

## **RC&D Notes from National Association of Conservation Districts Meeting – January 2013**

Today I attended the RC&D one hour breakout session and since I was the only one from Pennsylvania I thought I would share my notes. Feel free to ask if the notes don't make sense or you have a question.

The meeting was conducted by a National Association Board Member Harbison from Alabama, however the notes were delivered on behalf of National Executive Director Andy Gordon.

Emails [agordon.sso.org](mailto:agordon.sso.org)      [rlharbison@gmail.com](mailto:rlharbison@gmail.com) (You may want to check those before using.)

- In 2012, 199 of the 375 Councils paid their dues. Prior to de-funding, in a typical year 300 paid.

200 Councils are active

75 Councils are struggling

20-25 have merged with other Councils

75 have not survived

- Andy Gordon is the National Executive Director and he has a legal background. Hopefully, no additional Councils will fail, however if they need to carry through, Andy can help them to take the necessary steps since it is a legal process. He cannot actually provide the legal services but he can give guidance.
- The new website has been released and should be easier to use.
- Andy and an intern are the only full time employees of the National Association now as they continue to reduce costs.
- You can get the Catalyst newsletter by email for a stream of information from the National Association.
- Andy has met with the White House Rural Council in an effort to have RC&D recognized as an already established delivery system for the President's initiative. Another meeting is scheduled.
- Many Councils are benefiting from the Fire Wise grants. Councils can get information about this opportunity from the website.
- Andy has met with NRCS Acting Chief Jason Weller and he feels the relationship is good with NRCS under Weller and that he understands the value of RC&D Councils to NRCS and communities.
- Andy will speak in states, do teleconferences or Skype.
- The new Farm Bill draft does not change any of the RC&D language which is a good thing because currently it is a permanently authorized USDA program. There just is no funding. They are continuing to watch the Farm Bill wording to ensure the permanent authorization is not removed.
- Please use Grant Station to see opportunities, available to dues paying Councils.
- Next national meeting will be in Mobile, Alabama in June 2013

- Olga is the President of the National Association and since she lives 20 minutes from the national office in Washington, DC, she volunteers her time and claims little travel expense.
- If you have a good success story or more, please send them to Andy
- Councils should continue to pursue the Circle of Diamonds since it is the strongest card for showing accountability
- NRCS has all records and five year plans boxed up someplace and Andy is trying to get funding to get the boxes and analyze the contents. The boxes in storage includes all five year plans.
- National Association offers teleconferencing service at a minimal cost to Councils.
- Non profits can work outside their designated area which is a great advantage to RC&Ds.
- Kentucky said they feel alone, disconnected, and they never hear anything from the national association or from the region. They feel abandon. Other states said they get something almost every day in an email from national. Any Council not getting information should contact Andy to be sure they are being getting a steady stream of information from the national association.
- Some reports from states included:
  - Texas is past the Sad Song and Slow Walk'n stage and has moved on to be a strong RC&D State
  - Ohio is using the USDA Rural Development revolving loan program. They said they loan the money out and when its returned they get to keep the money?????? (I know that's what they said, but what a deal if its true!) The have done nine \$99,000 loans.
  - New Jersey is doing 319 work for their DEP. Also said that a law in NJ says that if a government entity purchases land and the land has a building, that building can be rented to a non-profit for \$1 a year so an RC&D Council has office space in a farm house.

Gary Smith

(Submitted by Gary P. Smith, Assistant State Conservationist, USDA NRCS,  
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