



National Association of Conservation Districts

April 18, 2014

Ms. Callie Eideberg
Senior Advisor to the Chief
Natural Resource Conservation Service
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Mr. Mark Rose
Dir. of Financial Assistance Programs Division
Natural Resource Conservation Service
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Re: Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Listening Session

Dear Ms. Eideberg and Mr. Rose:

On behalf of the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), thank you for hosting and allowing us to participate in yesterday's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Listening Session. We appreciate your willingness to accept our partner feedback as you prepare to release the Announcement of Program Funding (APF).

We would echo the comments in our coalition letter submitted to Chief Weller earlier this week. In addition, we think that NRCS should clearly explain their priorities in selecting projects if any more specific criteria will be used other than the topics outlined in the statute. **Prioritizing partners with a demonstrated ability to deliver results and who already work with producers is critical.** This is a working lands program, and the delivery mechanism has to be present to get conservation on the ground.

It is also important that conservation planning be considered implementation, not an administrative cost. Districts will need guidance on providing assessments and demonstrating conservation effects. It will be beneficial for NRCS to link these outcome-based requirements to ecosystem services. Additionally, the Source Water Collaborative, of which NACD is a member, highlights the benefits of including drinking water sources in the RCPP. Flexibility in cost-share and implementation of the program will be critical, and allowing non-statutory rules for covered programs to be waived will also provide flexibility.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments, and we are appreciative of your willingness to accept public input in finalizing the APF. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you would like our position on a specific aspect of the program as you move forward with the RCPP.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Larson', is written over a white background.

John Larson, CEO

Attachment: April 15, 2014 Coalition Letter