

The National Catalyst

Volume XVI , Issue 2, Summer 2006

President's Update

By Sharon Ruggi, President, NARC&DC



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

This issue features photos from the 2006 National Conference. The NARC&DC would like to thank Cindy Haygood, Karen Buckley-Washington, Sam Cobb, Charles Roberts, Carolyn Westbrook, and Mary Ann McQuinn for their time and donation of these pictures.



National Association of
Resource Conservation &
Development Councils
444 North Capitol St. NW
Suite 345
Washington DC 20001

Tel: 202-434-4780
Fax: 202-434-4783
www.rcdnet.org

As I write this article, I am extremely grateful that I can report on very positive developments. First, Congress has once again restored our funding. This is a result of your strong letter-writing campaign to Capitol Hill. You have responded to our request for letters for two years in a row and you have been successful. We are in our fourth continuous year of level funding, and this sends us a clear message that Council's must look toward other areas of funding to finance a part of our operations. We must work toward marketing all that we do in our local area. While doing this we must also continue to make our case throughout the year to Congress. Be sure to thank your Congressmen for their support of the RC&D Program and inform their office about your local project successes. Make sure you tie that success to the value within the Congressional District.

We cannot stop our work now! We have 34 unauthorized Councils across America. By uniting and delivering a consistent message we can work toward our individual and unified goals. Each of you serving on a Council Board should recognize the power of your message to Congress and the power of your message within your local community. You are delivering projects on the ground and solving the unmet needs of your communities. Stress to your representatives, local business, and potential funding partners that you are volunteers who are overseeing meaningful projects. Both independent and federal financial support ensures that the local needs are being met! By doing this you can help us, at the National level, make a strong case for an increase in appropriations, a full time federally funded Coordinator and Administrative Support. The National Association and our member Councils are a great team; let's continue to "Make Things Happen" by working together!

One of the tools the National Association provides to you is our annual Leadership Forum. We ask that you start planning now to attend our Leadership Forum next February in Washington, DC. This

Forum has grown every year, and the timing is perfect. We will be in Washington after the President's budget is announced and we can be among the first to take our own budget request to Congress.

Next, I thank all of you who attended our triennial National Conference in Savannah, Georgia. I would like to offer a special thanks to all the GA Volunteers and Coordinators who made this a wonderful event. It was a truly awesome sight to look out and to see over 1000 dedicated RC&D volunteers who had come to attend workshops and share success stories. I also thank each of you who took the time to come to the National Board listening sessions. Your comments

*"We cannot stop
our work now"*

are extremely beneficial to us and we are taking them seriously. In addition, we were able to share our draft ideas for the upcoming Farm bill at the conference. I hope that you will take the time to review our Farm bill proposal [See article entitled The National Association Unveils Farm Bill Proposal] and to share your ideas with us.

I would also like to remind everyone about our annual awards. These awards are announced every year at the Leadership Forum and are a great way to acknowledge the outstanding achievements of Councils, Coordinators, Program Assistants, RC&D members, Supporting Organizations and Youth participation. Also, don't forget about the Conservation Partnership Diversity Award. We know that there are many great stories. Please take the time to participate by sending applications to your regions for recognition with those winners then sent to the National level. This is another excellent way to market RC&D Activities.

On November 29-30, we are going to host a Partnership Leadership Conference in Nashville, Tennessee along with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), National Conservation Districts

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Employees Association (NCDEA) and National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA). The partners recognize that leadership skills are all important to the success of each of our organizations, and this Conference will provide excellent training for increased leadership ability. Each state executive committee leader will soon receive a special invitation to attend this event, please save the date and try to have at least one state leader, or designee, from each state attend.

As always, do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns. My email and phone number can be found on the National website: www.rcdnet.org. Thank you for being the best membership that any President can work with! ■

The Washington Report

**By Roberta Jeanquart,
NARC&DC Executive Director**

It was such an honor to meet so many of you at our national conference. As I said in my speech you inspire me with your dedication and commitment to your communities. You helped beat back efforts to cut RC&D funding in half. As you may know, the House of Representatives and the Senate Appropriations Committee restored RC&D funding to its FY06 level of \$50 million.

“You inspire me with your dedication and commitment to your communities”

It's the beginning of August and Washington, D.C. really slows down. Why? Because it's miserably hot and humid, and more importantly, Congress is out of session for the entire month.

It gives us time to catch up on tasks, reflect on our accomplishments and set the stage for future activity. One of the most frequently asked questions is, what can we do to ensure that RC&D gets the support it needs. For the short term, take the opportunity to talk with your Members of Congress while they are back and thank them for restoring funds – but be sure to tell them that level funding still results in cutbacks in service for your council. It still is possible for Congress to add funding to programs especially in this election year, and as my previous boss always told me

– you don't get what you don't ask for. Our target remains \$56 million for RC&D.

What can we do for the long term to insulate this program from budget cuts and to bring additional resources to your local RC&D council? We need to take stronger steps to market our RC&D activities and accomplishments. From the local level, on up to the national level, we need to use the media to highlight our successes. We need to take credit and tell our story. Was your community worried about losing your local RC&D council during the last two years of proposed budget cuts? If not then you need to ask why. Do they know what your council does and the service it provides?

We need to better market our activities. We need to perform to our highest standards. And we need for our communities to feel outrage when they hear RC&D is being cut because a critically important tool for economic development and conservation is being attacked. It is only when people beyond the council understand what we do and how important we are, that we begin to insulate ourselves from attack.

At the national level, we will be using more local success stories to tell our story. We will reach out to national media, to more new partners and to additional sponsors and funders. We also want to show the collective voice of RC&D and our accomplishments by having an RC&D week in which all councils join an effort to tell our story. Look for more details on these activities as we move forward.

As I said in Savannah, we are a powerful group with a powerful message and I am committed to helping in any way I can. Just keep doing what you are doing locally, take credit for what you do and call on the National Association when we can be of help. ■

Registrants line up for the National Conference



The City of Savannah welcomes the NARC&DC

2006 National Conference Highlights

In a word...SPECTACULAR! Long after the last conference session, the energy and excitement from the National Association's Fifth Triennial 2006 National Conference continued to ring through the hallways. If you were one of the over 1,000 Council Members who attended our Conference, we thank you for making this one of our best conferences ever! We ask that you share your memories, experiences, notes, and passion with those around you and especially with those who could not make it to this momentous event!

The National Association would like to thank the volunteers of the GA State Association for showing all of us a great time. The GA State Association gave us a true taste of southern hospitality like no one else can do!

The memories of "Killing Kudzu," and the inspirational words of Titan's Coach Bill Yoast, the advanced Council sustainability training, heart-warming and inspirational Council success stories, a lazy riverboat cruise down the Savannah River, the spotlight on recognition and the making of new friends, are just a few examples of what made this event one to remember.

"The goal of this conference was to provide the tools and information that foster sustainable RC&D Communities," said Sharon Ruggi, President of the National Association.

The conference started with the opening general session that highlighted the leaders of the National Association and the USDA. President Sharon Ruggi presented the preliminary RC&D Farm bill recommendations. It continued with Mr. Gower who left the crowd spell-bound as he offered a motivational, yet humorous talk entitled, "The Art of Killing Kudzu." Mr. Gower weaved his distinctive blend of knowledge, enthusiasm, and experience into a remarkable presentation. The day concluded with some fascinating and exciting training events. At these training events, attendees learned about NRCS Grant Opportunities, Harvesting Energy from the Land, Working with Tribal Governments, Grantsmanship, Not for Profit Management, Working with Elected Officials, any many other interesting topics. The next day opened with more exciting training workshops followed by the remarks of Chief Bruce Knight. A motivational speaker portrayed Theodore Roosevelt and fired up the crowd. The day concluded

with RC&D Council success stories and then conference attendees embarked upon an amazing and magical riverboat cruise down the wonderful Savannah River.

Our third day continued with RC&D Council success stories and concluded with the Awards Banquet. The Awards Banquet highlighted the past National award winners since our 2003 National Conference in San Antonio, TX, Partnership Alliance Members, Members of the Circle of Diamonds and the induction of two new members of the National Association's Hall of Fame. The two new additions to this distinguish panel of members are Mr. Chuck McCarty and Ms. Joan Smith Freeman. The Conference concluded with the inspirational remarks of "Remember the Titans" Coach, Bill Yoast. Coach Yoast delivered a message of leadership, team building, change, and diversity across North America. He commended the wonderful work that the RC&D's have done in these fields and urged that we continue to make great strides.

We, at the National Association, hope that each of you enjoyed the conference as much as we have and we look forward to seeing all of you again at our annual Leadership Forum in Washington, DC. ■

Marketing Update

Increasing public support to become self sustaining begins with raising public awareness. In 2005, the Board of Directors of the National Association decided to take on this challenge. To help achieve the goal of raising awareness in both the corporate and private world, unencumbered funding was needed, resulting in an increase in dues.

As our members, The National Association wants to keep councils aware of how this money is being spent. To date, your dues have enabled the National Association to create and distribute a marketing brochure and other information, continue our capital campaign, the Partnership Alliance, update our website, maintain our Listserv, and create a traveling display booth for use at meetings, conferences, and other events. We have on-going corporate partner-



Presentation of Colors opens up the National Conference



Attendees enjoying dinner at the National Conference

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ships with Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc. and Caterpillar, Inc. We realize that times are tough and financial sustainability is a top priority for our member Councils. We thank you for your support and payment of dues. ■

New Inductees to the National Associations Hall of Fame

The National Association has inducted two new members into its distinguished Hall of Fame. These two deserving individuals are the late Mr. Chuck McCarty and Ms. Joan Smith Freeman.

Mr. Chuck McCarty was the Coordinator of the Chariton Valley RC&D Council from 1969 to 1992. Mr. McCarty always had a great ability to envision progress in the broad spectrum of society and identify with and develop local leadership to make progress. He assisted his local council with projects from traditional conservation activities, to new concepts

associated with the districts, to working on housing, child-care, business and industry growth and development and Rural Water with other organizations.

Chuck was a master at identifying and developing local leadership! The local leadership responded in representing local interest and support to carry projects forward. We truly miss Chuck's exceptional passion in the RC&D Program.

Ms. Joan Smith Freeman a member of the Ore-Cal RC&D Council loves dealing with people, and she learned the craft of promoting causes from an early age. Her skills as a promoter of the RC&D cause have been heard first hand across the nation, Washington, DC, community halls, and throughout the rural neighborhoods across America. Joan has served on numerous national, state, and local committees always promoting relations with RC&D. She set the standards for the California Association of RC&D Councils as she stepped forward with a vision before any apparent mission took shape. As she does with anything she undertakes,

Joan gives of herself freely to make whatever she is doing an effective and efficient organization.

We commend both Chuck and Joan for their exemplary dedication to our RC&D Community! ■

Partner Highlight: Firewise Presence at National Conference

Staff of the national Firewise Communities® program joined participants in Savannah at the 2006 Triennial Conference to provide information about how sustainable communities can also be compatible with wildfire. Firewise staff handed out publications and talked to Council members visiting the exhibit area and attended a number of educational sessions.

“We were interested to see several presentations at the conference from local Councils that have been working on wildfire safety and fuel reduction programs,” said Judith Leraas Cook, the project manager for the national Firewise Communities/USA® Recognition Program. “The information about how local Councils have dealt creatively with the green waste issue will help our national program spread more good ideas to residents of wildfire-prone areas throughout the country.”

Firewise Communities is a national interagency program that plays a critical role in areas outside the jurisdiction of government entities or private land in the wildland/urban interface. Through its facilitation and information resources, the program is a model of cooperation among: federal, tribal, state and local government, private industry, nonprofit organizations, and community groups. At the heart of the program is a focus on personal responsibility. Communities are encouraged to adopt a long-term, proactive approach to protect homes and resources from the risk of wildland fire – before a fire starts. Visit www.firewise.org to learn more and to access information, training resources, audiovisual and print materials, and criteria for becoming a recognized Firewise Communities/USA® site. ■

“Take credit for what you do!”

Program and Services Corner

The National Association has been hard at work giving you the tools and resources that you have been asking for! Over the past few months your Council has received numerous mailings such as: the Bioenergy CD, Alternative Energy Fact Sheets Series II, Drought Fact Sheets and CD, Council Sustainability articles on “How to Write a Press Release” “Writing an Op-ed” and “Creating and Growing Your Council Website.” We hope that you have found these informative as well as useful.

Over the coming months we hope that you will enjoy



Sharon Ruggi, Theresa McCarty, Robert Harbison ~ Ms. McCarty accepts the Hall of Fame Award on behalf of her late husband, Chuck McCarty



Sharon Ruggi, Joan Smith Freeman, Robert Harbison ~ Ms. Smith Freeman becomes an inductee to the NARC&DC's Hall of Fame

fact sheets on Alternative Energy Series III, Conservation and Technical Assistance Programs of the USDA's NRCS and Serving Underrepresented Communities. We are also hard at work with our partners in the development of a new Community Planning CD entitled "2006 Wildland and Urban Interface Community Planning Toolkit."

Don't forget to utilize all your National Association has to offer. From our training classes (see the article entitled Training Classes Offered by the National Association) to our Grant Research Service to keeping up to date with our RC&D Community Listserv.

If you are a State Executive Board Leader then look for a special invitation to the Conservation Partnership's Leadership Conference, which will be held on November 29-30, 2006 in Nashville Tennessee. In addition to this conference, the National Association will be holding its annual Leadership Forum on February 26-28 of 2007 at the Holiday Inn on the Hill in Washington, DC. We hope that each and everyone one you reading this article will join us in Washington, DC for training specific to our RC&D Community.

We truly hope that you find all the services offered by your National Association valuable. If you have suggestions as to new services you wish to see from the National Association, please do not hesitate let us know! We are here for you! ■

The National Association Partners with the International Code Council

A growing threat to the safety and security of our communities is where undeveloped lands meet developed areas – what we call the wildland/urban interface. The National Association has partnered with the International Code Council in an effort to provide education and information about wildfire in urban, rural, and wildland America to the members of ICC and NARC&DC. We hope this partnership will encourage RC&D Council members to inform and participate with partners in projects that advance the understanding of the challenges occurring before and after wildfires.

Since 1960, more than 40,000 homes have been lost to wildland fires; a number that is rising dramatically each year. Local governments are spending close to \$1 billion a year to fight wildfires, while the cost to state and federal agencies is more than \$1.5 billion annually. In addition, wildfire-related insurance claims are

nearing \$250 million a year. The wildland/urban interface fire risk has become a major problem throughout the United States.

To assist you in protecting your community from the threat of wildfires, in the next few weeks, all RC&D Councils, State Association President, and Coordinators, you will be seeing a CD entitled the 2006 Wildland Urban Interface Community Planning Tool Kit. This resource will include a copy of the 2006 International Wildland-Urban Interface Code, examples of wildfire protection plans, a guide for developing a protection plan for your own community and a list of at-risk communities. We hope that your Council will take some time to become familiar with the CD, as you may be facing the threat of wildfires in your community soon. Additional copies are available upon request by contacting the National Office. ■



A time to learn

The National Association Unveils Farm Bill Proposal

As your unified voice, the National Association is working hard to ensure that the RC&D Program remains as strong as ever during the reauthorization of the 2007 Farm Bill. Now is our time to tell Congress what we want to see in the 2007 Farm bill. A few short weeks back the National Association of RC&D Councils sent out our 2007 preliminary Farm bill recommendations. We ask that you take the time to review these preliminary recommendations and send us your comments.

In summary, the preliminary recommendations to Congress include:

1. Acknowledge the role of the Coordinator in the law since the role is not included in the authorizing statute.
2. Define the role of the Coordinator in the law.
3. Reemphasize that RC&D is a locally led USDA program with assistance from a federal Coordinator. Recently, OMB and NRCS have made changes to the program that have created a top down approach in which goals are imposed which may be in conflict with the area planning process. We ask that Congress acknowledge that RC&D is both a conservation and community development program with priorities determined at the local level.

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4. Make RC&D funding mandatory.
5. Establish a pilot program in other USDA agencies such as Rural Development so that RC&D areas with community development priorities can continue to provide service to their communities.

Again, please take the time to comment on these recommendations. The full board of directors will review comments and take final action on your recommendations in August. Don't miss this opportunity to let your voice be heard.

The full description of our recommendations can be found on our website www.rcdnet.org. ■

Calling for 2006 National Award Nominations!

Would you like to receive one of the highest awards given out by the National Association? Have you been recognized by your Region for your exceptional encouragement and dedication to the concept of RC&D's mission and goals? Are you the type of person who enables the RC&D Program to "Make Things Happen" across the nation? If so, then make sure your Regional President submits your nomination to the

National Association.

Yes, it is that time of year when the National Association of RC&D Councils sends out its annual call for National Awards. This year we have the following categories:

1. Outstanding Performance by a Council
2. Outstanding Performance by a Council Member
3. Outstanding Performance by a Coordinator
4. Outstanding Supporting Organization
5. Outstanding Youth Involvement Award
6. Outstanding Program Assistant Award
7. Hall of Fame

Also, don't forget about the Conservation Partnership's Diversity Awards. Three awards will be given out, which recognize a Conservation District, an RC&D Council/Project, and a State Conservation Agency who are addressing diversity needs to improve delivery of conservation programs.

Over the next few weeks, be on the lookout for the National Association's Awards package and the Conservation Partnership's Diversity Award information coming to you via U.S. Mail and E-mail. Remember that all nominations should be derived from a regional awards process and only the Regional



GA Volunteers making sure all goes smooth

Association President may submit the nominees for the National Awards to the National Association of RC&D Councils. The National Association must receive all nominations by November 1, 2006. We look forward to seeing your nomination! ■

Training classes Offered by the National Association

Training classes now available from the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils at no charge for State and Regional meetings:

- Director's Training: The Who What When (new edition)
- Area Planning: Cooking Up a Recipe for Success
- Annual Planning: Showtime
- Two Cents Worth: Fiduciary Responsibilities of a Board for Project Planning and Administration
- External Communications: Use It or Lose It
- Achieving a Sense of Community: Your Community Base and Its Volunteers
- Sustainable RC&D Councils:
- Working with Tribes: First Step

To book training sessions contact Donna Hunter, Director of Education, NARC&DC at 202-434-4780 or dhunter@sso.org. ■

"Now is our time to tell Congress what we want to see in the 2007 Farm Bill"

Regional Roundup Section

MID-ATLANTIC REPORT

By Howard Coffield, President, Mid Atlantic Association of RC&D Councils

The 2006 Annual Conference & Business meeting was held in conjunction with the National RC&D Conference in Savannah, GA. President, Secretary, 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. ■

Success Stories

Nine Councils from the Mid-Atlantic presented 13 Success Stories at the National Conference. Councils making presentations were: Central NY,

Finger Lakes, First State, Greater Adirondack, Hudson Mohawk, Lake Plains, North Jersey, Northern Panhandle, Penn Soil, Seneca Trail, and Southern Maryland.

2007 Mid-Atlantic Annual Conference

The 2007 Annual Conference & business meeting will be hosted by the Pennsylvania Association of RC&D Councils, near Hershey, September 16-19, 2007 at the Holiday Inn in Grantville.

FY 2007 Proposed RC&D Budget

Councils members from the Mid-Atlantic region were quite active this year with their respective members of Congress and Congressional Budget Committee members endorsing and promoting the good work the RC&D Program does.

Web Page

Thanks to the South Jersey Council, the Mid-Atlantic Association has a web page(s) available at: <http://www.sjrccd.org/ma/mainindex.htm>

State Meeting(s)

As time and budget allows, the Mid-Atlantic Present will be attending RC&D State Association / Federation meeting in the Mid-Atlantic Region. ■

SOUTHEAST REPORT

By Jeanette Jamieson, President, Southeast Association of RC&D Councils

The Southeast Association of RC&D Councils would like to thank each and every one of you for making the 2006 National Conference one of our Associations best conferences to date! All of us in the Southeast are particularly proud of our accomplishments in hosting our Association's fifth conference. I would personally like to thank every one of our volunteers, Coordinators, and supporters for their assistance in making this conference happen. For more information on the National Conference, please read the article entitled 2006 National Conference Highlights. ■

NORTH CENTRAL

By Nedda Simon, President, North Central RC&D Association

It was so good to see so many council members from the North Central RC&D Region represented. The projects we are working on and complete speak for themselves, but the friendships we have are on an entirely different level. Thank you for your participa-

tion and support.

We met on the last day of the conference and had a very productive meeting. States reported activities and we honored Gerard Deshscaine for his energy and time spent for the North Central RC&D Region.

We discussed important plans to market ourselves and our work as well as ways to renew efforts for local funding. I promised to get everyone out soon so they could get "pretty" for the awards banquet. Remember that hall of fame awards must come from the regions so think about it.

Even though Ed Miller was proud of Wisconsin for sweeping the awards, he urged all councils and states to send in nominees. Michigan handed out great pamphlets showing our next annual meeting on March 25, 2007 in Frankenmuth, Michigan. Thank you again and hope to see you soon. ■

PACIFIC RIM REPORT

By Bob Jones, President, Pacific Rim Regional Association of RC&D Councils

The Pacific Rim Regional Association of Resource Conservation & Development Councils were well represented at the National RC&D Conference just held in Savannah, Georgia. It was a great conference and a great time was had by all. Planning is underway by Yosemite-Sequoia RC&D and the California State Association for the

next PacRim Annual meeting to held at Tenaya Lodge in Yosemite, November 6-9, 2006. Some changes in meeting format will allow for more training, success stories and networking time. A call for success stories will be going out in July. The theme for this years meeting is: "The new gold rush, sustaining natural resources and supporting rural communities for future generations".

Watch the PacRim website for news, updates and information about the registration, etc. (www.pacrimrcd.org). If you subscribe to the website, you will automatically receive notifications by email. All other RC&D's nationwide are welcome to attend. ■



To bid or not to bid

Gizilbil RC&D

3217 Bemidji Ave N
Bemidji, MN 56601

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National Association of
Resource Conservation
& Development Councils
444 North Capitol St. NW
Suite 345
Washington, DC 20001

Tel: 202-434-4780
Fax: 202-434-4783

NARC&DC Website: www.rcdnet.org

SOUTHWEST STATES REPORT

By Jim Bailey, President, Southwest States Regional Association

The Southwest States Regional Association held an annual meeting of their membership during the National Association's 2006 National Conference held in Savannah, GA. The meeting was well attended as the room was packed with members of the Southwest States Regional Association. At this meeting an election of officers was held. The results were as follows: Mr. Jim Bailey, of OK, was elected as the Regional President; Ms. Marva Beck, of TX, was elected as the Regions First Vice President; and Mr. Glen Williams, of LA, was elected as the Regions Treasurer. It was also decided to declare the official name of the Region as the Southwest States Regional Association. In addition to this action, the Region adopted some minor changes to the Association's by-laws. ■



A riverboat cruise to remember

Calendar of Events 2006-2008

Date	What	Where
October 26-28, 2006	New England Regional Meeting	Fairlee, VT
November 7-9, 2006	PacRim Regional Meeting	Yosemite, CA
November 29-30, 2006	Cooperative Conservation Partnership Leadership Conference	Nashville, TN
December 1-2, 2006	NARC&DC National Board of Directors Meeting	Nashville, TN
January 21-24, 2007	Western Regional Meeting	Colorado Springs, CO
February 26-28, 2007	NARC&DC Leadership Forum	Washington, DC
February 18-21, 2007	Southwest Regional Meeting	Lafayette, LA
March 25-27, 2007	North Central Regional Meeting	Frankenmuth, MI
September 9-12, 2007	Southeast Regional Meeting	Asheville, NC
September 16-19, 2007	Mid Atlantic Regional Meeting	Hershey, PA
March 2-5, 2008	Southwest Regional Meeting	St. Louis, MO