

# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

## Water Issues

### Clean Water – A Systems Approach

NACD uses programs pertaining to the Clean Water Act (CWA), and believes in enhancing and protecting the integrity of our nation’s waters. Conservation districts across the country work with state and local governments, agricultural producers, forest landowners, homeowners, and developers to collaborate in a systems approach to water quality and quantity, including nutrient management.

### Soil Health

Achieving soil health is part of a systems approach to agriculture production that benefits the landscape, reduces nutrient loading and sediment runoff, increases efficiencies, and sustains wildlife habitat, while providing the potential for cost savings to producers. Soil health minimizes the impacts of environmental and weather conditions to provide a consistent food, fuel, feed, and fiber supply for the future. Conservation programs such as Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) are important to soil health, since they address some of the technical and financial risks associated with practices that increase organic matter, water infiltration, water-holding capacity, and nutrient cycling.

### Certainty

State water certification programs or “certainty programs” have provided thousands of agricultural producers and landowners with some degree of regulatory assurance for adopting Best Management Practices (BMPs) in their operations. NACD believes that natural-resource needs are best addressed when state and local authorities take leadership roles in the voluntary adoption of conservation measures. Through certainty programs, producers receive a clear period of time during which they know rules and regulations will not change so as to receive credit for implementing voluntary BMPs.

### Watershed Operations

The collective Watershed Program benefits to rural and urban communities across the country add up to a stronger national economy and a more productive and secure nation. The Watershed Program represents opportunity for the perfect blend of natural resource protection and the creation of economic opportunity for rural America. Investment in the Watershed Program represents expanding opportunities for natural resource conservation coupled with important national economic and environmental dividends for all Americans.

### Small Watershed Rehabilitation

The Watershed Program provides NRCS its most direct, comprehensive authorities to address the impacts of changing climate conditions and the subsequent visible changes in weather patterns. Using a portfolio of land treatment, structural and non-structural measures planned and applied on a watershed scale, it offers conservation and environmentally beneficial solutions on a watershed scale. Conservation Districts have used the flexibility offered by the program to successfully address the impacts resource challenges. Districts need and require both the financial and long-term technical assistance from NRCS to manage existing watershed projects and to assist in the planning and implementation of new projects.

### 319 Nonpoint Source Grants

Section 319 of the CWA establishes a grant program to assist in mitigating nonpoint source pollution. States, territories and tribes receive grants from EPA to support a variety of water quality activities, including technical and financial assistance, education and training, technology transfer, demonstration projects, and monitoring. States then distribute funds to conservation districts and local governments. These grants increase the utilization of agricultural BMPs, low impact development, and storm water management.

### Funding Levels

Program	FY 2014 Final	FY 2015 Final	FY 2016 President’s Budget	NACD Request
Watershed Rehabilitation	\$12 million	\$12 million	Cuts \$69 million	\$85 million
Watershed Operations	0	0	\$200 million	\$300 million
319 Nonpoint Source	\$159.25 million	\$159.25 million	\$164.9 million	\$164.9 million

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