



NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION OF RESOURCES DISTRICTS

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February 9, 2007

TO: NARD Board, NRD Managers and Conservation Partners
FROM: Dean E. Edson, NARD Executive Director
RE: February 9 NARD UPDATE

Notes from the NACD Annual Meeting -- Nebraska NRDs had 11 representatives attend the National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting in Los Angeles this week. Olin Sims of Wyoming was elected President replacing Bill Wilson of Oklahoma, who has served out his term.

Much of the conference was spent discussing the new farm bill and funding for current programs. The budget for existing programs reflects higher corn prices, which in turn impacted a decision by USDA to announce there would be no general sign-ups in 2007 and 2008 for CRP and CSP. However, budget proposals are laid out to service existing contracts.

Key programs affecting conservation district members and customers, program funding levels as proposed in the president's FY 2008 budget and comparisons to last year include:

- Conservation Operations: \$802 million, up from \$791 million in FY 2007.
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program: \$1 billion, down \$270 million from Farm Bill authorized levels.
- Conservation Security Program: Proposed spending cap of \$316 million, up from \$259 million in FY07.
- Conservation Reserve Program Technical Assistance: \$58 million, down from \$80 million.
- US Forest Service State and Private Forestry: \$202 million, down from \$228 million in FY07.
- Resource Conservation and Development: \$15 million, down from \$51 million last year.
- Watershed Programs: \$6 million, down from \$75 million.

At the NACD annual meeting this week, several Nebraska conservation programs and individuals were recognized as follows:

- **The Upper Big Blue NRD** was the overall winner of the Association of Equipment Manufacturers /NACD Excellence in Communications Award. The award was given to recognize their outstanding overall communications efforts on water management, in particular the "Fantastic Fun – River Run" exhibit. Scott Snell, Information Director for the UBBNRD, who developed the exhibit, accepted the award on behalf of the district.
- **The Nemaha NRD** received the District Excellence Award in Water Resources for their work on more than 350 watershed structures in their district.

- **The Lower Platte South NRD** received the Northern Plains Region Collaborative Conservation Award for their work on the Antelope Valley Project. This award is given to the district that works with other conservation partners on a project.
- **Mike Mosel** was recognized for his years of service on the NACD Board. Mike goes off the board this year after serving on the NACD Board since the early 1990's. Mike has served as chair of the Agriculture Land Resources and District Operations Committee.

EPA Grant for Environmental Assessments and Nutrient Management Plans at Livestock Operations -- A new Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) program will help livestock operators identify and respond to environmental management challenges. In February 2007, EPA will issue an open solicitation for an \$8 million grant to conduct voluntary comprehensive environmental assessments and to develop and review nutrient management plans for animal feeding operations (AFOs). The goal of this project is to offer confidential no-cost technical assistance to AFO operators nationwide that will help operators prevent water discharges and reduce air emissions by identifying and addressing environmental challenges. The EPA will provide more detailed information on the solicitation once it is officially posted on www.grants.gov as well as on http://cfpub1.epa.gov/npdes/home.cfm?program_id=7

Nebraska Unicameral Committee Action

LB 488 – Income Tax Credit for Perpetual Conservation Easement Donations. Glenn Johnson, Manager of the Lower Platte South NRD, testified on behalf of NARD in support of LB 488, which provides an income tax credit for donated conservation easements. The bill targets areas designated as quick response water shortage areas in over appropriated basins and areas subject to interstate compacts, agreements, and decrees and on areas designated as biologically unique landscapes in the Nebraska Natural Legacy plan. Dan Smith, Middle Republican NRD Manager and Marlin Peterman, Papio-Missouri River NRD Assistant Manager, also testified in support of the bill. The committee took no action on the bill.

Nebraska Unicameral Committee Hearings Next Week – All Hearings begin at 1:30 pm.

LB 20 – NRD Projects and Public Access. This bill increases public access to NRD water project properties and private lands. **Hearing 2/14 Judiciary Committee, 1:30, Room 1113**

LB 564 – Recreational Liability Act. This bill adds political subdivisions to those who receive recreational liability protection if they do not charge the public for access. **Hearing 2/14 Judiciary Committee, 1:30, Room 1113**

LB 566 – Recreational Liability Act. This bill extends some recreational liability protection to land owners. This includes political subdivisions. **Hearing 2/14 Judiciary Committee, 1:30, Room 1113**

LB567 – Extend Recreational Liability Protection to Private landowners that charge access. This bill provides recreational liability protection to land owners that charge for access on their property. **Hearing 2/14 Judiciary Committee, 1:30, Room 1113**