



National Association of Conservation Districts

February 19, 2009

Senator Herb Kohl
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development and FDA
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
330 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Sam Brownback
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development and FDA
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
303 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member:

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) represents the nation's 3,000 conservation districts and 17,000 men and women who serve on their governing boards. Conservation districts are local units of government established under state law to carry out natural resource management programs at the local level. Conservation districts help state and federal partners work with landowners on a variety of conservation programs, including providing Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

Found under the NRCS Conservation Operations (CO) account, the CTA program provides a funding base that helps ensure the best technical and scientific knowledge is available when designing and implementing conservation plans with landowners. Conservation districts assist in this process by helping landowners in identifying natural resource needs and developing conservation plans on their property. Conservation plans are essential to landowner and manager access to Farm Bill conservation programs and ensure the delivery of ongoing and positive management on working lands. Funding for the CTA program remains critically low as landowner interest in conservation planning remains high across the country.

NACD respectfully supports a funding level of **\$924.446 million** for the Conservation Operations account in the FY 2010 Agriculture Appropriations Bill. Funding at this level continues the availability of technical expertise to local landowners when applying conservation practices on their land. Adequate funding for CTA also ensures the flexibility to address natural resource concerns that are unique to the state or local area. Most importantly, this funding will ensure landowners can continue to access conservation practices that provide countless public benefits including clean water, productive soils and a healthy ecosystem.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you as we continue to provide the benefits of conservation programs across the country.

Sincerely,

Steve Robinson
NACD President

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