

# **Building Your Local Work Group**

## **(Using the new provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill)**

### *What is the topic?*

This document looks at ways of renewing interest in local work groups and maintaining a high level of excitement toward the work group's tasks.

### *Why is the topic important?*

The locally led conservation planning process has proven to be an effective way to increase local participation in the management and protection of natural resources. Part of the reason this process is successful is because it brings stakeholders together to identify local resource problems and to work together to address these issues. Participants develop a sense of ownership toward the problems through the work group process. Creation of a local work group is effective for identifying issues, recommending priorities, setting the schedule for developing community and individual conservation plans to address these issues, and helping to find resources to execute the plans. However, not all work groups continue indefinitely with unbridled enthusiasm.

### *Who benefits from the information?*

The Conservation Partnership and local community members will benefit from this information because it will increase participation and enthusiasm in the locally led planning process to address resource needs of importance to the community.

### *What is a Local Work Group?*

Local work groups have an interest in conservation activities. The roles of these groups include identifying resource needs and making recommendations such as on priorities to the State Technical Committee.

### ***Local Work Group***

The purpose of this group is to develop and support the conservation needs assessment including community stakeholders to recommend priorities to address the natural resource concerns. " Convened by the local conservation district(s) [or NRCS field staff], the local work group provides a local perspective on USDA program policy and funding recommendations. The membership is composed of Federal, State, County, tribal, or local government representatives, and all of the stakeholders in a local community.

They make recommendations to state technical committees and the NRCS State Conservationist on such items as priorities, practices, policies, and maximum cost share rates.

The Local Work Group is encouraged to proceed through the following steps without regard to any particular program or programs:

- Obtaining public participation
- Assessing conservation needs
- Identifying and prioritizing needs
- Setting goals
- Identifying programs and funding sources
- Developing area wide conservation plans
- Implementing plans
- Measuring performance

The Local Work Group has a wide range of local members. The Local Work Groups can have non-governmental representatives including all interested stakeholders as well as make recommendations on a wide range of priorities and programs.

### ***Building and Maintaining a Local Working Group***

Oftentimes sustaining involvement and interest in a work group becomes a challenge, particularly when dealing with long term plans. Perhaps your group is experiencing one or more of the following:

- Leadership has changed or key players have moved and left the work group;
- The people who need to be involved have not been included;
- Very little seems to get accomplished;
- Conflict has caused misgivings and distrust among the group; and
- Interest and participation in the effort seem to be waning.

In situations like those cited above, the local work group is ineffective, goals are not being attained, and the natural resource needs are not being addressed. What can be done then to renew and maintain the local work group? Following are a few ideas that can help get the group back on track.

- Develop or revitalize your strategic plan
- Create an environment of trust
  - a) Involve the community
  - b) Make personal contacts
  - c) Provide regular feedback