



Earlier this year, Congress finalized the 2008 Farm Bill, the Farm, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008. With focus shifting to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to implement the bill, the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) will be working ensure that conservation programs maintain local input and that sufficient technical resources are provided for their delivery.

The 2008 bill maintains a strong commitment to locally led, voluntary conservation programs, providing an additional \$4 billion in conservation spending over the next 10 years. Producers and non-industrial private forest landowners have a variety of options for conservation assistance – cost-share, easements, land retirement programs. NACD will be working throughout the regulatory process at USDA to ensure that the conservation programs Congress reauthorized in the Farm Bill can be utilized successfully by producers and landowners.

Major Farm Bill Conservation Programs include:

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Conservation Stewardship Program
- Conservation Reserve Program
- Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program
- Grasslands Reserve Program
- Farmland Protection Program
- Wetlands Reserve Program

Conservation districts are local units of government located in all 50 states and U.S. territories, and established under state law to carry out natural resource management programs at the local level. In many areas, we are co-located with staff of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Farm Service Agency and work to include local input and priorities in the delivery of farm bill conservation programs. Districts also coordinate assistance to landowners from other non-federal programs including state or local cost-share or assistance programs, leveraging financial and technical assistance from multiple sources.

Conservation districts have been involved in the ongoing delivery of Farm Bill conservation programs by securing local input through the Local Work Group process – a process that we want to ensure continues. Successful delivery and participation in these programs hinges on local input and involvement.

ACTIONS

NACD, working on behalf of our districts across the nation, will work with USDA to ensure that the conservation programs of the 2008 Farm Bill are understandable and work for producers, include local input through the local work group process and the State Technical Committee, are delivered with sufficient technical assistance – provided either by USDA, technical service providers or partners, and are implemented in an efficient and effective manner.

We look to Congress to maintain the mandatory levels of program funding as included in the 2008 Farm Bill and reject any efforts to reduce conservation program spending in the future.