

NEWS RELEASE

**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

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For Immediate Release

NRCS AND ND STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE SIGN CONTRIBUTION AGREEMENT

Bismarck, ND, August 1, 2003— A first-of-its-kind contribution agreement between the North Dakota State Soil Conservation Committee (NDSSCC) and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was recently signed in Bismarck. Tom Jewett, NRCS State Conservationist, and Tom Christensen, NDSSCC Chair, represented their agencies in the signing of the agreement.

“NRCS and the NDSSCC have the common goal of helping to bring about the conservation and wise use of land, water, wildlife, and related resources. This agreement will help deliver technical assistance to landowners to implement conservation programs designed to address National, State, and local resource priorities,” said Tom Jewett.

“We feel this is a good method of doing business,” added Tom Christensen. “This is a bold and exciting step in the right direction.”

The NDSSCC receives State of North Dakota funding for the Soil Conservation District Assistance Program with an objective to deal in matters affecting soil conservation. Under this agreement, NRCS will provide an additional \$312,500 to support the efforts of the NDSSCC.

The current staffing levels of the NRCS are insufficient to adequately meet the increased need for technical assistance under the conservation programs authorized or re-authorized by the 2002 Farm Bill. This pooling of resources by the NRCS and NDSSCC will result in conservation priorities being addressed in a more efficient and effective manner, as opposed to each entity operating independently, according to Jewett.

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In the past, local soil conservation districts have utilized the assistance of soil conservation technicians through the NDSSCC Soil Conservation District Assistance Program to assist NRCS in delivery of USDA programs. This new agreement formalizes the process. The agreement will allow the NDSSCC and NRCS to increase staff resources in all North Dakota counties that had sought financial support from the NDSSCC to address conservation priorities. This will result in an additional 20 soil conservation districts being able to participate in the Soil Conservation District Assistance Program.

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Tom Jewett, NRCS State Conservationist, and Tom Christensen, NDSSCC Chair, at the signing of the contribution agreement

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