

NACD ADVOCACY TRAINING

Handout No. 1

Leadership Expectations:

Sample Oaths of Office

Alabama

I _____ do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Alabama, and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of Supervisor of the _____ County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Ohio

We pledge to serve, help educate and support Ohio's 88 county Soil and Water Conservation Districts;

We pledge to be a vigilant guardian of our state's natural resources for the quality of life of all Ohioans;

We pledge to educate the public about the importance of conservation stewardship and programs available to promote healthy soils, water quality, and wise use of our natural resources;

We pledge to be relentless in the pursuit of funding, support and dedication on behalf of Ohio's SWCD and conservation efforts, including assistance on behalf of our partners;
We pledge to maintain the highest level of professional standards, integrity and conduct.

This we pledge to each of you – our fellow SWCD Supervisors, staff, partners and to the citizens of Ohio.



NACD ADVOCACY TRAINING

Handout No. 2

Political Engagement

The Consensus-Making Process¹

Groups often use the consensus-making process to reach widespread or full agreement. This outline offers a brief review of how the process works.

Understand the principles of consensus decision making. There are five requirements of consensus decision-making:

Inclusion: Involve full group (unless someone asks to be excluded).

Participation: All group members should be free to offer opinions and suggestions. Each has an equal share (and stake) in the final decision.

Cooperation. Group members collaborate and build upon each other's concerns and suggestions to come up with a decision or solution that will satisfy all in the group, rather than just the majority (while the minority is ignored).

Equal Opportunity. Nobody's input is weighed more or less than anyone else's. Each has equal opportunity to amend, veto, or block ideas.

Solution-mindedness. An effective decision-making body works towards a common solution, despite differences. This comes through collaboratively shaping a proposal until it meets as many of the participants' concerns as possible.

¹ Adapted from: <http://www.wikihow.com/Reach-a-Consensus>

Understand the benefits of using a consensus process. Consensus decision making involves a collaborative discussion, rather than an adversarial debate. Thus a consensus process is more likely to result in all parties reaching common ground. The benefits include:

Better decisions - because all perspectives in the group are taken into account.

Better group relationships - through collaborating rather than competing, group members are able to build closer relationships through the process.

Better implementation of decisions- When widespread agreement is achieved and everyone has participated in the process there is strong cooperation in follow through.

Decide how your group will finalize a decision. A consensus process allows a group to generate as much agreement as possible. Some groups require everyone to consent if a proposal is to be passed. Other groups, however, allow decisions to be finalized without unanimous consent. Often a super-majority is deemed sufficient. Some groups use a simple majority vote or the judgment of a leader. They can still use a consensus process to come up with their proposals, regardless of how they finalize a decision.

Some guidelines for using the process:

- ✓ **Understand what it means to give consent.** Consenting to a proposal does not necessarily mean it is your first choice. Participants are encouraged to think about the good of the whole group. This may mean accepting a popular proposal even if it is not your personal preference. In consensus decision making participants voice their concerns during the discussion so that their ideas can be included. In the end, however, they often decide to accept the best effort of the group.
- ✓ **Clearly outline what needs to be decided.** You may need to add something or take something away. You may need to start something new or amend something current. Whatever it is, make sure that the entire issue is clearly stated for everyone to understand. It's always a good idea to address why the issue is being raised in the first place (i.e. what is the problem that needs to be solved?). Briefly review the options that are available.
- ✓ **List all the concerns participants want their proposal to address.** This sets the groundwork for collaboratively developing a proposal that most people will support.
- ✓ **Test the waters.** Before attempting a lengthy discussion, take a straw poll to see how much support a proposal idea has. If everyone agrees on a position, move on to finalizing and implementing the decision. If there is disagreement, discuss the concerns that are not yet met by the proposal. Then adapt the proposal, if possible, to make it more broadly agreeable. Sometimes a solution is reached by finding a middle ground between all parties. Even better, however, is when a proposal is shaped to meet as many needs as possible (win-win) rather than through compromise. Remember, to listen to each and every dissenter in the effort to get full agreement.

- ✓ **Reach a final decision.** There are a number of ways to come to a final decision. Make sure all in your group understand the ground rules you have established as a group.
- ✓ **Implement the decision.** This may require formal action under your group's rules of order.



NACD ADVOCACY TRAINING

Handout No. 3

Political Engagement:

NACD's Principal Legislative Contact Process

Qualified and Active Principal Legislative Contacts

The Principal Legislative Contact (PLC) plays an important role in connecting the conservation districts' grassroots network to NACD. The PLC is the main point of contact between NACD and conservation districts and legislative contacts within their state. This person needs the ability to communicate with all the conservation districts and other contacts in their state in a short period of time. The PLC provides feedback and information to NACD on district leaders' activities with their members of Congress.

Due to the importance of this role, state association leaders in each state need to designate the selection of the appropriate PLC as a top priority. While the selection process remains fully up to the state association, NACD recommends the selection of a person with strong communication skills. This person should have ample time to coordinate the activities this position entails and some working knowledge of or the willingness to learn the legislative process. The Legislative Committee may help where needed and clarify the expectations of the PLC. Given the work load and time expectations, the PLC must have the ability to work on a regular basis with the NACD Legislative Committee and staff on national issues as they relate to conservation districts.

There are times during the year when action alerts will be developed in which contact with each member of Congress is crucially important. Given those circumstances when PLCs have other responsibilities or cannot be contacted, an alternative PLC must be in place to carry out the PLC's functions.

We envision the responsibilities of the PLC to be as follows:

- Develop a strong network of district officials throughout their state.
- Identify people/district officials in your state who have ties to Members of Congress and their staffs.
- Help these people/district officials be informed and educated on these Members of Congress – the issues that matter to them, the policy approaches they are most comfortable with, and the ways in which they see the needs of their constituency. In other words, get to know them.
- Urge the completion of each Congressional District Information Package or similar document for their state.
- Maintain frequent contact with their region's NACD Legislative Committee member.
- Be prepared to mobilize to utilize the state's network of key people/district officials to work with specific Members of Congress on specific legislative issues such as conservation funding.
- Ability to gather and report important legislative information for their state as it relates to private lands conservation funding and legislation.
- Work with neighboring states to advance our mission.

- Have access to and frequently use email.

One way to ensure each PLC fully understands their role and how the conservation districts' grassroots system should work is to provide a model. Recognizing the diversity of issues and the differences between states, a one-size-fits-all model will not work. However, a common concept and examples can be developed that outlines how the system should work—as a national model for legislative success.





NACD Policy Development

NACD ADVOCACY TRAINING HANDOUT No. 4

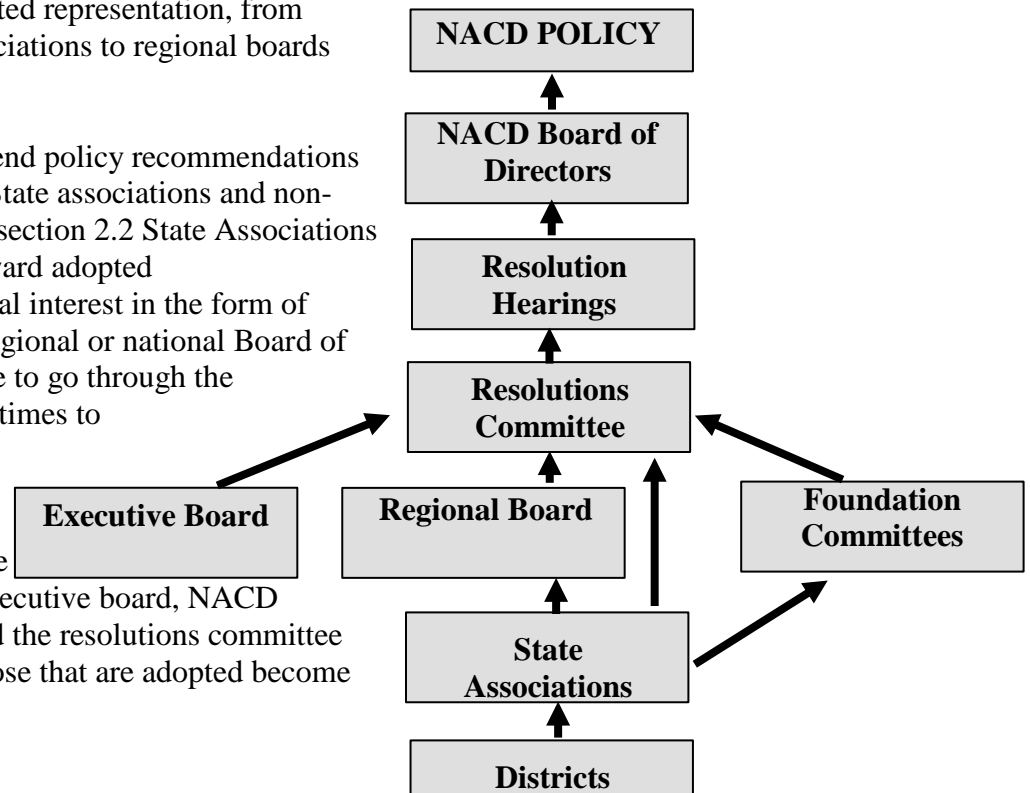
The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) is a private, nonprofit organization established in 1946 to represent the almost 3000 local units of state government that provide natural resource management assistance to land owners/managers and communities. Over the years, conservation districts have worked to help millions of cooperating landowners and land managers conserve and protect America's natural resources. NACD is built on the districts' philosophy that conservation decisions should be made by the local people who are most affected by those decisions.

This briefing paper reviews the NACD policy development process. It provides information on what type of policy recommendations (resolutions) will be considered by the national board, how to prepare resolutions, when to submit them, and how they are addressed. In order for a resolution to be presented to the NACD Board, the sponsor(s) must meet the requirements on pages 3-4 of this document.

Overview

NACD policy is the compilation of nationally adopted resolutions that guides the activities of the Association. Policy is developed from the grassroots up through a system of graduated representation, from district boards to state associations to regional boards and/or the national board.

Individual district boards send policy recommendations to their state associations. State associations and non-state members (as listed in section 2.2 State Associations in the NACD Bylaws) forward adopted recommendations of national interest in the form of resolutions to the NACD regional or national Board of Directors. They do not have to go through the regional board but do so at times to engage additional sponsors. The national board acts on these resolutions along with those submitted by the NACD executive board, NACD foundation committees, and the resolutions committee (defined on next page). Those that are adopted become NACD policy.



DEFINITIONS

NACD Board of Directors – The Board of Directors consists of one voting representative from each state association of conservation districts and non-state members as listed in the NACD Bylaws, and the following nonvoting members: the five NACD officers, the immediate past president, one representative from each NACD geographic region, and one representative from the Conservation Technology Information Center. Each state association determines its method for selecting its representative and an alternate.

NACD Regional Boards – The same state representatives on the NACD Board of Directors also serve on the NACD Regional Boards as designated by the geographical regions set in the NACD Bylaws: Northeast, Southeast, North Central, South Central, Northern Plains, Southwest, and Pacific.

NACD Executive Board – The Executive Board consists of the President, First Vice President or President Elect, Second Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, and one member from each of the NACD geographic regions. The Immediate Past President, the Chief Executive Officer, and one member from the Conservation Technology Information Center all serve as nonvoting members.

NACD Foundation Committees – Foundation Committees are charged by the Board of Directors with exploring their functional area to formulate proposals for action and submit to the appropriate Officers and Official Bodies of the Association. These are usually submitted in the form of resolutions and/or reports. The committees are made up of NACD board members as appointed by the NACD President. The current Foundation Committees are: Communications; District Operations and Member Services; Legislative; Natural Resource Policy; and Stewardship and Education.

NACD Resolutions Committee – The Resolutions Committee is appointed by the NACD President prior to the NACD Annual Meeting for the purpose of reviewing resolutions, the resolutions' assignments to the consent calendar or hearings, and preparing resolutions if determined necessary. Membership usually includes an NACD Officer as Chair and chairs of the Foundation Committees.

Resolutions Hearings – Formerly referred to as 'Hearing Committees', the Resolutions Hearings are conducted by the Foundation Committees. Held during the NACD Annual Meeting only, the purpose of the Hearing is to receive testimony and make recommendations on assigned resolutions for the full Board.

Background Statement (on Resolution Submittal Form) – This is a brief summary of the policy issue, including information essential to the understanding of a problem or situation.

Policy – This is definitive course or method of action to guide and determine present and future decisions.

PRIOR TO THE NACD ANNUAL MEETING

Who May Submit Resolutions to the National Board

According to the NACD Bylaws, resolutions may be submitted, as adopted at their annual or special meeting, by

- ✓ state associations of conservation districts and non-state members as listed in the NACD Bylaws;
- ✓ NACD region boards;
- ✓ NACD foundation committees;
- ✓ the NACD executive board; and
- ✓ the NACD resolutions committee.

Type of Resolutions for the National Board

For resolutions to be considered by the NACD Board of Directors, they must

- ✓ be concerned with the conservation, development or management of natural resources, or with the operations of districts;
- ✓ be of national or significant regional scope; and
- ✓ propose new policy or alteration of existing policy.

How to Prepare Resolutions for the National Board

Resolutions must

- ✓ be submitted in writing, in brief and concise form, without “whereas” and “therefore”, using the Submittal Form provided by NACD;
- ✓ list the sponsoring entity(ies);
- ✓ describe the problems or issues being addressed as background information for Board discussion along with potential outcome if the issue is not addressed, though if adopted this will not be included in the Policy Book;
- ✓ clearly and concisely, using active verbs, state the specific action(s) and timing expected of NACD;
- ✓ be based on fact, avoiding opinions and beliefs;
- ✓ note the date of the meeting where adopted; and
- ✓ be signed by an authorized member of the submitting entity.

The submittal should also include the

- ✓ impact on existing NACD policy;
- ✓ potential financial impact on NACD; and
- ✓ if appropriate, potential fiscal impact on the federal budget.

The Resolutions Committee may reject resolutions that are inaccurate, non-germane, or are of concern only in an individual state, or in some instances region, and will be returned to the submitting entity with an explanation of the reason(s) for rejection. A decision to reject a resolution may be appealed to the Resolutions Committee.

How to Submit Resolutions to the National Board

State association presidents and executives, NACD Foundation Committee chairs, and Regional Board Chairs should submit proposed resolutions in writing, in the required format on the Submittal

Form, to the NACD staff member designated by the NACD Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to coordinate the annual process. The preferred method is email, but all formats will be accepted if an authorized signature is provided. Contact information is provided on page 6.

When to Submit Resolutions for the National Board

Resolutions may be submitted anytime during the year, and sponsoring entities are encouraged to submit them as soon as possible after adoption. According to the NACD Bylaws, “resolutions should be received at least 30 days before the NACD annual meeting”. Those submitted after the 30-day deadline will be presented to the Resolutions Committee as late resolutions to determine if and how they will be addressed at the annual meeting.

NACD Handling of Resolutions

Resolutions submitted to NACD will be edited by the CEO’s designee to ensure appropriateness for the national Board, clarity, proper format and grammatical uniformity. Resolutions that propose substantially similar policy will be combined. Any edits or combinations will be shared with the submitting entities for review and signature to the best extent possible. Each resolution will identify the submitting entity(ies). All resolutions will be assigned to a Board resolutions hearing or to the Consent Calendar, the latter of which contains those resolutions likely to be accepted with no debate and so can be adopted with one vote.

Those resolutions received 30 days prior to the NACD Annual Meeting will be compiled into a preliminary resolutions pad. The draft pad, including the Consent Calendar and the hearing assignments, will be provided to the NACD Resolutions Committee in early January. The Committee will review the original resolutions, recommended edits and assignments, and will make changes as deemed appropriate. It will also review and assign all late resolutions.

When approved by the Resolutions Committee and no later than 15 days prior to the NACD Board Meeting, the preliminary resolutions pad will be distributed to: voting members of the NACD Board of Directors and alternates; state association presidents and executives; NACD officers and executive board members; NACD staff; and other partners as appropriate.

DURING THE NACD ANNUAL MEETING

Board of Directors Meeting

The first meeting of the NACD Board of Directors is held on Saturday afternoon. Board members receive their meeting books, which contain the previously emailed resolutions and each board member’s assigned hearing.

Resolutions Committee Meeting

The Resolutions Committee meets Saturday after the Board Meeting to review, and potentially assign, late resolutions. Sponsors of late resolutions are asked to attend and bring copies to this meeting for discussion.

Board of Directors Meeting

Copies of late resolutions and any re-assignments are provided to the Board at the Sunday afternoon meeting. The updated resolutions pad and hearing assignments are also provided to non-board members as requested.

Resolutions Hearings

Every NACD Board member with his/her alternate is assigned to one of the resolutions hearings through their State's assignment to a Foundation Committee.

These hearings are conducted to allow NACD Board members to hear testimony, and then to debate and vote on the resolutions assigned to them. They are a vital step in the policy development process. The hearings provide for quality, informed discussion among a designated number of board members on most of the issues while reserving major policy concerns for the full Board action.

Resolution hearing procedures follow Robert's Rules of Order. After introducing a resolution assigned to the hearing, the chair calls on the sponsor of the resolution to explain and support it. In many cases, if the resolution sponsor or representative is not present to explain/defend a resolution that is not clear, it is rejected at the hearing. Just like in the Board of Directors meetings, each state has one vote even if both the member and alternate attend.

Any district official in attendance may speak in support of or opposition to a resolution. As in NACD Board meetings, other attendees may also speak to resolutions to address technical clarifications and explanations and/or add factual information when requested by a Board Member or called upon by the presiding officer. They should speak neither in favor of, nor in opposition to, a resolution.

The hearings' actions on resolutions result in:

- ✓ those that are unanimously approved being added to the Consent Calendar;
- ✓ those that are approved, but not by unanimous vote, and those that are approved with amendment(s) being sent to the full Board to be voted on individually; or
- ✓ those that are defeated receiving no further action unless a two-thirds majority floor vote by the full Board brings it up for consideration.

Board of Directors Meeting

Full board meeting sessions are presided over by the NACD President or First Vice President/President-elect. All duly credentialed board members and alternate board members seated on the floor will have equal opportunity to be recognized by the chair. Only seated board members, or alternate in place of the board member, may vote on resolutions. The presiding officer will call on each resolutions hearing chair to give the report of the hearing and status of the resolutions considered.

The procedure for these reports at the Board Meeting is:

1. Upon recognition by the presiding officer, the hearing chair shall announce each resolution and sponsor(s), present the hearing's findings, speak to the resolution if not sent to the Consent Calendar by unanimous vote, explain any amendments adopted at the hearing, and call for technical clarifications, if necessary.
2. After announcement, the presiding officer shall call for a motion and second to adopt.

3. When duly moved and seconded, the presiding officer shall recognize the sponsor to speak to the resolution. The sponsor shall give a brief statement outlining the intent and meaning of the resolution. Discussion and debate may follow. The presiding officer shall follow normal rules of parliamentary procedure for handling amendments and the disposition of the motion.
4. Any tabled motions will die if not removed from the table prior to the conclusion of the final session of the Board of Directors meeting. The presiding officer will not, however, recognize a motion to table as being in order until the sponsor has moved the adoption of the resolution and been recognized for the purpose of explaining it.
5. In the case of late resolutions introduced from the floor and therefore not assigned to a resolutions hearing, the presiding officer will announce the resolution and then call for the Board to vote whether to address it through a two-thirds majority vote.
6. The Consent Calendar is considered in its entirety and is adopted or rejected by one vote of the full Board. Resolutions may be removed for floor debate by a two-thirds majority vote of the Board.
7. Resolutions defeated in the hearings may be brought to the floor for debate by a two-thirds majority vote of the Board.

AFTER THE NACD BOARD MEETING

All policy positions adopted by the NACD Board of Directors will remain in effect until their purposes have been accomplished, or until they are specifically replaced by newer policy, altered or deleted. Tabling or rejecting a resolution containing partial existing policy does not affect the entire existing policy.

The CEO will assign newly adopted policies requiring action to the appropriate NACD foundation committee, or other appropriate entity, for follow up. Each committee will develop, and with Executive Board approval, implement strategies to achieve the action(s). Adopted policies that state NACD positions on issues will be incorporated into policy positions developed by the NACD Legislative Committee in cooperation with the other NACD foundation committees.

An action register of resolutions will list the resolution; the sponsoring entity; NACD Board action on the resolution; the committee and staff assigned to take follow up action; and status of the action. This is used by the Board of Directors for reporting back to their states.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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**NACD POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS
TIMELINE FOR 2014 ANNUAL MEETING**

PRE-MEETING PREPARATIONS

ACTION	LEAD	DEADLINE*
Email information packet on process to board members and alternates, state association presidents and execs, and others	Bogar	Jul
Send monthly reminder emails to board and state associations	Bogar	Jul-Jan
Submit resolutions throughout fall to NACD c/o Debra Bogar, and no later than Dec 31 st (except states that meet in Jan)	State Associations, NACD Committees, Region Boards	Dec 31 (30 days stated in bylaws)
Compile resolutions as received through Dec 31 st ; obtain board members' names and contact info from all states	Bogar, Region Reps	Jul-Dec
Analyze resolutions impact on current policy, NACD resources.	Bogar, Policy staff	Jul-Dec
Notify Foundation Chairs of their responsibility to serve as Resolutions Hearings Chairs	President	Nov
Send draft resolutions packet to Resolutions Committee, with tentative hearing assignments	Bogar	1 st week Jan
Review resolutions, assignments, format and impact on NACD via teleconference	Resolutions Committee and staff advisors	1 st week Jan
Revise resolution packet and assignments per Resolution Committee's direction	Bogar	2 nd week Jan
Send resolutions packet to board members, state associations and partners via email	Bogar	2 nd week Jan
Brief board members and advisors on hearings' assignments	Committee Advisors	Jan
Include resolutions packet in Board notebooks	DC Staff	mid-Jan

ONSITE ACTIVITIES

ACTION	LEAD	DEADLINE
Conduct Resolutions Committee meeting on needed actions, eg late resolutions, re-assignments, etc	Chair	Feb 1
Brief new board members on process	Brooks	Feb 1
Make hearings' information available to annual meeting attendees	Bogar	Feb 1
Brief full NACD Board on process	Bogar	Feb 3
Hold resolution hearings	Hearings' Chairs	Feb 3
Prepare resolutions' report from hearings' actions	Bogar	Feb 3
Act on resolutions	NACD Board	Feb 4-5

POST MEETING FOLLOW-UP

ACTION	LEAD	DEADLINE
Assign resolutions for follow up action	CEO or designee	Mar 15
Follow up adopted resolutions by Executive Board and NACD foundation committees	Comm Advisors	Apr-Jul
Compile Executive Board and NACD foundation committees' reports on resolutions' actions	Bogar	Ongoing
Prepare status reports on resolutions for region boards	Region Reps	Jun-Sep
Share status reports with state associations and districts	Board Members	Jun-Dec
Prepare status report for full Board	Bogar	Jan 2014

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS
POLICY DEVELOPMENT
RESOLUTION SUBMITTAL FORM**

Sponsors are asked to review pages 3-4 in the NACD Policy Development Description before completing this form for each resolution. Contact Debra Bogar at deb-bogar@nacdnet.org if you have questions or would like a sample resolution.

SPONSORING ENTITY(IES)

BRIEF BACKGROUND DESCRIBING ISSUE (for NACD Board discussion; will not be included in the NACD Policy Book)

SPECIFIC STATEMENT OF ACTION EXPECTED BY NACD (clearly and concisely, using active verbs, state the specific action(s) and timing expected of NACD; must be based on fact, avoiding opinions and beliefs)

IMPACT ON EXISTING NACD POLICY

POTENTIAL FINANCIAL IMPACT ON NACD (budget, staff time, etc)

IF APPROPRIATE, POTENTIAL FISCAL IMPACT ON THE FEDERAL BUDGET

MEETING AND DATE ADOPTED BY SPONSORING ENTITY

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE(S) AND TITLE(S)

DATE

Submit to Debra Bogar, NACD, PO Box 621146, Littleton CO 80162-1147 or email at deb-bogar@nacdnet.org.

NACD ADVOCACY TRAINING



NACD ADVOCACY TRAINING

Handout No. 5

Political Engagement:

Writing an effective email

The following is an example of an email to a Senator or Representative:

Dear Senator _____: (OR) Dear Representative _____:

As a **[Title]** with **[District Name]** in **[County]** urge you to vote **YES** on the Farm Bill, S.954 Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2013.

We urge you to vote **NO** on any amendments that change our conservation compliance framework as passed by the Agriculture Committee, agreed to by agriculture, environmental, conservation and crop insurance groups.

Also, we **oppose** any amendments for means testing, payment limitations or premium subsidy reductions for the crop insurance program as agreed to by agriculture, environmental, conservation, and crop insurance groups.

This farm bill has more conservation than any prior farm bill, including conservation compliance attached to crop insurance – for the protection and preservation of our nation’s natural resources, as well as for the production of the food, feed, fuel and fiber that will sustain our growing population into the future.

The value of the Farm Bill stretches far beyond rural America – from our national food security, to the health of our economy, and to the conservation of the land, air and water we rely on every day.

We appreciate your continued support.

Sincerely,

Signature
[Printed Name]
[Title]
[District]



NACD ADVOCACY TRAINING

Handout No. 6

Impacting Policy Decisions

Legislative bodies at all levels of government are constantly changing. New lawmakers are elected frequently and legislative staff members are always coming and going.

If you have never met or do not know your lawmakers or their staff, it is never too late to find an opportunity to introduce yourself and get acquainted.

Specific opportunities can include:

- Contact the lawmaker's district office to schedule a personal meeting with him or her when they are back home meeting with constituents
- Attend a town hall meeting held by your lawmaker
- Request a meeting with a member of your lawmaker's staff. Staff members are often more accessible for scheduling face-to-face meetings
- Attend events attended by lawmakers that are hosted by state or local associations, charitable organizations, or political parties to which you belong
- Check your local newspapers or visit your lawmaker's website for announcements of meetings or other opportunities
- Host tours for members

Tips for meetings with policymakers

Do:

- Schedule your appointment well in advance
- Be punctual for your meeting
- Dress appropriately for the occasion
- Prepare adequate materials, handouts and a brief "leave-behind"
- Stay focused on your issue
- Provide relevant, specific examples from the legislator's home district
- Follow up after your meeting to answer any questions or unresolved issues

Don't:

- Show up 15 minutes late
- Talk about your recent doctor's appointment

- Wear your work boots
- Bring everyone you know to the meeting
- Get upset if you only get to meet with staff
- Wear out your welcome
- Mix personal and professional agenda

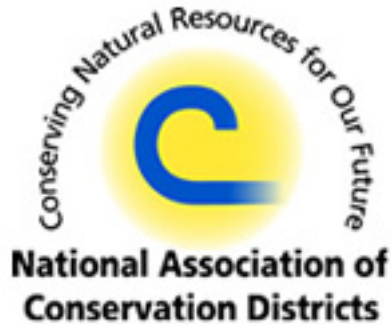
Checklist for Hill Meetings

Make sure to review your plans before any meeting with lawmakers.
Double check to be sure you:

- Know the date, time and location of the meeting
- Have specific topics to discuss
- Prepare materials and handouts for lawmakers and staff
- Bring plenty of business cards

Congressional Schedule

- Knowing when Congress is in and out of session can help you plan meetings and tours more effectively with federal lawmakers
- NACD will provide initial Congressional schedules and periodic updates



NACD ADVOCACY TRAINING

Handout No. 7:

Hosting a Conservation Tour

A conservation tour may be one of the best ways for you to show policymakers how you are protecting land and water.

TOUR TIPS

- Line up tour date with staff
- Invite local officials
- Send written invites
- Keep tour short
- Be accommodating
- Invite the media and let officials know!
- Prepare and provide an agenda and any supporting materials
- Get latest updates about national issues from NACD legislative staff
- Be knowledgeable about state, local issues

IDEAS FOR TOURS

- Local producer/district cooperator who has used services
- Boat tour to highlight water issues and conservation practices
- Demonstration projects and other innovative practices
- Walking tours
- Neighborhood urban conservation projects
- Forest tours highlighting sustainable forestry, fire risks and impacts and wildlife habitat

BEST TIMES TO HOST

- After election
- During recess
- Weekends

Hosting a Senate Tour in Rhode Island

According to Rhode Island Association of Conservation Districts (RIACD) President Dick Went, it all started when he requested an appointment with Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) to discuss conservation districts and their work in the state of Rhode Island. When Went received a response, he was pleasantly surprised. Not only did the Senator want to meet with him, he wanted to hold the meeting while touring a local farm. In addition, the Senator's conservation aide requested an opportunity to do a more in-depth tour beforehand, including a cross-section of Rhode Island conservation sites.

The tour was led by Went and included several members of Whitehouse's staff. The day began at Went's 50-acre woodland home, where he had just finished a Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) contract with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Next, the group went to Bally Duff Farm – a 100-acre sheep farm. Local conservationist Robin Meeks runs the farm, which produces wool for the Rhode Island Rhody Wool cooperative. The farm started as an RC&D project.



Northern Rhode Island Conservation District Manager Gina DeMarco teaches Senate staff about rain gardens

Meeks also grows vegetables, and offers both sheep and cattle for sale. She has had a number of NRCS practices done on her farm.

“...Costs in New England are very high... but farmers farm because they love it.”

*RIACD President
Dick Went*

From there, the group continued on to see a rain garden installed by the Northern Rhode Island Conservation District. This particular rain garden was installed to filter runoff from buildings. District Manager Gina DeMarco explained that the district does the outreach and education for the agency that controls the Scituate reservoir – the main source of water for 60 percent of the state. DeMarco and Went then accompanied the Senator's aide to Scituate High School. Here, they met with the teacher and students who had worked with the district in developing a forest plan for the high school. As a result of this work, the school is now a member of the American Tree Farm system.

From there, it was off to a local dairy farm, where Senator Whitehouse met the group. During the hour-long visit, Went made a point to emphasize that Rhode Island farming is “for love, not money.”



Senator Whitehouse (second from left) listens as dairy farm operator Scooter Leprise describes conservation practices on his farm

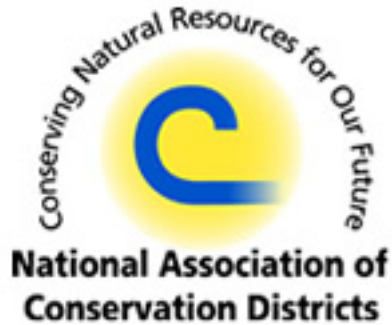
“Costs in New England are very high, which limits profit,” Went said. “But, as we all know, farmers farm because they love it.” According to Went, that's one of the most important messages his lawmakers need to hear.

Throughout the tour, Went and the other district leaders made a point to explain the importance of partnerships, grants—or in some cases, the lack

thereof—conservation technical assistance, clean water, forestry and the many other conservation issues of particular importance to the state.

Not only was the tour fun and educational, it was an important step in developing a strong, working relationship with the Senator and his staff — a relationship which Went hopes to continue to build upon in the years ahead.





NACD ADVOCACY TRAINING

Handout No. 8:

Working with Elected Officials

As with any professional engagement, working with elected officials is all about developing, nurturing and strengthening relationships. You may not agree with some (or even many) of the positions your elected official(s) takes. But successful relationships are built on finding common ground. The causes for which we work are so important that we need to find that common ground and then hold it. Here are some tips to help you build these vitally important relationships.

Know your officials

- On what committees do they serve? (Their web site will tell you.)
- Are they in leadership positions? (Their web site will tell you.)
- To what caucuses do they belong?
- Education
 - School
 - Degree
 - Other ties
- Profession
 - Previous work experience (This may help you establish connections.)
- Affiliations
 - Political party (Remember: Conservation must rise above partisan politics.)
 - Other organizations (Good for establishing connections)
 - Caucuses
 - Committees
- Political history
 - Time in office
 - Other positions

- Election history
- Record
 - Stance on issues (Important to know this.)
- Make a connection
 - Do you know anyone who knows him/her well?
 - Identify those who might want to help you make contacts at key moments, arrange meetings, explain the importance of an issue to the elected official
- Remember to:
 - Be patient: the political process can move very slowly
 - Be flexible: Compromise is SUPPOSED TO BE a part of the legislative process
- Be able to explain your issue in simple and straightforward terms
 - Example: Don't use acronyms. If you do, explain what they mean.
 - Time is precious-all communication should be concise and to the point

Other tips...

- Invite a legislator to be a guest speaker at one of your events
- Give a legislator an award if appropriate, and let the media know
- Attend town meetings: Let them know what's important to you
- Always follow up - it shows commitment to your issue and organization



NACD ADVOCACY TRAINING

Handout No. 9

Gaining Positive Media Coverage:

Letters to the Editor and Op-Ed examples



KIMBERLY LaFLEUR: The time for a Farm Bill is now

With only nine legislative days left before the Sept. 30 deadline, time is running out for Congress to pass a five-year Farm Bill.

The House and Senate have both separately passed versions of the bill, and its fate is now in the hands of leadership who simply need to bring the two bills to conference committee and work out the differences.

Failure to pass a Farm Bill would mean potentially devastating cuts to conservation funding and program authorities sun-setting on the Wetlands Reserve Program, Grassland Reserve Program and Conservation Reserve Program. The loss of meaningful reform measures that would cut costs while increasing efficiencies and best management tools to care for our natural resources is a terrible consequence of partisan political posturing. Producers deserve to have a long-term framework in place to effectively and efficiently manage their land, resources and businesses for the years ahead.

As our population continues to increase, and severe weather events are on the rise, the passage of a five-year Farm Bill has never been more critical, with far-reaching consequences on everything from our food security, to the economy, and the mitigation of the impacts of natural disasters on the land, air and water we rely on every day.

Regardless if you live and work on a farm, passage of the Farm Bill impacts all citizens. Thousands of jobs in Massachusetts are tied to the agricultural industry. This is a conservation bill, a food supply and safety bill and a jobs bill all rolled into one package. Lack of action on a Farm Bill will have serious and irreversible impacts on the future of conservation in America.

Kimberly LaFleur is vice chair of the Plymouth County Conservation District, Plympton.

Farm Bill matters to the Chesapeake Bay

By Gene Schmidt, *president of the National Association of Conservation Districts.*

We need a 2012 Farm Bill now.

The Senate Agriculture Committee deserves high accolades for its swift, bipartisan passage of a common-sense Farm Bill that will soon be taken up by the full Senate. The House is also making strong progress on its own bill.

This is truly a reform bill. And, as a conservationist, I can't underscore enough how important this bill is to the future of the Chesapeake Bay.

The bottom line is, producers in the Chesapeake Bay watershed have the opportunity to set the national standard for watershed conservation and protection. They have the know-how and the desire to do it; they just need the right tools and resources to get the job done. Success in the Chesapeake Bay is not an option; it's a necessity. The rest of the country is watching what happens here as they look to set their own water quality goals.

I strongly believe that the 2012 Farm Bill — and in particular, the Conservation Title — will set us on a course for success. One specific aspect of the bill, creating a Regional Conservation Partnership Program, empowers state and local decision-makers to get the job done on the ground, taking into consideration the unique needs and challenges of the region. Conservation districts are active partners in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and are ready to hit the ground running with this program.

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program aggregates national watershed funding levels to increase support for water quality restoration and enhancement, nutrient management, sediment reduction and water quantity conservation by \$30 million to \$40 million a year. By targeting 6 percent of popular conservation programs — such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program — and by providing mandatory funding toward water quality goals, approximately \$1.17 billion is authorized over five years with the hope of advancing work in the Chesapeake Bay and watersheds nationwide.

The 2012 Farm Bill includes a strong Conservation Title that helps producers implement conservation practices through a voluntary, incentive-based approach — rather than through a top-down regulatory approach. It streamlines and consolidates programs for increased efficiency and ease-of-use for producers, while maintaining critical funding for all of the conservation purposes needed to implement conservation where it counts.

While the bill isn't perfect, as nothing is, partisan politics could potentially hamper the passage of this common-sense policy that can provide real benefits to landowners and the landscape. Let's not let the ideal of perfect get in the way of good, progressive changes that make sense.

This bipartisan bill gives senators from the Chesapeake Bay states a tremendous opportunity to step up to the plate and do the right thing — both for the protection and preservation of our nation's natural resources, as well as for the production of the food, feed, fuel and fiber that will sustain our growing population for the future. The time for action is now.



NACD ADVOCACY TRAINING

Handout No. 10

Effective Partnerships:

Tips for building effective coalitions

Coalition building: “The action or process of joining together with another or others for a common purpose.” Building effective coalitions takes time, but is well worth the effort. Here are some tips that will help:

- **Building effective coalitions**
 - Have multiple coalitions
 - Coalitions often have specific goals and only cover a few issues
 - Set goals as a group
 - A coalition is a joint process
 - Understand each group’s self-interest
 - Balance goal of group with the goals of your organization
 - Respect internal process of group
 - Understand and respect differences
 - Learn about the other groups in your coalition
 - Agree to disagree
 - All groups won’t agree on everything all of the time
 - Shared goals should keep you together
 - Structure decision-making carefully
 - Everyone should have a voice
 - Decision-making process should be created so each person has a chance to say something
 - Recognize that contributions vary
 - Each organization has something else to offer
 - Each contribution is important
 - Give and take

- You can ask for support, but be prepared to give it in return
 - Trust building and respect
 - Be strategic
- **Thinking about coalitions outside of the box**
 - Do research
 - What groups are active in your area?
 - You probably don't know about every organization out there that is working towards the same goal
 - Use current allies
 - With which organizations do your allies currently work?
 - Think about who the stakeholders are
 - Look at issue from different angles
 - Who benefits from what you are trying to do?
 - They can't join you if you don't ask
- Many conservation district traditional outreach sources are still critical to accomplishing the district's mission. It's imperative to communicate with producers, local media, legislators, community leaders, schools and others. But taking time to pursue unique partnerships in your community could have great payoff. Some examples of these partnerships include service groups, churches, community organizations, special interest groups, senior citizens and schools. If you live in a college town, form a relationship with the professors in your areas of work or begin a college internship program.