

The National Catalyst

Volume XVI , Issue 3, Winter 2006

President's Update

By Sharon Ruggi, President, NARC&DC



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

As 2006 draws to a close, I am privileged to review the many accomplishments the RC&D community has achieved. As I have visited the RC&D Regions, councils have taught me about the many projects that are truly having a huge impact on the quality of life in every segment of our society. It is inspiring to see the strength of volunteerism.

We have had challenges. For the second year in a row, our budget was slashed in half in the President's budget; and, for the second year in a row we have seen our budget successfully restored to level funding. At a time when so many programs have seen cuts, we are proud to see that Congress has recognized the importance of the RC&D Program. In these tough budgetary times, I expect that there may be another Presidential budget proposal in February that will result in a cut in the RC&D appropriations.

There are steps that we can take now to ensure continued success. Every Council member needs to first thank your Congressman and Senators for supporting the restored funding and then tell your story how level funding has negatively impacted your local RC&D Area.

And—as we focus on Congress, we must remember that the recent elections have resulted in many changes. It is imperative that we establish a relationship with the newly elected legislators and educate them about RC&D. The new members of Congress will take their seats in January and the President's budget will come out the first week in February. You can easily see how much work we have to do immediately.

We currently have 35 applicant areas. Council members in these unauthorized areas have a great opportunity to make a difference with our budget.

Discuss your proposed projects and the anticipated effect the project could have within your member of

Congress's Districts (make it personal). Prove to them that you deserve to be authorized RC&D Area. Impress upon them that the only way it can happen is by an increase in the budget that will sustain the increasing operational costs of the existing 375 Councils as well as the authorization of applicant areas.

While focusing on the budget, we have to remember that, as Councils, we have to be accountable for the federal dollars. One of the greatest tools that we have to show our accountability is to become a member of the National Association's Circle of Diamonds. Please make it a "New Year's Resolution" that this year your Council will join.

"The National Association recognizes the challenges that face our program."

It is also important that every Council has a current Annual Plan and Area Plan. Please make sure that your Council's plans are up to date. Let's make this another Council "New Year's Resolution." After submittal, contact your RC&D Program Manager to make sure that your RC&D Council's plans have been forwarded to NRCS Headquarters in Washington DC.

The National Association recognizes the challenges that face our program. We are focused on helping you assure Council sustainability. The National Association provides many training opportunities for your Councils. As part of our training opportunities, please plan on attending the Leadership Forum in Washington, DC on February 26-28 where we will continue to discuss Council sustainability.

The new RC&D manual has been released. The National Association has reviewed the manual and our comments are posted on our website. Please take time to review the RC&D manual and our comments post on the website. Remember to submit your comments to the USDA NRCS.

I send the very best wishes for a joyful holiday season

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and a very happy new year to the whole RC&D family!!! ■

The Washington Report

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



Georg Shultz, Director, Electric Staff Division, Rural Development Utilities Program, USDA at the NARC&DC Farm Energy Audit Conference

The New Year will bring many changes in Washington DC — new Members of Congress, a new majority and new congressional staffers. What does that mean for us — to continue our support, we need to sharpen our message and continually educate about the value and benefits of RC&D in local communities.

One of the most frequently asked questions is what is RC&D funding used for? The funding provided to the RC&D program through the federal appropriations process is used to provide the coordinator's salary and benefits, the office, the equipment, vehicle, program assistant support, and administrative and supervisory cost at state and national levels. Think of this as the infrastructure for the council. The appropriations do not provide for project funding.

To fully fund an RC&D council it takes approximately \$190,000. To fully fund the RC&D program with 375 councils and 37 applicant areas it would take approximately \$78.3 million. At present the program is funded at \$50 million which means approximately \$125,000 is provided per council.

Why don't we ask for full funding? After careful consideration and advice from key congressional staff, we set a level of \$56 million as our target for funding. It allows us to make the case that we need to increase funds to keep up with cost of living adjustments, yet it is not unreasonably high that our request would be dismissed as unrealistic in the tight federal budget environment.

Congress, in legislative action on RC&D to date, has rejected the President's proposal to cut funding in half. In report language on the appropriations bill, they noted the need for each council to have a coordinator, and the value RC&D brings to a

community by its ability to leverage federal funds. However the language also mentions that future budget proposals can be based on the effectiveness and performance of the program. Clearly we are well positioned to continue to make the case and turn back efforts to cut the RC&D budget as long as we remain high performing councils that leverage federal dollars.

Who will be our key decision-makers in 2007? Keep in mind that next year we will have two advocacy tasks — funding and Farm bill. When Democrats take charge of the Congress in January the key appropriators on the House side will be David Obey of Wisconsin (Chair of full committee) and Rosa DeLauro of Connecticut (Chair of Subcommittee). The Senate will have Robert Byrd of West Virginia as Full committee chair and Herb Kohl of Wisconsin as (Chair of Subcommittee.)

The Farm bill issues will be handled by Tom Harkin (Iowa) Chair Senate Agriculture Committee and Collin Peterson (Minnesota) Chair of House Agriculture Committee.

The new Democratic majority has said they would like to put more funds in domestic discretionary programs. This will be no small task given the growing demands of mandatory and emergency spending and defense costs. Fortunately, all of the key decision-makers have supported RC&D.

Finally, keep an eye on your e-mail for our monthly e-newsletter. We want to keep you better informed on NARCDC

activities. If there is information you would like to see in the newsletter — send me an e-mail at robertaj@sso.org. I want to make sure that you have the information you need to be successful.

Thanks for all you do! ■

“The New Year will bring many changes in Washington, DC”

Welcome New National Board Members:

John Guskowski
(New England Association of
RC&D Areas)

&

Bob Perry
(Western Association of RC&D Councils)

National Association Seeks Candidates for At-large National Board Position

The National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils is seeking candidates for an open at-large national board position to reflect diversity. The candidate will serve a three year term, is expected to attend 3 NARC&DC national board meetings a year, and be an active member of the under-represented task force. Qualifications include knowledge of the RC&D program and service on a RC&D council. To be considered for this position, the candidate should submit a resume and cover letter outlining their qualifications. In addition, candidates need to submit a letter of support from their local RC&D council. Please forward cover letter outlining qualifications, resume, and council letter of support by January 15, 2007 to:

NARC&DC
444 North Capitol Street NW, Suite 345
Washington, DC 20001 ■

2007 Leadership Forum

On February 26-28, 2007 the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils ("NARC&DC") will hold its annual Leadership Forum in Washington, D.C., at the Holiday Inn on the Hill.

This year's Forum will no doubt be an extraordinary event bringing together individuals from across the Nation, including local civic leaders and elected officials, from various facets of American life. Come join fellow RC&D Council members help build sustainable "Councils of the Future." Involve yourself in an exciting forum that will explore how RC&D's can continue to build a better America. Come sharpen your skills in the following area:

- RC&D Council Sustainability
- Service on a Not-for-Profit Board
- Fundraising
- Endowments

- The Area & Annual Planning Process
- Performance Goals & Efficiency Measures
- The Legislative Process
- Grant Writing

There will be learning events for Council members at all levels of involvement, so don't miss out!

For more information on this Forum, check out the NARC&DC Web site at: <http://www.rcdnet.org>. We hope to see you there! ■

Cooperative Conservation Leadership Training a Success!

On November 28-29 of 2006 the Conservation Partnership, which includes the National Association of RC&D Councils, the National Association of Conservation Districts, the National Conservation District Employees Association, the National Association of State Conservation Agencies, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, hosted the Cooperative Conservation Leadership Training Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. Over 270 National, State, and local leaders shared their experiences and took home a wide array of tools to help them build upon their own skills and to help develop and foster new and emerging leaders within their areas. The participants learned from many notable speakers including Jackie Middleton, Frank Clearfield, and James Amps III. Participants were trained on issues from "Identifying Real Resource Needs" to "Adding up Social Capital." The conference was designed to continue building strong leaders and organizations to more effectively deliver conservation programs both independently and in partnership with others. A highlight of the conference was the signing of the Conservation Partnership's Partnership Statement which reaffirmed the partnerships cooperation to advance natural resource conservation throughout the United States. A copy of the Partnership Statement can be found on the National Association's Website: www.rcdnet.org. ■



Conservation Partnership Leaders sign Partnership Statement at the Cooperative Conservation Training Conference



Sharon Ruggi signing the Partnership Statement

National RC&D Week Declared

As part of a national marketing campaign to raise greater public awareness of RC&D and its activities in



Open panel discussion during the Energy Conservation Opportunities on the Farm Conference: Panelists from left to right:

Jeremy West -
USDA NRCS/Southern MD

RC&D Coordinator
Steve Faust - CEO,
EnSave, Inc.

Richard Nagle - Nagle Farms

Richard Hiatt - President/Executive Manager,
National Food and Energy Council

Marlene Elliott - Maryland/Delaware RD State Director

Chris Rice - Maryland Energy Administration

Andrea Clarke - USDA NRCS

Craig Metz - Vice President, EnSave, Inc.

Conway Gregory - MD Eastern Shore RC&D, Chairman

Steven McHenry - MARBIDCO

local communities, your National RC&D Board of Directors designated the week of September 23-29, 2007 National RC&D Week. This coincides with the anniversary of the Food and Agriculture Act of 1962 which was signed into law on September 27, 1962 which established the RC&D

program.

During this week, we ask the councils hold public events and work with their local press to bring greater attention to the impact RC&D has locally. With a targeted campaign and activities occurring nationally, we will bring greater recognition of the community service RC&D provides.

During this week we need to complete the sequence of service by telling people who we are, what we are doing—and why. That is the heart of public relations; communicating the message about the role that RC&D Councils provide to your community through your projects. Communicating that message has never been more important.

With the recent funding challenges that RC&D has faced, we have come to realize that, as an organization, we need to get the word out about our projects to ensure continuing support. Local people determining their community needs and creating solutions for these needs in our communities, and the many projects that RC&D Councils carry out, are far too important to go unnoticed in our communities and unrecognized by the media.

Good public relations means fostering a positive relationship with your community. The first goal is to make the public aware of your RC&D Council as an organization and your RC&D Council's role in bettering your area's economy, environment and living standards. We encourage councils to begin your preparations early.

In the coming months, materials will be sent to each council to promote the information about your RC&D Council and your Council projects. All

materials from our office will be posted on the website, www.rcdnet.org. We encourage you to share your celebration plans with us. All council materials on this celebration will also be posted to the web. Begin your plans for your RC&D Week Celebration! ■

RCD-POINTS

The Program Operations Information Tracking System (POINTS) is a new system instituted to track accomplishments for a number of NRCS programs. RCD-POINTS specifically tracks RC&D program accomplishments. Starting in Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 all progress for the RC&D program will only be reported in "RCD-POINTS". FY 2006 reporting is completed. Results should be available soon.

The new system is designed to link all RC&D Council Area Plan goals, objectives and strategies to the four elements in the RC&D statute and to the goals and objectives of the NRCS strategic plan while showing the benefits or outcomes from council projects. Data collected is available at the Congressional District, County, RC&D Area, State and the National Level.

Terry D'Addio, Team Leader for the NRCS RC&D program has responsibility for the RCD-POINTS system. Angie Day, NRCS Management Analyst, provides day-to-day guidance to RC&D Coordinators on the use of the system.

"National RC&D Week September 23-29, 2007"

NRCS has stated that due to government security issues only people with approved clearance can have access to RCD-POINTS. At this point, NRCS employees and council employees with the approved clearance have full access to the system for data entry and report generation. NARC&DC also has access and is working with the NRCS national office on how to use the system. NRCS is hoping to have public reports available for council members to access through the internet later in 2007.

It is important to note that due to changed reporting requirements for federal programs, progress reporting for RC&D is now a continuous process throughout the federal fiscal year, not just at the end of the federal fiscal year.

The RC&D Coordinator is responsible for all information for their respective RC&D Area, but Council Members do need to be aware of what is being reported in the new system since benefits and results will be used to determine funding allocations to the NRCS state offices to support councils.

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Reporting results (a desired outcome from an action) must become important for each council. Councils are encouraged to make sure they are reporting all that they accomplish. ■

Programs and Publications for 2007

As we wind down 2006 the National Association is gearing up for 2007! We have many new and exciting programs and publications lined up for you in the coming year. In the first part of the year we anticipate releasing an updated version of volume one of our guide book for RC&D Directors. This updated version will include new information on RC&D Area Planning and Performance Goals. We will also be releasing a National Biomass Feasibility toolkit that will allow RC&D Councils to estimate what types of biomass are located within an RC&D Area and determine if it is feasible to locate a biomass to energy site within the RC&D Area. Our Energy Fact sheet series III will also be released that includes information on bio-oil, pyrolysis, wind and solar energy, and fuel cell technology. In March of 2007 the National Association will be providing a water resources planning assistance guide and updated Drought Planning Guide for RC&D Councils that will highlight Federal assistance available to RC&D Councils. In addition, the National Association will be providing a host of trainings available free of charge at State and Regional meetings. These training include: Financial, Directors Training, Achieving a Sense of Community, Annual Reporting, Area Planning, Annual Plans of Work, RC&D External Communications, Working with Indian Tribes. Training also includes, Building Sustainable Councils with programs on State Associations, Contract Basics, and Hiring. In the latter part of 2007 the National Association will be doing more work in the field of biomass including promoting the "Fuels for Schools and Beyond Program."

Reports and publications have been prepared to address the needs expressed by our member Councils. Should your RC&D Council have a specific area of need or concern, please contact our office. ■



NARC&DC Hosts Energy Conservation Meetings around the US

"Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens." Thomas Jefferson knew the important role farmers played in our great Nation. With America's energy sources no longer as secure as they once were, it is time to promote sustainability of our resources.

Throughout the coming year the National Association, with local RC&D Councils will be hosting training conferences around the Nation that will help you better understand how energy (specifically electricity) is used on farms, and how to identify efficiency improvements. These conferences will show you practical examples of energy savings on farms. Real world examples and case studies will be used and each participant will receive a packet of handout materials.

Each conference is an opportunity to learn about "Energy Conservation Opportunities on the Farm" and what is involved in the performance of a Farm Energy Audit. This event is designed to demonstrate how partnering among private, local, State, and Federal organizations can foster the sharing of ideas. In addition, the conference will serve as an opportunity to network with key organizations that deal with energy and natural resource issues.

These are exciting times to be involved in both conservation and renewable energy. We hope you will join us at a conference near you!

For more information on these conferences please contact Andrew Gordon, Director of Programs, with the National Association of RC&D Councils at 202-434-4863 or visit the NARC&DC's Website at www.rcdnet.org. ■



Sharon Rugge opening up the Energy Conference



Participants learning from the speakers at the Farm Energy Audit Conference

RC&D Performance Measures

Performance Measures for the RC&D program have been finalized through the Office of Management & Budget (OMB) Program Assessment Result Tool (PART) process. There are three categories: annual, long term, and efficiency. All federal programs are required to have annual, long-term and efficiency measures.

All annual measures are required to have a goal each year. There are three: 1) Watershed or area-wide conservation plans measured in numbers 2) Land and water resources benefited by RC&D projects measured in acres. 3) Local businesses created or retained measured in numbers.

There are two long term measures, one for conservation and one for community development.: For conservation, a national RC&D natural resource performance index was established with a base year of FY 2005. It includes benefits for land conservation, water management and land management. The goal is to have this index increase by 10% by 2010. The long-term community development measure expects the RC&D program through the councils to create or retain natural resource based enterprises (businesses) that increase employment opportunities.

The RC&D program has one efficiency measure: land and water acres benefited through implementation of RC&D projects per staff year. This measure will be calculated using a rolling 3 year average starting with FY 2002-2004. The efficiency measure is the ratio of acres benefited through implementation of RC&D projects to the full-time staff year (Full Time Equivalent or FTE) funded through appropriated RC&D Funds. This means the ratio is Acres to FTE. The acreage will be the total of cropland, grazingland, forestland, mined or reclaimed land treated; preserved or protected agriculture land; and water bodies created or improved.

The above performance measures relate to the overall RC&D program budget and are reported in RCD-POINTS. The NARC&DC will be discussing these measurements with NRCS and any new information will be posted on our website: www.rcdnet.org. We encourage your comments to our office. ■

Regional Roundup Section

NORTH CENTRAL

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

Greetings from the North Central Region. Winter is here but councils still have projects to plan and complete and that is the heart of this program.

We welcomed Cy McDonald of Iowa and Steve Gonzalez of Illinois, onto the regional board and we said goodbye and good luck to Joan Ranney, who always sent out a professional newsletter for us all.

I have written many of these newsletters, but this one is special. In March, North Central will elect a new president and after eight years, I will step off the regional and national boards. What a privilege it has been to meet so many people, hear new ideas and see so much of our beautiful nation. You have given me an opportunity that few get to experience and I send my love and gratitude to you all.

Resource, Conservation and Development means so much to so many. Keep up the good work and remember you are the best. ■

“Resource, Conservation, & Development means so much to so many”

SOUTHWEST STATES REPORT

By Jim Bailey, President, Southwest States Regional Association

The Southwest States Regional meeting will be held February 18th through February 21st, 2006, in LaFayette, Louisiana. The meeting will take place during the annual Mardi Gras celebration. Marva Beck, 1st Vice President, and Jim Bailey, President, attended the Conservation Leadership Forum in Nashville, Tennessee. They also attended the National Board Meeting. ■

SOUTHEAST REPORT

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

The Southeastern Association of RC&D Councils will be concentrating during the immediate future on an increase in the RC&D budget currently under consideration. We believe it will be possible to support our councils nationwide if we can increase the proposed

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appropriations by 6 million dollars. This will replace RC&D funds which have absorbed pay increases during the years of level funding.

A move to encourage all councils in the Southeast to participate in the Circle of Diamonds program is forthcoming. We will request our host state for the 2007 Annual Meeting to include training for this application process.

Southeastern President Jeanette Jamieson has developed a policy of conducting quarterly teleconferences with members of the Southeastern Region. This allows better communications on a more current basis between councils and officers.

As we review the proposed changes in the RC&D Manual, and as we develop language for the upcoming Farm Bill, communication among all councils in our area remains a top priority.

We send best wishes and Merry Christmas to all! ■

MID-ATLANTIC REPORT

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

Mid-Atlantic 2007 Annual Conference

The 2007 Annual Conference & business meeting will be hosted by the Pennsylvania Association of RC&D Councils. The conference will be held near Hershey, PA, September 16-19, 2007 at the Holiday Inn in Grantville. Conference information will be available on the Mid-Atlantic Association web page(s) available at:

<http://www.sjrkd.org/ma/mainindex.htm>

Proposed RC&D Manual

Council members from the Mid-Atlantic region were asked to submit written comments on the proposed RC&D Manual.


Officers

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. ■



Council Members

Dear Council Members! Remember, as you are making your end of the year gifts, don't forget to include membership or renewal of your membership into the Partnership Alliance. For your convenience we have enclosed a form to help you become or renew your membership:



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
Other	\$ _____
Total \$ _____	

Name: _____

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State: _____


Zipcode: _____

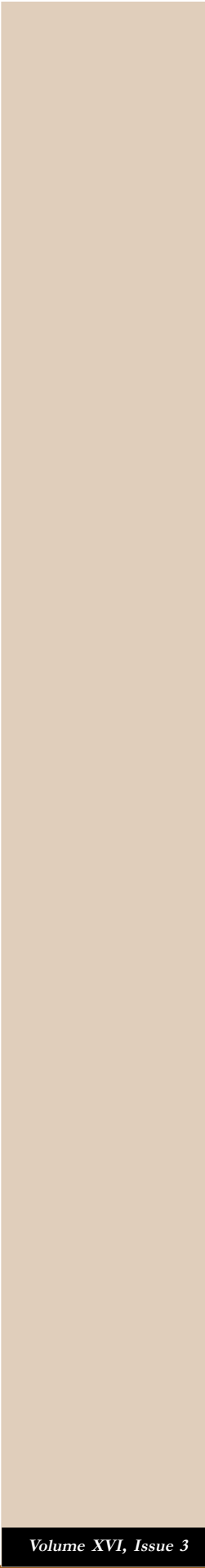
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You will receive a card that shows you are a member in good standing. So act today !

Please mail to:
Partnership Alliance Program
National Association of Resource Conservation & Development Councils
444 North Capitol St. NW, Suite 345
Washington, DC 20001

Any questions? Please contact Monica Johnson by phone at 1-202 434 4780, by fax at 202 434-4783, or by email narcdc@rcdnet.org.





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Calendar of Events 2007-2008

January 17-18, 2007	Farm Energy Conference	Huntsville, AL
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



Steve Faust, CEO of EnSave, Inc. walks the participants through an audit at the NARC&DC Farm Energy Audit Conference

Have Safe & Happy Holidays!

