



National Association of Conservation Districts

June 19, 2007

Chairman Collin Peterson
Agriculture Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman,

As the House Agriculture Committee moves forward with consideration of the 2007 Farm Bill, the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) would like to express our views on several issues that we expect the committee will be discussing at mark-up or in the near future.

NACD is committed to locally-led conservation. Local conservation districts across the country are instrumental in facilitating the delivery of programs in the Conservation Title. We hope that the 2007 Farm Bill retains this commitment to locally-led conservation.

Specifically, the role of districts is to convene Local Work Groups to solicit input of local landowners and others in the community. Due to regulations of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), the actions of those outside organizations/individuals in the Local Work Groups are limited. While producers and other landowners provide valuable input, they cannot be involved in the decision making process. NACD asks that you clarify this role of the landowner by officially including them in the Local Work Group. We suggest that this be done by creating the Local Work Group, convened by a local conservation district, as a subcommittee of the State Technical Committee. As an element of the State Technical Committee, the Local Work Group could function with greater transparency, include non-governmental entities, and be exempt from FACA. We appreciate the work that has been done by the Conservation Subcommittee to expand the participation on the State Technical Committee and hope the expanded participation in the Local Work Group can be achieved in the final committee bill.

We expect questions may arise regarding the administration of conservation programs under the U.S. Department of Agriculture. NACD is opposed to the change of administration of conservation programs from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to the Farm Service Agency.

We do understand your committee will consider this issue along with other re-organizational matters once action is concluded on the Farm Bill. We fully expect to be a part of those discussions and look forward to working with you to make sure the most efficient and effective

delivery of conservation programs is in place. NACD believes that issues of program administration should be thoroughly reviewed prior to any action and believe that there has not been sufficient discussion to take action during the Farm Bill.

If you have questions regarding our position on this matter or any other, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Olin Sims".

Olin Sims
NACD President