AUTUMN 2026

The RESOURCE

Apply for the Next Generation Leadership Institute

The 2027 Cohort application period for the **National Conservation Foundation's** (NCF) **Next Generation Leadership Institute** (NGLI) is now open! NCF developed NGLI as a comprehensive year-long leadership development program to meet the needs and challenges facing conservation district officials.

The NGLI program's learning objectives include advocacy and public policy, effective communication, leadership styles, conflict management, and many other skills that set NGLI Alunni apart in state and national conservation partnerships.

NGLI equips conservation district officials with a skill set that includes personal, civic, and organizational leadership development to meet the future needs of natural resources management. By increasing a district official's capacity to navigate and manage conservation challenges at the national level, this opens opportunities for conservation districts at the local level.

Eligible applicants for the program are appointed or elected conservation district officials serving in the United States or its territories. The application process is competitive and requires an online application, letters of support from the individual's conservation district and state or territory association, and an application fee.

For more information or to apply for a place in the 2027 NGLI Cohort, visit NCF's website, *nationalconservationfoundation.org*, or contact Keith Owen, NACD Director of Education at *keith-owen@nacdnet.org*. Applications are due **by October 31**.

Source to Sea Educational Materials Available

NACD's 2027 stewardship theme, **"From Source to Sea: Every Drop Has a Journey"** offers students an opportunity to discover the incredible path water takes through the water cycle and across the landscape. From mountain streams and rivers to wetlands, lakes, estuaries, and the sea, every lesson explores another step along the way while demonstrating the important role each of us plays in protecting our water resources.

The 2027 educational materials will explore watersheds, the water cycle, and the connections between healthy soils, forests, agriculture, wildlife habitat, urban conservation, and the many ways conservation districts help safeguard our nation's water resources. Select educational materials are already available for download at *nacdnet.org/store*.

The 2026 photo and poster contests are still accepting submissions though **December 1**. State education coordinators, please submit your state's winning posters depicting the theme, "Soil. Where it All Begins."

NACD Welcomes Laura Wood as Interim Chief Executive Officer

NACD is excited to welcome Laura Wood as Interim Chief Executive Officer.

Laura comes to NACD from LWP Consulting, Inc., where she served as President. Laura returns to NACD after serving as NACD's Director of Government Affairs from 2011 to 2014. She also brings extensive experience in multiple government affairs roles across the agriculture industry, including at The Russell Group, Inc., Syngenta, and Indigo Agriculture.

Laura holds a Juris Doctor degree from The George Washington University Law School and graduated cum laude from Kansas State University with degrees in Political Science and Philosophy. Laura is based in Washington, D.C., and Billings, MT.

Jeremy Peters resigned as NACD Chief Executive Officer effective September 30. He will consult for NACD through December 31. Read more about the leadership transition in NACD's Newsroom, *nacdnet.org/newsroom*.

A virtual meet-and-greet with NACD Interim CEO Laura Wood will be held on **October 20 at 4:00 p.m. ET**. Register to attend at *nacdnet.org/webinars*.

Apply for a Friends of NACD Grant

On **October 13,** The Friends of NACD Program will open applications for its eighth year of district grants!

These grants have supported everything from environmental education programs to habitat restoration projects, invasive species removal teams, and everything in between. Don't be afraid to think outside the box though. We love to see new and innovative proposals.

Districts that are dues paying members at any level and have not received a Friends of NACD grant in the past are eligible to apply. Visit *nacdnet.org/friends* or the QR code here to read more about the grants and find the application link starting on October 13.

What's Up in Washington? Government Affairs Updates

Congress returned from the August recess with movement on several major issues affecting conservation districts, though significant work remains.

The House passed its Farm, Food, and National Security Act (H.R. 7567) in April, and the Senate Agriculture Committee advanced its separate Agriculture Act of 2026 on September 16. NACD continues to track both measures and engage Congress as lawmakers work toward a final Farm Bill.

Congress has also extended federal funding through December 11 under a continuing resolution, giving lawmakers additional time to complete Fiscal Year 2027 appropriations. NACD remains focused on protecting strong funding for locally led conservation programs and the technical assistance needed to deliver conservation on the ground.

Several federal comment and funding opportunities are also open this fall. NRCS is accepting comments through October 1 on proposed revisions to 48 national conservation practice standards. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Army are seeking comments through October 9 on additional alternatives for the proposed definition of "waters of the United States" (WOTUS). EPA is also accepting applications through November 9 for approximately $3.5 million in competitive Clean Water Act Section 319 funding available specifically to eligible Tribes and intertribal consortia.

Meanwhile, the House Natural Resources Committee continues work on proposed changes to the Endangered Species Act. NACD's Government Affairs team remains in regular contact with Congress and federal agencies and will continue sharing updates and opportunities for member engagement.

Membership Corner: NACD Membership Updates

NACD is kicking off Fiscal Year 2027 with updated membership dues, expanded engagement opportunities, and renewed commitment to supporting conservation districts nationwide.

Updated Membership Dues Levels Take Effect October 1

Membership is an investment in the infrastructure and collective capacity of the conservation district system, and NACD relies on your support!

Membership dues from districts to NACD fund the services and resources the association provides to conservation districts, including advocacy, regional services, training and education, member communications, peer networking, recognition programs, and support for districts navigating changing conservation priorities.

Fiscal Year 2027 dues invoices will reflect updated membership dues levels approved by NACD's Board of Directors. Visit *nacdnet.org/get-involved/nacd-membership* to view membership levels, pay dues, and explore benefits and perks.

Build Skills in Remote Sensing

Join our next Conservation Coffee on **November 5 at 3:00 p.m. ET** hosted in partnership with NASA Applied Remote Sensing Training (ARSET). ARSET helps individuals build skills to use remote sensing data for a range of applications and offers training for all levels of experience at no cost.

Participants of this webinar will take part in ARSET's newest training geared toward novice remote sensing users. After the webinar, receive a link to a self-paced learning module that will prepare you for further training and earn you a NASA ARSET certificate upon completion.

Visit *nacdnet.org/webinars* to register.

You're Invited to the 2027 NACD Annual Meeting in Las Vegas!

Join us in the City of Lights! We invite you to join us in Las Vegas, NV for the 2027 NACD Annual Meeting! Hosted in partnership with the **Nevada Association of Conservation Districts**, the meeting will take place on **February 6-10, 2027**, at Caesars Palace.

Submit a Breakout Session

Let this be the year for you and your district to shine! NACD has extended the call for breakout and training session proposals to **October 16**. These popular sessions spotlight the work of conservation districts and partners across the country. They are a place to share initiatives with others and provide information to build the skillsets of district board members and employees.

Submit a breakout or training session proposal, view the schedule, registration details, exclusive hotel discounts, tour information, and more at *nacdnet.org/annual-meeting* or the QR code here.

Stay tuned to NACD's weekly eResource newsletter for more exciting Annual Meeting announcements in the weeks to come!

If you have questions or would like to explore sponsorship or exhibitor opportunities at the event, contact *events@nacdnet.org*.

Want more frequent updates from NACD? Subscribe to our weekly email newsletter eResource at *bit.ly/NACD-eResource*.