



## MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 11, 2019

FROM: Mike Mascoe, Public Information Specialist

SUBJECT: NACD Conference

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I attended the 2019 Annual Meeting of the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) February 3-6, in San Antonio. Of course, work continues toward preserving and protecting water resources, but scientific research on improving soil health dominated this year's conference.

Learning and communicating ways to make the dirt more productive seems to be on a faster track than water management has ever been. Technology is certainly one reason. Another reason, just as certain, is a more mature NACD. Its 3,000 member districts have made it the best-positioned organization in the nation to distribute science-based information on any topic to agricultural producers at the local level. NACD is embracing that responsibility and some at the conference suggested the ability to feed the entire world, sustainably, from U.S. fields alone in the near future is a realistic goal. Armed with what's been learned over decades about managing water and given the current explosion in soil management research data, NACD seems confident it can help meet that goal.

Climate change was another prominent conference topic. I attended a session highlighting services being provided by the USDA and partners through climate hubs in about a dozen North American regions. These climate hubs offer tools, strategies, management options and technical support to farmers, ranchers and other landowners to help them adapt to climate change ([climatehubs.ocs.usda.gov](http://climatehubs.ocs.usda.gov)). Another breakout topic, unfortunately held at the same time, focused on alternative siting of solar panels to avoid competition for agricultural space.

Urban agriculture was discussed by a panel at one of the main general sessions. Community gardens, it turns out, are great tools for criminal rehabilitation, neighborhood continuity, teaching people about their heritage and building self-sufficiency. The value of partnerships was among the many topics offered to improve district operations; an NACD Annual Meeting staple.

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NACD and the National Conservation Foundation (which sponsors Envirothon) launched a new endeavor at the Annual Meeting. The goal of the Next Generation Leadership Institute is, “to provide first-class leadership opportunities for the next generation of conservation leaders (#NCFNextGen).”

Other take-aways:

- This group likes to recognize its members in many ways. Nebraska was honored, along with others, for 100% of its eligible conservation districts being NACD members.
- Lincoln’s hosting the 2020 Envirothon drew applause during a main general session.
- Nemaha NRD Board Member Orval Gigstad is a tireless representative of our region on the NACD Board and deserves any thanks.

Thank you to the LPSNRD Board for the continued chance to connect professionally with NACD.

Mike Mascoe  
Public Information Specialist

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
REPORT TO THE  
LOWER PLATTE SOUTH NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT  
February 20, 2019**

**PERSONNEL:**

- Mitch Schoenfelder has joined the Lincoln NRCS Field Office staff as a Survey Aide. Mitch graduated from UNL with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies with a minor in Fisheries and Wildlife; Water Sciences. He will assist staff with conservation practice design, layout, and installation. Mitch began his duties in Lincoln on February 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Evan Sisel has joined the Lower Platte South NRD staff as the Resources Soil Conservation Technician in the Lincoln NRCS Field Office. Evan will graduate from UNL with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanized Systems Management with a minor in Agronomy in May 2019. He will assist staff with conservation planning, as well as conservation practice design, layout, and installation. Evan began his duties on January 14<sup>th</sup>.

**LAND TREATMENT:**

- There has been a great deal of interest in the LPSNRD Summer Conservation Program. Staff has been able to complete a good number of preliminary designs for spring/summer projects. Layout of these projects will commence once we have suitable weather.
- The NRD technicians are in the process of completing annual dam inspections.
- Staff is busy completing conservation plans needed due to variances received for 2018 status reviews. This is creating substantial interest in financial assistance programs to install conservation practices.

**PROGRAMS:**

- EQIP – All applications have been ranked. Due to the implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill, we are still awaiting direction from NRCS National Headquarters to proceed with contract development.
- CSP – Renewal contracts for 2019 will continue to be on hold until further notice. There has been no information regarding a 2019 signup for new contracts.
- CRP – The 2018 Farm Bill increases the acreage cap by 3 million acres nationwide. FSA will not take new applications until they receive further guidance from their National Office.

**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

- March 7<sup>th</sup> – State Technical Committee Meeting

***Cory Schmidt - District Conservationist***