

United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Washington, DC 20250



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

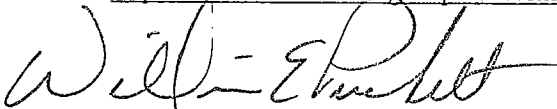



United States Department of the Army
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Washington, DC 20314

MEMORANDUM TO THE FIELD

SUBJECT: Concurrence on the NRCS/USACE Partnership Action Plan by Senior Leaders of both organizations.

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to inform you that on June 26, 2008, the U.S Department of Agriculture, acting through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Department of the Army, acting through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), renewed their commitment to the interagency partnership and concurred in the implementation of the Action Plan developed jointly by NRCS and USACE (enclosed). The attached Action Plan identifies national priorities for implementing the Partnership Agreement, serves as a basis for more detailed project management plans when warranted, and identifies actions for the next 1-3 years. The Action Plan also recognizes and supports collaborative efforts in the field and should ultimately improve the ability of USACE and NRCS to solve water and relate natural resource problems.
2. The Action Plan was circulated at the national and field level for review. Success stories of how the agencies are currently working together were shared, as well as suggestions for new joint activities and projects. The review revealed that in some cases the partnership is limited by a lack of knowledge of the other Agency's missions, capabilities, and programs. Therefore, we encourage you and your staff to develop and maintain a strong working relationship with your NRCS/USACE counterparts and explore how our agencies can collaborate and help each other accomplish our missions.
3. The Action Plan is intended to be dynamic and flexible. It is anticipated that new actions will be established as needs are identified by personnel at all organizational levels. Needs will be reviewed by the Partnership Core Team, and when appropriate, added to the Partnership Action Plan. The Action Plan serves as a framework for Agency Leaders to annually review and concur with partnership accomplishments and activities.
4. If you have questions, comments, or suggestions regarding this memorandum or the NRCS/USACE National Partnership, please contact agency points of contact: Doris Washington, NRCS Liaison to the USACE at (501) 210-8910 located at the NRCS National Water Management Center or Anne Cann, USACE Liaison to NRCS at (703) 428-7166 located at the USACE Institute for Water Resources. Additional information including the Action Plan is available on the Partnership web site at: <http://wmc.ar.nrcs.usda.gov/partnerships/COE/agreement.html>.


WILLIAM E. PUCKETT
Deputy Chief
Science and Technology
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service


STEVEN L. STOCKTON, P.E.
Director of Civil Works
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Date: 8-26-08

Date: 25 AUG 08

Attachment

Distribution:

Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Deputy Commander, USACE
Commanders, Engineer District, USACE
Division and District Planning Chiefs, USACE
Division and District Deputy Program Managers, USACE
Regional Integration Teams, USACE
Chief, NRCS
Associate Chief, NRCS
Chief of Staff, NRCS
Deputy Chiefs, NRCS
Regional Assistant Chiefs, NRCS
Division Directors, NRCS
USACE Partnership HQ POCs, NRCS
State Conservationists, NRCS
Center Directors
Mike Sullivan, Mississippi River Basin Coordinator /NRCS National Lead for Partnering Agreement
Carol Angier, Civil Works Deputy Northwestern Division Regional Integration Team, USACE

ACTION PLAN
The Natural Resources Conservation Service/ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
National Partnership Agreement

The NRCs/USACE Partnership Agreement, signed July 7, 2005, promotes a long-term working relationship to improve the management of water and related natural resources under the missions and authorities of NRCs and USACE. The Agencies have established partnership goals to express mutual commitment to comprehensive water and related natural resources management and conservation in support of Executive Order 13352, Facilitation of Cooperative Conservation. The NRCs and USACE have pledged to work together in the following areas: 1) watershed planning; 2) wetlands creation, restoration and enhancement; 3) natural disaster recovery; and 4) wetlands conservation and regulatory compliance (The "Swampbuster" Provisions of the Food Security Act and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act).

This Action Plan was developed jointly by USACE and NRCs and it identifies national priorities for implementing the Partnership Agreement. The Action Plan serves as a basis for development of more detailed project management plans when warranted. It ultimately improve the ability of USACE and NRCs to solve water and related natural resource problems.

The Action Plan was circulated at the national and field level for review. These reviews yielded a great deal of thoughtful input. Success stories of how the agencies are currently working together were shared, as well as suggestions for new joint activities and projects. The review revealed that in some cases the partnership is limited by a lack of knowledge of the other agency's missions, capabilities, and programs. Concerns from the field review included the USACE Field Staff identifying a lack of staff time/overhead funding to allow interagency collaboration where there is not an active Corps project, and a concern regarding implementation of the Section 404 Permit Program by Corps Districts.

The Action Plan is intended to be dynamic and flexible. New items will be added as they are identified (and vetted through leadership as appropriate). It is anticipated that new actions will be established as needs are identified by personnel at any organizational level. Needs will be reviewed by the Partnership Core Team, and when appropriate, added to the Partnership Action Plan. The Action Plan serves as a framework for Agency Leaders to annually review and concur with partnership accomplishments and activities.

ACTION PLAN
The Natural Resources Conservation Service/ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
National Partnership Agreement

ACTION	Short/ Long Term	TIME LINE	RESOURCES	CURRENT STATUS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS
<p>1. ADVANCING MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF WETLAND CONSERVATION COMPLIANCE AND REGULATORY ACTIVITIES.</p>				
<p>1.1 WETLAND DELINEATION. Deliver the NRCS wetlands delineation course that was developed in a cooperative effort working with USACE.</p>	Short Term	9/30/2009	Funding Source: NRCS-NEDC \$10,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training needs identified. NEDC is in the process of preparing the course for delivery. (6-19-08) Don Haake. • Potential NEDC funding for this course may be available to deliver a pilot course in August 2008. (Jerry Williams NEDC, 3-28-08)
<p>1.2 USACE WETLAND DELINEATION MANUAL UPDATE. Continue NRCS, EPA, and FWS participation with the USACE led effort to develop Regionalized Supplements to the USACE 1987 Wetland Delineation Manual.</p>	Long Term	10/1/2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRCS, EPA, and FWS are partnering with the USACE to develop regionalized versions of the 1987 USACE Delineation Manual and they are scheduled to be completed in 2010. • NRCS is the Chair of the National Technical Committee for Hydric Soils responsible for technical leadership in the formulation, evaluation, and application of hydric soils definition, criteria, indicators, and glossary.
<p>1.3 NATIONAL LIST OF VASCULAR PLANT SPECIES UPDATE: Continue USACE, NRCS, FWS, and EPA joint efforts to update and Regionalize the 1988 National Wetland Vascular Plant List.</p>	Long Term	10/1/2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USACE, EPA, FWS, & NRCS signed an MOA in 2006 to transfer responsibility for updating and maintaining the National List of Vascular Plant Species that Occur in Wetlands from FWS to USACE. • NRCS is a member of the National Plant Panel that will assist with establishing the Regional Panels.

ACTION PLAN
The Natural Resources Conservation Service/ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
National Partnership Agreement

ACTION	Short Long Term	TIME LINE	RESOURCES	CURRENT STATUS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS
<p>1. ADVANCING MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF WETLAND CONSERVATION COMPLIANCE AND REGULATORY ACTIVITIES.</p> <p>1.3 NATIONAL LIST OF VASCULAR PLANT SPECIES UPDATE: Continue USACE, NRCS, FWS, and EPA joint efforts to update and Regionalize the 1988 National Wetland Vascular Plant List.</p>	Long Term	10/1/2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The USACE has leadership for updating and maintaining the National Plant List and convening the National Plant Panel. The USACE is responsible for providing adequate funding for updating and maintaining the National list. • The time line for updating the National list is 2 years, beginning in 2008.
<p>1.4 404 PERMITTING PROCESS. Participate in discussions at the National level to examine measures to improve understanding of the regulations, regulatory guidance (interpretation), and the consistent application of the permitting process associated with watershed activities that impact local watershed sponsors.</p>	Long Term	Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National level communication/input for Nationwide permits. • An initial meeting for NRCS and USACE National staff with 404 permitting responsibilities was held on May 13, 2008. Agency concerns were discussed on USACE District and NRCS State working relationships. • USACE District Lead Contact information was provided to NRCS for distribution as needed. • NRCS suggested sending national bulletin to states to update on USACE/NRCS Partnership and provide the Lead District by States Information. • Regular annual and/or biannual meetings will be scheduled to allow agencies to stay abreast of current regulatory/conservation compliance issues. Impromptu teleconference can be held as needed to resolve immediate concerns.

ACTION PLAN
The Natural Resources Conservation Service/ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
National Partnership Agreement

ACTION	Short Long Term	TIME LINE	RESOURCES	CURRENT STATUS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS
<p>II. ADVANCING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF WETLAND CREATION, RESTORATION, AND ENHANCEMENT</p> <p>2.1. WETLAND RESTORATION, AND ENHANCEMENT TRAINING: Deliver the NRCS Wetland Restoration and Enhancement Training Course. The original concept during course development was to have 1/3 each NRCS, USACE, & FWS in each training session. Enrollment slots continue to be maintained for each agency.</p>	Short Term	9/30/2009	Funding Sources: NRCS, USACE, and FWS. Amount needed per course: \$10,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common training needs identified and course available for delivery. • No NEDC Funding Available for 2008. (11/26/07-Norman Melvin) FWS has provided 100% funding for 1 course to be delivered in New York the week of May 12, 2008. • The enrollment for the NY Wetland Restoration & Enhancement course has 30 enrolled. NRCS = 10, FWS = 8, USACE = 5, NY State and others = 7, Total = 30. (3-31-08 Norman Melvin).
<p>2.2. USACE/EPA NATIONAL WETLAND DATABASE. Brief NRCS National Leadership and National Wetlands Specialist on the USACE/EPA National Wetland Database in an effort to pursue the expertise of NRCS and explore the potential integration of NRCS wetland data into the USACE/EPA National Wetlands Database. Second meeting needed to explore potential uses/collaboration efforts.</p>	Short Term	9/30/2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial interagency teleconference was held on April 15, 2008 to discuss National Wetland Database. • USACE National Database known as ORM II. NRCS National database known as Easements Business Tool. Both National databases are used to provide a standard way to track wetland information including sub actions, property/easement status, and progress reporting items such as acres of wetlands. • NRCS will roll out to states in fall of 2008; USACE already using, ORM II is latest version. (NRCS-Ken Murray; USACE Dave Olson Contacts). • Additional discussions are needed to explore potential uses and/or collaborative database uses.

ACTION PLAN
The Natural Resources Conservation Service/ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
National Partnership Agreement

ACTION	Short Long Term	TIME FRAME	RESOURCES	CURRENT STATUS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS
<p>III. ENHANCING COORDINATION OF NATURAL DISASTER RECOVERY</p> <p>NATURAL DISASTER RECOVERY. Coordinate implementation of the six action items developed by NRCS and USACE in July 2006. (1) NRCS clarification of policy to reflect if levees qualify for USACE assistance they are not eligible for NRCS assistance; (2) NRCS input needed into ESF3 Infrastructure Support regarding channel clearing; (3) USACE/NRCS follow up with FEMA on Dept. Level contacts; (4) NRCS/USACE dialogue on PL84-99 and EWP authorities; (5) USACE identify lead District for coordination with each state; (6) NRCS/USACE finalize prescript mission assignment to address dead animal disposal. If it is determined that further coordination is needed a plan should be developed to ensure that the actions are implemented and that accomplishments are recorded.</p>	<p>Long Term</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2006 Senior meeting to discuss Post-Katrina response and identify areas for additional coordination. • 2008 Re-established Point of Contact and confirmed priority actions/ coordination needed. HQ POC's from both agencies agree that 6 action items from 2006 meeting are still valid. They will work together to enhance actions to be presented to Sr. Leaders including additional actions as needed based on WRDA 2007. • 2008 USACE has identified lead Districts for coordination with each state.
<p>3.2 INTERAGENCY FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE: Engage NRCS in the Interagency Flood Risk Management Committee sponsored by USACE to help examine impacts and potential solutions throughout watersheds including participating in 2008 National Levee Summit meeting.</p>	<p>Long Term</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2008-NRCS and USACE both have an interest in collaborating together on flood risk management. Discussion was around providing one voice to the public when working with them on Dam Safety issues. Levee Safety is similar to Dam Safety effort. • 2008- NRCS participated in the February 25th Summit in St. Louis. Mark Locke provided a trip report. Next steps are needed.

ACTION PLAN
The Natural Resources Conservation Service/ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
National Partnership Agreement

ACTION	Short Long Term	TIME FRAME	RESOURCES	CURRENT STATUS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS
<p>III. ENHANCING COORDINATION OF NATURAL DISASTER RECOVERY</p>				
<p>3.2 INTERAGENCY FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE: Engage NRCS in the Interagency Flood Risk Management Committee sponsored by USACE to help examine impacts and potential solutions of throughout watersheds including participating in 2008 National Levee Summit meeting.</p>	Long Term	Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Sr. Leader Meeting is planned for June 24, 2008 for Federal Agencies including NRCS with an interest in flood risk management. This meeting is sponsored by the USACE and FEMA Intergovernmental Flood Risk Committee.
<p>IV. ADVANCING COLLABORATION IN WATERSHED PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION</p> <p>4.1 WATERSHED TECHNOLOGY EXCHANGE. Promote and participate in watershed technology exchange for ongoing NRCS/USACE collaboration and dialogue regarding discipline specific technologies, tools and models. Topics will be derived from input solicited from the field.</p>	Long Term	Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2006 Technology exchange regarding sub-surface drainage tools (DRAINMOD, AnnAGNPS, GSSHA) USACE expressed interest distributing new NRCS handbook on stream restoration and design to regulatory offices to encourage their employees to use it. (1-24-08 David Olson). Electronic version of NRCS handbook provided to USACE by CED (1-30-08 Jerry Bernard). USACE has distributed NRCS handbook to all Regulatory Offices.
<p>4.2 STREAM RESTORATION AND DESIGN. Engage in National discussions regarding coordinated efforts in stream restoration and design.</p>	Long Term	Ongoing		

ACTION PLAN
The Natural Resources Conservation Service/ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
National Partnership Agreement

ACTION	Short Long Term	TIME LINE	RESOURCES	CURRENT STATUS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS
<p>IV. ADVANCING COLLABORATION IN WATERSHED PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION</p>				
<p>4.3 WATERSHED TRAINING. Conduct inventory of watershed training courses offered by NRCS, USACE and other Federal Agencies.</p> <p>4.4 DESIGN CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT. Develop a proposal for technical and financial support for USACE to test Roller Compacted Concrete for NRCS Dam Rehabilitation.</p>	<p>Long Term</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Funding Source: USACE \$5,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow up being conducted by NRCS and USACE Liaisons to collect existing training course information and make available on the NRCS/USACE website. • USACE has provided list of Prospect Courses.
<p>4.5 COLLABORATIVE USE OF AUTHORITIES AND FUNDING. Develop an issue paper for National Leadership review that identifies the barriers that inhibit the collaborative use of NRCS and USACE authorities and funding for mutual benefit.</p>	<p>Short Term</p>	<p>9/30/2008</p>	<p>9/30/2009</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently ERDC, USACE, is working on writing RCC testing proposal for NRCS to review. • Liaisons working with internal staff to better define the action item. The USACE has the lead on this effort. • USACE has identified Rock Island District as a potential candidate for developing an issue paper. • NRCS will participate on an equal level providing input into the development of the issue paper. • Emiquon Project has been identified as an example of Collaborative use of authorities for NRCS and USACE.

ACTION PLAN
The Natural Resources Conservation Service/ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
National Partnership Agreement

ACTION	Short Long Term	TIME FRAME	RESOURCES	CURRENT STATUS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS
<p>IV. ADVANCING COLLABORATION IN WATERSHED PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION</p> <p>4.6 PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF USACE FLOOD DAMAGE ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR AGRICULTURAL DAMAGES. Promote the incorporation of agricultural damages into the USACE Food Damage Assessment Tool and provide funds to assist in the development of the crop damage component following USACE standard procedures, including a literature search, and the use of NRCS agricultural economics expertise.</p>	Long Term	Ongoing	<p>Funding Source: NRCS: \$3,500 for Technical Service Support NRCS and USACE: \$5,000 each for completion of Design Proposal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second NRCS/USACE teleconference was held on April 9, 2008. Mike Deering, USACE, presented information on HECRAS and FDA Tools. • NRCS reviewed proposed information and cost on HECRAS and FDA and provided response to USACE on funding for both tools as well as input on changes to FDA Tool. • NRCS HECFDA contacts: Dale Pekar, David Boulard, NRCS HECRAS contacts: Jon Fripp and Claudia Hoefl. USACE HEC Contacts: Mike Deering and Jeff Harris. • NRCS has provided funding for re-establishing technical support with HEC on FDA Tool for one year. • NRCS and USACE HEC provided \$5,000 each to complete the design proposal to incorporate Ag Component to FDA. (6-20-08).
<p>4.7 QUANTIFYING ECOLOGICAL BENEFITS IN WATERSHED PROJECTS. Appoint a small NRCS/USACE interagency team to discuss potential cooperation in quantifying ecological benefits.</p>	Long Term	Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed action to long term based on last partnership teleconference.

ACTION PLAN
The Natural Resources Conservation Service/ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
National Partnership Agreement

ACTION	Short/Long Term	TIME LINE	RESOURCES	CURRENT STATUS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS
<p>IV. ADVANCING COLLABORATION IN WATERSHED PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION</p> <p>4.8 USACE REAL ESTATE AND NRCS EASEMENTS. Engage National Staffs in discussions related to USACE Real Estate and NRCS Easements to promote awareness of each agency's policies and guidelines and consider areas of collaboration for project and program implementation.</p>	Long Term	Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The USACE will continue their involvement with this federal interagency group; the next meeting will be in June. (4-3-08)
<p>4.9 USACE HECRAS (River Assessment System): Re-establish NRCS technical support for HECRAS at NRCS state level.</p>	Long Term	On going	Funding Source: NRCS: \$15,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second NRCS/USACE teleconference was held on April 9, 2008. Mike Deering, USACE, presented information on HECRAS and FDA Tools. NRCS has provided \$15,000 to USACE HEC in FY 2008 to re-establish technical support for NRCS employees using HECRAS. This is for one year of service. (6-20-08)
<p>4.10 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) P&G: USACE and NRCS should collaborate in revisions to the P&G to further the missions of both agencies.</p>	Short Term	11/9/2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Principles and Standards by Nov. 2008 Draft Procedures by Sept. 2009 Complete Document by Nov 9, 2009 to meet Congressional deadline.
<p>4.11 National Inventory of Dams: Coordinate National Inventory of Dams efforts of NRCS and USACE as appropriate.</p>	Long Term	Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggested by Noller Herbert, Director, NRCS Conservation Engineering Division. (2-19-08). NRCS/USACE conducting follow up with National Contacts to pursue initial meeting to further discuss this action item. (3-12-08).

ACTION PLAN
The Natural Resources Conservation Service/ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
National Partnership Agreement

ACTION	Short/Long Term	TIME LINE	RESOURCES	CURRENT STATUS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS
<p>IV. ADVANCING COLLABORATION IN WATERSHED PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION</p>				
<p>4.11 National Inventory of Dams: Coordinate National Inventory of Dams efforts of NRCS and USACE as appropriate.</p>	Long Term	Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eric Halpin is the USACE NID Contact and this actively working with Mark Locke, NRCS concerning coordination efforts of the NID. (6-12-08)
<p>V. IMPROVING FEDERAL COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION BETWEEN AGENCIES</p> <p>5.1 NRCS/USACE NATIONAL CONTACT LIST. Establish a NRCS/USACE National Subject Matter Contacts list that includes National Headquarters Contacts for both agencies, USACE Communities of Practices Points of Contacts, organizational charts and other information that would be beneficial to the improvement of communication and coordination at all levels of each organization.</p> <p>5.2. SUCCESS STORIES. Share NRCS and USACE success stories of existing collaborative efforts currently in place.</p> <p>5.3 PARTNERSHIP WEBSITE. Publicize the Partnership & document activities through electronic newsletters, websites, etc. including examples of NRCS/USACE collaboration from District/State Communications. USACE/NRCS Partnership Website.</p>	Short Term	9/30/2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearing house concepts for questions accepted. USACE to provide additional contact information as requested to NRCS. (01-09-08). USACE provided partial information on USACE HQ staff. Additional staffing contact information is still needed from USACE. Established Goods/Services 2 Way MOU Action Plan developed to support Partnership Agreement. Collected field input to serve as basis for initial success stories. Success Stories posted on the website. Partnership Website Link has been established. Developed Partnership Brochure Delivered Partnership Presentations at 07 NCER Conference, 08 USACE Planner's Conference.

ACTION PLAN
The Natural Resources Conservation Service/ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
National Partnership Agreement

ACTION	Short Long Term	TIME LINE	RESOURCES	CURRENT STATUS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS
<p>V. IMPROVING FEDERAL COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION BETWEEN AGENCIES</p> <p>5.4 NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION. Support the 2009 National Ecosystem Restoration Conference by sponsorship, program planning, and/or employee participation.</p>	Short Term	4/30/2009	USACE - PENDING NRCS - \$20,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both agencies working to secure funding to support conference. • NRCS reported on 3-11-08 that they had secured funding to support a sponsorship for the 2009 NCER conference.