

November 29, 2006

## THE CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP

Partnership Statement – The federal/state/local partnership represented by the undersigned represents a unique example of cooperation to advance natural resource conservation throughout the United States. The purpose of this statement is to describe our areas of common interest and to specify our individual commitments to those common goals. Those commitments are further described in the individual organizational strategic plans.

- I. Introduction The five members of this conservation partnership- the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA), the National Conservation District Employees Association (NCDEA), the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils (NARC&DCs) and the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)- operate on a variety of issues and levels and are an example of a true federal/national, state, local and private partnership regarding policy and operations issues involving conservation programs impacts that are critical and invaluable to the Nation.
  
- II. Principles The members of this partnership share certain principles in common. These principles include the common interest of conserving, developing and utilizing America's natural resources for the benefit of its citizens. Each of the partners brings a certain set of resources, authorities and skills that are important -that must be used in a coordinated fashion, to achieve these shared conservation principles and goals.
  
- III. Basis for this partnership The entities involved have legal status at either national, state, and/or local governmental level or private sector non profit status to carry out conservation objectives. For example, there are existing written agreements to specify the relationships between governors and the Secretary of Agriculture and between NRCS and individual conservation districts as elements of this partnership. While the partnership has evolved over the seventy year history of this movement in the US, a formalization of this partnership relationship was set up about 15 years ago.
  
- IV. Some Examples of Common Goals
  - A. Training Each of the partners shares a need to train and prepare its employees and officials to achieve conservation success. Often this training including organizational training can be shared among the partners to achieve seamless delivery of services in the organizations, offices, and the field. To the end that it is mutually beneficial, the partners agree to cooperate on training opportunities.

B. Outreach and Diversity The leaders of the partnership are responsible for providing significant national impetus towards greater diversity in the partnership and outreach to the community. Through such things as national conferences and training sessions, State and local workshops, follow up materials and commitments to reach all citizens/customers in all communities and to reflect the needs of local communities in several ways including recruitment of board, council, and committee members as well as in hiring and contracting for work we can broaden the conservation partnership to include those who have been underserved in the past. The breadth of the conservation mission lends itself to a very inclusive definition including all natural resources, all populations and a variety of approaches.

C. Expanding the Partnership While there is a continuing need for this partnership to adhere to the points in this statement, there is also a growing need to use this partnership in various ways that involves tens of billions of dollars of program work each year to accomplish the conservation of the natural resources in this country and the world. In that regard we intend to reach out in an even more aggressive way than in the past to engage and enlist other conservation minded individuals, and or organizations to address specific issues, to combine forces where necessary to achieve greater benefits, to build broad support for natural resource conservation and many other purposes.

D. Strategic Planning The partnership will regularly endorse some key overarching goals and objectives that will guide future endeavors and will provide a benchmark for progress as well as provide examples for State partnership enhancement.

E. Annual Review We are committed to regular reviews of our progress towards common goals and objectives, as well as the other components of this Statement so as to stay fresh and current. This will also help the partnership transition more efficiently during times of change to new partner leaders who come on the scene in varying schedules or timeframes.

Nothing in this document shall obligate either the Department of Agriculture (USDA), or other signatory, to obligate or transfer funds. Specific work projects or activities that involve the transfer of funds, services, or property among various agencies and offices of USDA and other signatories will require execution of separate agreements and be contingent upon the availability of appropriated funds. Such activities must be independently authorized by appropriate statutory authority. This document does not provide such authority. Negotiation, execution, and administration of each such agreement must comply with all applicable statutes, and regulations.

This document is not to, and does not create, any right, benefit, trust, responsibility, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity, by party against the United States, its agencies, its officers, or any person.

signed/Bill Wilson

Bill Wilson, President  
National Association of Conservation Districts

signed/Arlen Lancaster

Arlen Lancaster, Chief  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

signed/Sharon Ruggi

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National Association of Resource Conservation & Development Councils

signed/Robert Dobbs

Robert Dobbs, President  
National Conservation District Employees Association

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