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**Wisconsin Association  
Of  
Land Conservation Employees**

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**NACD Report** by: Greg Baneck

2009 Was a year of transition for NACD. In April, Krysta Harden, the 5+ year Executive Director stepped down to accept President Obama's nomination as the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Congressional Relations for the USDA. Hopefully her years with NACD will help to put Land Conservation and Conservation District issues at the forefront as USDA programs roll out.

After an extensive search and interview process, Doug Loudenslager, Chief Operating Officer of the National FFA was selected as the new CEO of NACD and started July 13<sup>th</sup>. After working extensively with the National Board and learning the magnitude of activities that the organization was involved with, it became apparent that the job was significantly different than he had anticipated and resigned in early October.

After yet another exhaustive search, Jeff Eisenberg was selected as the next CEO of NACD and officially started in this capacity February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010. Eisenberg most recently served as the Executive Director of the Public Lands Council, where he represented ranchers before Congress and the Executive Branch on a variety of natural resource issues such as climate change, the Farm Bill and endangered species. Eisenberg says, – the challenges facing conservation in America are great, but the opportunities are even greater and NACD is well-positioned to lead the charge. Eisenberg was raised in Minnesota, and received his graduate degree from the University of Wisconsin. Hopefully his Mid-Western roots will benefit our programs in the long-run.

With all of the transition in 2009, NACD still worked tirelessly in Washington to promote conservation programs that result in funding for the programs we administer here at home. They played an important role in getting the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative pushed through which will funnel nearly \$475 Million to the Great Lakes Region which encompasses about a third of the state. This will result in funding for both staff and projects in many of the Great Lakes Counties in the State.

Additionally, NACD has been working with NRCS to increase the reimbursement rate for technical assistance provided by districts for implementation of Farm Bill Programs. While this

still won't reimburse Counties for 100% of their staff's time, it will definitely result in a higher rate than what is currently paid.

### NACD Convention Jan. 31<sup>st</sup>-Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>

- NRCS Chief Dave White gave his report during one of the general session of the event.
  - Promised 1/3<sup>rd</sup> Billion dollars for Nutrient Management in the Mississippi Basin over the next 5 years.
  - Proposes a 80-90% increase in time spent with “boots on the ground” rather than administration for the organization in the next 5 years.
  - Understand that many of their “new” staff were not brought up on farms which requires more work to get them to be able to “speak farm” and work with landowners to help implement their programs. They will increasingly depend on Districts to help promote some of their programs where conservation goals overlap.
  - Starting to utilize new media methods to promote programs – USDA Youtube Channel and sites like <http://swcsnetwork.ning.com/>
- Harris Sherman – USDA Under Secretary of Natural Resources and Environment addressed the group.
  - Advised that all agencies will be under a budgetary freeze for the next 3 years.
  - Conservation programs are likely to be targeted for potential reductions
  - Future program focus will likely be rewarding landowners for good stewardship
    - Environmental markets such as Carbon credits are likely to be big in the short term.
  - Focus will be more on landscape scale conservation – limiting fragmentation.
- Cheseapeake Bay Project – I attended a couple of sessions on the efforts currently being employed on the Cheseapeake Bay Watershed. Some of their approaches are similar to what we do in WI, while they also are attempting some innovative concepts. They still seemed focused on voluntary compliance however.
  - Breaking down large basin into “Priority Watersheds”
  - Promoting volunteer compliance
  - Core 4 practice focus – mostly field related
  - Focus on 15-20 practices (low tech) – mostly soft practices
  - Shortage of technical assistance for rapid implementation.
- Conewago Watershed (one of the Priority Watersheds of the Cheseapeake) they are trying some more innovative approaches.
  - Goal of 100% participation
  - Established Conservation SWAT Teams – consist of specialists with expertise w/certain practice layout and design and the team moves from District to District w/in the watershed for a 3-5 year period. Eases the staff costs for Districts and gets practices completed.
  - Employing community waste storage practices with regional digesters and incinerators. Claim a \$250/cow return to farms annually.

- Export 100,000 tons of manure from watershed annually to reduce nutrient levels
- SWIMS – Soil and Water Information Management Systems – Attended a session on a software system that many Districts in Ohio are utilizing to track virtually everything happening within their departments. While data entry did seem a bit onerous at times, it was able to produce some pretty useful information for departments using it.
  - Core Modules
    - Landowner Contact System
    - Time tracking by project
    - Outreach tracking
    - Time sheets
  - Are able to track and query the following info.
    - Where are staff spending resources
    - Progress towards goals
    - Identify areas where changes are needed
    - Identify if duties need to be re-assigned or work re-distributed
    - Extent of County coverage with service
    - Time/program Reporting.

Several other sessions were also attended. As a whole, after a turbulent year, NACD seems to have righted the ship and are moving forward once again.