



2013

# ANNUAL REPORT

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
STATE CONSERVATION AGENCIES**



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CONSERVATION AGENCIES**

*Founded 1967*

**OUR VISION**

TO ENHANCE THE ABILITY OF ALL MEMBER CONSERVATION AGENCIES TO FULFILL THEIR  
AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCE MISSIONS

**OUR MISSION**

TO STRENGTHEN MEMBERS' CAPACITY AND INFLUENCE NATIONAL PROGRAMS AND POLICIES BY  
PROVIDING LEADERSHIP, FOCUS, AND DIRECTION

## OBJECTIVE I PROVIDE CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS AS MEMBERS IDENTIFY NEEDS

There is an undeniable value to NASCA membership in the form of networking opportunities with our peers from other states. NASCA provides a unique forum for many of our state conservation agencies to share ideas and experiences. Members benefit as more states become active NASCA members due to the increased size of our network. Additionally, NASCA becomes more marketable to inactive member states as the number of active state members increases. With each additional active member we have more to offer one another, and thus we become more effective in our member capacity-building efforts. We therefore strive to solicit more participation from all of our member states and enlist greater participation from staff-level personnel of those states that are currently active.

### TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

NASCA prides itself in the quality of the technical training it provides to its members. On February 13 we hosted a webinar on Regulatory Certainty Programs. We featured speakers from six states with these programs who explained how their programs were set up, how they operate, and how they provide win/win opportunities for all stakeholders. On July 30 NASCA hosted another webinar dedicated to Utilizing Technology in Conservation Delivery. This webinar featured seven speakers who talked about how they employ the latest and greatest technological advances to increase productivity and efficiency in their operations. Over 100 members from forty states participated in these presentations. Our membership has encouraged us to continue providing these valuable educational opportunities.

NASCA launched its new website earlier this year. Our new site offers members countless resources in an easy to navigate, user friendly format. Visit us at [www.nascanet.org](http://www.nascanet.org) to gain access to countless resources, tune in to archived webinars, and learn more about NASCA and its membership.

### DISTRICT OFFICIAL TRAINING

In 2009 NASCA developed a matrix that outlines minimum standards for states' District Official training programs. The matrix provides a detailed menu of 15 training elements. NASCA developed the matrix as a tool for its member agencies to use to perform self-assessments of their District Official training programs, and thus determine areas of strengths or weaknesses in the programs. NASCA has also populated its website with examples of how these 15 elements are addressed

by some of the premier training programs in the country. All of this information is available at <http://www.nascanet.org/index.php/resource-library/district-training/>

This matrix has become so popular that NACD now uses it as an assessment tool to judge District Official training programs for their annual recognition program. NASCA also provides District Official training assistance to those states that request it. We have conducted District Official training programs in New Hampshire, Alabama, and at the 2013 NACD Northeast Regional Meeting. There are at least two more states that have already requested NASCA's assistance with District Official training in 2014.



### ANNUAL MEETING

Each year NASCA members gather to share strategies and experiences in delivering soil and water conservation in their home states. President Carolyn Hefner welcomed members to this year's event in Rogers, Arkansas. After an opening general session where we get organizational updates from our core partners (NACD, NCDEA, NRCS, and NARC&DC), the meeting "breaks out" into two sessions. State agency directors and administrators meet in one session to share issues of concern, discuss national policy, and conduct the business of the organization. Field staff personnel gather in the other session to share numerous presentations on innovative ideas and programs in their states.



### COMPILING STATE INFORMATION

NASCA conducted a membership survey of questions posed by our members over the last year. The survey included questions regarding: organizational structure, funding amounts and sources, conservation district code/statute, staffing classification/rates, programs (319, farm bill), conservation district official elections. A report of the 2013 NASCA Questionnaire to Membership will be completed in 2014 and shared with membership.

### REGULATORY CERTAINTY

NASCA defines regulatory certainty as a voluntary approach to provide "assurances" to the agricultural community so they may conduct business in a predictable regulatory setting in exchange for their implementation of additional BMPs to achieve enhanced environmental benefits. Certainty is popular in most circles as it provides an opportunity to implement a greater suite of agricultural BMPs on working lands, grants educational opportunities for the operators of our working lands, and provides a sustainable business environment for those farmers who choose to participate in this type of program. NASCA received a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) from NRCS to research regulatory certainty programs in this country and develop a tool that will help State Conservation Agencies develop these programs in state where they do not currently exist. At the onset of this work we knew of five regulatory certainty programs inexistence. However, we discovered a number of other programs that offer elements of regulatory certainty in 2013 by contacting each state directly. All in all, we have found that some element of regulatory certainty exists in 16 states. We are examining the program development experiences of these states to develop a tool that will help other states develop regulatory certainty programs of their own. This tool will be released early next year.

### ASK NASCA

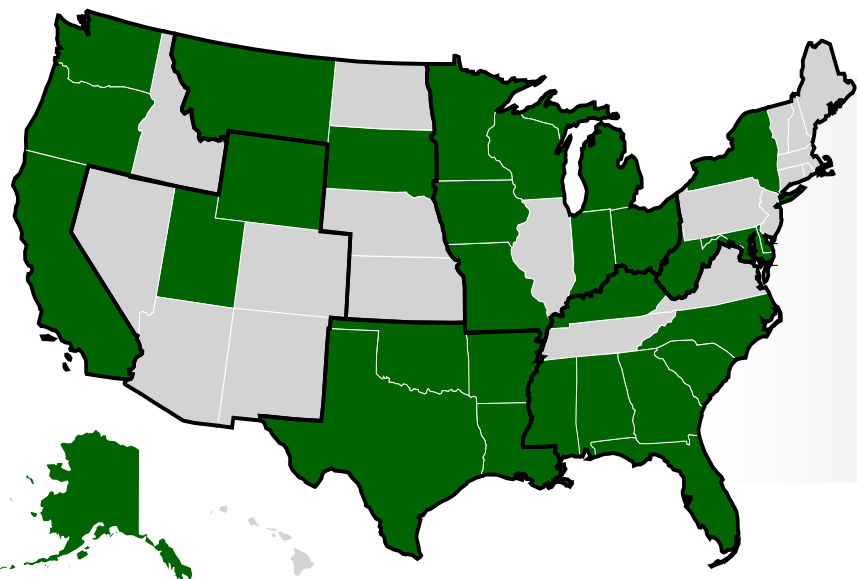
Ask NASCA provides a forum for members to easily ask fellow conservation district employees questions on topics as they arise. We encourage our membership to take advantage of this unique tool. In 2013 NASCA received 81 replies on 11 questions posted on topics such as: field office of the future, regulatory certainty, state ag soil loss/erosion limit laws.

## OBJECTIVE II TO REMAIN A FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATION

NASCA currently depends on member dues, grants, contractual agreements, and earnings from its investment accounts to support the organization's annual budget. Additionally, the organization has worked tirelessly in recent years to streamline its operations in the name of efficiency and cost-effectiveness. In doing so, we have trimmed our budget from \$268,250 in 2008 to \$131,200 in 2014 while at the same time improving service to our member states!

### MEMBERSHIP DUES

In 2013 NASCA received dues in the amount of \$84,300 from 30 member states.



**30**  
MEMBER STATES

**\$84,300**  
DUES COLLECTED

### GRANT FUNDING

NASCA entered into a contribution agreement and a CIG grant with NRCS this year. These agreements focused on providing technical training to our members and partners, developing District Official training programs, investigating regulatory certainty programs, and providing multiple venues for information exchange and technology transfer. NASCA is grateful to NRCS for providing a portion of the funding for these projects that are so valuable to our members and partners.

### BUDGET

The NASCA board of directors continues to reevaluate it's annual budget reducing costs wherever applicable. NASCA performed well in 2013 exceeding budget expectations and further reduced the 2014 budget by an additional 13%.

	2013 ACTUAL	2013 BUDGET	2014 BUDGET
TOTAL INCOME	\$216,720	\$150,000	\$131,200
OPERATIONS	\$21,333	\$24,000	\$20,350
CONTRACTORS	\$87,162	\$112,000	\$100,000

### SUPPORTING MEMBER STATES

The NASCA Board of Directors elected to provide scholarship funding for members from states with travel funding restrictions to attend our annual meeting in Rogers, Arkansas. These funds provided travel support to 14 NASCA members from 8 states who otherwise may have been unable to attend the meeting. One of the goals of the annual meeting is to share information between members from a variety of states, and our Board of Directors realizes the value of ensuring a diverse mix of states attending the event. Getting more states to the meeting makes the experience more valuable for all attendees, so every participant ultimately benefits from this scholarship funding!

In September 2012 NASCA entered into an agreement with Kimberly Clark as part of their promotion of the Scott Naturals product line. Kimberly Clark conducted an online promotion that asked participants to pledge to use this product line for a specified period of time. The company then agreed to provide \$50,000 to NASCA to be used for conservation practice implementation in the state with the highest per capita participation rate in the promotion. On January 8, 2013, NASCA was pleased to present this \$50,000 award to the Alaska Natural Resource Conservation and Development Board, who used the funds to support several projects in Alaska:

- The Kenai Soil and Water Conservation District planted native trees and shrubs with students at Tustumena Elementary School and created an apple tree courtyard at Sterling Elementary to educate students about arboriculture.
- The Upper Susitna Soil and Water Conservation District is working with University of Alaska forest researchers to establish long term data plots contributing to scientific understanding of boreal forest dynamics and ecosystems.
- The Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District partnered with local agencies and schools to promote the value of trees culminating in an Arbor Day ceremony and recognition patch for participants.



*"In 2008 our Board of Directors was concerned, and rightfully so, about NASCA's financial sustainability. Despite the struggling economy, I am proud to say that we are in a stronger financial position today than at any time in the organization's history. This is due in large part to effective use of staff resources, sound investment policy, and unwavering support from membership."*

Carolyn Hefner  
2013 NASCA President

## OBJECTIVE III    NATIONALLY REPRESENT ITS MEMBERS

NASCA serves as the voice for its member states in developing conservation policy at the national level. Our staff and leadership keep in constant contact and work effectively in Washington DC with NRCS, EPA, our conservation partners, and a number of NGOs.

### FARM BILL

NASCA logged countless hours providing support, technical expertise, and influence on the development of the 2013 Farm Bill. Our Farm Bill Committee, chaired by Steve Shine of Michigan, met as needed and remained current on all progress throughout the evolution of this Farm Bill. Additionally, Bill Smith of South Dakota represented NASCA on NACD's Farm Bill Task Force. In that role he kept NASCA interests in the forefront of NACD's policy discussions. We also served as active members of the Washington DC Conservation Coalition. This group met regularly and developed frequent correspondence to decision-makers regarding the importance of Title 2 programs to our working lands and producers.



### REGIONAL PRESENCE

The NASCA Board of Directors represents the organization at regional functions like NACD regional meetings. They not only provide formal reports on behalf of the organization but also solicit input from our member agencies in every state so that we may accurately represent our members concerns at the national level. If the Board member is not available to attend these meetings they will request that the NASCA Executive Director represent the organization. In 2013 President Carolyn Hefner attended both the Southeast and Northeast NACD Regional meetings, and Executive Director Mike Brown provided a presentation on the future of conservation financial resources at the NACD Northeast Regional meeting. He also conducted a half day District Official training program at that same meeting.



NASCA also stepped up its alliance with the National Watershed Coalition (NWC) in 2013 to work to secure continued federal support of the Small Watershed Program. President Carolyn Hefner and executive Director Mike Brown travelled to Tunica, MS to attend the bi-annual NWC meeting. They conducted three sessions for NWC at this meeting, resulting in the development of a Call to Action document that highlights the importance of small watershed planning and operations as well as structure rehabilitation and repair. Conservation practices have been implemented in every state via the Small Watershed Program, including structures in 47 states. Therefore, this program has been and remains critical to our membership.

## NATIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP

NASCA is one of five core partners that constitute the National Conservation Partnership. The others are:

- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)
- National Conservation District Employees Association (NCDEA)
- National Association of RC&D Councils (NARC&DC)

NASCA's leadership meets quarterly with these partners to help shape national conservation policy. Additionally, NASCA's Executive Director meets at least monthly with the NACD CEO, the NCDEA Executive Director, and the NRCS Associate Chief for Conservation. We are diligent about raising awareness to the issues of greatest concern to our membership at the national level.



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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**President**  
*Operations Division Director*  
West Virginia Conservation Agency



**Mike Thralls**  
**Vice President**  
*Executive Director*  
Oklahoma Conservation Commission



**Shana Joy**  
**Secretary**  
*Executive Director, NRCDB*  
Alaska Department of Natural Resources



**Adrian Baber**  
**Treasurer**  
*Conservation Division Chief*  
Arkansas Department of Natural Resources



**Don Underwood**  
**Past President**  
*Executive Director*  
Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Mark Clark**  
*Executive Director*  
Washington



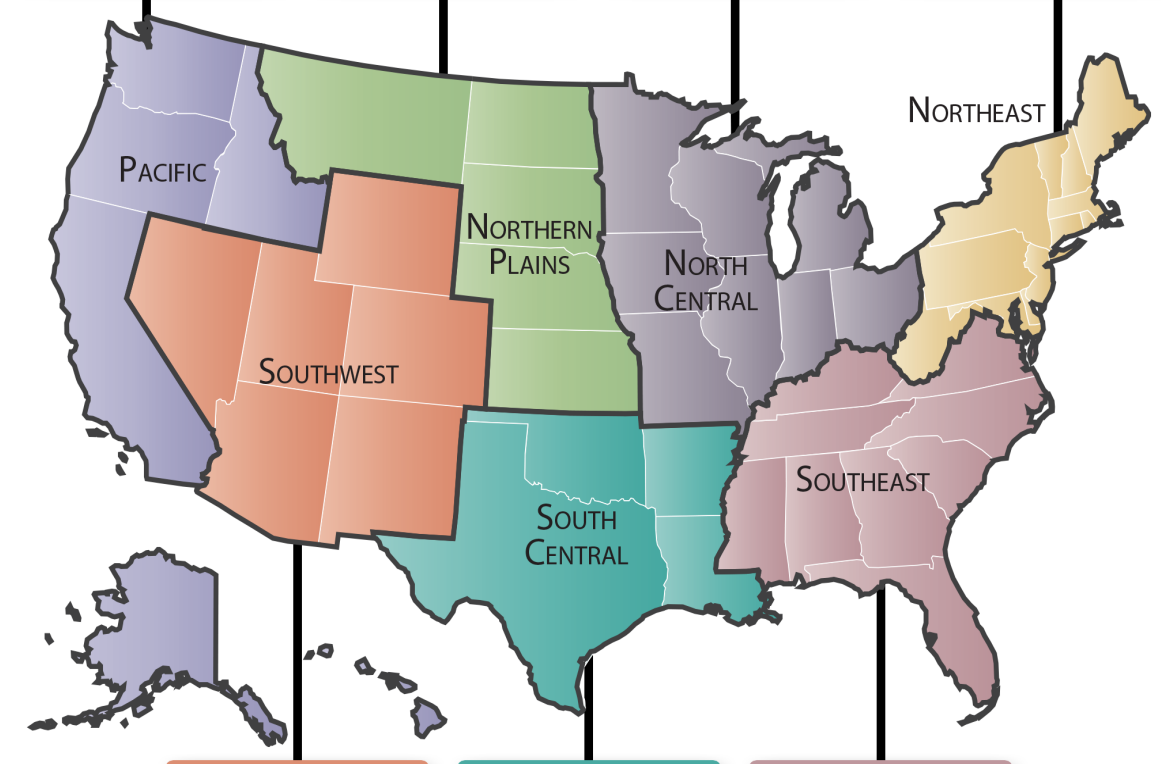
**Bill Smith**  
*Administrator*  
South Dakota



**Bill Wilson**  
*Environmental Manager*  
Missouri



**Michael Latham**  
*Director*  
New York



**Thayne Mickelson**  
*Executive Director*  
Utah



**Brad Spicer**  
*Assistant Commissioner*  
Louisiana



**Marc Cribb**  
*Conservation Districts Program Manager*  
South Carolina

## COMMITTEES

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 Steve Shine, North Central  
 Brian Farkas, Northeast  
 Scott Carlson, Northern Plains  
 Stu Trefry, Pacific  
 Mike Thralls, South Central  
 Brent Dykes, Southeast

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 Cindy Lair, CO  
 Teri Murrison, ID  
 Jennifer Pinkston, IN  
 Johnna McHugh, KY  
 Tom Anderson, MA  
 Mark Harrison, OK  
 Loren Warrick, TX  
 Andrew Stacy, WV  
 Ray Ledgerwood (advisor)

### Investment

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 Randy Young, AR  
 Robert Baldwin, DE  
 Brad Spicer, LA  
 Ray Beck, MT  
 Mike Brown (staff)

### Annual Meeting

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 Adrian Baber, AR  
 Aaron Andrews (staff)  
 Mike Brown (staff)

### Farm Bill

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 Adrian Baber, AR  
 Suellen Cozey McCuin, CT  
 Brent Dykes, GA  
 Steve Coleman, KY  
 David Williams, NC  
 Mike Thralls, OK

## Staff

### Executive Director

Mike Brown  
 Hartly, DE

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### Project Consultant

Ray Ledgerwood, WA  
 Board Works by Ledgerwood



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