



Conservation Operations and Conservation Technical Assistance

Conservation Operations (CO), which includes Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA), is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and helps provide funding for NRCS staff in local offices. Technical assistance helps landowners become better stewards of their natural resources by assisting 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. **NACD requests \$890 million for Conservation Operations.** While NACD continues to be concerned about the further centralization of functions into the new Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Business Center, this request includes NRCS’s contribution to the Business Center to support those functions.

Farm Bill Conservation Title Funding

The Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (also known as the 2018 Farm Bill) maintained overall Conservation Title funding, a key priority for NACD. However, Congress must ensure this funding is not reduced through the annual appropriations process. NACD calls on Congress to maintain all mandatory farm bill conservation program funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 at the levels recently authorized in the Agriculture Act of 2018.

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. Over decades, conservation districts across the country have stepped up to sponsor these projects, which often require significant financial resources and long-term technical assistance. Along with the continued support from the 2018 Farm Bill, **NACD requests a total of \$200 million for Watershed Operations and \$75 million for Watershed Rehabilitation for FY 2020.**

State and Private Forestry Programs

State and Private Forestry (S&PF) programs are administered by the U.S. 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. The S&PF program helps sustain the nation’s forests and prevent harm caused by forest pests, invasive species and wildfires. **NACD requests a total of \$339 million for S&PF programs,** which includes a small increase to the incredibly important Forest Stewardship program to \$23 million.

319 Nonpoint Source Grants

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awards grants to states, territories and tribes to support water quality activities that assist in mitigating nonpoint sources of water pollution. These grants increase the utilization of agricultural best management practices, low impact development and stormwater management. **NACD requests level funding of \$171 million for this critical program.**

Program	FY 2018 Final	FY 2019 Final	NACD FY 2020 Request
Conservation Operations	\$874.1 million	\$890 million	\$890 million
Watershed Operations	\$150 million	\$150 million	\$200 million
Watershed Rehabilitation	\$10 million	\$10 million	\$75 million
State and Private Forestry	\$329.5 million	\$335.5 million	\$339 million
319 Nonpoint Source	\$170.9 million	\$170.9 million	\$171 million



Conservation Technical Assistance

The Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) program helps landowners become better stewards of their natural resources by assisting them with resource assessment, practical design, planning, and monitoring of conservation practices. NRCS uses CTA funding, along with farm bill programs, to hire the critical staff in local NRCS offices who work directly with landowners. Without sufficient NRCS staff in place, as is the case today, USDA's customer service and conservation program implementation are negatively impacted.

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 resources 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 while achieving greater sustainability to improve the lives of all Americans.

Administration

CTA is administered by NRCS. Conservation expertise is provided by NRCS staff funded through the CTA program 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. While USDA has provided hiring authority, Congress should continue to encourage USDA to make progress in filling vacancies at the local level to strengthen the ability of local NRCS offices to effectively deliver conservation. 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 \$890 million in FY 2020.**

