Maine Association of Conservation Districts
Working for Maine's Conservation Districts
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Maine Association of Conservation Districts – Briefing for Maine State Technical Committee

Good morning, everyone ~

Again, thanks to Maine Natural Resources Conservation Service (ME NRCS) for allocating time on the State Technical Committee meeting agenda to Maine Association of Conservation Districts.

For over 80 years, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Soil and Water Conservation Districts have been steadfast partners serving local producers, landowners, and residents with solutions and resources on prioritized environmental challenges here in Maine and across the nation. Whether serving farmers, woodlot owners, landowners, producers, our common shared goal is to provide solutions to environmental problems to those seeking to voluntarily improve the land they own or manage.

In Washington, DC, the National Association of Conservation Districts recently distributed a survey to the over 3,000 state and territory Soil and Water Conservation Districts to gather data concerning changes in federal funding for contracts and grants plus the reduction of federal employees in our partner agencies who serve local participants.

Maine Soil and Water Conservation Districts joined with all other states and territories to provide input into the result of these changes.

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) compiled the data into a report that was submitted to elected officials in Washington, DC. The report is available at the NACD website (https://www.nacdnet.org/) plus I've included a link to that report in this briefing, which will be available online following this meeting: https://www.nacdnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/2025-02-28-Conservation-District-Survey-Report.pdf

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In addition, at the national level, NACD has submitted letters in support of conservation participants and agencies. Board members have contacted their state leadership promoting the vital importance of voluntary conservation to ensure continuity of the efforts toward healthy soil and clean water.

The National Association of Conservation Districts, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts have provided this support for our Federal partners for decades. Every year, NACD Board Members meet or communicate with elected officials to share information, challenges, and concerns about statewide and local environmental issues plus illustrate the importance of federally funded conservation programs – as well as the workforce necessary to provide the technical assistance.

NACD continues to monitor and assess the news and updates taking place in Washington, DC and is on point to react and respond in support of our nations producers and those who assist them. As I said earlier, the strong partnership between NRCS and Soil and Water Conservation Districts has – for more than eight decades – carried the same goal and mission, to help people help the land.

That goal and mission carries through here in Maine by well established, longstanding relationships between Maine NRCS and Maine Soil and Water Conservation Districts. By promoting and assisting each other, the partnership serves to enhance that goal.

In addition, partnerships with State and Federal agencies and departments extend that capacity. With the focus on providing assistance to producers, landowners, and residents at the forefront, voluntary conservation practices, programs, and education are the primary goals.

For example, Soil and Water Conservation Districts recently gathered at the Maine State Capitol in the Hall of Flags to meet with State House and Senate elected officials plus provide conservation outreach and information that will serve their constituents. Soil and Water Conservation Districts will be represented again in just a few days at the Hall of Flags on Ag Day, continuing to promote natural resource conservation.

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Across the state, Soil and Water Conservation Districts provide outreach and education to local farmers, woodlot owners, rural and urban residents, and the general public. Focused on local priorities, this effort illustrates how important it is for each service area to have a voice on the individual and often unique environmental issues that affect them.

As you all are aware, when it comes to conservation, one size does not fit all. Site specific, common sense, effective conservation is necessary to produce efficient natural resource solutions to local environmental challenges.

In closing, I'll remind you that this year at the Agricultural Trades Show Commissioner's Luncheon, Governor Mills make a proclamation that 2025 is the, 'Year of Youth in Agriculture.' This announcement aligns with many SWCD educational programs, such as the Read ME Agriculture program, as well as a popular project, "Soil your Pants," that demonstrates the effect of burying cotton underpants in healthy soil.

Maine Envirothon, a natural resources competition for high school aged students includes a soil station - a vital agricultural element.

For decades Maine's Soil and Water Conservation Districts, with the ability to quickly react and respond to changes, will continue to provide trusted conservation leadership and support our partners in conservation.

Thank you so much, to Maine NRCS and all members of the State Technical Committee, for your time.

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