



Conservation Operations and Conservation Technical Assistance

Conservation Operations (CO), which includes Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA), is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Technical assistance helps landowners become better stewards of their natural resources by assisting them with resource assessment, practical designs, planning, and monitoring of conservation practices. Other programs included in CO are the snow survey, soil survey, and plant material centers. More information on the importance of the CTA program can be found on the back of this page. **NACD requests \$865 million for Conservation Operations.**

Farm Bill Conservation Title Funding

The Agriculture Act of 2014 (also known as the 2014 Farm Bill) consolidated conservation programs from 23 to 13 and cut funding for these programs by \$6 billion. Additional cuts to farm bill programs – like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) – would set a dangerous precedent at a time when voluntary, incentive-based conservation is needed more than ever. We call on Congress to maintain all mandatory farm bill conservation program funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 at the levels authorized in the Agriculture Act of 2014.

Watershed Operations and Small Watershed Rehabilitation

The Watershed Program generates about \$2 billion worth of improved water quality and erosion control benefits annually. These benefits help rural communities strengthen their local economies and restore ailing infrastructure, like dams and water storage facilities. For decades, conservation districts across the country have stepped up to sponsor these projects, which often require significant financial resources and long-term technical assistance. **NACD requests \$300 million for Watershed Operations and \$75 million for Watershed Rehabilitation.**

State and Private Forestry Programs

State and Private Forestry (S&PF) programs are administered by the Forest Service. The agency works with a broad range of forestry organizations, conservation districts, and others to address the protection and management of forested lands. S&PF provides assistance to help sustain the nation's forests and prevent harm caused by forest pests, invasive species, and wildfires. **NACD requests \$237 million for this important program.**

319 Nonpoint Source Grants

Section 319 of the Clean Water Act established a grant program to assist in mitigating nonpoint source pollution. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awards the grants to states, territories, and tribes to support water quality activities including: technical and financial assistance, education and training, technology transfer, demonstration projects, and monitoring. These grants increase the utilization of agricultural best management practices, low impact development, and stormwater management. **NACD request level funding of \$184.9 million for this critical water quality program.**

Program	FY 2015 Final	FY 2016 Final	FY 2017 Senate Appropriations	FY 2017 House Appropriations	NACD FY 2018 Request
Conservation Operations	\$846 million	\$850.9 million	\$864.5 million	\$855 million	\$865 million
Watershed Operations	\$0	\$0	\$150 million	\$0	\$300 million
Watershed Rehabilitation	\$12 million	\$12 million	\$0	\$21 million	\$75 million
S&PF	\$233 million	\$237 million	\$244 million	\$220 million	\$237 million
319 Nonpoint Source	\$159.25 million	\$164.9 million	\$184.9 million	\$164.9 million	\$184.9 million



The Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) program, funded under the Conservation Operations (CO) Account, helps landowners become better stewards of their natural resources by assisting them with resource assessment, practical design, planning, and monitoring of conservation practices.

Putting a Plan in Place

Working with conservation planners, landowners can evaluate their specific resource needs and develop a tailored plan to meet their stewardship goals. Conservation plans give landowners the confidence and know-how to implement conservation practices on their land, and in many instances, also help landowners apply for farm bill conservation financial assistance.

Despite having a desire to implement the best conservation practices, many landowners do not have the technical or scientific expertise to evaluate their land's unique resource needs – such as sediment runoff or wind erosion – and need CTA assistance to address their unique resource concerns. Through the CTA program, landowners are able to work with technical experts to identify and address their most pressing resource concerns.

Conservation plans not only help agricultural producers be better stewards of their land; they can help producers achieve greater yields and decrease input costs, improving producers' bottom lines.

Administration

CTA is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Conservation expertise is provided by NRCS staff in partnership with a voluntary conservation network, including employees from conservation districts, throughout the nation. By utilizing conservation districts and other partners, NRCS is able to expand their ability to put conservation on the ground.

Funding

The CTA program is funded by Congress under the Conservation Operations (CO) account in the annual appropriations process. In order to continue assisting our nation's agricultural producers to be the best stewards of their natural resources, continued investments in CTA are required. **NACD requests Congress fund the Conservation Operations account at \$865 million in FY 2018.**

Have questions? Contact Coleman Garrison, NACD director of government affairs, at coleman-garrison@nacdnet.org, or consult NACD's website: www.nacdnet.org

