

Highlights
National Board Meeting
National Association of RC&D Councils
September 19-20, 2004

1. The Drought Committee of the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils met in Savannah Georgia in conjunction with the National Board meeting on September 20th. By the time you receive this bulletin board item you should have gotten your copy of the “Drought Planning Handbook”. Four copies including a CD with each are being sent to each RC&D in the country. A copy is also being provided to each Natural Resources Conservation Services State Conservationist and RC&D Program Manager. Each State Emergency Management office will also receive a copy. This effort was primarily funded through a cooperative agreement between the NARCD and NRCS. While this document focuses primarily on small community and urban concerns, the National Association of Conservation Districts is doing some similar work on agricultural lands. The possibility of a “National Drought Planning Conference” sponsored by both NARCD and NACD was discussed.
2. Nancy Porter and Dan Bailey of the U.S. Forest Service talked about progress in the Firewise Program and how RC&Ds have been an integral part of its success. Responding to a request on how it might be improved, I suggested that funds for on the ground applications be funded directly to local RC&Ds rather than routed through State Forest agencies. They stated they are aware that a problem exists and will work toward its correction. Concern was expressed by several board members that State Farm has 34% of home owners’ fire insurance nation wide and has been unresponsive to lower ISO ratings as a result of dry hydrant etc. The Firewise home page can be accessed at www.Firewise.org which will provide material on the Firewise effort.
3. Ann Dubay has been appointed as the new Division Director for the RC&D Program for NRCS. Her office has been moved to the Cotton Annex at 12th & C due to largely increased NRCS personnel in Washington DC which is a result of Regional Office closures. The program administration has moved out of the USDA South building. Smith Covey also reported that field reviews of the RC&D program had been conducted in Florida and Indiana with California scheduled for this October. With “listening” sessions on the RC&D program (similar to the one we had in January in Bismarck) scheduled for the Mid Atlantic and Pacific Rim next month. A Native American listening session has been scheduled for Las Vegas, December 9, 2004. Mr. Covey stated that the NRCS RC&D progress reporting system is in its final development phase and expressed a need for Councils to ensure that Coordinators report progress. Some colleges are giving credit (i.e.: Texas A&M, Southern University) to individuals taking the Planning and Implementation course.

Discussion was held on the denial of some State Conservationists to allow RC&D Coordinators to transport Council members to various meetings and events. Some State Conservationists have continued to allow this practice. All though the National

Board strongly felt that denying the right of Council members to ride in governmental vehicles was detrimental to the program; they did not want to push this issue for fear of a blanket policy. Each state association was urged to work with their individual State Conservationist.

4. Bobbi Jeanquart reported that it takes approximately \$300,000 to operate the National Office of RC&Ds. The current dues structure is not adequate to meet this demand. The National Board, following the recommendation of the Executive Board voted to increase Council dues by \$50.
5. In the absence of Gary Freeman, California, Chairman of the Energy Committee, I gave a progress report on this committee's activities. The National Association is presently negotiating a memorandum of understanding with NACD to provide a framework for cooperation at the national level to encourage the utilization of alternative energy and woody by products of forest and range hazardous fuel reduction and restoration treatments through delivery and outreach mechanisms. The National Association would like someone with an energy development background from the Western Region to serve on this committee in the next two months (October, November) on small scale biomass utilization with a meeting of the full committee schedule for the Dallas-Fort Worth area in early December. Travel costs to be borne by the National Association. Interested individuals are urged to contact Andrew Gordon at (202) 434-4863 immediately.
6. Keith Kessler and I discussed with Bobbi Jeanquart the need to fulfill NARCDs part of Western's Agreement with them to produce a "Conference Planning Handbook". The handbook was to be a reimbursable product of the \$10,000 given to NARCD some time ago. Assurances were received that this commitment would be honored. Contact has already occurred between NARCD and Western Region staff support to finalize this product.

Paul Calverley

Western Region 1st Vice President