issues we are examining include: national association financial sustainability; organization; applicant area support; council evaluations and capacity building.

*"National
Conference,
June 18-20, 2006,
Savannah,
Georgia."*

Lastly, I am very excited about our upcoming National Conference, and I trust that you are all making plans to attend. You have now received your raffle tickets for the 2006 red Ford Mustang. Please get energized about selling these tickets!! Everyone can easily sell chances on such a fantastic prize. The proceeds will all go to the National Association and will allow us the flexibility of being your advocate in Washington and providing services that you need. See you in Savannah!!!

**You Could WIN
a 2006 Ford
Mustang!!**



**Buy a Chance for \$20
from Your Local RC&D**

**This issue
features photos
from the
NARC&DC Leader-
ship Forum Held
in Washington DC
February, 2006**



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The Washington Report

By *Roberta Jeanquart*,
NARC&DC Executive Director

Here we go again. The RC&D Program is cut in half to \$26 million in the President's budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2007. This cut is done by eliminating over 225 coordinator positions and requiring the remaining 150 coordinators to serve multiple RC&D areas. To restore funding to the program, we will need the assistance of every council member and supporter of RC&D nationwide.

NARC&DC is ready to help you make the case to restore funding. Look to our website at rcdnet.org for our legislative alerts and sample letters. The federal budgets will be even tighter this year so we need to

be as aggressive in pleading our case as we did last year.

Our target funding level is \$56 million to make up for the cost of living adjustments the program has absorbed in recent years. To be most effective we really need to explain how RC&D affects our local communities. Highlight your projects in your letters. In addition, this year, because of the urgency of our appeal we encourage you to write a letter, follow it up with a phone call and meet with your Member of Congress while they are at home in their District. Fax your letters to make sure they arrive in a timely manner.

At present a "Dear Colleague" letter is circulating in the House of Representatives in support of RC&D funding. The letter is available for sign-on with Rep. Frank Lucas of Oklahoma and Rep. Collin Peterson of Minnesota. In just 2 days 29 Members of Congress have signed on. Last year's efforts to educate Members of Congress on the value of RC&D are paying off tremendously and we should see many more signatures. Your efforts last year really helped highlight the role RC&D plays in local communities.

Finally, please remember legislative action is strictly a council member responsibility. Neither federal employees nor federal equipment (federally supplied fax machines, computers, or stationary) can be used to assist in these efforts.

Please call on NARC&DC at 202 434-4780 whenever we can be of assistance. Thank you for all you do to make RC&D the strong and vibrant program it is today.

NARC&DC Hosts its' Seventh Annual Leadership Forum

On February 6-8, 2006 over two-hundred RC&D Leaders came to Crystal City, VA to take part in the NARC&DC's Seventh Annual Leadership Forum.

The theme for this year's conference was Cooperative Conservation and how to strengthen local communities through local leadership. President Sharon Ruggi, along with the entire NARC&DC Board of Directors, expressed extreme concern as the RC&D leadership prepared

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Congresswoman Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO) encourages members to stay the course during tight budget times.

L-Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) invigorates RC&D members before they begin their annual Hill visits.

R-Congressman Robert Aderholt (R-AL) ends the Congressional breakfast with words of strong support for the RC&D program.



NARC&DC Announces New Services

The NARC&DC is proud to remind Councils of the many existing and new services we provide our member Councils. First and foremost, NARC&DC serves as an advocate for local councils seeking partnerships with federal agencies and non-governmental organizations to benefit local council activities. As an advocate, NARC&DC also provides legislative services by distributing updated information on current [events](#) and [legislation](#) that affect RC&D Councils Nationwide.

We also offer the [GrantStation Insider](#) our FREE weekly e-newsletter and our wonderful **Grant Research Service!** If you are embarking upon a project, have the NARC&DC provide a listing of potential funders for your project.

The NARC&DC is committed to providing invaluable [communications](#) to our entire council network. The National Office gets the word out to councils and our partners in a number of ways. We provide quarterly newsletters and regular mailing; we have our website at www.rcdnet.org; and our RC&DNET Listserv.

We also provide a variety of [training opportunities](#), which are available at [no charge](#) to state and regional RC&D organizations. Currently available until April, 2007 are: Sustainable RC&D Councils; RC&D Non-Profit Director's Training; Working with Indian Tribes and RC&D Communications. Topics available soon include: Recruiting Volunteers, Council Performance Assessment and Quality Annual Reporting. Additional topics to be presented at the NARC&DC National Conference include: Program Application Guides; Grant Research; Proposal Writing/Project Planning; Grant Administration; Rapid Basin Assessment and Water Quality; Sustainable RC&D Councils; Capital Campaigns; Edowments/Foundations.

In addition to our live training, we offer the **Financial Management Guidebook**, which is our second guidebook for RC&D Directors. This guidebook is a continuation of our much heralded [Guidebook for Local RC&D Council Development](#), which highlights the roles and responsibili-

ties of RC&D council members as members of non-profit organizations.

Some new publications, which you will be seeing soon, are **twelve drought and water quality fact sheets** and an updated Drought Planning Book. These new fact sheets will focus on: What individuals can do to mitigate the impact of drought; Putting on a drought education workshop (how to connect with a community); How watersheds are different from area to area; Population growth/sprawls impact on sensitive drinking water supplies; and many others.

In addition, keep an eye out for the **NARC&DC's Small Business Start-Up Kit** and the Proceedings from our popular [Alternative Energy Forum](#).

If you enjoy any of the above services we ask you to help us continue these wonderful efforts. We ask that you ensure that your Council is current on its dues payment and if you have not done so, join the NARC&DC's [Partnership Alliance](#). If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact [your](#) National Office. ■

Leadership Forum 2006 Continued from Page 2

to meet the current needs of their communities and the RC&D budget.

President Ruggi reported, at the opening general session, that the RC&D Program has been cut in half to \$26 million in the President's 2007 budget. This cut is done by eliminating over 225 coordinator positions and requiring the remaining 150 coordinators to serve multiple RC&D areas. However, President Ruggi expressed pleasure and pride as the RC&D leadership and Councils, throughout the country, have mobilized to fight this cut.

Notable speakers included, Mark Rey, Under Secretary for USDA's Natural Resources and Environment, whom addressed the budget and the legislative outlook for Fiscal Year 2007. Another highlight of the forum was Dana York, Associate Chief, USDA, NRCS. Ms. York focused on NRCS' plans for this fiscal year, the future, and what NRCS has been doing to strengthen the RC&D



Attendees at the NARC&DC Leadership Forum in Washington, DC enjoying lunch while the 2005 Leadership Award winners were announced.

*"Join
NARC&DC's
Partnership
Alliance."*

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NARC&DC Announces 2005 National Award Winners

On Tuesday February 7, 2006 the NARC&DC presented seven deserving individuals and groups with its' highest awards, the NARC&DC National Awards. These deserving individuals and groups have shown that they are effectively meeting the needs of the RC&D program and the constituents they serve.



Marshall Nelson representing the Blandin Foundation receives the Supporting Organization of the Year Award.

The first award, Supporting Organization of the Year, went to the Blandin Foundation nominated by the Giziibii RC&D Council Area. Over the years the **Blandin Foundation** has supported many of the innovative projects throughout the Giziibii RC&D Area. The Blandin Foundation has focused on the economic viability of rural MN communities. They offer leadership development programs, public policy programs, as well as, provide grants to community generated projects.

The second award, Outstanding Youth Involvement, went to the **Delaware Bay Workcamp**.

The Workcamp was nominated by the First State RC&D Area Council for their work in helping the RC&D Council provide an opportunity for young

people to develop leadership skills and a sense of community service. The Workcamp campers and adult chaperones helped to complete repairs on 53 homes and logged 15,600 hours.

The RC&D Program Assistant Award went to **Sue Adams** of the Old Dominion RC&D Council. Sue started with the Council in 1991 and has shown innovation and spirit by helping Council projects move forward, managing grants and making decisions even during times when the Coordinator position was vacant. She has been a team builder and a point person for information for project partners, council members, volunteers, and the public.



Delaware Bay Workcamp receives the Outstanding Youth Involvement Award

Upper Right-Tallgrass RC&D members, Jim Bailey and Greg Kindell receives the Outstanding Council Award

Lower Right - Sue Adams receives Outstanding Program Assistant Award

The National Catalyst

“Effectively meeting the needs of the RC&D Program”

The Coordinator of the Year Award went to **Ms. Susan Watson** of the Time and Tide RC&D Council. Ms. Watson is an individual whose hard work and dedication has helped the Council develop a clear sense of direction and purpose. She has been key in the coordination and development of key partnerships and coalitions while insuring all projects fall within the confines of the Council's Area Plan and Annual Plan of Work.

The 2005 Council Member of the Year went to **Mr. Tony Hyde**, of the NW Oregon RC&D Council, who has been instrumental in fostering and completing at least 12 projects per year, which bring in over 10.22 million dollars per year to the Council.

The Council of the Year Award went to the **Tallgrass RC&D Council**. This deserving council has assisted projects, which help to enhance Economic Development, Natural Resource Management, and Rural Community Development, while



ensuring that projects, as well as, Council Membership, reflect the community's cultural diversity.

The final award presented by President Ruggi went to **Mr. Smith Covey**, USDA NRCS National RC&D

Program Coordinator (Ret.). Ms. Ruggi presented Mr. Covey with a special President's Award in recognition of exceptional leadership and devoted service to RC&D Councils Nationwide. Mr. Covey has recently retired after serving the RC&D program with many years of distinguished service.



Join us in Savannah, Georgia June 18-21, 2006 for National Conference

NARCD&C is holding its sixth Triennial Conference in Savannah, Georgia. Known for its abundance of squares, parks, and open public areas, Savannah has been rated one of the top ten walking cities in the country. This seaport town combines southern hospitality with old-world charm. Be sure to taste Low Country dishes that help create the charm of the Old South. Visit the City Market, a pedestrian mall with restored buildings, quirky boutiques, unique vintage shops, restaurants, clubs, art galleries, and activities, or the Savannah Historic River Street Area with restored cotton warehouses and cobblestone streets for cafes, pubs, and shopping. Visit the Mercer House that was made famous by the John Berendt's best selling book, *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. Tybee Island, Savannah's beach, is just 20 minutes from the downtown district. Boat cruises, deep water fishing, dolphin tours and other sea adventures are available year round.

Our conference features over a hundred training sessions and success stories on a variety of topics including: RC&D Area Planning, Financial Development, Working with Tribal Governments, Biomass, Developing Diverse Council Membership, Strategies for Successful Associations, Developing a Successful Volunteer Program, Building Partnerships, Value Added Agriculture, Grant Research Writing and Administration, Water Quality/Source Protection, Farm Energy Audits, Fuels for Schools, and Emergency Response.

The conference begins on Sunday June 18 with a President's reception. The opening general session is Monday morning, followed by a training sessions on Monday afternoon and Tuesday



morning. RC&D success stories will be presented on Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning. Wednesday afternoon is reserved for regional association meetings and Wednesday evening will conclude with our Awards Banquet.

A riverboat dinner cruise will take place on Tuesday evening.

Want to drive home from the conference in a brand new 2006 Ford Mustang? Buy a raffle ticket and you could drive it away! The raffle is sponsored by the Georgia Association of RC&D councils and the proceeds benefit the national association.

Registration forms will be mailed to all councils in March and are also available on our website www.rcdnet.org



Smith Covey receives the NARC&DC President's Award from President Ruggi and the entire NARC&DC Board of Directors.

Leadership Forum

Continued from Page 3

Program. Other areas addressed at the forum included Congressional Budget Priorities, Communicating with Legislators, Outreach Strategies to Broaden Council Membership, Training for RC&D Councils, 2007 Farm Bill Outlook and Opportunities with Other Federal Agencies.



Lyell Gardner accepts Council Member of the Year Award on behalf of Tony Hyde with President Ruggi & NARC&DC Awards Committee Chairman Harbison.

This year, the NARC&DC was especially proud to host three Congressional Speakers during our Congressional Breakfast. Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Congresswoman Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO), and Congressman Robert Aderholt (R-AL) each addressed the RC&D constituency and spoke of their steadfast support for the RC&D program. Each Representative noted that the President's budget recommendation was just that, a recommendation, and it is Congress who has the final say on the appropriations.

Sue Watson receives Outstanding Coordinator Award with President Ruggi & Awards committee Chairman Harbison

Annual National NARC&DC Awards for 2005 were presented at the annual Awards Luncheon.

The NARC&DC Invites you to Join the Circle of Diamonds

The National Association of RC&D Councils is proud to acknowledge the 41 current members of our Circle of Diamonds Program. The Circle of Diamonds Program is a unique program in which Members have proven their exemplary public accountability to the people they serve.

Your National Association designed the Circle of Diamonds program to highlight our Councils that are producing quality programs within their local community. These Councils have achieved the specific benchmarks outlined in the application and have become wise stewards of their non-profit organization. This mark of excellence will assist Council's in showcasing themselves to their local community, other councils, and the Nation.

In addition, this program was established as a proactive approach for councils to simply demonstrate that they were complying with the basic requirements of the RC&D statute, the council

responsibilities outlined in the NRCS manual, and best non-profit management practices. This program was set up as a tiered program in which new criteria will be added every year, so that we can continue to improve the quality of our RC&D Councils. What better way to show congress that they should continue to wisely invest dollars into our program! By having each and every Council become a member of the Circle of Diamonds, we will show Congress that we ARE good stewards of our program. We will also show Congress that we have internal controls to ensure that their investment is wise, sustainable, and brings forth great returns!

The National Association of RC&D Councils truly believes that our Circle of Diamonds program is a great way to showcase our success. In fact, because the National Association of RC&D Councils feel this is so important, the Board of Directors unanimously agreed to waive the fee for tier one. This will ensure that every Council can become members of this great program!

Making Things Happen!



Circle of Diamonds Members

National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils

Alabama Mountains, Rivers & Valleys RC&D - AL
 Alamo RC&D Area - TX
 Badlands RC&D, Inc. - SD
 Big Horn Basin WY RC&D Council - WY
 Central Savannah River RC&D Council, Inc. - GA
 Cherokee Hills RC&D Project, Inc. - OK
 Clinch-Powell RC&D Council, Inc. - TN
 Cocopai RC&D Council, Inc. - AZ
 Coronado RC&D Area, Inc. - AZ
 Dinosaurland RC&D Area - UT
 Eastern Shore of VA RC&D Council, Inc. - VA
 Finger Lakes RC&D Council, Inc. - NY
 First State RC&D Council, Inc. - DE
 Five Rivers RC&D Inc. - NE
 Five Rivers RC&D Council, Inc. - TN
 Flint Hills RC&D Council, Inc. - KS
 Giziibii RC&D Association - MN
 Hohokam RC&D Area, Inc. - AZ
 Jackson Purchase RC&D Foundation, Inc. - KY
 Loup Basin RC&D Council, Inc. - NE
 Lower Colorado River RC&D Area, Inc. - AZ
 Lumberjack RC&D Council, Inc. - WI

Miami Valley RC&D Council, Inc. - OH
 Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D Council - NE
 North Central Nebraska RC&D Council - NE
 Northeast Nebraska RC&D Council - NE
 Oconee River RC&D Council - GA
 Ohio Valley RC&D Council - OH
 Onanegozie RC&D Council, Inc. - MN
 Panhandle RC&D Council, Inc. - NE
 Pembina Trail RC&D Association - MN
 Pineywoods RC&D Council - TX
 Prairie Country RC&D Council - MN
 San Luis Valley RC&D Project - CO
 See-Kan RC&D Project, Inc. - KS
 Shenandoah RC&D Council - VA
 Southwest NE RC&D Council, Inc. - NE
 Southwest OR RC&D Council, Inc. - OR
 Southwestern Illinois RC&D, Inc. - IL
 Three Rivers RC&D Council, Inc. - MN
 Top of the Ozarks RC&D Council - MO
 Trailblazer RC&D Council - NE
 Western Reserve RC&D Council - OH

Regional Roundup

Mid-Atlantic Catalyst News

By Howard Coffield, President, Mid-Atlantic RC&D Association

2005 Annual Conference

The 2005 Annual Conference & Business meeting was held at West Point, New York. Vice President, Treasurer, and Member-at-large were elected. The current officers are: Howard Coffield (WV) - President, James Ghent (NY) - Vice President, Pat Pinnell (MD) - Treasurer, Cathy Skwara (PA) - Secretary, and Jack Preston (PA) - Member-at-large. Olga Walter (NY) serves as the second delegate to the National RC&D Board.

2005 Awards

During the 2005 Conference, the following awards were presented by Howard Coffield and Sharon Ruggi:

Kent County Parks Division (DE) - Outstanding Supporting Organization
Delaware Bay Workcamp (DE) - Outstanding Youth Involvement
Olga Walter (NY) - Outstanding Performance by a Council Member
First State RC&D Council (DE) - Outstanding Performance by a Council
James Ali (WV) - Outstanding Performance by a Coordinator
Debra Delaney, WV - Outstanding Performance by a RC&D Program Assistant

2006 Mid-Atlantic Annual Conference

The 2006 Annual Conference & business meeting will be held in conjunction with the National RC&D Conference in Savannah, GA.

2007 Mid-Atlantic Annual Conference

The 2007 Annual Conference & business meeting will be hosted by Pennsylvania.

FY 2007 Proposed RC&D Budget

It looks like this year will be another busy year for Council members in the region. The (members) will be active with their respective members of Congress and Congressional Budget Committee members endorsing and promoting the good work the RC&D Program does.

North Central Regional News

By Nedda Simon, President, North Central RC&D

Dear Friends in Resource, Conservation, and Development,

Our regional bylaws state that the board must hold an annual meeting in the first quarter of the year. We held a teleconference instead of traveling to save money. Elected to office were -Marilyn Rubner, Vice President, Marshall Nuckolls, Treasurer, and Ed Miller, Secretary.

Congratulations and thank you for your service to the region. Remember our regional meeting will be held at the National Conference in Savanna, GA. We are scheduled in the agenda, our awards will be given and we will conduct the business of the region.

I urge you to attend this meeting.

San Antonio was great and this will be greater. Workshops and networking and winning a new Mustang will certainly be good reasons enough. If you all don't buy a ticket for the car, that means I will surely win it. Be sure you get those letters to your Congressmen. Yes, we have to do it again and maybe again, but we cannot let those who don't understand our value cut our budget. Remember to have customers, partners, and community leaders write letters as well. Make it easy for them by giving them a sample they could use or write it yourself and have them sign it. Thank you for all your help.

The Leadership Forum was interesting and I could say enlightening but for about 24 hours we didn't have lights! It was a great meeting anyway. See you in Savannah in June.

New England Regional News

By Jim Sipperly, President New England RC&D Councils

STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITY FOR 2006

Last year the 15 New England Regional RC&D Councils worked hard to develop a strategic plan. True about any plan - is that it is only as good as it gets implemented. How many of you know the hard work of people putting in long volunteer hours or perhaps spending thousands of dollars on consultants only to have those plans put on a shelf to collect dust. Our New England Region's



NARC&DC President, Sharon Ruggi urging council members to action at the seventh annual Leadership Forum in Washington, DC.

*News & Views
across RC&D
Regions*

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New England ***Continued from page 7***

goal is to implement the newly adopted strategic plan in a timely yet efficient manner.

Our Vision: The New England Association of RC&D Areas is a strong voice for its member councils, facilitates addressing issues common to all, and enhances communications among member councils and between member councils and the National Association of RC&D Councils with resources the association develops.

Our Mission: To help member RC&D Councils to be more effective through communication, facilitation and resource development.

After learning the skills from Donna Hunter, staff to the National Board, on how to develop a strategic plan, council members laboriously developed priority issues and action items. The 3 priority issues identified in the New England Region are no doubt similar to other regions of the country. They were in descending order: 1. FUNDING, 2. COMMUNICATION, 3. CAPACITY BUILDING/ LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT.

These themes appear throughout the country not

only at a regional level, but at a local level and national level as well. Our approach is as follows:

FUNDING- We have agreed to expand, promote, utilize, seek corporate sponsorships, local businesses, and memorial gifts for our annual conference. We will develop a partner list to find and secure additional monies. We discussed raising association dues (nobody really likes this, at any level). We will also develop a list of corporate sponsors that relate specifically to New England.

COMMUNICATION -We will find appropriate organizations to partner with at regional and national meetings. Include private enterprise and their monies at RC&D meetings for support of organization. Finally we will set up a "list serve" so that the association members can discuss issues. This was done. To post a message type: rcdnewengland@yahoogroups.com, to subscribe type: Rcdnewengland-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

We will train council members at the local level to be more productive. We will tap into existing training. Committees were formed to solicit council member participation.