



2016  
NASCA

# ANNUAL REPORT

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
STATE CONSERVATION AGENCIES**

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I look back on the past decade of my involvement with the National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA), I am grateful for the many lessons I have learned from my peers across this country of ours. NASCA members have faced every barrier to conservation delivery imaginable and consistently come up ways to get the job done. We certainly need to thank our core partners (NACD, NRCS, NCDEA, and NARC&DC) for helping with this task, yet I am always particularly impressed by the dedication, innovation, intellect, and sheer determination of NASCA members to put conservation on the ground.

I am blessed to work in the State of Arkansas, where the conservation partnership is alive and well. I feel especially fortunate to work with Mike Sullivan, who I consider the finest State Conservationist in the business. However, serving as NASCA President during this past year has provided me the opportunity to get a better look at a vast array of State conservation partnerships. Certainly some of these are better than others. Nonetheless, I am inspired by our members and our core partners who continually strive to support and improve State conservation partnerships each and every day.

Improving and maintaining these partnerships is more important today than it has ever been. Just this year we have witnessed several well-coordinated efforts to impose a greater regulatory presence onto our land-managing cooperators. We have also seen more criticism of the voluntary, incentive-based approach to conservation delivery that our partnership has employed so effectively over the past 75 years. I believe that some of this criticism is simply a strategy of self-promotion on the part of some "environmental" groups, but it is also a sign that the core conservation partnership has failed to adequately describe our many successes. We are excellent conservationists, but we need to become better communicators.

I would like to thank all of NASCA's partners for your dedication to conservation. It has been an honor to work with all of you during my term as NASCA President. I would also like to thank NASCA's members, its Board of Directors, its officers, and its staff for your support, enthusiasm, and candor. I consider myself fortunate to be part of an organization that is so cutting-edge, benevolent, agile, and member-focused. I am proud of each and every one of you, our organization, and our partnership.

*Adrian Baber*

NASCA President  
as Immediate Past President.





## 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 training opportunities for its members and partners by assembling the best and brightest talent to share the latest in conservation delivery innovation. In 2016, we hosted three webinars, featuring 18 speakers who discussed how they addressed several of the most pertinent topics our members had identified. The first took place on April 19 and featured tips and successes associated with the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The second webinar occurred on July 13 and highlighted small acreage conservation programs in different parts of the country. The final webinar took place on November 15 and featured speakers who described how to effectively partner with NGOs to deliver conservation. Over 200 members and partners participated in these webinars, and the presentations are archived online at <http://www.nascanet.org/category/webinars/>.

## FIELD TO MARKET

NASCA is proud to announce that it has become an Affiliate Member of Field to Market. This alliance for sustainable agriculture is a multi stakeholder initiative committed to championing solutions for tomorrow's safe, accessible and nutritious food, fiber, and fuel in thriving ecosystems. Affiliate members typically provide scientific and technical guidance and participate in work groups and subgroups, and technical teams. They can also initiate or participate in Fieldprint projects, which utilize Field to Market's platform to assess the environmental impacts of commodity crop production and identify opportunities for continuous improvement. NASCA's North Central director, Doug Thomas of Minnesota, currently serves as NASCA's key contact for Field to Market.



**Field to Market®**

The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture

## DISTRICT OFFICIAL TRAINING

NASCA continues to provide assistance to State Conservation Agencies who request our help with providing district official training. The conservation partnership has identified this work as a priority and NASCA remains committed to working with its members and the NACD District Operations Committee to continue to improve the training we offer our conservation district supervisors and directors.

NASCA Executive Director Mike Brown provided district official training on January 13 at the Delaware Association of Conservation Districts (DACD) Annual Meeting in Dover, DE. He also travelled to Syracuse, NY to provide training at the New York Association of Conservation Districts (NYACD) Annual Meeting on October 20. Both of these sessions were well attended, with energetic and engaged participants.

## NATIONAL CONSERVATION PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

Conservation planning has long been foundational to conservation delivery on private working lands. In recent years, however, an effort to put unprecedented amounts of technical assistance funding to work on the landscape led our conservation partnership to partially abandon this foundation and begin writing conservation plans to serve contract needs rather than natural resource concerns. NASCA joined forces with its core conservation partners (NACD, NRCS, NCDEA, and NARC&DC) in 2015 to form the National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCP). To best serve our cooperators, the NCP developed several key objectives:

1. Reinvigorate conservation planning.
2. Improve the partnership's capacity to deliver conservation planning assistance.
3. Ensure the delivery of technically sound science-based assistance.
4. Build a workforce of skilled conservation planners.

The NCP has made significant progress in 2016, thanks to the dedication of many dedicated partners working together on this effort. Some of these accomplishments include:

1. NRCS has hired a full time communications coordinator position located in NRCS headquarters to work with NCP.
2. An NCP publication was developed for member organizations and employees.
3. As part of the effort to develop an NCP communications plan, we conducted a nationwide conservation planning survey for both internal and external customers. We have logged thousands of responses and are developing a report based on these surveys.
4. NRCS invited approximately 60 conservation district employees to participate in Conservation Boot Camp this year. Additionally, NRCS has committed additional funding for training that will allow 80 partner employees per year to participate in Conservation Boot Camp and related courses over the next 5 years.
5. NCP developed a new conservation planner certification policy.
6. The National Conservation Planner database has been developed and populated: There are currently over 5,000 planners entered into the database. New planners are being added daily.

The NCP is emphasizing the critical role that conservation planning plays in advancing voluntary conservation efforts on private lands. A broader commitment to planning will improve the health of our communities, make farms and ranches more resilient to extreme weather events, maintain and increase agricultural production, increase carbon sequestration, and improve our soil, water, and habitat resources. It is our best path to agricultural, environmental, and economic sustainability.



### 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.

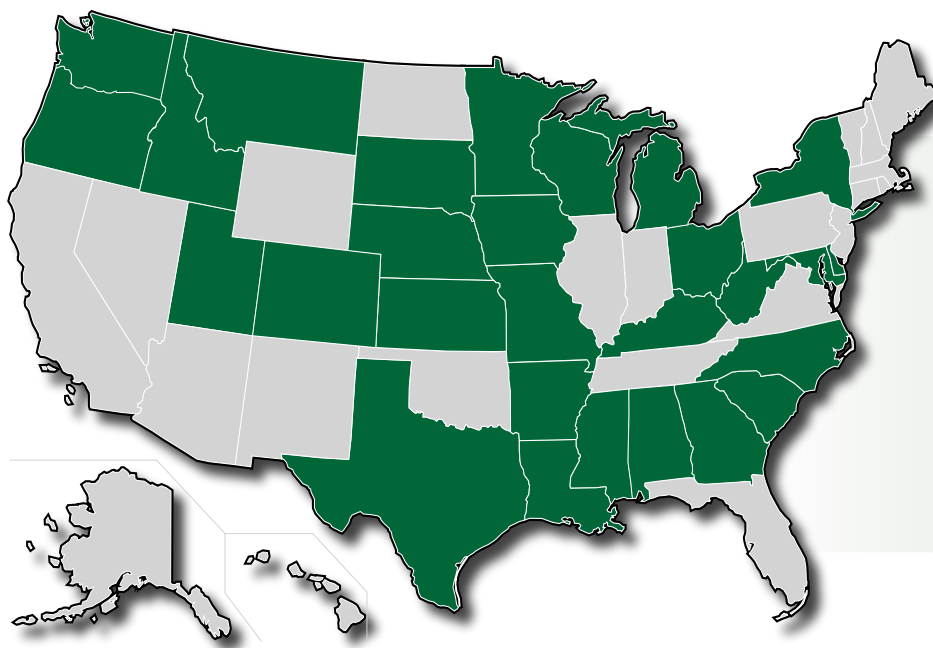
## OBJECTIVE II

# 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 \$156,250 in 2016 while at the same time improving service to our member states!

## MEMBERSHIP DUES

In 2016 NASCA received dues in the amount of \$81,300 from 28 member states.



# 28

STATE AGENCIES

# \$81,300

DUES COLLECTED

## AGREEMENTS

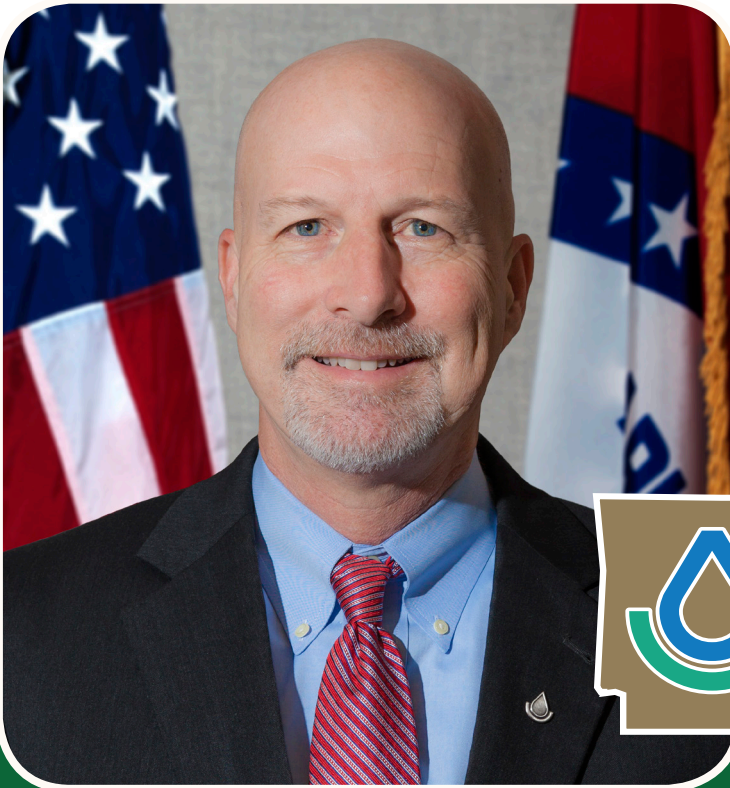
NASCA entered into a contribution agreement with NRCS again in 2016 to provide technical training to our members and partners, develop and deliver District Official training programs, conduct an inventory of State programs designed to incentivize private investment in conservation, and provide multiple 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 its annual budget reducing costs wherever applicable. NASCA performed well in 2016 exceeding budget expectations

	2016 ACTUAL	2016 BUDGET	2017 BUDGET
TOTAL INCOME	\$128,417	\$156,250	\$183,750
OPERATIONAL COSTS	\$24,615	\$33,750	\$61,250
CONTRACTOR COSTS	\$119,788	\$122,500	\$122,500

## 2016 OUTSTANDING STATE CONSERVATIONIST AWARD



NASCA is proud to recognize Arkansas' State Conservationist Michael Sullivan as the recipient of our 2016 Outstanding State Conservationist Award.

Mike is being honored for being the State Conservationist who has had the greatest impact on locally-led conservation on a statewide basis. He has demonstrated excellence in service, dedication, cooperation, and partnership. Mike's nomination for this award was accompanied by countless letters of support from industry, academia, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and of course his core partners in Arkansas. Mike exemplifies partnership in every way and NASCA is pleased to recognize him as the 2016 Outstanding State Conservationist.



**CONGRATULATIONS TO  
MICHAEL SULLIVAN!**

## 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 core conservation partners (NACD, NRCS, NCDEA, and NARC&DC), and a number of NGOs.

### PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT

NASCA takes partnership very seriously. We actively support our partners with their key initiatives in a variety of ways. For example, NASCA Executive Director Mike Brown has served on the NACD District Outlook Task Force during the past two years. This work was completed when the task force submitted its final report to the NACD Board of Directors in July. In June, Mike was asked to attend the NCDEA Summer Board meeting in Denver, and lead the Board through a strategic planning exercise. We are pleased to report that they made tremendous progress and have since polished the work in Denver into a strategic plan for the organization. Additionally, Mike continues to co-host the National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCPP) along with Astor Boozer of NRCS. This effort benefits the entire core partnership as well as the thousands of cooperators we assist across the country. Finally, the Soil Health Institute invited NASCA to participate in its first annual meeting in Louisville, Kentucky in July. We were delighted to accept their invitation and help the Institute shape its future.



### NASCA AT YOUR SERVICE

While NASCA represents its members at the national level, we also take advantage of opportunities to bring national perspective to local events. NASCA's Executive Director Mike Brown was asked to join several NRCS officials in presenting a session on the NRCS Resource Stewardship Evaluation Tool at the Soil and Water Conservation Society's (SWCS) annual meeting in Louisville, KY on July 27. Mike also gave a number of NASCA updates and keynote presentations at a number of venues in 2016:

- North Central NASCA Meeting
- Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts (KACD) Annual Meeting
- NACD Southeast Regional Meeting
- NACD South Central Regional Meeting
- NACD Northeast Regional Meeting
- Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) Annual Meeting



## ANNUAL MEETING

NASCA ends each summer by holding its annual meeting in a venue where our members and partners are invited to share ideas, experiences, innovation, and intellect. This year, NASCA President Adrian Baber welcomed participants to the Branson Convention Center in Branson, Missouri. The meeting started with two days of information sharing, including particular focus on specific topics such as conservation planning, the most important things State Conservation Agencies do, sustaining locally-led conservation, the NRCS Administrative Transformation, and RCPP. We also hosted a field staff sharing session, facilitated by Ray Ledgerwood, during these same two days. The final day of the meeting was dedicated to hearing from our partners and guest speakers. We enjoyed presentations from NRCS, NACD, NCDEA, NARC&DC, EPA, the National Agricultural Law Center, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Freshwater Society, the Soil Health Institute, the Conservation Federation of Missouri, and the National Watershed Coalition.



## FAREWELL TO THE CHIEF

NASCA would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to NRCS Chief Jason Weller, who has led his agency with the true spirit of partnership during the last four years. We have come to know Jason as a forward-thinking, energetic leader who makes everyone around him better at what they do. He will be missed in the Chief's office, but we hope that we will continue to have opportunities to work with him in other capacities. Thank you Jason!



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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



**Marc Cribb**  
**Vice President**  
*Conservation Districts*  
*Program Manager*  
 South Carolina Department  
 of Natural Resources



**Stephen Shine**  
**Secretary**  
*Pollution Prevention Section Manager*  
 Michigan Department of  
 Agriculture & Rural Development



**Brian Farkas**  
**Treasurer**  
*Executive Director*  
 West Virginia Conservation Agency



**Shana Joy**  
**Past President**  
**Regional Director**  
**Washington State**  
**Conservation Commission**

# REGIONAL DIRECTORS

**Teri Murrison**  
*Administrator*  
Idaho



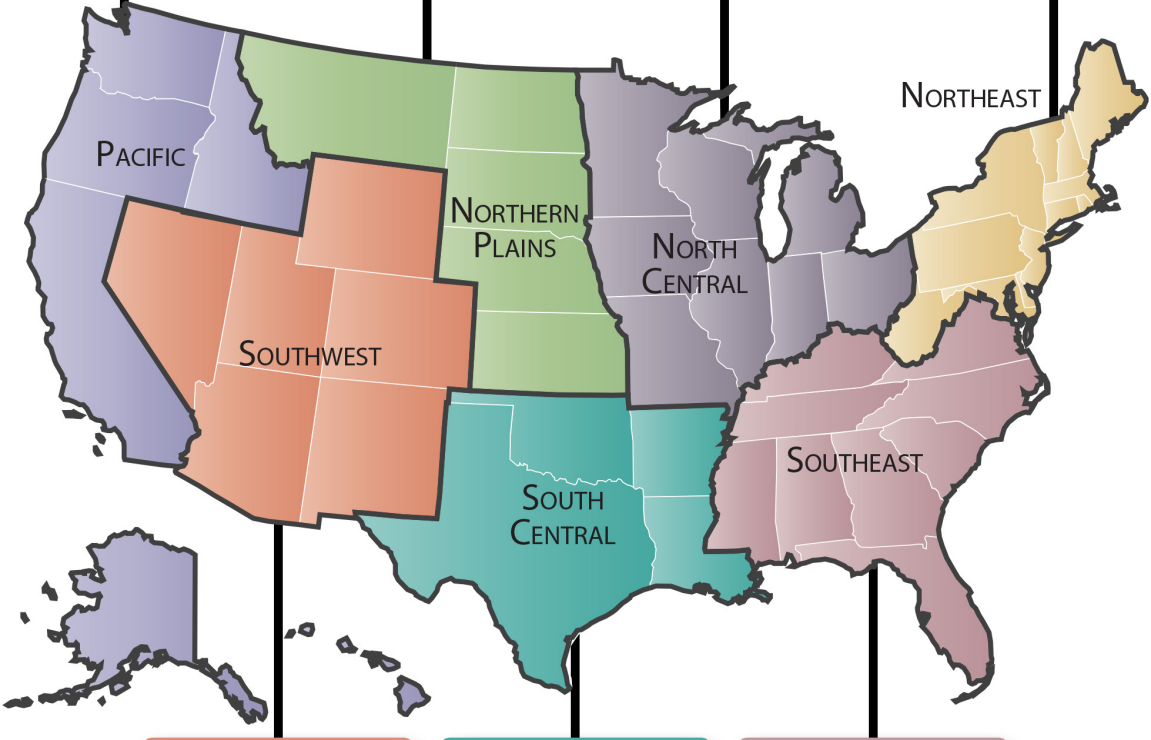
**Bill Smith**  
*Division Director*  
South Dakota



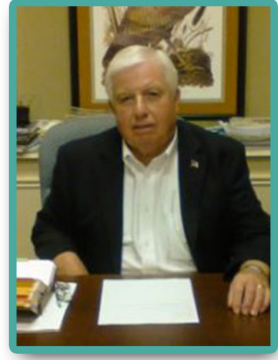
**Doug Thomas**  
*Assistant Director*  
Minnesota



**Louise Lawrence**  
*Chief*  
Maryland



**Cindy Lair**  
*Program Manager*  
Colorado



**Brad Spicer**  
*Assistant Commissioner*  
Louisiana



**Mark Gilbert**  
*Deputy Administrator*  
Mississippi



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
STATE CONSERVATION AGENCIES**

PO Box 211  
Hartly, DE. 19953

[nascanet.org](http://nascanet.org)