

The National Catalyst

Volume XVII, Issue 1, Summer 2007

President's Report



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

By Sharon Ruggi, President, NARC&DC

For the third year in a row, I am writing the spring article for the Catalyst while battling President Bush's budget proposal that would severely cut our RC&D funding. And, for the third year in a row, you are all responding by writing letters to your Congressmen and Senators. Telling your story to Congress, stressing the value of your projects to Congress is critical to our success. I am seeing an increased awareness of the value of RC&D on the Hill and that is due to your efforts. We, at the National office follow up on your contacts on the Hill, but as you know all politics is local and without your messages we cannot get the job done. Thank you for all you do!! This will be a long process but rest assured the national association will be your voice as the Congress proceeds through the budget and Farm bills during this spring and summer.

We have just completed our annual Leadership Forum. Many of you had to endure rigorous travel challenges in order to attend this year's event; and it is a testament to your dedication that you tolerated long delays and enthusiastically arrived ready to attend workshops and make Hill visits. It was extremely gratifying to see so many first timers attending the conference! I hope you all enjoyed attending the Forum and found it meaningful.

I hope that each Council is making plans to celebrate RC&D week beginning September 23rd. This is a great opportunity to help erase the "best kept secret" notion that has been voiced far too often. I believe that our recent challenges have taught us that marketing is critical to our long-term survival. Plan events early that will showcase your projects so that you can invite your Congressmen and lure the press to write about your successes. It is important to remember that we cannot afford to only communicate with our legislators at budget time. They need to be educated about what we do throughout the year. At the same time, we must be ever mindful of the fact that accountability is extremely important. Please make sure that your Area Plans and Annual Plans of work are current. These Plans are

proof that you are being good stewards of the federal dollars.

Our quarterly teleconferences with State Presidents have been very well attended. I enjoy the dialogue, and it is a tremendous opportunity for me to respond to your questions. For the States that do not have a State organization, I would encourage you to designate a person to join the teleconferences. Just send the person's name and contact information to the National office.

I am ever mindful of what an honor it is to serve as your National President. "Making Things Happen" is our motto; but seeing and hearing about your projects and the results of volunteerism first hand is a true privilege. ■

"Telling your story to Congress, stressing the value of your projects to Congress is critical to our success."

Executive Director's Report

By Roberta Jeanquart, NARC&DC
Executive Director

We're in another funding battle this year. The President proposed \$14.6 million for RC&D in his budget and wants to reduce the number of coordinators to 50. This is discouraging but keep in mind that the President's request is simply a proposal and that Congress has the ultimate say in the amount of funding that is provided to RC&D in the upcoming fiscal year.

When you receive this newsletter it will be time to follow-up on your legislative contacts on RC&D funding. Did you get a response to your letter to your Member of Congress? If not, be sure to make a phone call and ask what your Member of Congress did to support your request. Did they write the appropriations subcommittee chair in support of \$56 million for RC&D? Did they sign a congressional letter of support for RC&D (a Dear Colleague letter)? Let us know what you hear and we will help get your messages across here in Washington DC. We need to keep up the pressure as the appropriations bills are drafted in April

Continued on Page 2

Volume XVII, Issue 1



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Executive Directors Report continued from Page 1

and May and passed in the House and Senate in June and July.

This year we have a second critical legislative task – to ensure that our RC&D recommendations are included in the Farm bill. Every five years Congress drafts a new Farm bill. In 2002, we achieved a huge victory by having the RC&D program permanently authorized. In the past few years however, we have seen changes implemented in RC&D which change the way the program is operated at the local level.

The NARC&DC assembled a task force to examine the current RC&D program and propose legislative changes in the 2007 Farm bill based on concerns we

have heard from councils across the nation. We need your support and assistance in writing to your Members of Congress for these legislative changes which will help RC&D operate more effectively and efficiently at the local level. Our recommendations will make it clear that every council should have one coordinator and the local support and resources to provide technical

assistance to the council. We also ask Congress to reaffirm the role of local decision-making through the area planning process, and to reinforce that RC&D is a USDA program that brings to bear USDA resources in a community. Finally, we ask that funding for RC&D be made mandatory rather than subject to annual appropriations.

A legislative alert on the Farm Bill, including the NARCD C Farm bill recommendations and a sample letter can be found on our website at www.rcdnet.org. The Agriculture Committees of the House and Senate will hold hearings on the Farm bill throughout the spring. During the summer the legislation will be drafted and passed in the House and Senate. The Committee Chairs would like to have a final conference version of this legislation completed in September and a new Farm bill signed into law by the end of this fiscal year. Please help by sending a letter in support of the RC&D Farm bill recommendations to your Members of Congress as soon as possible.

We know that you are volunteers and we are asking a lot of you, but our activities on the Farm bill will shape the way the RC&D program operates for the next five years. NARCD C will be carrying your messages to the



Pearlie Reed, former NRCS Chief & current Co-Legislative Liaison & Underrepresented Task Force Member of the NARC&DC

Congress and keeping you apprised of activities in this critical legislative year. Please call us whenever we can be of assistance. ■

2007 Leadership Forum



First Vice-President Ms. Smith Freeman moderating at the Eighth Annual Leadership Forum

On February 26-28, 2007 the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development

Councils (“NARC&DC”) held its annual Leadership



Secretary Johanns & Sharon Ruggi

Forum in Washington, D.C., at the Holiday Inn on the Hill. This Forum is the Association's key event where the NARC&DC unveils it

annual legislative priorities. This year's two legislative priorities included funding for the RC&D Program and the Farm bill.

“We're in another funding battle this year.”

The Forum featured Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns who shared his vision about the future of the RC&D Program. He noted that “The RC&D program represents cooperative conservation, in practical, on-the-ground terms, working with USDA partners, experts, and nonprofit RC&D councils to help deliver services in niche areas, maybe where no other services are available.”

The Forum also featured Ms. Vivian Mills who discussed how RC&D Councils can be sustainable in today's tough economic climate.

On Wednesday morning attendees at our Congressional breakfast heard Representatives offer strong messages



Board Members Harbison & Walter with Sec. Johanns

of support for RC&D. Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Chair of the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, as

well as, subcommittee members Ray LaHood (R-IL), Rodney Alexander (R-LA) and staff for Chair Collin Peterson of the House Agriculture Committee addressed guests. The Speakers congratulated Council members on their good work and encouraged them to take their messages to Members of Congress both in DC and back home. ■

Special Report: What Does It Mean to Be Sustainable?

In 2003, the RC&D Program celebrated our 40th anniversary. Your commitment as volunteers sustains this program and helps it remain vibrant in the midst of challenges. We are composed of individuals who truly believe in the spirit of the “can do” attitude. As individual members of an RC&D Board of Directors it is both our right and our responsibility to ensure our local Council is thinking about the future of RC&D.

What are the key characteristics that Councils need to remain strong as an organization for another 40 years? The NARC&DC believes our Councils of the future must embody six key characteristics. We need to be: Mission Focused Councils, High Performing Councils, Sustainable Councils, Transparent and Accountable Councils, Diverse Councils and, Entrepreneurial Councils.

We must be Mission Focused: Our mission defines our core purpose and the reason we exist. It defines us as a group, tells us what we do and how we serve. Do you know who you are and what you want to achieve? Are you taking deliberate and well considered steps to achieve your Council’s mission? Don’t be afraid and take on the tasks to accomplish your mission. Empower your local community to fulfill your mission!

We must be High Performing Councils: Do we employ good business practices in what we do? Are all board members trained in non-profit management and aware of their legal and fiduciary responsibilities? Do we evaluate our activities periodically? Do we lead our councils – or do we let our coordinator take the drivers seat? High performing councils have boards that lead and operate like businesses. Councils of the future must be financially Sustainable: We need to find new funding sources, and find new ways of doing business.

We must be Transparent and Accountable: Are we the best kept secret in our community or do people know who we are? Do people know what we do and why we

do it? Do we have sound business practices? Is your Council a member of the Circle of Diamonds? Are we creating value within our community? As sustainable Councils we must seek to provide real social improvements. We must offer an attractive social and financial return to those who invest in us, either through money, time, or knowledge.

We must be Diverse: We must review our membership and make sure we truly reflect the communities we represent. We should not fear change, but embrace it because with change and diversity of membership comes new ideas and new ways of doing business. We must also consider who we serve. Are your programs and services open to the whole community?

Councils, of the future, will need to be Entrepreneurial: Are we open to new ideas and new ways of doing business? Can we take advantage of new opportunities and see ways of generating revenue without losing sight of our mission? These are all goals that we, as the RC&D Community, must evaluate to ensure we make lasting improvements in our community. We are the reformers and revolutionaries of our local communities. We can make fundamental changes in the way things are done in our local areas as well as on a National scope! We must challenge ourselves to make our visions bold and “Make Things Happen!” When you act locally, your actions have the potential to stimulate local, national and global improvements.

“Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful.” (Albert Schweitzer) We know that you love what you are doing and this love and

passion for the RC&D program has made it the success it is today. ■

National Energy Forum June 11 & 12, 2007, Savannah, GA

“Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens.” Thomas Jefferson knew the important role farmers and producers play in our great Nation. With the security of America’s energy sources slowly dwindling we must focus on ensuring the sustainability of our great Nation.

To help facilitate our Nation’s energy sustainability, the NARC&DC will be hosting a National Farm Energy Forum. This training Forum will help you better understand how energy is used on farms, and how to identify efficiency improvements. The Forum will show you practical examples of energy savings on farms that can help you increase farm income. We hope you will join us in Savannah, GA for this momentous event. ■

“Make Things Happen!”

NARC&DC NATIONAL AWARDS

NARC&DC Awards Leaders with one of our highest awards



Modoc National Forest accepting Supporting Organization Award

On Tuesday February 27, 2007 the NARC&DC presented seven deserving individuals and groups with its' highest awards, the NARC&DC National Awards. Each year, the NARC&DC honors those individuals and groups who have shown exceptional efforts to meet the needs of the RC&D program and the constituents they serve.

The first award, Supporting Organization of the Year, went to the Modoc National Forest, nominated by the North Cal-Nevea RC&D Area Council.

Over the years, the Modoc National Forest has supported many of the innovative projects throughout the RC&D Area. The Modoc National Forest has focused on financial and technical assistance for project implementation, providing motivated and quality representation to the Council, assisting with projects benefiting disadvantaged citizens, and assisting the RC&D Council develop many partnerships that help to implement community wide activities.



Outstanding Youth Involvement Award: Alex & Cory Ward

The Second award, Outstanding Youth Involvement, went to the Alex and Cory Ward.

The Ward's were nominated by the Pilgrim RC&D Area Council for dedicating their time and expertise in creating training DVD's. These DVD's have assisted numerous individuals in the State of Massachusetts by addressing Farmland

Protection, Dispute Resolution, Land Management Priorities, and Agricultural Education in the community and local schools.

The RC&D Program Assistant Award went to Donna Burcher of the Ore-Cal RC&D Council.

Donna has shown innovation and spirit by helping Council projects move forward, managing grants and making decisions. She is a team builder as well as a point person for information for project partners, council members, volunteers, and the public.



Donna Burcher - Program Assistant Award

The Coordinator of the Year Award went to Mr. Kurt Simon of the Little Kanawha RC&D Council. Mr. Simon's efforts include providing training throughout the Country on RC&D Concepts, fundraising and



endowments, and capacity building. He has been critically involved in two major outreach projects; Operation Sharing and the Dell Printer Project. Mr. Simon

oversaw the development of the revolving loan fund, the lawn and garden expo, and local grant writing sessions.

The 2006 Council Member of the Year Award went to Mr. Ted Smith, of the Mat-Su RC&D Council.



Ted has worked vigorously to ensure that Alaskan Natives are well represented on the RC&D Council.

In addition, he almost single handedly secured

Darcy Salmon accepting award on behalf of Ted Smith

four grants totaling 35 thousand dollars to make it possible for 11 RC&D Council members from all across Alaska to receive leadership and organizational training by attending Regional and National Meetings.

The Council of the Year Award went to the Time & Tide RC&D Council.



This deserving council has assisted projects, which help to enhance Economic Development,

Natural Resource Management, and Rural Community Development. The Council had been providing service to its local Area for over 32 years.

Foundation Award

This year, the National Association of RC&D Councils wanted to recognize an outstanding Council, with a Foundation Award. This award represents the exceptional encouragement and dedication to the concept, mission and goals of the NARC&DC.

The Little Kanawha RC&D Council earned this award



in appreciation and recognition for its continued partnership

with the NARC&DC and RC&D Councils around the Nation. ■

New Inductees to the National Association Hall of Fame

Recently, the National Association welcomed two new members into its distinguished Hall of Fame. After several years of devotion and service, Mr. Reed Gardner and Mr. Marshall Nuckolls, joined the ranks of those honored.



Mr. Gardner has been involved with

RC&D for over 40 years. His RC&D service began when he joined his local Council and he later served his Regional Association and on the National Board of NARC&DC. Throughout the last four decades, Reed has remained a strong and positive influence in the RC&D Program, ensuring that decision-making abilities for an RC&D Area remain in the hands of the local residents who he feels “knows best what they need, want, and can achieve it!” When Reed was asked why he became involved in RC&D he stated, “Agriculture in America is dying and I just wanted to make a difference. I gave it a good try.”

“New Inductees into the National Association Hall of Fame”

For over 35 years, Mr. Nuckolls has been a strong advocate of the RC&D process, focusing on both aspects of its name: Conservation and Development. Not only has Mr. Nuckolls provided encouragement, guidance, and leadership for RC&D Councils across the Nation, he has been critical in promoting the incorporation of diverse individuals and cultures by enthusiastically supporting efforts to provide assistance to Native Americans in his local RC&D Area. In his home state, he is viewed as the “go-to” person in maintaining a positive and productive relationship with USDA and among other partners. As one of the foremost advocates of RC&D policy, Marshall has worked diligently to make sure that RC&D is no longer the “best kept secret!”

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

Calling for 2007 National Award Nominations

Would you like to be honored with 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. Be on the lookout in May for the National Association’s Awards package coming to you via U.S. Mail and e-mail. Remember the National Association must receive all nominations by November 1, 2007. We look forward to seeing your nomination! ■

NARC&DC Board of Directors Update

NARC&DC’s Board of Directors (“BOD”) held a national board meeting on February 24 & 25, 2007 in Washington, DC. The Board addressed general issues ranging from the reauthorization of the Farm bill to the Association’s future plans for fundraising and marketing. Special guests at the meeting were Ms. Katie Goslee of the US Forest Service and Ms. Terry

Continued on page 6



Board of Directors Update continued from page 5
D'Addio from USDA NRCS RC&DRL Division.

The Board spent a great deal of time discussing its legislative strategy for funding and the Farm bill. In addition, the issue of accountability and its impact on legislative priorities was analyzed. Subsequently, the need for local RC&D Councils to ensure their Area and Annual Plans are updated and on file at USDA NRCS headquarters in Washington, DC was highlighted. Further, the Board stressed the importance of timely Council dues payment to guarantee that the Association could continue its advocacy efforts in Washington; especially in light of the two legislative tasks. Another issue addressed was the services that should be offered to member and non-member Councils.

The BOD also discussed the Association's Strategic Plan and will seek Council member input on the services and activities Council members feel are most necessary and beneficial to local RC&D Councils.

As a final order of business, the NARC&DC held officer elections. The following individuals have been elected for the following two-year terms: Ms. Jeanette Jamieson from the Southeast Region was reelected to Second Vice-President, Mr. James Sipperly of the New England Region was elected Secretary, and Mr. Pearlie Reed of the Southwest States was elected Legislative Co-Chair. ■

Call for At-Large BOD Member

By unanimous consent, the BOD decided to extend the deadline for nominations to the At-Large Board Seat to April 30, 2007. Any interested individual, who reflects diversity, should submit a resume and cover letter outlining their qualifications. In addition, candidates must submit a letter of support from their local RC&D council.

Please forward cover letter outlining qualifications, resume, and council letter of support to NARC&DC, 444 North Capitol Street NW, Suite 345, Washington, DC 20001 by April 30, 2007. The candidate will serve a three year term is expected to attend 3 NARC&DC National Board meetings a year, and must be an active member of the under-represented task force. ■

NARC&DC Services

NARC&DC Services to Dues Paying Councils – A Good Value for Your Investment.

All of us are council members with limited budgets and we understand that every additional dollar in dues is a dollar out of your Councils budget. As such, the Board

of Directors agreed to hold Council dues at the 2006 level. But, we also vehemently believe that some things are worth paying for! Over the last few years there has been an increase in the strength of the National Association and prompt payment of dues will continue to assist the NARC&DC in the areas of advocacy, marketing and fundraising, and education.

First and foremost, your support funds our advocacy efforts. On your behalf, we have been leading an effort to restore the funding to the RC&D Program. In addition to restoring funds to the program, we have also been able to clarify in legislative language, that all councils should receive the assistance of a full time coordinator, that councils can continue to provide both conservation and economic development assistance, and that efforts to implement program goals must in done in consultation with councils. Further, the NARC&DC will lead efforts to make legislative changes needed in the Farm bill to ensure that each council continues to have a coordinator and that your ability to address issues based on local needs and priorities is protected.

*“A Good Value
For Your Invest-
ment”*

In addition to the advocacy efforts, your yearly dues payment of \$450.00 assists the NARC&DC in providing valuable services to councils. These services include:

- * Grant Center and Grant Station Insider – a free grant research service and electronic newsletter for councils
- * Awards, Hall of Fame and Circle of Diamonds recognition
- * Listserv and Newsletters
- * Publications and mailings with resources for council projects and activities
- * Training materials such as the Guidebook for RC&D Directors and the Financial Management Guidebook
- * National Conference, Leadership Forum and other educational forums
- * Consultation services with NARC&DC staff on issues of importance to councils
- * Free training at state and regional meetings
- * Low cost directors and officers liability insurance
- * Information on specific issues such as: Community Development, Drought Planning, Alternative Energy, and Tools to Increase Diversity

Our goal is to make sure RC&D is recognized nationally for the good work it does in our communities. The NARC&DC relies on the participation and support of its member Councils. Without your continued and valuable assistance the National Association could not be the dynamic Association providing the services that you expect. We look forward to serving you in the upcoming year. ■

Regional Roundup Section

MID-ATLANTIC REPORT

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

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. When it becomes available, Conference information will be available on the Mid-Atlantic Association web page(s) available at:
<http://www.sjrcd.org/ma/mainindex.htm>

FY 2008 Proposed RC&D Budget
Councils members from the Mid-Atlantic region have been contacting their respective members of Congress and Congressional Budget Committee members endorsing and promoting the good work the RC&D Program does. 15 Mid-Atlantic Council members attended the recent NARCDC Leadership Forum. In addition to the attending the Forum, while in DC, visits were made to members of Congress. ■

NORTH CENTRAL REPORT

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

Our regional members will gather in Frankenmuth, Michigan for our Annual Meeting and Conference on March 25th to 27th, 2007. We welcome all to this meeting. We all learn new skills that benefit our councils and communities in preserving resources and building economic strength.

Now, and in the future urban concerns will be rural concerns. Resource Conservation and Development can help resolve problems through partnerships. Best wishes, to our 2007 board of directors.

My family and I thank you for your support and friendship throughout the years.
Retiring President, Nedda Simon ■

PACIFIC RIM REPORT

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

The Pacific Rim Regional Association of RC&D Councils held its 2006 Annual Meeting in conjunction with the California State Association at Tenaya Lodge,

the gateway to beautiful Yosemite National Park. A Big Thank You goes to Yosemite-Sequoia RC&D Council for their hard work in putting on a great conference. The training and educational tours were exceptional. The Council Success stories were awesome. The next Pac Rim Annual meeting and Conference will be held at Makaha Resort on the Island of Oahu, Hawaii, November 5-8, 2006, with a possible post-conference trip to American Samoa.

Pacific Rim council members from most of our states attended the Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. Council members received training on developing sustainable councils, farm energy audits, financial management, planning, board roles and responsibilities and leadership just to name a few. Council members spent time "On-the-Hill" educating their representatives. ■

SOUTHWEST STATES REPORT

By Jim Bailey, President, Southwest States Regional Association

The Southwest States held its annual meeting during the Mardi Gras celebration in Laffette, LA this last February. In attendance was Sharon Ruggi, President of the NARC&DC. Also, in attendance was Ms. Donna Hunter, Education Director of the NARC&DC, who held several trainings for the Region. The meeting provided for a wonderful time and educational experience for all who attended. The Southwest States is looking forward to its next Regional meeting next March in St. Louis, MO. ■

WESTERN REPORT

By Robert Perry, 2nd Vice President, Western RC&D Association

As a reminder to all RC&D regions through out the Nation, Western is again gearing up for our Regional meeting. Western Association plans to hold their next annual conference in January of 2008 in sunny and warm Las Cruces, New Mexico. But here's the big reminder; our NRCS coordinators and other federal staff along with some of our key RC&D council members are unable to attend our conference. Funding is a very critical issue in these past years and is putting the hurt on our planning ability and conference success.

Best of luck for your regional meetings, I hope your conferences are as vibrant and special as the conferences Western Association holds. For updates on the Western Association Conference in Las Cruces, New Mexico please check our Web Site www.westernrcd.org. Also, it's time to think about the 2009 National Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. ■

Gizilbil RC&D

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Calendar of Events 2007-2008

April 26, 2007	Energy Conservation Opportunities on the Farm	Sacramento, CA
June 9-10, 2007	Board of Directors Meeting	Savannah, GA
June 11-12, 2007	Energy Conservation Opportunities on the Farm	Savannah, GA
September 9-12, 2007	Southeast Regional Meeting	Asheville, NC
September 16-19, 2007	Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting	Hershey, PA
November 5-8, 2007	Pacific Rim Regional Meeting	Oahu, HI
November TBD	Board of Directors Meeting,	Location TBD
March 2-5, 2008	Southwest States Regional Meeting	St. Louis, MO

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: _____

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

Any questions?

Please contact Monica Johnson by:

Phone: 1-202 434 4780

Fax: 202 434-4783

Email: narcdc@rcdnet.org

