

Western States, we all knew this would happen, so now is the time to go back to work.

***Your National Association is working for you already
Your Western President has a few words after Bobbie's***

Today the President released his proposed Fiscal Year 2009 budget. The request for the RC&D program is zero. The justification stated in the budget is that funds are needed for higher priority programs and that the program duplicates other Department of Agriculture economic development programs that encourage State and local governments to plan and implement projects, including those for resource protection, community zoning and infrastructure and economic development.

The National Association of Resource Conservation and Development is deeply disappointed with this budget request. The national board will meet this evening to discuss legislative strategy to restore funds through the Congressional budget process. A teleconference will be held tomorrow with state Presidents and a legislative alert will be published on our website tomorrow.

The RC&D program is a critical tool for economic growth and conservation in communities across this nation. RC&D volunteers return \$7.50 for every dollar the federal government invests in the program. Because RC&D areas are locally organized, sponsored, and led, the program provides an ideal way for residents to join together to decide what is best for their community.

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Dear Western States,

It's time again to get out the pen and paper and start writing down your thoughts about RC&D and the Presidents proposal to Flat Line our funds. We have a little time before your state is represented at the annual Washington D.C. Leadership Forum and you need to have a stack of letters to hand to your Congressional Delegates during those hill visits.

Letters should be single page with one or two main ideas and a single signature. Letters are counted. Single page letters are read. Letters with multiple signatures are only one letter. Once again letters should carry a single signature on a single sheet of paper with no more than two main ideas.

After the Forum has passed letters through the mail get held up. Letters FAXED get into the congressional offices. Phone calls to representatives and senators are excellent but phone calls to the correct aid in the office are just as effective.

This year we have been given a different direction to our lobbying efforts. In the past we have given our great work and positive results as the reasons to continue funding for RC&D. The new direction is to look at the other side of the good work and tell our congressional delegates about what they will lose.

They will lose how many citizen volunteer hours of free education and promotion of desirable conservation or rural development work. They will lose an efficient distribution and implementation for the "higher priority" programs. For every single federal dollar spent they will have no, zero, none, zip leverage to generate up to eight times the federal expense for the RC&D supported and implemented program. They will have no more RC&D implemented jobs. The individual project that RC&D works on could lose continuity and possibly fail, leaving funds expended but unable to complete their goals.

Each council has projects that may be lost and unattainable if the RC&D funds are zeroed out of the budget. Talk about those losses as if it is the representative's own lost project, some of them will be. The federal budget provides for overhead and staff support, RC&D council members do the rest. Generally the RC&D council members don't touch the Federal Budget funds.

We are looking for a minimum of \$56 million. For each year they give us level funding we lose roughly 4%. Over the past six budgets we have lost 25% when comparing past dollars to today's dollar. To fully serve RC&D for a year will take \$85 million. To stay with "our heads above water" we need \$56 million.

Once again the Leadership Forum is coming up in Washington D.C. Please make appointments to visit on the Hill. Do not skip an opportunity to talk to an aid if the Representative or Senator is unavailable. I'll look forward to seeing you in Washington.

Sincerely,

Robert Perry