

## **Resolution # 2016-01**

**Sponsor:** Washington State Conservation Commission

**Title:** Conditioning Funds of Incentive-Based Conservation Programs

**Subject:** Opposing the Requirement of Certain Conservation Practices as a Condition of Program Participation

### **Action requested to be taken by NASCA:**

Oppose any proposal by a federal agency requiring the implementation of certain conservation practices as a condition to access incentive-based conservation program financial assistance.

In addition:

- Support an approach to natural resources management that leverages the benefits of incentive-based programs.
- Support constant improvement in the effectiveness of incentive-based conservation programs, and to increase participation in them.
- Support landowner choice and flexibility for incentive-based programs that make available to landowners and working lands managers a full system of practices that can be applied to address natural resources concerns brought to their attention.

### **Background:**

In recent years, those who fund incentive-based conservation programs have been urged to require implementation of certain practices as a condition of receiving program financial assistance. There is a perception that existing incentive-based programs and services delivered to landowners and land managers are not effective in putting conservation on the ground and in achieving desired results to protect natural resources.

The attraction of voluntary, incentive-based conservation planning is that it takes a site specific approach in developing a *system of conservation practices* to be implemented. For example, a cooperator could be required to first install one practice as a condition of access to financial assistance and potentially in the place of conservation practices recommended in a landowner's conservation plan. This is especially problematic when the required practice is not included in the landowner's conservation plan or financial assistance is unavailable for the required practice. There is a concern the participation, trust, and cooperation of landowners will be negatively impacted by putting regulatory requirements into the collaborative planning process.

Incentive-based conservation works to improve the quality of natural resources. However, the primary limiting factor for achieving more widespread improvement is lack of funding, resulting in a lack of landowner participation in conservation programs.

Incentive-based programs are important in developing ongoing stewardship that meets the objectives of regulatory compliance. Mandating specific practice implementation as a condition of participation may inhibit participation by landowners and land managers in conservation financial assistance programs.