



National Association of Conservation Districts

August 17, 2017

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Natural Resources Conservation Service
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Kevin Wickey, Regional Conservationist for the Central States
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Keisha Tatem, Acting Regional Conservationist for the Northeast
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Craig Derickson, Acting Regional Conservationist for the Southeast
Natural Resources Conservation Service
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Dear Regional Conservationists,

The mission of NACD's Tribal Outreach and Partnership Resource Policy Group (TOP RPG) is to promote and support engagement between conservation districts and tribes that help put additional conservation on the ground.

It is in the best interest of NRCS, NACD, and the TOP RPG that NRCS tribal liaisons work with the RPG to play a role in assisting conservation districts in tribal outreach and partnership efforts.

NRCS tribal liaisons deliver federal conservation technical and financial assistance to tribes through long-standing relationships. Their work with tribes is a model for collaborative conservation planning, and in part, NACD's inspiration for creating the TOP RPG in 2016.

In Washington state, Tribal Liaison Robin Slate played a key role in identifying best practices for tribal communications, suggesting outreach and training opportunities, and avoiding missteps along the way. The work of Slate and Washington's conservation districts was so impactful, NACD set out to find ways to help other districts replicate their successes by launching the TOP RPG. Today, the TOP RPG's members would like to engage with NRCS tribal liaisons in a similar manner as part of a national effort.

The RPG has two requests. First, it asks that NRCS Regional Conservationists facilitate engagement between NRCS tribal liaisons – *as a group* – with the RPG, at either a national or a regional scale. It is critical that Regional Conservationists also coordinate with NRCS headquarters management personnel and the Chief's office regarding this initiative to ensure agency leadership is thoroughly informed and involved.



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Second, the RPG asks for **direct access** to tribal liaisons – again, at a national scale or a regional scale – to explore what role(s) they might play in the RPG’s work and the tribal outreach and partnership efforts of conservation districts.

With open communication and information sharing, the RPG believes the nation’s 3,000 conservation districts will become more familiar with tribal-NRCS conservation activities, and more willing to participate in and/or otherwise contribute to such efforts. Also, in their interactions with the RPG, tribal liaisons can relay best practices for tribal outreach and partnerships to conservation districts more readily.

Please give our requests your earliest consideration. This proposal was most recently discussed on August 8, 2017 at the NACD Southeast Region Meeting in Greenville, South Carolina, among Craig Derickson, Acting Southeast Regional Conservationist; James Tillman, Southeast Regional Conservationist on temporary headquarters assignment; and David Vogel, NACD Advisor to the Tribal Outreach and Partnership RPG.

The TOP RPG has limited funding to support NACD participation in NRCS tribal liaison events and meetings. However, Regional Conservationists are always welcome to join NRCS RPG representative, Roylene Rides-at-the-Door, at any RPG meeting or teleconference event.

The RPG appreciates the support by NRCS in the RPG’s efforts, and we look forward to a productive engagement with the NRCS tribal liaisons. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Crowder".

Michael Crowder
NACD Second Vice President
Chair of the NACD TOP RPG

cc: Tanna Engdahl, RPG Vice-Chair
Roylene Rides-at-the-Door, NRCS RPG member
Jeremy Peters, NACD CEO
Rich Duesterhaus, NACD Director of Projects and Partnerships