



# North Central Region Partners' Meeting

President Abraham Lincoln Springfield: a DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel  
Springfield, IL  
Salon A & B  
January 11 – 12, 2024

## Board Attendance:

Tom Beyers, IL	Matt Peart, OH
Stan Moore, IN	Monte Osterman, WI
Marc Roberts, IN	Bob Micheel, WI
Don Elsbernd, IA	Ryan Britt, NACD Executive Board
Jerry Miller, MI	Kim LaFleur, NACD President
Kurt Beckstrom, MN, Region Vice Chair	Beth Mason, NACD Region Representative, Recorder
Ron Willis, MO	
Kris Swartz, OH, Region Chair	

Approximately 45 additional partners and attendees

## Draft Minutes

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**Thursday, January 11**

### Welcome/Introductions

Kris Swartz opened the meeting with a welcome and introductions of all attendees.

### Approval of Minutes

Ohio: Motion to approve the minutes from the Summer Region Meeting on 7/16/23.

Motion was seconded.

Motion was unanimously approved.

### Climate Smart Commodities

**PART 1:** Dr. Chinmay Soman, Co-Founder and CEO of EarthSense presented the details on the following CSC project he and Professor Girish Chowdhary, Director of the iCOVER Project for the University of Illinois are running. A brief summary is provided below and a time of questions and answers followed the presentation.

### **Innovative Cover-crop Opportunity, Verification and Economy stimulating technology for underserved farmers using Robotics (iCOVER)**

The iCOVER project plans to scale up robotic cover crop planting and verification of soil carbon through innovative radiological robotic sensing technologies, creating markets for climate-smart products for minority underserved farmers growing specialty crops and animal products. The project plans to use standard and well-established soil sampling and remote sensing methods to measure and quantify the effect of cover crops on carbon sequestration, and then develop and scale up an innovative in-situ robotic system capable of soil carbon measurements at high-throughput using a contact-free radiological method for fast, accurate and automated soil organic carbon quantification. The project is planned to also focus on market building for underserved producers through an existing resource and partnerships with grocery chains and restaurants.

Dr. Soman provided his contact information for any additional follow up from attendees:  
[chinmay@earthsense.co](mailto:chinmay@earthsense.co), 217-402-4767, [www.earthsense.co](http://www.earthsense.co)

## **Part 2: NACD Climate Smart Commodities Grant Program update**

Beth Mason shared a bit about the overall CSC grant program providing [the link](#) to the USDA project dashboard for states to research CSC projects in their states and areas of interest. She also gave an update on the CSC NACD grant program, the status of matchmaking North Central States/districts with projects, and next steps. This was followed by a time of discussion, questions and answers.

## **NRCS ACT NOW Process**

Missouri State Conservationist Scott Edwards explained the ACT NOW process that streamlines and fast-tracks the enrollment process for Farm Bill programs such as EQIP, CSP, etc., helping to manage the massive injection of IRA funding into getting conservation on the ground. NRCS state conservationists each explained the various nuances of their state's ACT NOW process, how they have used it in the past, if this is their first year using it, and how are they using it this fiscal year. This session included discussion and Q&A.

## **Dinner options**

Prior to taking a break, Richard Lyons of the Montgomery County SWCD board shared a list of dining options in the area and recommended making reservations during the break.

## **Break**

## **Resolutions**

Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) submitted two resolutions to NACD for consideration. The resolutions were brought before the region board to determine if the region will add their support to the resolutions. *(See Appendix A for full submission, including supporting arguments/background.)*

### **#1: NACD supports increasing the minimum age of properties eligible for the National Register of Historic Places within designated conservation project areas from 50 years to 100 years with consideration given to the current condition of properties and potential recent historically or culturally significant events.**

Iowa: Motion for region support for the resolution.

Motion was seconded.

Motion was unanimously approved.

### **#2: NACD supports FSA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) allowing and providing 50 percent cost-share for the construction of restored or created wetlands on any existing or planned CRP acres where NRCS determines that these practices are needed and appropriate.**

Iowa: Motion for region support for the resolution.

Motion was seconded

Discussion

(Discussion included a proposed amendment to the resolution, but because the resolution was already submitted to NACD, all the region was able to do is lend their support or not. Any suggestions to amend would need to be brought up at the hearing on Monday, February 12.)

Motion was unanimously approved.

#### **NACD Committee/Subcommittee discussion**

With NACD's new committee structure and newly formed subcommittees, NACD President Kim LaFleur gave some background on the NACD committee structure over the years that brought it to this point in the latest restructuring. She shared the process of assigning states and representation on committees/subcommittees and the vision and work, moving forward. The region had a period of discussion and Q&A.

#### **NACD President Closing Comments for the day**

Immediately following the committee discussion, NACD President Kim LaFleur gave some closing comments and respond with a short Q&A.

Approximately 5:00 pm, the meeting adjourned for the day.

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### **Friday, January 12**

#### **Call to order/welcome**

Swartz called the meeting to order at 8:00 am and explained a change to the agenda to get all necessary region business completed first and then move on to the rest of the agenda. This would allow any region board members to leave early to hopefully beat the bad weather coming east.

#### **Region Elections**

Ryan Britt called for nominations for **region chair**.

Missouri nominated Kris Swartz (OH/current Region Chair)

Nomination was seconded.

Wisconsin: Motion to close nominations.

Seconded

Kris Swartz was re-elected as North Central Region Chair.

Ryan Britt called for nominations for **region vice chair**.

Wisconsin nominated Kurt Beckstrom (MN/current Region Vice Chair)

Nomination was seconded.

Wisconsin: Motion to close nominations.

Seconded

Kurt Beckstrom was re-elected as North Central Region Vice Chair

#### **Local Work Groups**

NCDEA Region Representative Eric Shidler gave a presentation on the Local Work Groups followed by NCDEA President and NCPP Co-Chair Melissa Higbee who shared the NCPP Local Work Group Guide. Both offered background in the process, shared some tips and encouraged re-evaluation of the process to continue to improve, refine, and reinvigorate the process. This session was followed by discussion and Q&A.

#### **Partner Updates**

- NRCS Acting Regional Conservationists Curtis Elke (Center Region) and Kasey Taylor (Northeast Region)

- NRCS State Conservationists Tammy Willis (IL), Scott Edwards (MO), John Wilson (OH), Damaris Mortenson (IN), Jon Hubbert (IA) – submitted via email and shared verbally.
- NASCA Treasurer John Switzer (MI)
- NCDEA Region Representative Eric Shidler (IN) and NCDEA President/NCPP Co-Chair Melissa Higbee

### **State Round-Robin**

Each state’s board member, alternate board member, and Executive Director had a chance to share what’s going on in their state. The states in attendance during this time included: IA, IN, MI, OH, MN, WI and IL.

At 10:30 am, the meeting was adjourned.

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#### Upcoming Meetings:

- 2024 NACD Annual Meeting: February 10 – 14, San Diego, CA
- 2024 NACD Fly-In: March 20, Washington, D.C.
- 2024 NACD Summer Meeting: August 10 – 13, Boston, MA

## **2023 Iowa Resolutions**

### **1. Policy:**

**NACD supports increasing the minimum age of properties eligible for the National Register of Historic Places within designated conservation project areas from 50 years to 100 years with consideration given to the current condition of properties and potential recent historically or culturally significant events.**

#### **Supporting Argument:**

Current guidance is that if at any time there is or was a building in the project location over 50 years old, then it should be considered a cultural resource, no matter the building's current condition. Changing the age of historic places to dwellings erected 100 years or more ago with the baseline year set at 1900, for example, as 50 years is not adequate time to make it historic. Also, it is important to recognize that there may be recent activities which may create the need for a site to be designated as historically or culturally significant.

### **2. Policy:**

**NACD supports FSA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) allowing and providing 50 percent cost-share for the construction of restored or created wetlands on any existing or planned CRP acres where NRCS determines that these practices are needed and appropriate.**

#### **Supporting Argument:**

Restored or created wetlands have the potential to remove significant amounts of nitrates from tile water routed through them. A restored or created wetland must be installed according to standards and specifications approved by NRCS's technical practice code.

Resubmitted by:

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Rewritten January 9, 2024