

DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION		Number: 1042-076
SUBJECT: Resource Conservation and Development Policy Advisory Board	DATE: October 18, 2000	
	OPI: Natural Resources Conservation Service	

1 PURPOSE

This regulation establishes a Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Policy Advisory Board (PAB) as directed in 16 U.S.C. § 3457. This regulation also establishes a working group and outlines responsibilities and operating procedures for the PAB and working group.

2 CANCELLATION

Department Regulation No. 1042-76, dated July 14, 1997, is hereby canceled.

3 POLICY

It is the policy of USDA to encourage and improve the capability of State and local units of government and local nonprofit organizations in rural areas to plan, develop, and carry out programs for resource conservation and community development.

The PAB will serve as the single interagency forum for advising and recommending policy to the Secretary regarding the administration of the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program, in Public Law 97-98, 16 U.S.C. §§ 3451-3461. The PAB will identify ways to make more effective

use of available resources to further objectives of USDA programs.

4 OFFICERS AND MEMBERSHIP

a Policy Advisory Board (PAB): The PAB shall be comprised of a minimum of seven full-time employees of USDA as follows: Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, and two senior executives, preferably the administrators, selected by their respective Under Secretaries from each of the three mission areas: Natural Resources and Environment; Research, Education and Economics; and Rural Development. The Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment will chair the PAB. Additional members may be added to strengthen interagency coordination and cooperation on resource conservation and community development. The RC&D policy coordinator on the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff will serve as executive secretary.

The chairperson is responsible for calling all meetings. The meetings are executive meetings of Federal officials. Other persons, agencies, or groups may be invited to attend specific meetings when deemed appropriate. The proceedings of each meeting will be recorded by the executive secretary to the PAB.

The PAB will act on issues assigned by the Secretary, raised by the working group, and with those raised to the PAB level through appropriate administrative channels by agencies of the Department and by RC&D Councils. The chair of the PAB has the authority to authorize RC&D Area boundary adjustments.

b Working Group: A working group shall be chaired by NRCS and consist of USDA employees representing member agencies of the PAB. NRCS shall provide clerical and related staff support for the working group.

The chairperson is responsible for calling the Working Group meetings. The Working Group shall function as the staff of the PAB, preparing reports and proposals and conducting related activities as directed by the PAB and upon their own initiative as deemed appropriate. In addition, the Working Group shall work closely with local, State, regional, and National Associations of RC&D Councils to identify needs and concerns. The Working Group shall identify needs and concerns of Councils to the PAB and facilitate coordination among USDA Agencies and programs to increase effectiveness and efficiency in assisting communities.

Equal opportunity practices, in accordance with USDA policies, shall be followed in all appointments to the PAB and Working Group. To ensure that the recommendations of the PAB have taken into account the needs of the diverse groups served by USDA, membership should include, to the extent practicable, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.

5 DUTIES

The PAB shall:

- a Respond to the needs and concerns of RC&D Councils;
- b Identify and coordinate Departmental Agency activities to achieve the objectives of the RC&D Program and strengthen assistance to communities;
- c Recommend policy and procedures for coordinating with agencies outside the Department to achieve the objectives of the RC&D Program;
- d Recommend RC&D Program evaluation and progress monitoring activities;
- e Review applications and recommend new RC&D Area designations;

f Recommend actions to revitalize inactive RC&D Areas and undesignate inactive RC&D Areas when deemed necessary;

g Assist all USDA Agencies in developing and implementing community assistance programs;

h Advise the Secretary on other RC&D policy-related issues as the PAB deems appropriate;

i Analyze progress and report to USDA and other Federal agencies the contribution of resources provided by participating agencies.

6 ESTIMATED ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS

The PAB members shall serve without pay.

7 NUMBER AND FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

The PAB will meet four times per year.

8 REPORTS AND SUPPORT

NRCS shall provide clerical and related staff support for the Working Group and to the PAB.

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