

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS
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February 10, 2010

URGENT LEGISLATIVE ALERT ON RC&D FUNDING
Please respond by March 1, 2010

Dear RC&D Council President:

The President eliminated funding for the RC&D Program in his Fiscal Year 2011 budget proposal.

To restore funding to the program, we will need the assistance of every council member. **We need you to distribute this packet to your local council members for action as soon as possible.**

Attached is material which can help you make the case for funding the RC&D program for Fiscal Year 2011. The packet includes a fact sheet on FY 2011 priorities and a sample letter, which you may use to make the case for an increase in funding to the RC&D program. To be most effective please customize this letter by **including your local success stories**, as well as, adding your personal touch to the letter. This year, because of the urgency of our appeal we encourage you to write a letter, follow it up with a phone call and meet with your Member of Congress while they are at home in their District. Fax your letters to the Member's Washington office to make sure they arrive in a timely manner. Hard copy mail generally takes three weeks to arrive in Washington DC due to security screening. **Letters need to arrive by March 1 to be most effective.**

Please also remember to send a copy of your letter to the NARC&DC office so we can be sure to follow-up on your requests. Our fax number is 202 434-4783.

Our staff can assist in providing you with the fax number for your Member of Congress. We also have a new legislative e-mail network for individuals who wish to receive updates and information electronically. To subscribe, send an e-mail to narcdc@rcdnet.org and indicate you would like to receive our legislative updates.

Thank you for your commitment to RC&D Program. The NARC&DC is ready to help with any questions you may have. Please call Executive Director, John Haugen, or Deputy Executive Director, Andrew Gordon, at (202) 434-4780 if you need any assistance or email us narcdc@rcdnet.org.

Please remember legislative action is strictly a council member responsibility. Neither federal employees nor federal equipment (federally supplied fax machines, computers, or stationary) can be used to assist in these efforts.

SAMPLE LETTER TO REQUEST FUNDING FOR RC&D PROGRAM FOR FY2011

The Honorable _____
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: FY 2011 funding for the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program in Agriculture appropriations

Dear:

I am a member of the _____ RC&D council located in _____. As you are aware, RC&D Councils are non-profit entities that work in partnership with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service through a federal coordinator. I urge you to oppose the President's budget request for the RC&D Program, in which he proposes to eliminate all funding to the RC&D program. We need your help in restoring this funding of \$50.73 million, (which has been frozen since 2003) to continue our strong record of service on conservation and economic development issues in our community.

The RC&D Program is one of the federal government's success stories to create jobs and leverage financial resources efficiently to support economic development and resource protection in rural areas. On average, \$5.60 is generated for every \$1.00 of federal funds invested in the RC&D Program; for some RC&D Councils the leverage is even greater.

In FY 2009, the 375 RC&D Councils of the RC&D Program created or retained over 11,800 jobs through its initiatives. For an allocation of \$50.73 million, this is only \$430 of federal investment per job created. A dynamic job-creation engine like that should be extolled as a prime example of the effectiveness of federal funding, not targeted for elimination.

The President's budget justification states that the RC&D Program was established to "build community leadership skills...that would access Federal, State, and local funding sources for the community's benefit. After 47 years, this goal has been accomplished." Surely, you can agree that the need for leadership and support in our local communities is as great now as it ever was. The RC&D has always provided this leadership, and is prepared to continue its excellent mission.

We cannot allow funding to the RC&D program to be cut. If funding for this program is cut, the following services and projects can no longer be provided in our community:

[Please look at your Area Plan and list local projects that will enhance economic development or are in the renewable energy or climate change area that would not be completed if RC&D funding is eliminated.]

I am writing to you to ask that you continue support for this council and Councils nationwide by writing the Chairman and Ranking Members of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee and asking that \$50.73 million be provided to the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, Resource Conservation and Development Program (RC&D). Please ask them to insert this language into the Agriculture Appropriations bill:

"Resource, Conservation and Development Councils play an important role in rural development and natural resource conservation. USDA has indicated on average it takes \$173,100 to fully support an RC&D Council with a full time Federal Coordinator. There are currently 375 existing Councils and 38 pending applications. The Committee provides \$50.73 million to move the existing Councils toward full funding."

Sincerely,

[Feel free to distribute the attached information to all elected official and interested parties]



RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS FY 2009 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils are the leadership entities associated with RC&D areas. RC&D Councils help plan and carry out activities that increase conservation of natural resources, support economic development, and enhance the environment and standard of living in local communities. RC&D Councils are non-profit entities that work in partnership with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service through a federal coordinator.

RC&D Council members are volunteers and include local, civic, appointed, and elected officials. Because RC&D areas are locally organized, sponsored, and led, the program provides an ideal way for residents to join together and decide how to improve life in their communities. RC&D Councils help identify and address these unmet needs. Currently, 375 RC&D Councils serve 180 million people in 2,693 counties in all 50 states, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands Area.

A few of the many RC&D accomplishments in FY2009:

- 676 new businesses were created
- 5,921 businesses were expanded or retained
- 401 businesses were financially assisted with funds totaling \$25.9 million
- 7,060 jobs were created and 4,778 retained
- Improvements were made on 2,420,000 acres of wildlife habitat, 400,000 acres of lakes, and 7,731 miles of streams
- 1,040,000 people acquired new knowledge or skills
- 3,200,000 economically or socially disadvantaged people were helped nationwide
- Formation of 129 cooperatives was facilitated
- \$283.9 million in external grant funds was obtained for projects
- Agri-tourism activities were developed on 927 farm or ranch operations
- 704 farms or ranches were assisted through direct farm-to-consumer marketing – community supported agriculture groups, restaurants, stores, or farmers markets
- 631 instances of Tribal Nations served
- Over 601,701 acres of agricultural land were preserved or protected
- Water quality projects at 1,871 animal agricultural operations were assisted
- Construction or rehabilitation of 17 flood control structures
- Over 6,100 workshops, tours, and seminars were conducted on agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, and wildlife issues
- Over 2,900 training sessions on leadership development, grant writing, business development, non-profit management and environmental education were held
- More than 500 natural resource related school curricula and programs were developed

RC&D Councils in eight states implemented renewable energy projects, including biofuels from soybeans, ethanol production from corn, and energy production from other biomass, solar, water, and wind sources.

Funds provided to RC&D through appropriations provide technical assistance and support for one Federal Coordinator per council. In turn, council members seek outside funding to address local needs identified in council area plans for conservation and economic development. RC&D Councils have leveraged an additional \$5.60 for every dollar provided by the federal government. In recent years, as the program absorbed inflation and cost of living adjustments, technical assistance to local Councils has declined and, as a result, council services provided to local communities have also declined. Councils no longer have full time coordinators and program assistants have been eliminated.

Full support of the 375 existing Councils and the additional 38 applications pending at USDA would require an allocation of \$72 million to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's RC&D appropriation in FY 2011. The program is currently funded at \$50.3 million for FY10.

The National Association of RC&D Councils requests that the following report language be added to the FY2011 Agriculture Appropriations Bill:

Resource, Conservation and Development Councils play an important role in rural development and natural resource conservation. USDA has indicated that on average it takes \$173,100 to fully support an RC&D Council with a full time coordinator. There are currently 375 existing Councils and 38 pending applications. The Committee provides \$50.73 million to move the existing Councils toward full funding.