Spring 2014

The RESOURCE

America's Voice for Conservation

The New Farm Bill

Inside the Agricultural Act of 2014

- NACD Hosts Successful Spring Fly-In
- High Tunnels in Cleveland Help Underserved Communities
- Conservation Leaders Honored at NACD Annual Meeting

The Official Publication of The National Association of Conservation Districts

a letter from the president

Earl Garber

President,
National Association of
Conservation Districts

Leading the Way

There was excitement in the air at your 2014 NACD Annual Meeting in Anaheim, Calif. when the U.S. Senate passed the Agricultural Act of 2014. After Senate passage on February 4, President Obama quickly signed the bill into law three days later.

As members of the natural resource conservation community, you can be particularly proud of what was included in several of the Farm Bill titles. The majority of NACD's Farm Bill principles submitted to the House and Senate agricultural committees were included in the final bill.

As NACD requested on behalf of our members, the final bill consolidates 23 programs into 13 programs, providing greater efficiency of delivery for producers and landowners across the nation. Savings from program consolidation will provide additional dollars for financial assistance for our producers and landowners to install conservation on the ground.

In addition to streamlining, our efforts to provide flexibility in determining the need for technical assistance funds were also successful. The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture now has the decision-making authority necessary to assure the effective implementation of conservation programs. After much discussion on the pros and cons of linking conservation compliance to crop insurance premium assistance during the Farm Bill process, a provision to include compliance was included in the final bill. A key part of the provision is that requirements are not retroactive to activities in previous years. Just as our membership reaches across the landscape of America, so should our commitment to the American people. This provision will assure their hard-earned tax dollars are being well spent on our natural resources for present and future generations.

The Forestry Title included several important provisions. The Healthy Forest Reserve Program was reauthorized with increased funding. The "Good Neighbor Authority" program was also reauthorized and is now available nationwide. This will continue to allow for partnerships with private and public landholders to implement conservation. Reauthorization of the "Stewardship Contracting Authority" will also increase jobs and maintain private industry capacity to serve the forestry needs in rural communities.

These are just a few of the many success stories in the Agricultural Act of 2014. These "wins" for conservation would not have been possible without your active engagement over the past two and half years. Thank you for the grassroots outreach you provided on a regular basis throughout this long process.

The final bill is a tremendous achievement for our nation's landowners and producers. Over the next five years, I encourage you to remain engaged by providing locally-led leadership to assist the USDA in implementing a successful conservation program.

Earl J. Garber
NACD President

The RESOURCE

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Conserving Natural Resources for Our Future
National Association of Conservation Districts

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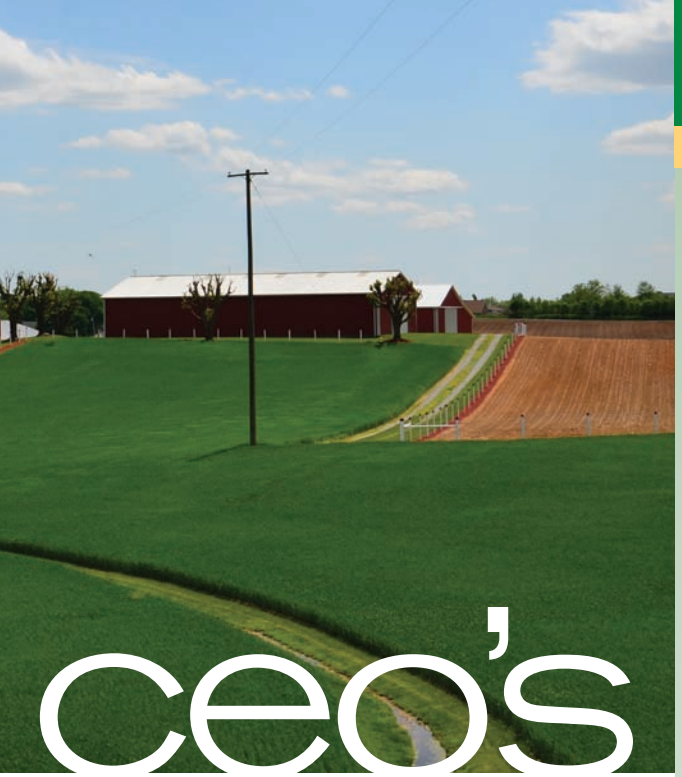
John McDonald . . . . . Pacific Region
Gene Schmidt . . . . . Past President
Charlie Schafer . . . . . CTIC

Editors: Bethany Shively,
Bethany-Shively@nacdnet.org
Diane Ivey,
Diane-Ivey@nacdnet.org

about our cover

This photo by Joni Mehus of Root River SWCD was the 2013 NACD/Auxiliary Photo Contest's 1st place winner in the "Agriculture/Conservation Across America – Adult" category. To see more winners from the photo contest, visit *flickr.com/nacd*.



ceo's corner

Working Together

The spring "roller coaster" has been in full effect in the Eastern U.S. this year (probably like every year when we think about it)! Cold, windy and down-right unhospitable to warm, even hot, and comfortable have been the days before and after for the last few weeks. It is consistent with the toils of Congress over the last few years. Hot and cold, active and not-so-much, bi-partisan and…well, maybe I exaggerate a bit with that last statement except for one set of Congressional Committees: the Agriculture Committees.

The House and Senate Ag Committees worked diligently on the Farm Bill legislation for two and a half years, and were able to pass the final conferenced Bill on February 4. This legislation produces a huge opportunity for conservation districts to assist in the development of priorities, the identification of participants, and the implementation of conservation in relationship to existing, consolidated programs, and new programs.

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is an interesting new program that identifies opportunities for "partners" to be working together to develop new ways to encourage participation of private landowners and managers in conservation programs. The opportunity to work with others in this type of program is not something new to conservation districts. I feel this is the way that districts operate around the country.

Districts are the collaboration point for many partners, and bring a sense of community to the projects they partner in at the local level. As this new program is developed, NACD is providing input that the local delivery system of conservation should be utilized, and given priority, in the proposals that are submitted in this RCPP process. My hope is that conservation districts are working with partners to develop proposals that assist producers to implement conservation practices on working lands.

As we look at the prospect to lead from the local level, an opportunity such as the RCPP is the kind of program in which conservation districts should be excited about participating. NACD hopes that additional opportunities in the new Farm Bill are embraced by the local level, and that conservation prospers under the direction and leadership of conservation districts.

John Larson
CEO, National Association
of Conservation Districts

John Larson, CEO

Photo by Bill Clark

NACD Hosts Successful Spring Fly-In

NACD held its Spring Fly-in, March 25-26 in Washington, D.C. Approximately 120 attendees from across the country heard from policymakers and regulators and met with their legislators on Capitol Hill.

On Tuesday, March 25, NACD held a General Session at the Hyatt Arlington. Speakers included Krysta Harden, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture; Jason Weller, NRCS Chief; Doug Crandall, Director of Legislative Affairs, U.S. Forest Service; and a Farm Bill Implementation Panel. Panel participants included: David Graves, President, American Association of Crop Insurers; Bruce Knight, Principal, Strategic Conservation Solutions LLC; Jeremy Peters, Director of Federal Policy, American Farmland Trust; and Chandler Goule, Senior Vice President of Programs, National Farmers Union.

Tuesday evening, NACD hosted a Capitol Hill reception attended by over 250 NACD members, partners and members of Congress and their staff. House Committee on Agriculture Chairman Frank Lucas gave remarks, and was presented with a Conservation Award plaque from NACD. Reception sponsors included: National Farmers Union, American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, Soil Science Society of America; Quail Forever, Pheasants Forever, National Wildlife Federation, American Farmland Trust, NCDEA; Dow Agrosciences, Case IH, Agricen, John Deere, and Agri Drain.

On Wednesday, March 26, attendees had breakfast on Capitol Hill and heard from Rep. Cynthia Lummis of Wyoming (sponsor of the Open Book on Equal Access to Justice Act) and Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow. Senator Stabenow was also presented with a special recognition plaque for her efforts on behalf of conservation.

Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow and NACD President Earl Garber.

After the breakfast, NACD members dispersed on Capitol Hill to meet with their Senators and Representatives about conservation policy priorities, including Fiscal Year 2015 Appropriations and a resolution supporting the conservation of natural resources.

The resolution, H.Con.Res.95, introduced on March 26 by U.S. Representative Richard Hudson (NC-08), expresses the sense of Congress regarding support for voluntary, incentive-based, private land conservation implemented through cooperation with local soil and water conservation districts.

NACD members at the Congressional Reception on Tuesday, March 25.

Concurrent Resolution Expresses Support for Conservation

NACD is praising a bipartisan resolution expressing the sense of Congress regarding support for voluntary, incentive based, private land conservation implemented through cooperation with local soil and water conservation districts.

H.Con.Res.95 was introduced in March—during NACD's Spring Fly-in—by U.S Representative Richard Hudson (NC-08). NACD is currently working to gather co-sponsors in both houses of Congress. The text of the resolution is below:

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress regarding support for voluntary, incentive-based, private land conservation implemented through cooperation with local soil and water conservation districts.

Whereas over 70 percent of the contiguous United States is privately owned; Whereas the future of the environment is determined by the decisions made by the men and women who own and manage that land, including urban landscapes; Whereas world population is projected to reach 9,000,000,000 people by 2050; Whereas increased production will be needed from agricultural land to feed the increasing population; Whereas meeting these needs will make caring for the environment more difficult; and Whereas landowners work to ensure they sustain a healthy environment to support abundant wildlife: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That— (1) Congress supports the conservation of the Nation's natural resources and working lands; and (2) it is the sense of Congress that voluntary, incentive-based, private land conservation, provided in partnership with local conservation districts, is necessary to sustain natural resources, meet the needs of a growing population, and ensure safe, abundant, and adequate resources for current and future generations.

The New Farm Bill: Inside the Agricultural Act of 2014

After three years attempting to pass a comprehensive five-year Farm Bill, Congress has delivered at last: on February 7, President Obama officially signed the Agricultural Act of 2014 into law. The signing came three days after passage of the bill in the Senate by a bipartisan vote of 68-32, and passage of the bill in the House in late January by a bipartisan vote of 251-166.

It's a cause for celebration and relief, especially among the conservation community. NACD thanks its members for their support and engagement throughout the process; your unrelenting efforts to advocate for a strong Conservation Title and final passage of the Farm Bill were instrumental to its success. Now that we have moved into the implementation and rule-making phase, it is important to know what makes this Farm Bill different than those previously enacted.

What's New in the Farm Bill?

The 2014 Farm Bill streamlines the Conservation Title by consolidating 23 conservation programs into 13 programs, making it more flexible, accountable, and adaptable at the local level.

The new Farm Bill also restores livestock disaster assistance for losses dating back to 2011, as well as establishing a permanent livestock disaster program. Nearly $7 billion is allocated for programs related specifically to livestock in the 2014 Farm Bill, which includes programs that provide an emergency safety net for producers when disaster strikes.

Additionally, the bill establishes record-level funding for many specialty crop and organic food programs, including incentives for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participants to use benefits at farmers markets and local food providers. It also includes incentives and exemptions for beginning farmers, ranchers, and military veterans enrolling in Farm Bill programs.

Aside from streamlining the programs within the Conservation Title, NACD is pleased with the new additions to the Conservation Title. The title includes a provision submitted by NACD that gives Technical Assistance (TA) decision-making authority to the Secretary of USDA for effective implementation of conservation programs. TA is necessary in order to implement programs such as EQIP, CSP, CRP, and the newly structured RCPP and ACEP.

Conservation Title

The 13 programs housed within the new Conservation Title are as follows:

1. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
2. Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
3. Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
4. Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
5. Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
6. Soil and Water Resources Conservation Program
7. Terminal Lakes Assistance Program
8. Emergency Watershed Protection Program
9. Agriculture Conservation Experience Services Program
10. Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentives Program
11. Grassroots, Source water Protection Program
12. Conservation on Private Land Program
13. Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program

NACD also successfully advocated for a provision, included in the final bill, to relink conservation compliance to crop insurance premium assistance for highly erodible lands and wetlands. While NACD supported a national Sodsaver program, we are satisfied that the bill includes a first step by implementing a regional Sodsaver program. States included in the program include: Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota.

Farm Bill Implementation

Many of the existing conservation programs will be updated, rather than completely overhauled, by NRCS. Several programs have remained open for signup or will be open for signup starting in May. Some programs, which were streamlined into new programs, automatically transferred contracts. USDA has been working hard to ensure that the rule-writing and implementation process is done as efficiently as possible.

All conservation districts should be looking at potential partnerships and ideas to submit a proposal to NRCS for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Districts within a critical conservation area may qualify for funding sources from the national, state and critical conservation area percentages allotted in the Farm Bill. NRCS has ensured us that once the RCPP is finalized and a request for proposals is sent out, there will be ample time to submit a proposal and qualify for project funding.

Program	Enrollment Status	Sign-up/Application Status
ACEP	Farmland Protection Program & Wetlands Reserve Program automatically enrolled	- Agriculture Land Easements, open by the end of May - Wetlands Reserve Easements, currently open
CSP	No changes	Sign-up closed, re-enrollment starting this Summer
EQIP	Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Program automatically enrolled	Continuous sign-up, notification of contracts starting in May
RCPP	N/A	Will begin acceptance of RFPs in May

Forestry Title

A number of provisions in the Farm Bill provide opportunities for forest landowners and resource professionals. For example, permanent reauthorization of the Stewardship Contracting Authority should help to stimulate the forest industry, while taking better care of our forestland. It allows the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to enter into long-term contracts to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire and improve forest health. To date, the Stewardship Contracting Authority has been used to treat more than a half-million acres across the country.

Another forestry highlight was the expansion of Good Neighbor Authority, which allows state foresters to work across jurisdictional boundaries to address landscape-

scale forest issues. This would allow for fuels reduction treatments on federal lands adjacent to areas where similar treatments are being done on non-federal lands. Prior to now, work through this Authority was only permitted in Utah and Colorado.

The Farm Bill also increased discretionary funding for the Healthy Forests Reserve Program and strengthened the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA), which allows the USDA Secretary to assign hazardous fuel reduction projects, at least one per state, to national forests experiencing dieback due to insect infestation or disease. HFRA was allocated $200 million annually through FY2024.

Urban & Community Programs

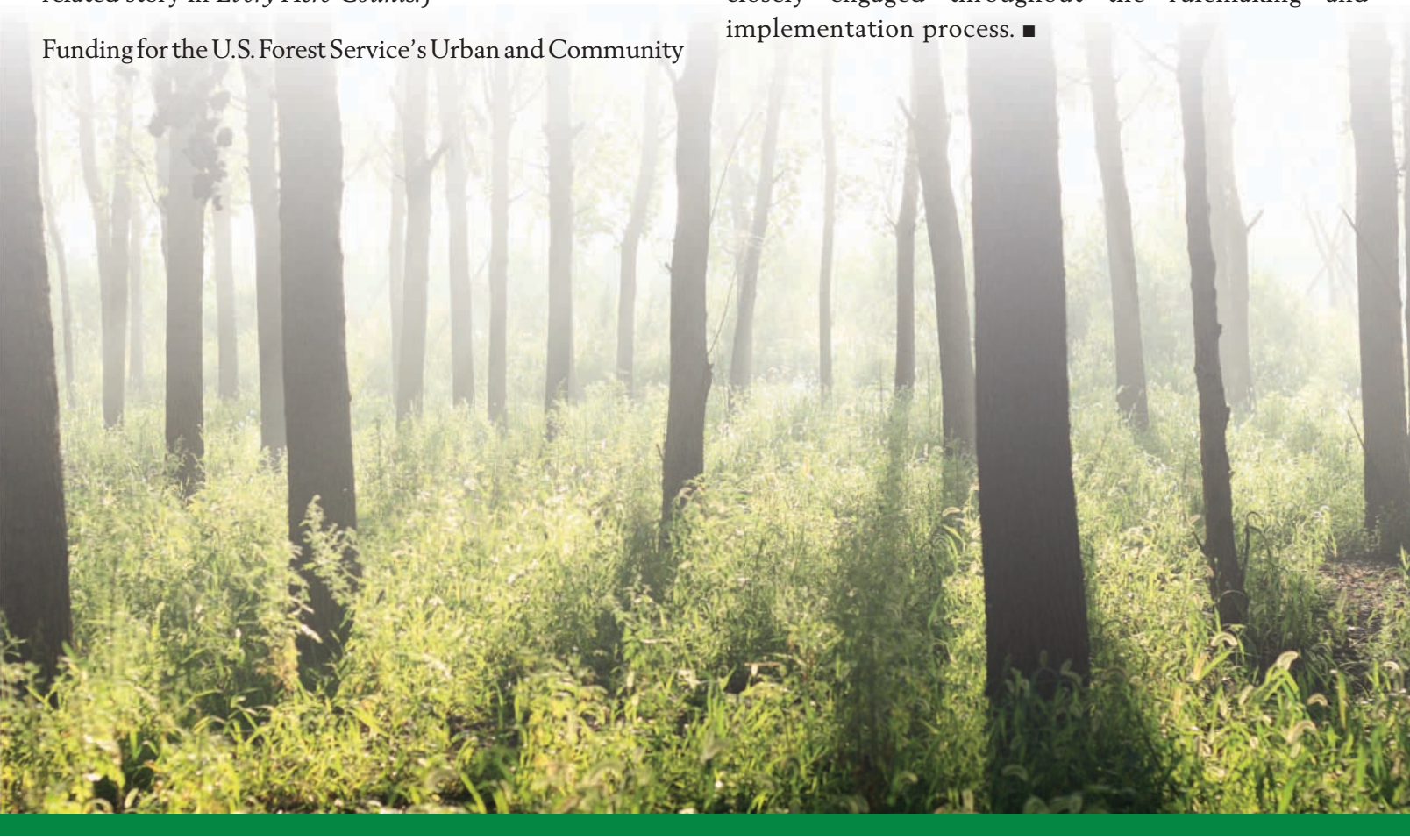
NRCS's popular Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative now provides EQIP cost-sharing for urban farmers, enabling them to construct high tunnels if they meet local regulations and qualify under NRCS standards. (See related story in *Every Acre Counts*.)

Funding for the U.S. Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Program held firm, and the Farm Bill called for an annualized inventory of trees in urban settings as part of the Forest Service's revised strategic plan for forest inventory and analysis.

Healthy food access will see increased funding and the creation of some new programs. The bill triples funding to $30 million per year for the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program. It also expands the program to allow grants to both direct-to-consumer projects and projects supporting local and regional food enterprises through processing, aggregation, distribution, storage, and marketing. A new program, the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program, doubles spending power of low-income Americans using SNAP benefits to purchase nutritious fruits and vegetables.

Moving Forward

All in all, the 2014 Farm Bill was a huge win for conservation. NACD looks forward to remaining closely engaged throughout the rulemaking and implementation process. ■



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

2014 NACD Farm Bill Priority Outcome

NACD Top Farm Bill Priorities	Agriculture Act of 2014 Outcome
1. TA decision-making authority Give Technical Assistance (TA) decision-making authority to the Secretary of USDA for effective implementation of conservation programs.	✓ The Senate language inserted by NACD was included in the bill, giving decision-making authority to the Secretary of Agriculture. This will allow for faster use of TA funds and more conservation programs being implemented on the ground.
2. Conservation Compliance relinked to crop insurance Tie conservation compliance to crop insurance (while opposing AGI limitations or premium assistance reductions to crop insurance) as part of NACD's broad coalition agreement.	✓ The Farm Bill relinks Conservation Compliance to federal crop insurance premiums with no claw back (not retroactive). NACD advocated for the provision after the removal of direct payments to ensure producers have an incentive to remain compliant.
3. National Sodsaver provision Support Senate's national Sodsaver provision to address crop insurance disparities and preserve habitats for game species on native sod and on grasslands that producers cannot certify have ever been cropped.	✓ A regional Sodsaver program was included in the bill, applying to the following states: Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota. NACD supports the regional program as a first step towards a national program.
4. Forestry Title pilot program Include Forestry Title pilot program, taken from the National Forest Emergency Response Act, giving the Secretary of Agriculture authority to assign relief to National Forests decimated by insect infestation, drought, disease, and storm damage.	✓ The Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 was amended in the bill to allow the Secretary of Agriculture to provide assistance to forest areas that have been decimated by insect infestation up to 3,000 acres per year at the Governor of the state's request.
5. Reduced cuts for Conservation Title Support the Senate budget for Title II. These cuts are fair and justifiable, and we are doing our part to contribute to our nation's deficit reduction. Cuts beyond the Senate version would hurt the very viability of the programs in the Title.	✓ The 2014 Farm Bill's cuts to Title II were higher than the Senate version but remained fair ($4 billion instead of $3.5 billion). For the first time in Farm Bill history, Title II expenditure is higher than the Commodity Title!

Additional provisions included in the Agriculture Act of 2014 of interest to NACD:

- The new bill includes the consolidation of the previously 23 conservation programs into a highly manageable and efficient 13 programs. The Regional Conservation Partnership Program and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program were added.
- A permanent baseline was established for EQIP with an overall increase in funding compared to the 2008 Farm Bill. EQIP now includes WHIP along with 5% of funds set aside for WHIP activities.

Cambria County Conservation District Works to Improve Water Quality and Fish Habitat

One conservation district's work has garnered the attention of conservation leaders and organizations in Pennsylvania. Cambria County Conservation District is located in the southwest part of the state, near headwaters of the west branch of the Susquehanna River.

Said District Manager Robb Piper, "Everything in the upper half of the county flows to the Chesapeake Bay; the lower half flows to the Ohio Basin."

Sediment is an ongoing problem, and the district has become a popular partner in projects to improve water quality and fish habitat. For its efforts, the district received the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's (PFBC) Habitat Appreciation Award this January.

Since 2007, Cambria County Conservation District and PFBC have worked together to place 782 habitat structures in three reservoirs. These habitat structures are made from lumber, rock and concrete blocks, and are designed to attract and protect aquatic life. Other structures helped stabilize 4,010 feet of eroded shoreline while improving angler access and additional fish habitat.

"They have gone above and beyond our average habitat partners by pulling in grants for project materials and staff reimbursement, which enables the Commission to accomplish more habitat work on the waters of Cambria County," said Ben Page, chief of the PFBC's Lake Habitat Section.

In March, Cambria County's work was recognized by the Pennsylvania Lake Management Society. Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) asked Piper if he would provide a presentation on the district's work at an upcoming meeting. The presentation highlighted 7,000 feet of fish habitat remediation in a flood control project on Chest Creek in the middle of Patton Borough. Through the work, the district was able to make a low-flow channel away from a dyke to cool temperatures and add habitat, such as hemlock logs, to attract fish.

The projects also attracted fishermen, Piper said. "You ought to see the people down there on the first day of trout season," he said.

For its most recent project, the district obtained funding from the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies through the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds. This grant was PA DEP fine money paid by a local energy company. The district is performing streambank stabilization and improving fish habitat in the Little Conemaugh River drainage.

To learn more about Cambria County Conservation District's streambank and fish habitat work, email Robb Piper at *piper@co.cambria.pa.us*.

The Cambria County Conservation District has garnered praise for its water quality and fish habitat improvement efforts.

High Tunnels in Cleveland Help Underserved Communities

It all started with an NACD Urban and Community webinar, said Janine Rybka, Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District administrator.

The webinar made note of the fact that urban areas don't qualify for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding in NRCS's Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative. The Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers. The goal of the initiative is to assist producers to extend the growing season for high value crops in an environmentally safe manner.

NRCS State Conservationist Terry Cosby reached out to U.S. Rep. Marcia Fudge, which led to NRCS implementing the Cleveland High Tunnel Initiative. Many of the neighborhoods in Fudge's district are impoverished and considered food deserts. According to USDA, food deserts are defined as urban neighborhoods and rural towns without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food.

Now, urban farmers across the country are eligible for EQIP cost-share funding under the Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative.

The Cuyahoga district serves Cleveland, a city with more than 3,000 vacant lots. City planners have been focusing on urban agriculture, and the High Tunnel project fits well with efforts to expand community gardens and urban market gardens. The initiative has supported construction of more than 50 high tunnels, sometimes called hoop houses (see photo). The district hosts workshops and other activities to spread the word about the effort.

The Cleveland initiative gives higher priority to applicants located in city-targeted agricultural use areas, areas designated as food deserts, and applicants from one of the 20 U.S. Department of Urban Development Special Needs Program target areas. The city's Division of Water has also reduced hydrant permit fees in certain areas. These features help the initiative reach out to historically underserved populations, often minorities and low-income residents.

"It was a quantum jump for NRCS to provide funding for high tunnels in an urban area, and we really wanted it to be in Cleveland," Rybka said.

The initiative is one example of the Cuyahoga district's efforts to reach out to historically underserved populations. Others include environmental education for urban children in partnership with several other organizations, and translating conservation outreach materials to Spanish to serve a large Puerto Rican population in the Cleveland area. Rybka offered advice for other districts reaching out to underserved populations.

"Collaborate, and don't be afraid to get out there," he said. "Think about what we have to offer to people, what we promote, what we've believed in as conservation districts back from the Dust Bowl."

More information on high tunnels is available on the NRCS Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative web page. Watch for a future NACD report on conservation districts reaching out to traditionally underserved populations across the country.

NACD Summer Meeting Registration is Now Open!

NACD is pleased to invite you to the summer Soil Health Forum and Conservation Tour, July 21-22, in Indianapolis, Indiana (with NACD Board Meetings July 19-20). As part of the meeting, NCDEA will also be offering a soil health technical training session for district and NRCS employees on July 23.

The tour, forum and training will be held in conjunction with NACD partners NRCS, EPA and the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD). Participants will select from several farm tours highlighting on-the-ground conservation practices in part supported by USDA Farm Bill and EPA 319 programs. Dow Agrosciences will host the NACD Board of Directors meeting on July 19.

On Monday, we'll hear from a variety of speakers, including a panel of farmers, on the topic of soil health. On Tuesday, attendees will participate in one of several of soil-health focused tours, including:

- Rulon Enterprises: Economic opportunities of Soil Health Systems
- Starkey Farms/Little Ireland Farms: Measuring the Benefits of Soil Health for Water Quality/ Farming for Soil Health and Upstream from Indy's Drinking Water Source
- Legan Farms: Irrigation and Manure Integration for Soil Health and Water Quality

On Tuesday afternoon, we'll head to the Indiana State Fairgrounds to visit the "Pathway to Water Quality" watershed demonstration site and the Indiana Soybean Alliance "Glass Barn," a vivid experience of what life is like for Indiana farmers, including how technology serves as a bridge between farmers and the land.

The NACD Soil Health Forum and Conservation Tour is an excellent opportunity to learn more about NACD, NRCS, and state soil health outreach efforts! For the latest information on the agenda, tours, hotel, local attractions and to register, visit: *nacdnet.org/events/summer2014*.

We look forward to seeing you in Indianapolis!

NACD Testifies at BLM National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board

NACD's Western Issues Specialist Ted Ramsey testified on behalf of the National Horse and Burro Rangeland Management Coalition (of which NACD is a founding member) at the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board meeting in Sacramento, California on April 14. The National Horse and Burro Rangeland Management Coalition is a diverse partnership of 13 wildlife and sportsman organizations, industry partners, and natural-resource scientific societies.

During his testimony, Ramsey outlined the destruction that overpopulated herds cause to rangeland health and voiced the importance of sound science and active management of wild horse and burros.

Gary Moyer, NACD Southwest Region Chair, provided comments to the Advisory Board on behalf of NACD. Moyer requested that the Advisory Board encourage BLM to lead by example in complying with adopted Resource Management Plans on lands within their jurisdiction, as private landowners are expected to do. The Wildlife Society and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation also presented, representing the Coalition's concern for the health of the range.

NACD continues to encourage BLM to keep natural resource management and the health of the nation's public lands as a guiding factor within all ongoing decisions regarding the management of Wild Horses.

CTIC Dialogues Panel Held in DC

In April, the Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC) held its annual Dialogues Panel on the economic and ecological benefits of agricultural conservation systems at the Capitol Visitors Center in Washington, DC.

The Panel was moderated by Sara Wyant of Agri-Pulse Communications, and included Ray McCormick, a producer and NACD Board Member from Indiana, as well as Suzy Friedman, Director of Agricultural Sustainability, Environmental Defense Fund; Josh Maxwell, Senior Professional Staff, House Committee on Agriculture; Jean Payne, President, Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association; and Wallace Tyner, Professor of Agricultural Economics, Purdue University. NACD President-elect Lee McDaniel also attended the event.

Conservation districts were identified as a key partner in distribution of information and assisting implementation of changing trends in conservation practices and systems on the ground. The discussion included the following topics: conservation in the Farm Bill; long-term conservation practices; how conservation-minded organizations like CTIC help producers, government officials and others make conservation decisions; and conservation trends affecting agriculture in the next five years.

To learn more about CTIC and to view the webcast of the panel, visit *ctic.org*.

New Resources Available at NACD Urban and Community Conservation Web Pages

The NACD Urban and Community Resource Policy Group is pleased to announce they have updated their section of the NACD website to reflect current services and resources. In addition to the topic areas that contain district showcases, resources, funding sources and more, these pages now provide information on the RPG's more recent activities:

- NACD Urban and Community Conservation Network on Facebook, which is a great way for districts and partners to share ideas, information and pose questions.
- NACD monthly Urban and Community Conservation Webinars, with PDFs of all presentations since they started in September 2012 and recordings since November 2013.
- Backyard Conservation: Lawns and the Environment outreach tools and how to access them.

There is even a printable handout about these urban and community conservation resources that districts can download and copy to share with their peers and partners

Be sure to check what's available now at *nacdnet.org/policy/urban*. The RPG would like to post many more district showcases and resources; you can help make that happen by sharing your stories and weblinks! Please send those and any other suggestions you have for this website section to Deb Bogar at *deb-bogar@nacdnet.org*.

Photo by Randi Mehus

NACD President Earl Garber (far left) and NRCS Chief Jason Weller (middle right) present the NACD/NRCS Earth Team Award to Alabama NRCS State Conservationist Dr. William Puckett and Alabama Association of Conservation Districts President Sue Gaines on behalf of the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District, Huntsville, Ala.

Conservation Leaders Honored at NACD Annual Meeting

NACD honored leaders in conservation during an awards banquet at the 2014 NACD Annual Meeting. Janet Adkison, President of the National Association of Farm Broadcasting, served as Master of Ceremonies.

The NACD/NRCS Olin Sims Conservation Leadership Award was presented to Brent Van Dyke of Hobbs, N.M. This annual award recognizes an individual, district or organization for superior service to the conservation community in promoting and leading conservation on private lands. Dick Went of Foster, R.I. was honored with the prestigious NACD President's Award — one of highest forms of recognition bestowed by the nation's largest private lands conservation organization. Jack Majeres of South Dakota was presented with NACD's Distinguished Service Award which recognizes an individual who has made significant contributions to the conservation of our natural resources.

Other awards presented during NACD's Annual Meeting include:

- NACD Friend of Conservation Award: Friends of Wake Soil and Water Conservation District in North Carolina
- NACD/NRCS Earth Team Award: Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District, Huntsville, Ala.
- National Conservation District Employees Association Outstanding District Board Member Award: Kevin Jeffries, Oldham County Conservation District, Ky.
- NCDEA Outstanding Conservation District Employee: Carol Edwards, Davidson County Conservation District, Tenn.
- National Conservation Foundation/Presidents Association Award: Gallatin County Conservation District, Mont.

Congratulations to all of the winners!

A Market-Based Approach to Water Quality in the Ohio River Basin

The Ohio River Basin Water Quality Trading Project, led by the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), is the first-of-its-kind multi-state water quality trading program. The program is designed to maximize both ecological and economic success not yet achieved by the approximately 80 pilot projects conducted over the past 20 years. Few of these programs have even resulted in active trading, but since 2007, EPRI has conducted in-depth reviews of these programs for guidance in developing the Ohio River Basin Trading Program in strong collaboration with stakeholders in the region.

The interstate pilot program comprises three states: Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky; the program funds on-farm installations of conservation practices, making up the world's largest water quality trading program. This program is strictly voluntary and no laws or regulations exist that require any private industry or landowners to participate.

Soil and water conservation districts have been involved in this program from the beginning: identifying local concerns, prioritizing pilot watersheds, recruiting the participation of landowners, verifying credits from agricultural producers, and evaluating the project. With the cooperation and input of the federal and state agencies, these credits are also ensured to count toward pollution reductions required by the federal Clean Water Act.

EPRI has allocated $300,000 of private funding to assist farmers in covering up to 75 percent of the cost of establishing or installing best management practices (BMPs) to reduce the runoff of phosphorus and nitrogen in their watershed. These reductions, once verified and certified can then be sold as "credits" to permitted facilities, such as electrical utilities and water treatment facilities, which may need these credits to meet regulatory compliance obligations.

Some of the conservation practices or BMPs that are installed for this program include cover crops, nutrient management, vegetative filter strips, grass waterways,

Pictured, from left to right: Tara Wesseler, Indiana State Department of Agriculture; Kim Richardson, Kentucky Division of Conservation; and Fred Hammon, Ohio Department of Natural Resources. These individuals are state agency staff that are helping to coordinate this pilot project in each of their states.

livestock exclusion, forage and biomass planting, Heavy Use Area Protection (HUAPs), and conservation tillage. Once installed, these practices must be maintained for five years in exchange for the cost-share assistance from EPRI.

The program began in 2009 and the first credit transactions occurred March 2014 at a meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio where industries, state and federal agencies, soil and water conservation districts, farmers, nonprofit organizations and other partners came together for an update on the program, demonstrating key programmatic elements and sharing the different perspectives and the participation of the various stakeholders throughout the basin. The first stewardship credit transactions were bought by American Electric Power, Duke Energy, and Hoosier Energy.

In this first round of trading, there were 16 farmers who participated in the program in Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky. Later this year, an additional 20 farmers are expected to participate, and EPRI anticipates holding a public auction

for stewardship credits. Continuing to follow their timeline, EPRI expects to have an established program and trading market by 2015.

How this translates to improved water quality is this: the current participation in Indiana and Ohio will result in reducing nitrogen pollution by an estimated 37,000 pounds and phosphorus by 12,500 pounds. When the second round of projects is completed in all three states, the total estimate reductions in nitrogen are estimated to be 66,000 pounds and 33,000 pounds of phosphorus.

When at full-scale, this EPRI project in the Ohio River Basin could include up to 8 states, potentially creating credit markets for 46 power plants, thousands of wastewater facilities and various industries, and approximately 230,000 farmers.

To keep up-to-date on this pilot project and for more information, please visit the EPRI website at *wqt.epri.com*.

Partnering for Success

Thank You to our 2014 NACD Annual Meeting Sponsors

NACD would like to thank the following sponsors for their contribution to the 2014 NACD Annual Meeting, February 2-5 in Anaheim, California: Case IH; Dow AgroSciences; AgriDrain Corporation; DuPont; John Deere; U.S. Forest Service; LG Seeds; Bayer CropScience; Monsanto; Land and Water magazine; Plum Creek; DuPont Pioneer; Bob Warner of Brighton, Colorado; STIHL; Proxibid; Scotts Miracle-Gro; AgXplore; and Agricen.

Sponsorship is an investment in the gathering of conservation leaders from across the country to discuss policy and legislation, to network with partners and members of industry, and to gain a better understanding of new technologies and natural resource issues.

If you would like to discuss opportunities for your involvement as a sponsor at Annual Meeting or another NACD event, please contact Beth Mason at *beth-mason@nacdnet.org* or 317-946-4463.

Annual Meeting Resources Available Online

Selected presentations from the 2014 NACD Annual Meeting are now available on the NACD website. These resources include PDFs of presentations from speakers at the Wednesday Workshops and Breakout Sessions.

To view the presentations and other resources such as news and photos from this year's Annual Meeting, visit *nacdnet.org/events/annualmeeting*.

NACD also has a collection of presentations from past Annual Meetings, webinars, and other events. These resources can be viewed and downloaded online at *nacdnet.org/resources/presentations*.

NACD Consultant Dave White discusses leadership training at one of the Wednesday workshops.

Envirothon Moves to National Conservation Foundation

On Monday, March 31, the North American Envirothon closed its doors and transferred the Envirothon enterprise to the National Conservation Foundation (NCF).

Since 1979, this outstanding program for high school students has grown to become a leading natural resources competition for students in Canada and the U.S. Beginning April 1, NCF will provide leadership for a new vision for the Envirothon, including aiming for a global program by 2030.

Initially, the Foundation will be focusing on a new fundraising approach, as well as encouraging the current 57 state and provincial participants to continue building their respective local and state/provincial programs. A short activity is being planned this summer for all 57 participants.

Plans are also moving forward for international competitions in 2015 (Missouri), 2016 (Ontario), and 2017 (Maryland). For information on the Envirothon, visit envirothon.org or call 1-800-825-5547 extension 2, 3, or 5.

ENVIROTHON

A NATURAL RESOURCE ENCOUNTER FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Jason Moulin, Product Manager, Nitrogen Stabilizers

Nitrogen Stabilizers Support Best Management Practices

Implementing best management practices is top of mind throughout the agriculture industry. As a partner of The Fertilizer Institute's 4R Nutrient Stewardship program, Dow AgroSciences supports environmentally beneficial fertilizer practices. The 4R program supports using the right fertilizer source, at the right rate, at the right time, with the right placement.

The 4R framework takes an innovative, science-based approach that provides stakeholders with educational tools, advocacy support and implementation recommendations for crop nutrient stewardship. The program advocates fertilizer management practices to increase production, boost farmer profitability, enhance environmental protection and improve sustainability. Incorporating a nitrogen stabilizer helps growers optimize fertilizer inputs in a growing agriculture industry.

The Dow AgroSciences nitrogen stabilizer portfolio consists of N-Serve® and Instinct® II. These nitrogen stabilizers protect the crop's largest input investment, ensuring nitrogen is available longer when and where corn needs it most. Instinct II is proven to optimize yield and profit potential of corn by inhibiting nitrification of applied nitrogen with UAN, urea or manure. N-Serve inhibits nitrification when used with anhydrous ammonia.

The Dow AgroSciences partnership with 4R focuses on the importance of nutrient stewardship and fertilizer efficiency. Since N-Serve was introduced in 1974, Dow AgroSciences has expanded sales and agronomy experts in nitrogen management. Today, Dow AgroSciences continues to develop innovative solutions for a more sustainable world.

Along with optimizing yield and plant health, these nitrogen stabilizers support best nutrient management practices. Some of the other benefits include:

- Reduced leaching of nitrogen into groundwater and surface water by managing nitrification of fertilizer
- Reduced loss of nitrogen into the atmosphere as a greenhouse gas by reducing denitrification
- Can be incorporated with just a half-inch of rain to reduce the use of fuel
- Can be tank-mixed with fertilizer, herbicides and insecticides to further reduce fuel use

To learn more about Instinct II and N-Serve nitrogen stabilizers, visit *NitrogenStabilizers.com* or contact your local sales representative.

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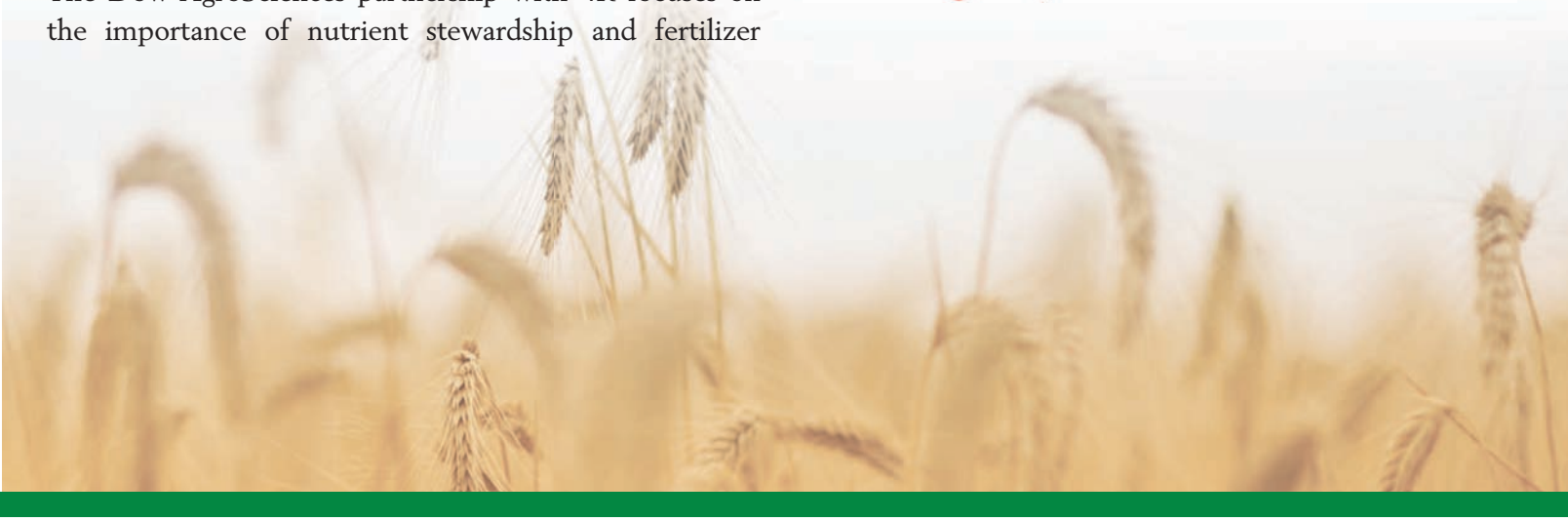

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2014 NACD SOIL HEALTH FORUM AND CONSERVATION TOUR

JULY 21-22, MARRIOTT INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANAPOLIS, IN

- The tour and forum will be held in conjunction with NACD partners NRCS, EPA and IASWCD.
- Participants will tour multiple farms, highlighting on-the-ground conservation practices supported by USDA Farm Bill and EPA 319 programs.
- Dow Agrosciences will host the NACD Board of Directors meeting on July 19.
- This is a great opportunity to learn more about NACD and NRCS soil health outreach efforts.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, OR TO REGISTER: **www.nacdnet.org** or call **202·547·6223**

Photo courtesy of Rich Clark