

March 5, 2007

NARCDC Leadership Forum – Approximately 160 members attended our annual Leadership Forum in Washington DC last week. The event unveiled our legislative priorities for the Farm bill and for FY 08 funding for RC&D. Attendees heard from the Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Johanns, who talked about the role councils could play in market based conservation, our role in cooperative conservation and also discussed the Administration’s Farm bill proposals. The Secretary also talked about the President’s proposed budget request for RC&D of \$14.6 million and attributed the budget request to a low PART SCORE and the view that RC&D duplicates other federal programs.

On Wednesday morning attendees at our congressional breakfast heard strong messages of support for RC&D from Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) Chair of the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee and subcommittee members Ray LaHood (R-IL) and Rodney Alexander (R-LA) and staff for Chair Collin Peterson of the House Agriculture Committee. The Speakers congratulated council members on their good work and encouraged them to take their messages to Members of Congress both in DC and back home. Council members were reminded by the speakers that the President’s budget was simply a proposal and that Congress supported RC&D. Rep. DeLauro also talked about the issue of duplication referred to by the Administration and said that in her view RC&D does not duplicate – we work in partnership.

Legislative Activity – Council members are encouraged to assist in two tasks this year to strengthen and support RC&D. First is to write a letter in support of \$56 million for FY08 funding for RC&D councils as soon as possible. If you have not already done so please get your letters in this week, as the appropriations committee is moving forward on its work on the FY08 budget. A legislative alert and sample letter are available on our website. Please also feel free to contact me if you need assistance.

Some of you will find that Members of Congress ask if there is a “Dear Colleague” letter in support of RC&D funding. A Dear Colleague letter is one which a Member or Members of Congress circulate in support of an issue and ask their fellow colleagues (Members of Congress) to sign on. Chairman Collin Peterson (D-MN), Tim Holden (D-PA) and Frank Lucas (R-OK) plan to circulate a letter later this week. As soon as we get a copy we will forward it to you. The Dear Colleague letter is a good way for Members of Congress to show support for RC&D – but an even stronger show of support is to ask your Member of Congress to write a letter to the Chair and Ranking member of the House and Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee to support \$56 million to move the existing RC&D councils to full funding.

Our second legislative task is ask your Member of Congress to support our Farm Bill priorities for RC&D. A letter was sent our councils and is on this [website](#). This letter should be mailed no later than the end of March to be most effective.

NARC&DC Board Meeting 2/24 and 2/25– NARCDC held a board meeting last weekend. Officer elections took place – Jeanette Jamieson was reelected to Second Vice-

President, James Sipperly was elected Secretary and Pearlie Reed was elected Legislative Co-Chair.

In other action, the board of directors extended the deadline for nominations to the at-large board seat to April 30.

The board also discussed the need for councils to have area plans updated within the last five years and on file at NRCS headquarters.

State Association Presidents Teleconference – A teleconference will be held on **Thursday March 8** with state association presidents to discuss legislative activities.