COMPUTER MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Encourage state conservation partners to utilize the Information Exchange MOU and the Interconnectivity Agreement to engage in discussions immediately and reach agreement on how to address computer management issues and options within their state.
   a. Encourage NRCS to recognize the important role of the partners in the delivery system, as well as the financial value of the workload being carried out by conservation districts and state agencies. This is especially critical when determining if and when the cost of computer management is charged back to partners.
   b. Encourage NRCS to continue to provide a minimum of one (1) computer work station and seat management costs per conservation district per year.
   c. To the extent possible, also encourage consistency in decisions and avoidance of last minute decisions or changes.
   d. USDA will plan to give conservation districts a minimum of 18 months notice prior to any cost increases and/or changes in contractual agreement. This will give conservation districts time to make adjustments in their budgets.
2) NACD will work with the conservation partners on the national level to assure that USDA considers conservation districts and state agencies when making decisions about computer management, security, access, etc.
3) Because access to and sharing of information is vital to the successful delivery of conservation technical assistance by *all* within the conservation partnership, NACD will encourage USDA to provide access to information which is needed for conservation district and state conservation agency employees to perform their duties in serving farmers and ranchers. The information that should be shared by USDA is listed, but not limited to the following:
   a. Individual operators' name(s), mailing address, phone number and all information contained on FSA Form 1026A;
   b. Common land unit layer GIS files including acreage, HEL determination, farm number(s), tract number(s), field numbers, state and county codes, and cropping history;
   c. All information contained within program participant USDA folders for specific conservation programs, e.g. – EQIP, CRP, CREP, etc.
4) NACD will continue to update the NACD website material for states and districts which fully discloses all the facts concerning access to the USDA CCE system, including pros vs. cons of staying connected to the system vs. securing internet access/computer purchases separate from USDA. Continue to add/modify FAQs on the webpage and provide the discount purchase program for all hardware upon availability.

5) NACD will encourage USDA to consider actions that support conservation districts and state agencies to remain within the CCE system:
   a. USDA shall help develop firewalls for state/district computers that are not on the CCE system, but are networked with other CCE computers.
   b. USDA shall develop encryption of wireless aircard devices for security of state/district equipment.
   c. USDA shall require only the necessary security tools and processes to protect the system, keeping costs to conservation districts to a minimum whenever possible.
   d. Computer programs and tools that are developed or altered for USDA's use should be made available to conservation districts at no cost, e.g. – RUSLE2, C-Graz, Engineering Field Handbook, etc.