

NASCA Statement on Working Lands Resiliency

The owners and operators of our nation's working lands assume a tremendous responsibility for food and fiber production, wildlife habitat management, water and air quality enhancement, soil health, and a number of other environmental elements that benefit the public as a whole. Conservation practices have proven a worthwhile investment in enhancing the long-term viability of these working lands. In the face of significant changes in weather patterns and increased occurrence of erratic and sometimes catastrophic weather events, the value of conservation practices has been verified to an even greater extent.

Soil and water conservation practices serve a greater purpose than mere stewardship. They are a key component to agricultural sustainability and provide resiliency to the landscape in the face of extreme weather events. Thus, conservation practices implemented on our nation's working lands offer long-term protection, not only to the agricultural industry, but to homes, property, roads, bridges, utilities, and infrastructure of all types.

Many individuals, groups, and organizations have taken an interest in providing conservation assistance to landowners and operators. However, the vast majority of conservation delivery responsibilities still rests squarely on the shoulders of our core conservation partnership: The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), state conservation agencies, and conservation districts. This unique partnership of federal, state, and local resources brought us out of the dust bowl 80 years ago, and will see us through any environmental challenges that lie ahead, including changing weather patterns and climate variables.

Environmental impacts to our landscape are not new, but the types of impacts are changing. In the face of more extreme weather events, prolonged droughts, floods, and increasing demands on agricultural markets, our conservation partnership must continue to evolve to meet these challenges. NASCA recommends the following:

- NASCA supports voluntary, incentive-based, locally-led conservation delivery. These elements should be at the heart of conservation program design at the federal, state, and local level.
- The conservation partnership needs to improve its outreach initiatives. This will not only help to provide more resources for conservation, but will promote more unassisted conservation activity on natural and working lands.



- Many federal and state conservation programs are oversubscribed and thus fail to meet the overall conservation needs across the landscape. NASCA encourages Congress and state legislatures to financially support conservation programs at levels that will meet this landscape-based need.
- NRCS and state agencies have determined staffing requirements to meet conservation delivery needs. However, budget restrictions too often result in staff shortages. NASCA urges Congress and state legislatures to fully fund conservation program staffing needs.
- NASCA supports and investigates market-driven and other innovative approaches to fund conservation delivery through the traditional conservation delivery system.
- NASCA understands that best practices for local resource issues are often developed at the local level. Innovation is therefore encouraged at the on-farm or conservation district level, and we encourage our partners to embrace this local innovation.

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