



NACD North Central Region Partners' Meeting

Drury Plaza Hotel | 9625 N. Meridian St. | Indianapolis, IN
January 13 – 14, 2026

Minutes

Attendance:

Josh Curry, IL

Kent Gunkel, IN

Roger Wenning, IN

Ethan Truax, IN

Liz Rice, IN Executive Director

T.C. Loving, IA

Jerry Miller, MI

Randy Shellack, MN

David Hutsell, MO

Jim Boschert, MO Executive Director

Kris Swartz, OH, Region Chair

Matt Peart, OH

Janelle Mead, OH Executive Director

Monte Osterman, WI

Samantha Steiner, NACD Executive Board

Ryan Britt, NACD Second Vice President

Beth Mason, NACD staff, recorder

Others in attendance: 28

A full list of attendees can be provided as a separate document

Tuesday, January 13

1:00 pm

Welcome/Introductions – Region Chair Kris Swartz

Partner Spotlight: RC&D Councils

Anna Cornelius, Chief Operating Officer (anna@nationalrcdc.org) and Dorris Skipper, Conservation Programs Director (dorris@nationalrcdc.org) introduce themselves and provide a presentation on who RC&D Councils are and their services. For more information, you can email Anna or Dorris and visit their website at www.narcdc.org

North Central Region Workplan with the USFWS

Opening Comments

Kris Swartz gave opening comments to this session, explaining the purpose of the following exercise. Sergio Pierluissi of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) gave opening comments and information leading into a panel presentation/discussion.

Panel Presentations

Beth Mason moderates the panel and introduces the panel participants. The panel offered three state examples of how USFWS is working and partnering with districts in their states.

Participants included: Susan Kozak, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS); Sheila Vanney, Assistant Director of the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD); and Caitlin Nagorka, Assistant State Coordinator, USFWS in Wisconsin.

Break

Small Group Exercise and Discussion

Meg Leader, Director of Resilient Indiana with Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD) led the attendees in an exercise to draw out practical ways to partner with USFWS back home/in their own state. The results of the exercise will be compiled by Mason and the committee will work on next steps in this process of developing a workplan for the region.

NCPP Update

Melissa Higbee, Co-Chair of NCPP, along with Eric Shidler, NCDEA treasurer and Anna Conelious, NARCDC COO gave an update on NCPP activities and programs.

Meeting for the day ended at approximately 5:00 pm

Attendees met at Royal Pin Bowling nearby for a catered dinner and bowling, sponsored by IASWCD.

Wednesday, January 14

8:00 am

NACD Region Business

- *Approval of Minutes*
Motion: Wisconsin makes a motion to approve the minutes from 7/27/26 region meeting at the NACD Summer Conference.
Motion was seconded
Motion unanimously passed.
- *NACD North Central Region Financial update and Region Scholarship update/discussion*
Beth Mason gives an update on the region finances and the scholarships.
Motion: Michigan makes a motion to go back to offering \$500 scholarships, but increase the number offered to four scholarships.
Motion was seconded
Discussion
Motion passed 4/3.

Kris Swartz asked about the location for next year's January region meeting. Mason asked Ryan Britt to share his thoughts as Missouri volunteered to host the 2027 meeting. Britt asked Janelle Mead to also share with him thoughts for taking the meeting out of the region and holding it at another time of the year to allow for better weather and a chance to go on conservation tours. Discussion continued with pros and cons and other options such as joining NASCA's region meeting which was proposed earlier but not approved. Additionally, it was brought up that the MOA states the meeting is scheduled in January. Britt also mentioned the only 3 viable locations for the meeting which would allow for easy travel – Kansas City, St. Louis, and Columbia. The discussion ended by having the group consider the pros/cons and will look to revisit this topic later.

- *NACD Region MOA discussion/ratification*
Representatives from each state approved and signed the MOA for another year.

NACD Executive Board Report and Strategic Plan Update

Samantha Steiner and Ryan Britt gave a brief presentation

Region Elections

- *Region Chair*
Motion: Samantha Steiner made a motion to reelect Kris Swartz as region chair
Motion was seconded
Motion unanimously passed.

- *Region Vice Chair*
Motion: Wisconsin made a motion to elect Josh Curry as the Region Vice Chair
Motion was seconded
Motion unanimously passed.

Resolutions

The board reviewed resolutions that were submitted to NACD to determine if the region would also support the resolutions going into the NACD Annual Meeting.

1. *Minnesota: Federal Support for NRCS and FSA Staffing Levels*
Motion: Minnesota made a motion for the region to support this resolution.
Motion was seconded
Discussion
Motion unanimously passed.

2. *Michigan: Cover Crop Alternative Planting Options*
Motion: Michigan made a motion for the region to support this resolution.
Motion was seconded
Discussion
Motion unanimously passed

3. *Monte Osterman, Outreach Committee Chair submitted the committee's proposals for new resolutions and sunset challenges, asking for the region's support. Osterman approved these could be done in two voting blocks rather than voting individually for each resolution and sunset challenge.*
 - Motion: Wisconsin made a motion for the region to support the proposed Sunset Challenges from the Outreach Committee.
Motion was seconded
Discussion
Motion unanimously passed.

 - Motion: Wisconsin made a motion for the region to support the proposed new resolutions from the Outreach Committee.
Motion was seconded
Discussion
Motion was unanimously passed

4. *New Resolution #1: Kris Swartz presented a new resolution for the region to consider supporting.*

NACD supports technical services and funding through public/private partnerships to increase farmers' voluntary adoption of conservation drainage practices and systems.

Motion: Wisconsin made a motion for the region to support the proposed new resolution as presented by Kris Swartz.

Motion was seconded

Discussion

Motion passed unanimously. Swartz will work with the resolution's author to get the resolution formally submitted to NACD.

5. *New Resolution #2:* Guest Steve Stierwalt presented a new resolution for the region to consider supporting.

Conservation Evaluation Tools

NACD supports the use of evaluation tools, based on scientifically researched practices, to assist in the implementation of voluntary conservation practices and programs.

There was discussion on this resolution before the motion which suggested that it be amended to say "NACD supports the development and use of evaluation..." Stierwalt and those in attendance agreed it would improve the resolution.

Motion: Illinois made a motion for the region to support the proposed new resolution as presented by Steve Stierwalt.

Motion was seconded

Discussion

Motion unanimously passed. Stierwalt will work with Kris Swartz to get the resolution formally submitted to NACD.

Committee updates

Leadership Development Committee – Jerry Miller, Michigan, Committee Member

Outreach Committee – Monte Osterman, Wisconsin, Committee Chair

Break

Region Partner Updates/Reports

Mason will include as a separate document the contact information and any extra handouts and webpage links provided by partners for distribution.

- EPA: Sharmin Syed, US EPA Region 5 Ag Advisor
- NRCS: Astor Boozer, NRCS Deputy Assistant Chief; Damaris Mortenson, NRCS Indiana State Conservationist; Tammy Willis, NRCS Illinois State Conservationist; John Wilson, NRCS Ohio State Conservationist (also gave a brief report on behalf of Diane Gray, NRCS Michigan State Conservationist); Nate Goodrich, NRCS Acting Missouri State Conservationist
- NASCA: Susan Kozak, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
- NCDEA: Donna Kanan, Region Representative
- ACED: Janelle Mead, President

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 am