



## **National Association of Conservation Districts**

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October 30, 2008

Chief Gail Kimbell  
Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Chief Kimbell:

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) represents the nation's 3,000 conservation districts and their governing boards. Established under state law, conservation districts are local units of state government charged with carrying out programs for the protection and management of natural resources – including trees and forests - at the local level. Conservation districts work with federal, state, tribal and other local agencies to provide technical assistance to landowners and other partners to address natural resource issues. With respect to trees and forests, the districts are involved in non-industrial private forest management, wildfire prevention and fuels reduction, biomass production and utilization, forest pest management, conservation education, wildlife habitat management and urban forestry to name a few.

By working together for many years, the State and Private Forestry Program, state forest agencies and conservation districts have been very successful in applying conservation practices on forested lands. NACD is pleased with the provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill that expand practices available to non-industrial private forest landowners. We have the following specific recommendations on the forestry related aspects of the 2008 Farm Bill to ensure that provisions of the Bill are accessible to a variety of different types of producers and landowners.

NACD expects conservation districts, or the state's association of conservation districts, to be key partners on the committees helping to determine conditions and trends and identifying threats in the development of the State-Wide Assessment and Strategies for Forest Resources. The structure is already in place to solicit information and recommendations on local resources, priorities and needs using the Local Work Groups – a tool used by USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to solicit input from program recipients and members of the local community. NACD supports the continued use of Local Work Groups and encourages forestry partners – including Forest Service - to be involved in priority setting at the local level. (Title 8, section 8002)

NACD supports the changes made in the 2008 farm bill which expands the State Technical Committee structure to include Local Work Groups as subcommittees and changes the language to improve accountability of the public process. NACD encourages the Forest Service to be an active participant in the NRCS State Technical Committee in every state. Congressional support for these provisions indicates a commitment to having local input in these programs.

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NACD is looking forward to serving as a non-federal representative on the Forest Resource Coordinating Committee. NACD serves many customers who are non-industrial private forest landowners that are familiar with the USDA forestry programs and can provide valuable guidance regarding the direction and coordination of USDA forestry programs. (Title 8, section 8005)

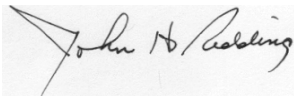
Conservation districts play a key role assisting landowners following natural disasters. Districts are prepared to deliver assistance provided by the Emergency Forest Restoration Program; acting as the primary contact with those landowners affected by hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfire, insects, floods and other events. (Title 8 section 8203)

Conservation districts stand ready to work with state and local officials in the identification of available feedstocks required in the plan by those entities pursuing grants provided under the Community Wood Energy Program. (Title 9, section 9013)

Conservation districts should be considered as eligible units of local government for the Pest and Disease Revolving Loan Fund. Currently, the districts work in partnership with federal, state, tribal and local entities in all types of forest projects including insect and disease work. (Title 10, section 10205)

NACD appreciates the opportunity to provide input on the important forest-related aspects of the Farm Bill. Conservation districts, working locally with producers, landowners, forestry interests and others, have an important perspective on the implementation of these programs and want to ensure their success in meeting customer needs, ensuring wise use of taxpayer funds and providing natural resource benefits. NACD and conservation districts look forward to a continued partnership with the Forest Service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John H. Redding". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name and title.

John Redding  
President