

# DRAFT

November 18, 2005

To: NACD Executive Board  
Krysta Harden  
NACD Board of Directors

From: NACD District Operations Committee

**RE: Recommended District Official Certification Program**

## **Purpose Statement**

To establish and maintain a basic body of knowledge for local district officials. Examples of the curriculum include the following:

### **Basic Knowledge**

- What is a conservation district?
  - § Authority of districts
  - § Role of district officials
- Conservation History Timeline
  - § History of NACD, NASCA, NRCS and other partners
  - § Dust Bowl, model legislation, etc.
- Clearinghouse/wagon wheel concept (Missouri model)
- Public accountability and public fiduciary responsibilities
- Ethics
  - § Employee/supervisor relationship
  - § Conflict of interest
  - § Acceptance of gifts
  - § Nepotism

### **Basic Responsibilities (examples)**

- Understand state law relating to conservation districts
- Lead in assessing local natural resource issues
- Establish goals through strategic/long-range and annual planning
- Establish operations policy and procedures
- Implement a personnel management system
- Secure sufficient funding to reach goals
- Understand the roles of state and national associations
- Interface with local, state and federal officials

## **Primary audience**

District officials

# DRAFT

## Assumptions

- Many states have well-developed, established training programs.
- Some states have no formal district official training program.
- Each state will need to develop content specific to their state.
- Each state and/or district has the freedom to add to the basic content defined above.
- Partners and state associations may be involved in the training process.
- Certification can be given by the state association or state agency.
- Each state can select the appropriate delivery system for the certification training.

## Benefits

- A uniform national training program
- Uniform certification standards and expectations for district officials
- An improved national conservation delivery system
- Stronger local conservation district programs
- Additional funding opportunities for conservation districts
- Reduced district official liability exposure
- New information, reinforcement of concepts through re-certification
- District officials empowered to fulfill public duties
- Added credibility to district operations

## Funding

- States and districts will creatively seek sufficient funding for training and certification of district officials.

## Guidelines

- Every district official will be certified within one year of election or appointment.
- District officials must be re-certified during their second term and during each subsequent term.
  - Consult state agencies and state associations on how to conduct re-certification

## Administration

- Training can be delivered through
  - Existing state association/agency training programs
  - NACD training opportunities (where necessary)
  - State and federal partners
  - Self-contained training module (e.g. PowerPoint presentation with audio narration)
- Ask states to submit current training programs for DO committee approval to ensure components are covered

## Implementation Steps

1. Draft to Krysta Harden, November 2005 (Vandever)
2. Conference call with NACD Executive Board, November 2005 (Robinson)
3. Presentation to Conservation Partnership Leaders, November 2005 (Dobbs)
4. Preliminary presentation to NACD board of directors, February 2006 (Robinson)

# DRAFT

5. Request NASCA input, participation, and endorsement, February 2006 (Bill Wilson - MDNR)
6. Request state association participation/endorsement, February 2006 (Christa Jones)
7. District Operations Committee address/incorporate comments, February 2006
8. Request NRCS endorsement, March 2006 (Robinson/Vandevere)
9. Submit to NACD board of directors for adoption, July 2006 (Robinson)
10. Roll out program at region meetings, 2006
11. Ensure training component incorporation into existing state training programs
12. NACD provide a forum for sharing training tools; share state training models with states that do not have training programs. Provide a list of manuals, tools, etc.
13. Present during national Partners Leadership Conference, Summer 2006 (Krysta Harden)
14. Present first certifications, February 2007
15. All states and territories implement certification programs, December 2009

## **Possible Incentives**

- NACD reward states for adopting certification process: “reduced” registration fees; scholarships to attend meetings
- “Certified” lapel pin
- Plaque or certificate
- Award at national meeting; national recognition
- “Certified District Official” on name badge; gold star
- NACD require national board members to be certified (recommendation: By board meeting 2009, all board members must be certified)
- Increase in federal funds through NRCS with percentage of district officials certified?
- Provide news releases to local districts: “\_\_\_\_\_ County District Officials Certified” with photo

## **Implementation Issues**

- States provide certification training; NACD will help if necessary
- Certification of instructors; train the trainer
- Working with NASCA, suggest state agency to add incentives to certification
- Encourage state associations/commissions/agencies to add incentives
- Keep this positive, emphasize the benefits
- Invite partner employees to participate in training (they will not receive district official certification)