



2015  
NASCA

# ANNUAL REPORT

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
STATE CONSERVATION AGENCIES**

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Serving as NASCA President the past 16 months has been a rewarding and enlightening experience. I have long been an enthusiastic supporter of our national organization, in large part due to the opportunities to exchange information and ideas with my counterparts from other states. I am now more convinced than ever that NASCA is a truly effective national organization. Our relationships with each other, with the core national partners, and our developing relationships with new partners are our primary strengths. Our relationship with each of the core partners is stronger today than ever before thanks to the commitment and engagement of all NASCA members as we all interact with our partners on multiple levels. I look forward, as I hope all of you do, to strengthening our organizations' relationships even further in the future.

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) is our closest national partner. Like our NASCA member agencies, NACD focuses on the relevance and success of conservation districts across the country. Over the past 16 months I have gained an appreciation for just how closely our organization works with NACD and the investment of time necessary to participate as a true partner. Not only do we provide State Conservation Agency representation on NACD's Resource Policy Groups, but they have also asked NASCA to play integral roles in their special task forces as well. For instance, in 2015 NASCA played key roles in both the RCPP Task Force and the District Outlook Task Force. We will continue to contribute substantially in these ongoing efforts in 2016, including taking on several key roles at NACD's upcoming Annual Meeting in Reno. Furthermore, NACD refers members to NASCA to provide district official training to those states that request help. This is a program that both organizations consider mission critical and NASCA is proud to fill this key role. Our staff meets every month with NACD staff, and I am happy to report that the relationship between the two groups has never been stronger.

We have also improved our relations with the National Conservation District Employees' Association (NCDEA). I have been continually impressed with the professional development work this organization does as well as their willingness to provide assistance to the core partners at any time. NASCA has stepped up our efforts over the last couple of years to work closely with them. Another member of the national partnership, the National Association of RC&D Councils (NARC&DC), has endured sweeping changes to their organization during the past few years. NASCA remains ready to be of assistance to NARC&DC as they continue to evolve. I feel that our partnership with the National Watershed Coalition holds great promise as we work together on matters of mutual interest.

Our final partner in the National Conservation Partnership is the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Just as our members work hand in hand with NRCS to deliver conservation at the local level, NASCA works very closely with NRCS at the national level to develop policy and address conservation issues of national concern. This relationship is also closer than ever, as evidenced by NRCS asking our own Mike Brown to co-chair the National Conservation Planning Partnership with NRCS Western Regional Conservationist Astor Boozer.

I am pleased that we are so engaged with our core conservation partners, and that we are expanding the scope of our partnership with other national conservation organizations. I am also pleased with our hard-working staff, our incoming slate of officers, and the fact that we are more fiscally sound than at any other time during the organization's existence. However, I have realized during my term in office that the single greatest strength our organization has is the engagement of its members. Our members continue to bring their knowledge and experience to the table to share with their peers, not just at annual meetings, but through a variety of forums. It is the greatest gift we can give one another. I am thankful to have served as NASCA's President and I look forward to my continued engagement in NASCA as Immediate Past President.



*"THE SINGLE GREATEST STRENGTH  
OUR ORGANIZATION HAS IS THE  
ENGAGEMENT OF ITS MEMBERS"*



### NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE 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

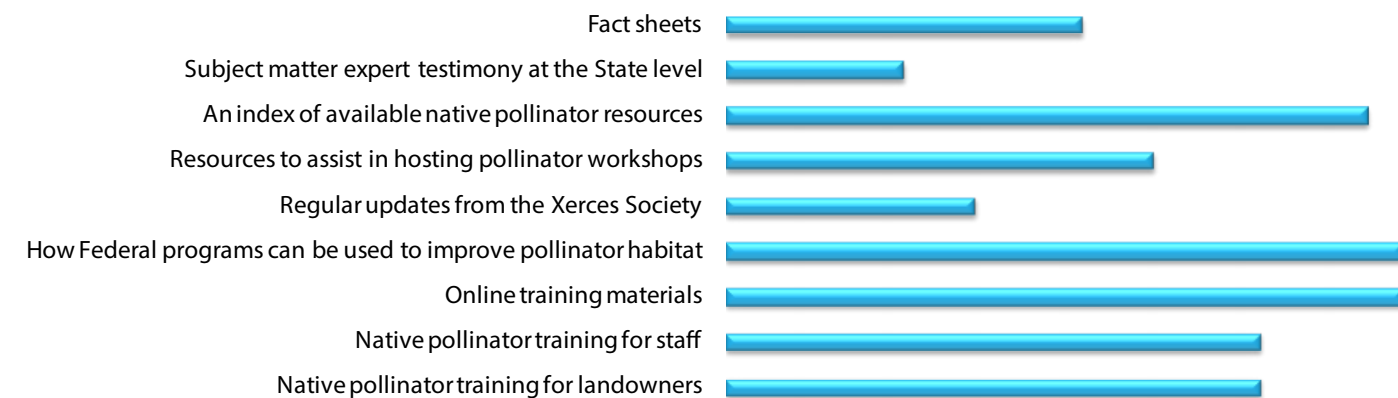
There is an undeniable value to NASCA membership in the form of networking opportunities with our peers from other states. NASCA provides a unique forum for many of our state conservation agencies to share ideas and experiences. Members benefit as more states become active NASCA members due to the increased 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 continues to provide opportunities for its members and partners to interact and learn about the conservation delivery topics that are of the utmost importance. In keeping with tradition, we hosted two webinars in 2015. The first was on April 8 and highlighted Urban and Stormwater programs from different parts of the country. The next presentation took place on July 30 and focused on conservation funding strategies from a variety of states. Our 2015 webinars reached Approximately 100 participants from over 30 states and the District of Columbia. These presentations are also archived at <http://www.nascanet.org/index.php/category/webinars/>

### NATIVE POLLINATORS

NASCA continues to make resources available to its members on managing for native pollinator populations. Midway through 2015 NASCA conducted a membership poll to determine what resources would be of the greatest value to our membership. The results are presented in the graph below, and based on these survey responses, NASCA has arranged for the Xerces Society to provide training in early 2016 on those elements most requested in the poll results.



### DISTRICT OFFICIAL TRAINING

NASCA continues to provide one-on-one assistance to those states that request it in order to improve their district official training. Additionally, we have committed to work closely with the NACD District Operations Committee to continue to update and streamline the district official training matrix.

NASCA Executive Director Mike Brown provided district official training on January 6 at the 2015 Delaware Association of Conservation Districts (DACD) annual meeting in Dover, DE. He also provided district official training program on October 22 for the New York Association of Conservation Districts (NYACD). NASCA believes that district official training ultimately leads to better decision-making at the local level, resulting in more efficient and effective conservation delivery.

## NATIONAL CONSERVATION PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

In September 2012 NASCA drafted a white paper entitled "Commitment to Conservation Technical Assistance Through Partnership and Collaboration." The white paper calls for a greater investment in conservation technical assistance and placed a tremendous emphasis on conservation planning.

Fast forward to January 2015 when NRCS hosted a conservation planning summit in Indianapolis. The summit was attended by a diverse group of NRCS staffers, representing positions from Associate Chiefs to District Conservationists. The core partners were also invited to participate. The summit resulted in the creation of the National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCP), a group whose purpose is to reinvigorate conservation planning as the foundation for voluntary conservation delivery. The NCPP Leadership Team is composed of representatives from all of our core partners: NRCS, NACD, NCDEA, NARC&DC, and NASCA. The team is nationally co-chaired by NRCS Western Regional Conservationist Astor Boozer and NASCA Executive Director Mike Brown.

This effort included the formation of action teams to address five specific elements of developing multi-year action plan to address conservation planning. These elements and the NASCA representatives assigned to each action team were:



The action teams have completed their work and have submitted reports to the NCPP Leadership Team. The Leadership Team is working to combine these action team reports into a comprehensive action plan to place an increased emphasis and awareness on conservation planning in the years ahead.

### NASCA's Vision for Conservation Planning

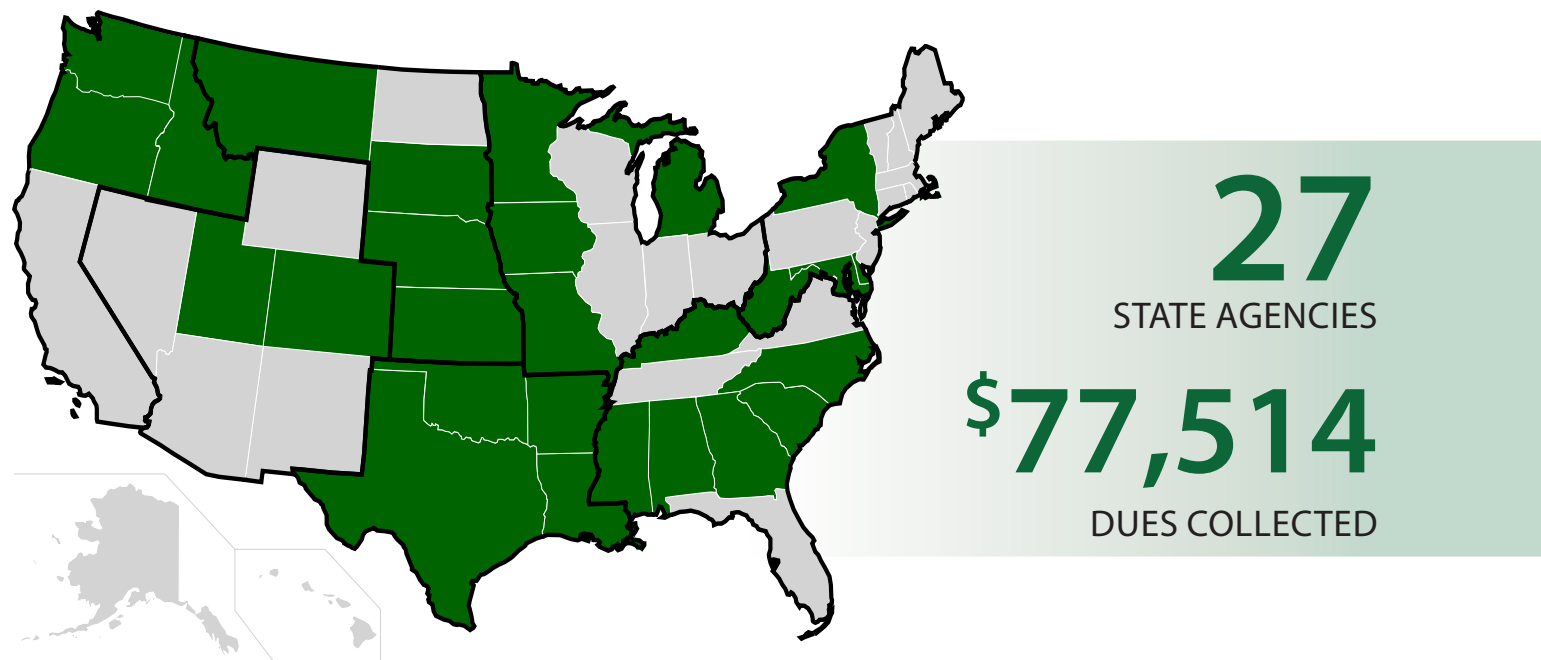
We will provide greater services by providing conservation plans that comprehensively support landowner objectives, are technically and economically sound, are tailored for a specific operation, efficiently use technical assistance resources, and are goal-oriented. We will shift our focus from managing programs to managing natural resources with the assistance and enthusiasm of our greatest partners, America's landowners and land managers.

## 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 \$137,500 in 2015 while at the same time improving service to our member states!

### MEMBERSHIP DUES

In 2015 NASCA received dues in the amount of \$77,514 from 27 member states.



### AGREEMENTS

NASCA entered into a contribution agreement with NRCS again in 2015 to provide technical training to our members and partners, develop and deliver District Official training programs, train members to more effectively prepare RCPP applications, and provide multiple venues for information exchange and technology transfer. Additionally, NRCS has taken on a leadership role and provided significant financial support for the National Conservation Planning Partnership. NASCA is grateful to NRCS for providing a portion of the funding for these projects that provide so much value 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 2015 exceeding budget expectations

	2015 ACTUAL	2015 BUDGET	2016 BUDGET
TOTAL INCOME	\$145,174	\$141,000	\$156,250
OPERATIONAL COSTS	\$28,659	\$33,750	\$33,750
CONTRACTOR COSTS	\$111,657	\$103,750	\$122,500

### 2015 OUTSTANDING STATE CONSERVATIONIST AWARD



NASCA is proud to recognize Louisiana's State Conservationist Kevin Norton as the recipient of NASCA's Outstanding State Conservationist Award.

Kevin is the first recipient of this annual award that recognizes the NRCS State Conservationist that has made the greatest impact on locally-led conservation on a state-wide basis through excellence in service, dedication, cooperation, and partnership. Kevin has demonstrated this excellence not only in Louisiana, but regionally and nationally as well. His efforts have greatly benefited his agency, his peers, his partners, and the cooperators we serve. Kevin is a trusted friend to all with whom he works, and NASCA is pleased to recognize him as the 2015 Outstanding State Conservationist.



**CONGRATULATIONS TO KEVIN NORTON!**

# 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.

## 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. In fact, NASCA hosted this meeting on September 29 in Corpus Christi, Texas. 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.

NASCA Executive Director Mike Brown also travelled to Dallas, TX in June to attend the National Conservation District Employees Association (NCDEA) Board meeting. NCDEA has become a vital member of the National Conservation Partnership and NASCA is appreciative of their professional development efforts for district employees across the country



## ANNUAL MEETING

Each year NASCA members gather to share strategies and experiences in delivering soil and water conservation in their home states. President Shana Joy welcomed members to this year's event in Corpus Christi, Texas. NASCA changed its annual meeting format this year, taking care of business matters first, then inviting our partners to join us in general session on the final day of the meeting. This year's opening general session featured updates from several of our key partners, including National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) President Lee McDaniel, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Associate Chief for Conservation Leonard Jordan, National Conservation District Employees Association (NCDEA) President Tim Riley, National Association of RC&D Councils (NARC&DC) President Olga Walter, and National Watershed Coalition (NWC) President Mark Gilbert. Other keynote speakers during the meeting were Amos Eno of the Resources First Foundation, Jim Gulliford of the Soil and Water Conservation Society, Dr. Kent Messer of the Center for Behavioral and Experimental Agri-Environmental Research, and Diane Gelburd, Aaron Lauster, and Steve Durgin of NRCS.



## NATIONAL WATERSHED COALITION (NWC)

NASCA continued to work closely with the National Watershed Coalition in 2015 to ensure the sustained viability of the Small Watershed Program. In May, NASCA President Shana Joy, NASCA Executive Director Mike Brown, and several NASCA members attended the NWC Biannual Meeting in Fort Worth, Texas. NASCA members Rex Isom, Trey Lam, Greg Foley, and Don Underwood manned a panel on watershed operations from a State Conservation Agency perspective.



*"Our partnership with NASCA is extremely important to us. The increase in participation by NASCA and its members in NWC activities has been an important part of several recent watershed success stories. We hope that you find our partnership equally beneficial."*

Dr. Dan Sebert - National Watershed Coalition



## NASCA AT YOUR SERVICE

In addition to representing its membership at the national level, NASCA also took the opportunity this year to provide a national perspective at some local venues. NASCA Executive Director Mike Brown presented a NASCA overview and a look at the conservation delivery world through the eyes of State Conservation Agencies to the Joint State Conservation Summit in Boise, Idaho in July. The event was attended by the conservation delivery communities, decision-makers, and practitioners from Idaho, Oregon, Montana, and Washington State. Mike additionally reported on NASCA's behalf in August at the NACD Northeast Regional meeting held at Canaan Valley, West Virginia.



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