United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT
BETWEEN THE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
AND THE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY (CIVIL WORKS)

Purpose: To promote a long-term working relationship between the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) (OASA (CW)) on collaborative efforts to improve the management of water and related natural resources under the missions and authorities of NRCS and the Department of the Army (DA) Civil Works mission through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

Goals: NRCS and OASA (CW) have established the following partnership goals:

- To express mutual commitment to comprehensive water management and related natural resources conservation in support of Executive Order 13352, Facilitation of Cooperative Conservation.

- To create and support a national team to review existing authorities and programs, identify areas of mutual concern and need for increased collaboration, and support implementation of actions identified for:
    1) Watershed Planning and Implementation,
    2) Wetland Creation, Restoration, and Enhancement, including Coastal Restoration,
    3) Recovery from Disasters Impacting Natural Resources, including Restoration
    4) Water Quality Improvements, Water Supply Development and Water Management,
    5) Coordination of other programs and activities including Wetland Conservation Compliance (Swampbuster) and Regulatory Programs (Section 404 of the Clean Water Act), and

6) Coordination of programs and activities that promote the wise use of floodplains including participation in the Federal Interagency Floodplain Management Task Force.

- To support and encourage the establishment of Project Field Implementation Teams to serve as pilot projects for implementing innovations, removing impediments to the NRCS/USACE partnership, and engaging and supporting local leadership in solving water and related natural resources problems on specific projects.

Implementation: We commit to achieve our goals by fostering a spirit of teamwork between our organizations at all levels. We will meet in partnering sessions as needed, but at least semi-annually, to ensure that we are achieving our goals. This partnership agreement does not commit either the NRCS or USACE to fund particular initiatives, as funding commitments must be addressed pursuant to a more formal document.

Effective Date: This agreement is effective when signed by both parties and should be reviewed annually to renew our commitment and consider needed changes.

United States Department of Agriculture

Dave White

Dave White
Chief
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Date: 26-May-2011

United States Department of the Army

Jo-Ellen Darcy

Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the
Army for Civil Works

Date: 26-May-2011

PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES
to accompany the
PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT
between the
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
and the
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I. Background

A. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners, State and local units of government, Tribes, and other Federal agencies, and technical assistance to international governments through a partnership effort to conserve, maintain, and enhance natural resources and the environment.

B. The Department of the Army (DA) Civil Works mission through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) provides planning, design, and construction services to civil and military customers, and other agencies, worldwide. The USACE also develops, manages, and protects water and related land resources.

C. The NRCS and USACE (subsequently referred to as the Agencies) both have responsibilities for carrying out policies and programs that address water and related natural resources issues. Both Agencies recognize that the policies, programs, plans and activities that are used to carry out their respective responsibilities may significantly affect the other agency and those they serve.

D. There are often opportunities for Federal agencies, such as the Agencies, to cooperate under their respective jurisdictions. Opportunities also exist for the Agencies to provide each other with needed services and technical expertise. Cooperative management and technical assistance efforts can help: improve resources management and protection; improve public services, provide a better understanding of the Agencies' goals, objectives, and programs; and help minimize misunderstandings and conflicts.

E. Each Agency retains full responsibility and authority to execute and accomplish its programs. All duties and commitments described herein are contingent on the availability and administrative allocation of funding. Nothing in this document shall be construed as committing either agency to provide any goods or services to the other agency.

II Purpose of the Partnership Agreement and the associated Partnership Principles:

A. Improve public services, management of water, and the conservation of related natural resources through harmonious and effective cooperative efforts.

B. Establish a framework for communication and coordination between officials and staff at every level of the Agencies.

C. Encourage the use of NRCS expertise in application of upstream conservation practices and systems to enhance the effectiveness of appropriate USACE water resources projects.

D. Foster the early identification of mutual interests in the Agencies' plans, programs, and activities in order to minimize conflicts and maximize synergy whenever possible, and to facilitate collaborative efforts to address water resources needs.

III. Areas of Cooperative and Mutual Interests. Listed below are areas of cooperation that may initially be pursued between the Agencies. The items listed are by no means all inclusive because as this partnership develops, it is likely that other areas of cooperation and mutual interest will be identified at all levels of the Agencies.

A. **Watershed Planning and Implementation**. The Agencies should seek ways to integrate water resources programs and initiatives in order to develop more complete and efficient water resources projects for project sponsors, and improved watershed resources management for the broader range of watershed stakeholders. Topics to be addressed may include:

1. Increase the Agencies' coordination in water resources activities;
2. Establish a sediment work group to collaboratively identify system approaches to managing sediment and potential pilot projects;
3. Establish a workgroup to coordinate models, tools, and technologies related to water and natural resources planning;
4. Establish pilot water resources projects and/or interagency planning teams to identify innovations and impediments to collaborative watershed approaches to resource development and management;
5. Establish watershed planning, training, and technology exchange;
6. Develop an integrated process to assist watershed project sponsors in obtaining 404 permits; and,
7. Increase technology, services, and data exchange to assure safety of new and existing dams.

B. **Wetland Creation, Restoration, and Enhancement, including Coastal Restoration.** The Agencies should review existing authorities and ongoing programs, identify areas of concern and need for increased collaboration. Topics to be addressed may include:

1. Identification and importance of wetlands and aquatic resources projects and programs;
2. Develop processes to coordinate wetlands projects and programs; and
3. Coordinate interagency wetlands training and technology exchanges

C. **Recovery from Disasters Impacting Natural Resources, including Restoration.** The Agencies should review and update, as needed, existing emergency management agreements for Presidentially Declared Disasters, working closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and major flood response and recovery actions requiring coordinated response for Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies (FCCE) and Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program activities. Items to be addressed include:

1. Review areas of responsibility; and
2. Coordinate disaster recovery activities.

D. **Water Quality Improvements, Water Supply Development and Water Management** The Agencies should create joint project field planning/implementation teams for specific projects to address water quality, water supply, water management and other water related issues to the extent authorized.

E. **Coordination of other programs and activities including Wetlands Conservation Compliance (Swampbuster) and Regulatory (Section 404 Clean Water Act).** The Agencies should review existing policies and agreements related to wetland conservation compliance and regulation, update them as needed, and identify additional opportunities for cooperation.

F. **Coordination of programs and activities that promote the wise use of floodplains.** These activities include participation in the Federal Interagency Floodplain Management Task Force, the Silver Jackets Program, and other mechanisms for collaboration and coordination of floodplain and flood risk management actions.

IV. Communications and Coordination

A. The Agencies should maintain a list of points of contact responsible for program areas and other areas of mutual interest. Early communication should improve public services and resources management consistent with the above mission statements for both Agencies, through increased efficiency and avoidance of potential conflict. Coordination should occur for planning, programs and other management actions of mutual interest. Each Agency should offer the other opportunities for early coordination regarding the modification of significant policies and procedures that may affect subject areas of this agreement and have impacts on the programs and mission of the other Agency.

B. Frequent informal consultation on matters of mutual interest should be encouraged at all levels. The NRCS State Conservationists and USACE District Engineers should be the primary conduit through which field coordination should take place. For regional level coordination, the primary conduits will be the NRCS Regional Conservationist and the USACE Division Commanders. Each Agency should be responsible for ensuring that personnel are informed and involved. To encourage District/State communications, the Agencies, with staff support from the Liaisons, should:

1. Issue guidance from headquarters through Regional Conservationists to NRCS State Conservationists and through Division Commanders to USACE District Engineers encouraging communication, and providing examples of success stories;
2. Publicize through newsletters, websites, etc. examples of NRCS/USACE collaboration resulting from planned District/State communications; and
3. Provide points of contact by subject matter for each State NRCS Office and each USACE District.

V. Implementation

A. **Responsibility**. Lead responsibility for overall coordination and implementation of the Partnership Agreement should be assigned as follows: NRCS Liaison to USACE, USACE Liaison to NRCS, or their designees. Contact information will be maintained on the Partnership website.

B. **National Team.** The Agencies will establish a National Team to coordinate activities, identify needs, present findings, and document agency leadership decisions in support of this agreement.

C. **Project Field Implementation Teams.** The Agencies will support and encourage the establishment of Project Field Implementation Teams to serve as pilot projects for implementing innovations, removing impediments to the NRCS/USACE partnership efforts, and engaging and supporting local leadership in solving water and related natural resources problems.

D. **Liaison Designation.** The Agencies should continue their designation of liaison positions. Liaisons should provide staff support to help carry out actions identified through the Partnership Agreement.

E. **Goods and Services.** A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between USACE and USDA was executed on December 7, 2005 which governs the respective responsibilities regard the provision of goods and services. Further, the Agencies will develop jointly an NRCS/USACE agency-wide MOA that provides for the effective and efficient exchange of goods, services, and funding necessary to accomplish the intent of each Agency's legislative responsibilities and mandates, as appropriate. The Agencies will support using this MOA as guidance for development of project specific MOAs for states and districts.

F. **National Points of Contact**. National points of contact should be established by each Agency by subject matter for coordination on program and technology issues. Points of Contact should be reviewed annually and kept current.

G. **Regional MOUs.** The Agencies should establish regional level MOUs to support implementation of the National Partnership Agreement and enhance coordination across multiple states within NRCS Regions and USACE Divisions or Districts.