

RC&D Council Member Update **April 25, 2007**

Legislative Activity –

FY08 funding – our target is \$56 million to move the existing councils toward full funding. We are making tremendous progress in our efforts to restore funding to the RC&D program with many Members of Congress supporting RC&D. House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro expressed strong support for RC&D at a speech to our leadership forum and in a hearing before her subcommittee on the President's budget for natural resources.

A Dear Colleague letter circulated in both the House and Senate in support of RC&D funding. The House letter had over 30 signatures including the Chair and Ranking Member of the House Committee on Agriculture Collin Peterson and Robert Goodlatte and the Chair and Ranking Member of the Conservation Subcommittee Tim Holden and Frank Lucas. The Senate letter had over 20 signatures.

Many more members of Congress have communicated their individual support for RC&D to the Ag. Appropriations Subcommittee. The appropriations committee will take action on their funding bills in mid to late May with House and Senate floor action expected in mid –late June. Please continue to follow-up with your Members of Congress and ask them if they communicated their support of RC&D to the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee Chair and ranking member. NARCDC follows up on your contacts here in DC and keeps key committee staff and Members of Congress informed on our RC&D funding request.

Farm Bill – Please continue writing your Members of Congress in support of our recommendations. The legislative changes we are requesting will help RC&D operate more effectively and efficiently at the local level. These changes will make it clear that every council should have a coordinator and the local support and resources to provide technical assistance to the council. We will also ask Congress to reaffirm the role of local decision-making through the area planning process, and to reinforce that RC&D is a USDA program that brings to bear USDA resources in a community. Finally, we ask that funding for RC&D be made mandatory rather than subject to annual appropriations.

The Agriculture Committees of the House and Senate are continuing to hold hearings on the Farm bill through early May. The Subcommittees will begin drafting legislation in May with the goal of having a new Farm bill in place by the end of September.

NARC&DC is meeting with all committee members and it is critically important that contacts are made locally. We are getting very positive support for our recommendations but mandatory spending in this budget environment will be difficult without strong local contacts. Please let us know if you have any questions or need help – call Bobbi Jeanquart at 202 434-4780 or e-mail at narcdc@rcdnet.org

Congressman Zack Space of Ohio is planning to introduce our recommendations for RC&D as a separate bill and champion their incorporation and approval in the Farm bill. Congressman Space is a member of Conservation Subcommittee of the Agriculture Committee. As we get more details on the legislation we will let you know.

SAVE THE DATE NARCDC is sponsoring the [Energy Conservation Opportunities on the Farm Conference](#), June 11-12, 2007 at the Hilton Savannah DeSoto, in Savannah Georgia. This conference will help you better understand how energy (specifically electricity) is used on farms, and how to identify efficiency improvements. The conference will show you practical examples of energy savings on farms and guide you through an on farm energy savings audit. Participants will learn what is involved in being an energy savings audit data collector. Stipends will be available. See our website and our early May council mailing for more details.