

# National Conservation Planning Partnership

Planning for Tomorrow, Together



## Conservation Planning for the Future

The National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCP) continues to build on its efforts to reinvigorate conservation planning using employee and customer feedback as its guide. Input from the 2018 nationwide employee listening sessions, focus groups and a 2019 NACD symposium led by NCP committee chairs to identify and outline eight high-priority projects to streamline conservation planning during a May 2019 work planning session.

The partners view conservation planning as critical to our nation's long-term sustainability and agricultural productivity. They are working cooperatively to reinvigorate conservation planning, improve the partnership's capacity to deliver one-on-one conservation planning assistance, ensure the delivery of technically sound, voluntary science-based assistance and build a workforce of strong conservation planners.

## Work Planning Session

An NCP action team representing all conservation partners analyzed nearly 200 individual suggestions during a three-day working session. The team used an iterative process to review the feedback and determine the outcomes and priorities. The process of sorting and scoping listening session feedback involved thousands of hours of work, much of it volunteer time.

The team determined conservation planning, capacity and training as the highest priorities in screening and ranking the recommendations. Other important factors used in the process were operational processes, core partnerships, expansion, staffing and metrics. NCP will continue to improve its internal communications processes to ensure all partnership staff and members are kept up to date.

The recommendations were broken down into four main areas:

- 1) Just Do It Projects (recommendations that can move forward immediately)
- 2) Recommended Projects (recommendations identified as priority for action and implementation)
- 3) Recommendations that need further exploration
- 4) Items that are out of the partnership's scope of work

In addition, many recommendations we received have already been implemented but may need more communication to ensure planners are aware of their existence. These findings will be available to employees, with each recommendation directly addressed with a response from NCP.

NCP represents the efforts of five key national conservation partners to reinvigorate conservation planning by enhancing and strengthening the effectiveness of planning and our partnership workforce.

In 2015, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Association of Conservation Districts, National Association of State Conservation Agencies, National Conservation District Employees Association and National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils signed a memorandum of understanding to bring our staff and members' greatest skills, strengths and passion to this endeavor.

As NCP efforts grow, we are looking to expand the partnership to leverage all possible resources in the conservation planning arena.

NCP is co-chaired by Astor Boozer, Regional Conservationist, NRCS and Mike Brown, Executive Director, National Association of State Conservation Agencies.



## Projects Selected For Immediate Action:

- Increase accessibility to conservation planning training for all partnership employees
- Develop a collaborative process for regional conservation planning training opportunities and establish a cadre of effective trainers
- Encourage use of third-party vendors to help deliver conservation planning and support training
- Expand communications which capture conservation planning benefits
- Automate the national planner database to generate messages and notifications to conservation planners
- Enable or create e-signature feature in Conservation desktop and Client gateway for participants' signatures on job sheets
- Develop (with producer input) a streamlined conservation plan
- Streamline the conservation planner certification process

The partnership's vision of improved and enhanced conservation delivery will be boosted by these projects, which address needs for improved training, tools, capacity and experience.

## Next Steps

Next steps include developing work plans and timelines for the above recommended projects, identifying and securing resources needed to accomplish goals and communicating about the projects to all employees.

A process will be developed to encourage additional input and feedback from staff and customers as we move forward.

An NCPP website is in development that will include information for both internal and external audiences.

Conservation planning and technical assistance delivery will be strengthened through expanded training and certification programs to develop and maintain skills. Emphasis will be placed on

- economic benefits of conservation
- landscape-scale planning
- soil health improvement
- knowledge shared across the partnership
- communications with customers that leads to an understanding about natural resources on their land.

For more information on NCPP and its work, contact: Stacy Koch, National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCPP) Coordinator, at 570-925-5531