
The National Catalyst

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Legislative Update . . .

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On September 29, Congress passed a continuing resolution that will fund federal programs at FY07 levels through November 17. The conference agreements (final version of legislation that works out differences between House and Senate versions of funding) on the appropriations bills will be completed in the coming weeks.

RC&D is poised for a much needed increase in funding in both the House and Senate bills. At present \$52,370,000 was provided by the House of Representatives for the RC&D program and the Senate Appropriations Committee also increased funding of \$53,150,000 for RC&D. The FY07 funding level was \$50,787,000.

The national association has been meeting with Members of Congress on this issue throughout the spring and summer to reinforce the messages local council members have sent to Congress. **It is critical that council members keep up the pressure on their local Members of Congress and make phone calls asking for the Senate level of funding, \$53,150,000, when the agriculture appropriations bill goes to conference.**

The appropriations process will be a rocky one as the President has threatened to veto bills that are over his spending requests – this includes the

agriculture appropriations bill. A veto can be overridden but only if there are sufficient votes. It remains critical that every Member of Congress understand how important it is to increase RC&D funding.

On a similar track in Congress is the Farm bill. The House of Representatives passed a Farm bill that includes RC&D recommendations suggested by your National Association. Those recommendations will help us maintain a locally led planning process; provide a coordinator for each council; and help bring to bear all Department of Agriculture programs in a community. The Senate is expected to act on their version of the Farm bill in late October and then both bills will need to be reconciled into a conference agreement. Our recommendations on RC&D are also in the Senate draft Farm bill. In addition, your National Association of RC&D Councils has been active in working with coalitions of groups in Washington, DC to provide increases to conservation funding in the Farm bill. Stay tuned to the NARC&DC list serv and website at www.rcdnet.org for the latest legislative information.

2008 Leadership Forum

The NARC&DC is pleased to announce our **Annual Leadership Forum on February 25-27, 2008**. This year's event will be a hands-on forum helping to build sustainable RC&D Councils. The forum will be held at the Holiday Inn on the Hill in Washington, D.C. The meeting will begin with a general session at 9:00 AM on Monday, February 25, followed by our annual Awards luncheon and then breakout sessions that afternoon. A reception will be held that evening. Tuesday will feature morning training sessions with an opportunity to schedule Congressional meetings that afternoon. Wednesday will feature a breakfast meeting with congressional speakers, followed by a day of Hill visits. The event will conclude with

a reception to share your experiences on Wednesday evening.

Registration materials can be found on the NARC&DC's website. The deadline for the discounted hotel rate is January 22, 2008; please mention group code RDC. The early registration deadline is February 1, 2008. The Holiday Inn Washington, On-the-Hill can be reached at (800)345-8082.

So make your Hill appointments early. Please help us to make our case by making time to visit with your Representatives while in Washington, D.C. Schedule your appointments early. We will have packets of information ready for you to utilize.

President's Report

RC&D Week a Success



The National Catalyst

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Sharon Ruggi

It has been a busy and exhilarating fall! Thanks to all of you who participated in our first RC&D week by showcasing your projects. I spent "RC&D Week" in North Dakota. I first attended the annual State meeting, and

then I was treated to two incredible days of touring North Dakota from North to South. I was extremely impressed with the many projects that I had the privilege of seeing first hand. The Councils there, recognizing the importance of inclusion and serving diverse groups, showed me several very

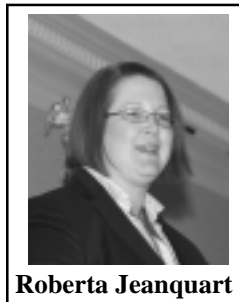
impressive projects with the tribes of ND. In order to highlight RC&D week, nine newspaper, radio and television interviews had been arranged. What great marketing! Prior to visiting North Dakota, I had associated cold weather with the State. After visiting, I first think of the warmth of the people and the strength of the RC&D program there.

There is tremendous RC&D enthusiasm across the United States. In September, I had the pleasure of attending the Southeastern Regional meeting in Asheville, SC, where they enjoyed record-breaking attendance. The following week, I attended the Mid-Atlantic regional meeting in Hershey, PA. At both meetings, I saw the dedication and fervor of Council volunteers.

I also see Councils focusing on sustainability. For example, last week, the California State Association meeting dedicated two days to examining every angle of opportunity in order to assure

See **PRESIDENT**, Page 4

Executive Director's Report



Roberta Jeanquart

Congress will be in session well into November to complete action on two pieces of legislation critical for RC&D councils – the agriculture appropriations

bill and the Farm bill.

We are fortunate to have several of our Farm bill recommendations included in both the House versions and the Senate draft legislation. Specifically, the Farm bill:

- 1) Calls for an area planning process, for the RC&D program, which is locally led;
- 2) Calls on the Secretary of Agriculture to designate a Coordinator for each Council to provide and assist in providing

technical assistance;

- 3) Adds to the technical assistance definition - providing assistance for the implementation of area plans and projects; and


- 4) Adds to the technical assistance definition – providing services which bring to bear the resources of Department of Agriculture programs in a local community as defined in the locally led planning process.

I think it bears discussing how we arrived at these recommendations and why they are important to the future of RC&D. As council members first look at the recommendations – they may think – isn't this the way we have always done business? Yes, it is however, the law does not require the RC&D program to operate this way and in the view of the national association, legislative changes had to be


See **EXEC. DIR**, Page 4

Councils in the Spotlight . . . **Celebrating RC&D Week!**

Rather than highlight the work of one Council we thought we would highlight all Councils and give you a sample of activities around the nation on RC&D week.

 **Northeast Nebraska RC&D Celebrates National RC&D Week** with a special exhibit highlighting the Northeast Nebraska RC&D was on display at the Corps of Discovery Welcome Center, located three miles south of Yankton, S.D. Some of the other RC&D projects featured at the Welcome Center exhibit included:

- ❑ Farm to Family Connection - helping local farmers and rural businesses, most of which direct-market their products, get in touch with consumers through a Web site and weekly radio program;
- ❑ Northeast Nebraska Weed Management Area - a coalition of weed superintendents and other officials involved in control of noxious and invasive weeds in the eight-county area;
- ❑ Heritage Museum Group - an association of small museums to facilitate networking and sharing of resources; and
- ❑ Food, Land and People - a children's educational series focusing on the importance of agriculture.

 **Indiana Governor, Mitch Daniels, Jr.** proclaimed September 23-29, 2007 as RC&D (Resource Conservation & Development) Week. This proclamation was announced and read in Lt. Governor Becky Skillman's office.

Lt. Governor Skillman said, "Understanding the great gift we have in our land, we strive to find a balance

between growth and conservation, technology and preservation. Our 10 Resource Conservation and Development Councils throughout Indiana help us achieve that balance. They work with our State Department of Agriculture to provide a system of rural development to encourage wise use of our natural resources. They also bring together private citizens, state and federal agencies to work together to find answers."

Annually, Indiana's RC&D councils carry out over 100 projects, helping to address issues such as sustainable land use, mine reclamation, rural fire protection, small business support and development, community land stewardship, and a variety of environmental education needs.

 **Minnesota Governor Praises Minnesota RC&Ds**

Nearly a hundred individuals from all over the State of Minnesota heard Governor Tim Pawlenty praise the Laurentian Resource Conservation and Development's (RC&D) Renewable Energy Clean Air Project (RECAP) as an outstanding example of what local community leaders need to do the reinvigorate and energize their communities. "We need to have leaders who are not happy with the status quo," Pawlenty said at the conference of the Minnesota Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils (MARC&D) luncheon.

"Control your own destiny," Governor Pawlenty said highlighting the link between economic development and the enthusiasm of local leadership.

RECAP runs on a plasma gasification system where organic waste is converted to a fuel gas in an extremely high temperature, oxygen deprived setting. The fuel or "syngas" still contains all the chemical and heat energy from the waste that can be used to fire steam turbine generators. This process could significantly increase domestic energy production while reducing much of the waste that would ordinarily wind up in the nation's landfills. Reprinted from NRCS this week 9/26/07



Pictured from left to right: Jerod Chew, Indiana State Department of Agriculture, Marshall Nuckolls, Indiana League of RC&D Councils (Sycamore Trails); Lt. Governor Becky Skillman; Jane Hardisty, Indiana NRCS State Conservationist; Andy Miller, Director, Indiana

RC&D - Making Things Happen!

PRESIDENT, *from Page 2*

themselves of continued prosperity.

I was excited to be invited to attend the annual National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA) annual meeting in Charleston, SC and to give an RC&D update as a Conservation Partner. In June, I attended the Conservation District Employees meeting in Saint Petersburg, FL. I encourage all of you to engage our partners and invite them to State and Regional meetings. Through partnering, we have an opportunity to strengthen the Conservation program across the United States.

In closing, I encourage all of you to center your attention on two words: marketing and accountability. Accountability is important because even one under performing Council can destroy the RC&D credibility. And—we need to



Left to right: Helen Schatz, State Association President, Joe Dunn, Standing Rock Conservation District Manager, Mary Stevens, Dakota Prairies RC&D Executive Director and Sharon Ruggi.

market all our good work in order to ensure our sustainability. Thanks for all you do!

EXEC. DIR., *from Page 2*

made to protect the future of the program.

First, in recent years area plans and annual plans of work have been focused on national goals which may not necessarily reflect local priorities. Our legislative recommendations correct this top down process and bring area planning back to local priorities as defined by local Council members. Second, to date the role of the coordinator is not included in the authorizing law for RC&D. Coordinators have been provided as a matter of precedent. In recent years there have been attempts to cut the number of coordinators to one per state. The National Association felt it is time to acknowledge the role of the coordinator in the law and to make clear that every designated Council is provided one coordinator.

Our third recommendation was necessary to make clear that coordinators can help with any projects identified in area plans not just those that fall within national NRCS goals. Finally, for years Council members have seen RC&D as a USDA program that happens to be

administered by NRCS. In recent years, the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has required RC&D to more narrowly focused on the NRCS conservation mission and vision. Therefore, our fourth recommendation makes clear in law that we can bring to bear USDA resources in a local community. This means not just conservation but also Forest Service, Rural Development, Food and Nutrition Service, etc.

Let me be clear that we value our partnership with NRCS. Our goal in bringing forward these Farm bill recommendations to Congress was to make sure that Councils were able to operate with local priorities in the forefront, and that each council has the flexibility and technical assistance it needs to continue its record of fine service to communities across this nation.



Regional Happenings...

Pacific Rim

Bob Jones, President

The Pacific Rim Regional Association of RC&D Councils' Annual Meeting and Conference is coming up November 6-8, 2007 at the Makaha Resort located on the beautiful Island of O'ahu. The O'ahu RC&D Council has been working hard on the planning and implementation of this conference. It has been a tremendous challenge to plan this year's conference. Due to tight federal budgets, there is a lack of funding resulting in the reduction of coordinators and other federal staff that will be able attend.

The theme of the Conference is "Sustaining Our Lands, Our People, and Our Culture." Our training will focus on helping RC&D councils to be sustainable. Training will include Area Planning, Financial Management, Direct/Indirect Charge, Developing a Business Plan, Non-Profit Funding Opportunities, Harvesting Energy from the Land, and Global Warming just to name a few. Councils will share Success Stories.

We invite all RC&D council members to come experience Ahupua'a concept of sustainability, a

system that ensures that natural systems are kept in balance and acknowledges the inherent relationships between land, sea, water and life. You can learn about this on one of two tours; "Ahupua'a and Culture" or "Ahupua'a and Agriculture". For more information about the conference and the PacRim Region please visit our website: www.pacrimrcd.org

*Leadership and learning
are indispensable to
each other.*

John F. Kennedy

Western Region

Joe Leichtnam, President

Fall has hit the Western RC&D region & thank GOD after another hot & dry summer. I must say this is my favorite time of the year as an RC&D volunteer! All the state associations are holding their annual fall meetings & holding workshops. I have had the opportunity to attend meetings in 8 of the 10 Western states since elected and it still amazes me to see the great projects and people that shape the RC&D program.

It also pleases me to see more Western states participating in an awards program & recognizing the people who spend countless hours working for the success of our grassroots group. The judging of the awards is still one of the most rewarding aspects of working with the program.

The weeks ahead will be filled with even more meetings & teleconferences as New Mexico finalizes the

2008 Western Conference to be held January 13- 16, 2008 in Las Cruces, NM & my home state of South Dakota plans for the 2009 Western in Spearfish. I am truly blessed to have found such a good group of friends to work with for a common goal. I look forward to seeing you all soon & until then THANK YOU for all you do!! You are what keeps this country great!!



NARC&DC Publishes New Guidebook for RC&D Directors

The National Association is pleased to announce that the second edition of the Guidebook for RC&D Directors is now available. Each RC&D Area should be receiving 5 copies of the newly revised guidebook within the next few weeks. Additional copies are available for a nominal shipping fee.

This updated guidebook was

developed in response to questions asked by Council members and published through a contribution agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. This new edition includes information on Area planning and performance goals, legal and risk management issues, funding and board develop-

ment, and many other topics of interest identified by you, our member Councils.

The material is intended to provide your RC&D Area with guidance and information that Council members need to become exceptionally prepared Board members and help your Council be both successful and sustainable.

Council Skill Building

Civil Rights Compliance: Understanding your Council's Role

Annual Meetings

Pacific Rim Association
November 5-8, 2007
Oahu, HI

**NARC&DC Board of
Directors Meeting**
December 1-2, 2007
Albuquerque, NM

Western Association
January 13-16, 2008
Las Cruces, NM

**NARC&DC Leadership
Forum**
February 25-27, 2008
Washington, DC

Southwest States Association
March 2-5, 2008
St. Louis, MO

North Central Association
March 9-11, 2008
Rochester, MN

National RC&D Conference
June 2009
Albuquerque, NM

Quite often the National Association is asked questions pertaining to Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity and its impact upon the RC&D Council. For a not-for-profit entity, like an RC&D Council, Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity requirements may seem like a dizzying task, but to hide from this can be a mistake. Making sure that your RC&D Council is working toward the best practices and tools to ensure an open environment for employees of the Council and Volunteers alike can help an RC&D Council continue a happy existence. So what is a discriminatory action? Discriminatory actions are intentional actions or actions having the affect, which encourage, sustain, or result in discrimination. Prohibited discriminatory actions may include:

- ❑ Denying a person any of the program benefits offered to the public
- ❑ Providing any service or benefits to a person that are different or provided in a different manner than others in a program;
- ❑ Subjecting a person to segregation, separate or different treatment in any manner related to receiving program services or benefits; and
- ❑ Intimidating, threatening, or discriminating against any individual as retaliation for their involvement in an investigation or hearing.

So why does this apply to RC&D Councils? The simple answer is that each RC&D Council is a recipient of Federal financial assistance. As such, we are required to ensure the public or beneficiaries have an equal opportunity to participate in all RC&D Council programs and activities and that Coun-

cils comply with civil rights equal opportunity laws. So what laws should we follow? There are a host of federal laws each Council must be aware of. In addition, each RC&D Council must take their particular state laws into account. In addition, because each RC&D Council receives much of their assistance from USDA agencies the following nondiscrimination statement should be included on all council material distributed for public education, distribution, or notification.

"In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer." If the material is too small to permit the full statement to be included, the material should include the statement, in print size no smaller than the text: *"This institution is an equal opportunity provider."* For more information on Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity please see the NRCS General Manual Section 440 - Conservation Programs Manual, Part 513.40 at <http://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?id=2191>.



Council Skill Building

The Importance of Area Plans

Why should your RC&D Area worry about having a current Area and Annual plan? The answer can be as simple as a way to continue NRCS support to your RC&D Area or as complex as a marketing tool for your RC&D Council. We are all aware that planning and implementation are the central functions of an RC&D Council. Having a current and dynamic Area Plan can improve your Council's organizational ability to capitalize on changing conditions, improve overall productivity, and make better strategic decisions that result in the implementation of a more efficient and effective RC&D Program.

The USDA NRCS Conservation Programs Manual part 513.24(c) requires each RC&D Areas to file a current copy of their RC&D Area Plan with NRCS. A well-developed Area Plan provides a basis and direction for the RC&D Council to serve their area to the best of its ability. It should identify needs and opportunities, as well as broad and specific objectives to

reach each goal for a five year planning horizon. It can also serve as a guide when you are reporting your progress to your local community, the media, and NRCS! Make sure you use your Area and Annual Plans as a marketing tool to help your RC&D Council share your success!

But, what should you have in your RC&D Area plan? NRCS requires each Area plan contain:

- 1) Your Council's Mission;
- 2) Your Council's Vision;
- 3) The Needs and Opportunities within your RC&D Area;
- 4) Your Council's Goals to accomplish your Mission and Vision;
- 5) Objectives as to how to obtain the Goals you set above;
- 6) Strategies to achieve those Objectives;
- 7) Documentation of all USDA Partnerships;
- 8) A Time Frame to accomplish each component of your Area Plan;
- 9) Compliance Statements as

required by the RC&D Manual and OMB Circulars; and

10) Signatures.

Now that you know what should be included in your plan and once you have determined your projects, setting your goals should be easy. However, when setting your goals you will need to utilize "SMART" goals to ensure compliance with NRCS rules.

SMART goals are:

- 1) Specific
- 2) Measurable
- 3) Attainable
- 4) Results Oriented – lined to needs
- 5) Timeframe for accomplishments

There are also optional items that you may wish to put into your RC&D Area Plan. A more detailed description of the required items, and examples of SMART goals are covered in the NARC&DC publication "Area Plan: A Guide for Success." If you would like a copy of this publication please contact your National Office at narcdc@rcdnet.org or call (202) 434-4780.

NRCS Releases New RC&D Operations Manual

On August 21, 2007, USDA NRCS released the Conservation Programs Manual 440, Part 513, which provides guidance to both federal employees and councils on the operation of the RC&D Program. Throughout the development of the new manual, NARCDC worked on your behalf to make sure the revision process was open and allowed for public input.

The NARCDC submitted comprehensive comments on behalf of all councils. Our comments ranged from ensuring that the RC&D Program kept a proper balance between Conserva-

tion and Community Development while ensuring that the process for determining the needs of the local community remained with local leaders. In addition, the National Association expressed deep concern regarding any language change that indicated a withdrawal of Coordinator support to each RC&D Area. A full listing of the comments by your National Association can be found on our website.

The new manual contains some significant changes to the area planning process and format and the utilization of SMART goals (See article entitled

"The importance of Area Plans"). In addition, the new manual addresses more in-depth Civil Rights and Ethics standards and incorporates the new RC&D POINTS reporting system. NARC&DC expects the 2007 Farm bill to include changes for the RC&D Program. These changes will require additional revisions to the NRCS RC&D manual. We will keep you apprised as the process moves forward. The full Conservation Programs Manual can be found at <http://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?id=2191>.

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RC&D - Making Things Happen!



Become an Associate Member of NARC&DC

Partnership Alliance Registration Form

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

New Membership Renewal

Sign up for (circle your choice):

Out of This World (Lifetime)	\$500.00	_____
Diamond (Yearly)	\$250.00	_____
Platinum (Yearly)	\$100.00	_____
Gold (Yearly)	\$ 75.00	_____
Silver (Yearly)	\$ 50.00	_____
Regular (Yearly)	\$ 25.00	_____
Additional Donation	\$	_____
	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 RC &D Councils
444 North Capitol St. NW, Suite 345
Washington, DC 20001

Any questions?

Please contact Monica Johnson
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