

CONSERVATION POLICY MANUAL

March 2019

North Dakota Association of
Soil Conservation Districts
3310 University Drive
Bismarck, ND 58504

PREFACE

The policy of the North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts (NDASCD) is determined by its members -- the elected and appointed soil conservation district supervisors in North Dakota. Recommendations become policy if adopted by the members at their Annual meetings.

The members, at their 2001 NDASCD Annual Meeting, adopted a recommendation that would sunset policy that is at least five years old unless the NDASCD Board of Directors deems that policy to still be relevant and appropriate. Where the Board of Directors have chosen to retain policy believing the policy to still be relevant and appropriate it is indicated with a (BOD 2002).

These NDASCD Policy positions reflect both recommendations of the members and the policies that are retained as determined by the Board of Directors.

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POLICIES

I. GENERAL STATEMENT

North Dakota's soil is one of our most valuable resources. The uses of the land are many and varied with approximately 95% being utilized for agricultural production. The soils vary from a degree of low productive capacity to a degree of very high productive capacity. (BOD 2007) (BOD 2009)(BOD 2012) (BOD 2017)

Beginning in 1937, soil conservation districts in North Dakota have been encouraging farmers, ranchers, other landowners and occupiers to adopt conservation practices on their land which would best provide for the control and prevention of wind and water erosion.

Conservation planning and the application of soil conservation practices are needed to protect crop, range, and forest lands against erosion.

The ultimate goal is for 100% of the land area in North Dakota to be adequately protected against wind and water erosion and soil quality degradation of factors. This is necessary to enable our soil resource to provide a sustained high level of production for present and future generations. (BOD 2012) (BOD 2018)

We support the five core principles of soil health.

1. Soil Armor
2. Minimize soil disturbances
3. Plant diversity
4. Continual live plant/root
5. Livestock integration (2017)

A. OF MAJOR CONCERN

1. We believe programs to meet oncoming resource and environmental needs should be directed toward 1) preventing waste, pollution, and damage to natural resources; 2) improving the quality of those resources; 3) exploring and developing the potentials of resources; 4) encouraging the efficient and beneficial use of resources; 5) full utilization of existing facilities and services; 6) flexibility in meeting the diversity of problems and needs; 7) encourage land occupiers to use the land according to its capabilities and treat the land according to its needs. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)
2. The North Dakota Soil Conservation Districts value our partnership with Natural Resources Conservation Service, but we need to retain our ability to have local control. We believe NRCS and FSA should remain separate entities because we want to maintain an agency that will concentrate on conservation and resources of our area. (2000) (BOD 2009) (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)
3. We support locally-led conservation with elected and appointed supervisors determining policy on local issues by districts conducting locally-led events and vigorously defending locally-led conservation. (BOD 2017)
4. NDASCD recommends a field office presence in the districts. It is vital to our method of delivery that there is a presence in every district. We recommend that the delivery of quality technical service in our field office and area offices, are when they are fully staffed and supported. (2018)

B. ENVIRONMENT

We share with other Americans the concern for environmental quality and will continue to work for improved management of resources, control of pollution, and the productive harmony of nature and man. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)

C. WE WILL SEEK OR SUPPORT

1. We seek effective support for conservation districts from government, industry, labor and commerce, farm, civic and other conservation organizations, among educators, news media, clergy, and other segments of American society. (BOD 2009) (BOD 2015)

2. We encourage the adoption of cooperative working agreements between conservation districts and public agencies as needed to help carry out district programs. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)
3. We seek cooperation and urge maximum teamwork in conservation programs. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)
4. We support the North Dakota State Soil Conservation Committee being maintained as an agency by itself. (1996) (BOD 2007) (BOD 2012) (BOD 2017)
5. We support the ability of Soil Conservation Districts' to introduce to the public, as hand plants, disease resistant varieties of the American Elm species when source(s) become available. (BOD 2012) (BOD 2017)
6. We support funding of the Outdoor Heritage Fund for the future of North Dakota. (BOD 2017)
7. We support placing Palmer amaranth on the ND Prohibited Noxious Weed list. (2017)
8. The NDASCD supports legislation that requires development permits to have a Conservation Plan that outlines mitigation measures to limit erosion and weed potential. (2018)

D. FUNDING PRIORITIES AND SPENDING

1. We recommend greater resource program activity and appropriation which will meet present and future needs of our state and nation. We believe there is a need for more attention to soil and water conservation, forestry, public land management, rangeland management, sediment control and related resource efforts on which our future depends. (BOD 2009) (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)
2. The NDASCD will promote and provide leadership to seek adequate Soil Conservation District Assistance Program funding during legislative sessions to ensure a continued program for all North Dakota Districts needing Technician funding assistance. (1997) (BOD 2009) (BOD 2011) (BOD 2016)

E. NON-DISCRIMINATION AND POLITICAL AFFILIATION

We will promote the welfare of soil conservation districts and the people therein regardless of race, religion, sex, or national origin. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)

F. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

We favor legislation, where necessary, to authorize state and federal agencies to provide additional services to and through conservation districts for resource development and environmental improvement. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)

G. LAND USE

1. Wise Use of Soil
 - a. We advocate measures to promote the saving and utilization of quality soil materials, including topsoil, whenever disturbed by man in agricultural, industrial, commercial, recreational, residential, highway or other uses. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)
2. Prime Farmland
 - a. NDASCD endorses the principle that prime agricultural lands be reserved for agricultural uses. We believe that every farm and ranch should have a basic conservation plan as the foundation for land use and a conservation program fitted to the resources of each operating unit. (BOD 2009) (BOD 2010) (BOD 2015)

- b. We support local action requiring all land users and zoning authorities to seek alternate site locations whenever a land use, other than for agriculture production, is considered for an area of prime farmland. (1978) (BOD 2009) (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)

H. TRESPASS

We endorse actions designed to halt unwarranted and unlawful entry on private property. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)

I. LANDOWNER PROPERTY RIGHTS

We believe just compensation should be made for the loss of property rights by landowners. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)

II. EDUCATION

Education is a basic part of any district program and work plan and is a major concern of this Association. Since all people depend upon our natural resources for their survival, the conservation and wise use of these resources must be the responsibility and concern of everyone. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)

A. IN OUR SCHOOLS

1. We emphasize that the basics of conservation and environmental understanding must be started in our schools so that every child will be taught early in life the vital importance of resources and the dangers of waste and pollution and the difference between constructive and destructive actions of man in relation to environmental and resources management issues. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)
2. We advocate the teaching of conservation and care for the environment as an integral part of our school curriculum beginning with the lower grades through higher educational levels. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)

B. OUTDOOR CLASSROOMS

1. We believe outdoor classrooms provide a valuable teaching tool and learning situation. Soil conservation districts are encouraged to assist in locating and developing outdoor classroom areas for use in conservation education. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)
2. We believe school conservation tours are an excellent means of showing students the practical application of conservation practices on the land. We encourage districts to arrange such tours. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)

C. EDUCATION PROGRAMS SUPPORTED

In order to improve public understanding, attitudes and belief, and improved management and use of our resources, NDASCD supports:

1. Each district's participation in the annual observance of Soil Stewardship Week, beginning each year with the fifth Sunday after Easter. We express our gratitude to the clergy of all faiths for their participation. (BOD 2009)(BOD 2010) (BOD 2015)
2. Scouts, 4-H and FFA conservation programs (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)
3. An educational program on the application of conservation practices (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)
4. Distribution of educational materials (BOD 2009) (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)

5. The North Dakota Soil Conservation Achievement Program (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)
6. Youth Range Camps (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)
7. The "Keep North Dakota Clean" Campaign (BOD 2007) (BOD 2012) (BOD 2017)
8. Environmental Education Workshops (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)
9. Completion of Supervisor Accreditation Training (BOD 2010) (BOD 2015)

D. CONSERVATION EDUCATION

1. We support the voluntary approach toward solving our erosion problems. We will provide leadership in conservation education and information programs. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)
2. Continue a conservation education program for Achievement Winners at the State Convention. (2003) (BOD 2009) (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)
3. We recommend a committee be created to review higher education curriculum for conservation of natural resources. (BOD 2017)

E. RANGELAND

We urge SCDs to sponsor range tours for the public. (1980) (BOD 2009) (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)

F. INFORMATION HELPS

1. We will supply reliable information about the purposes and activities of conservation districts to the press, radio and television; to national, state, and local legislative bodies; to farm organizations and agricultural leaders; and to all other responsible organizations and leaders concerned with our soil resources. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)
2. We will keep soil conservation district officials informed about current conservation issues. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)

III. FEDERAL PROGRAMS SUPPORTED

A. COST SHARE FUNDING (EQIP)

Incentives to plant trees around farmsteads are needed to encourage greater conservation efforts. NDASCD believes farmstead belts are a necessary and good conservation measure and should be included in the USDA cost share programs. These belts provide wind erosion control, building and livestock protection, conservation of heating energy and provide some excellent habitat for wildlife. NDASCD encourages USDA to continue to initiate actions to include this in future cost share conservation programs. (BOD 2010) (BOD 2012) (BOD 2017)

B. RC&D

NDASCD supports the RC&D Program at a funding level that will enable local sponsors to complete their measures to fulfill the intent of the program and allow for completion of RC&D area plans. (1978) (BOD 2007) (BOD 2012) (BOD 2017)

C. FARM PROGRAMS

1. Recommend all EQIP funds be non-prioritized. (1996) (BOD 2007) (BOD 2012) (BOD 2017)
2. (EQIP) We will work with NACD and NRCS to provide a point system that does not reward size but considers benefits from small practices. (BOD 2017)

3. Extend CRP contracts to 20 years for living snow fences, field windbreaks, filter strips and riparian buffer planting, (1999) (BOD 2009) (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)
4. Due to fire concerns, climatic conditions and the fact that by mid July the majority of nesting birds have hatched, we recommend haying and grazing dates for CRP be changed from August 2nd to July 15th for any county that has received only 40% of their normal precipitation in the previous six months. (2004) (BOD 2009) (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)
5. We recommend the Farm Service Agency (FSA) authorize lifting of the current haying and grazing limitations of CRP Practice CP18C, Establishment of Permanent Salt Tolerant Vegetative Cover, in order to maximize reduction of salinity by encouraging maximum forage production through mowing or haying to a minimum forage height of six inches, beginning as early as June 20 annually. (BOD 2011) (2016)
6. We favor additional flexibility for producers dealing with CRP. Several CRP contracts are expiring, and many operators are choosing to return that land to crop production. Current FSA policy allows operators to destroy existing cover after July 1 for fall seeded crops, or to apply chemicals (with or without mowing) after the primary nesting season preparation for spring-seeded crops, without a payment reduction in either case. However, cover may not be destroyed on land intended for spring-seeded crops until after October 1. Approval of additional practices could promote no-till seeding, improve establishment of spring-seeded crops, and facilitate no-till organic production practices for those wishing to follow that method of farming. NDASCD encourages FSA to recommend a policy change in Section 280 of the 2-CRP (Rev.4) Amend.12 to allow the no-till seeding of cover crops in land intended for spring-seeded crops, with either chemical application or with no-till organic manipulation (such as crimpers) to terminate growth of existing cover, after the primary nesting season. FSA should be encouraged to consult with NRCS to develop a list of acceptable cover crop species. (BOD 2010) (2015)
7. We encourage the Natural Resources Conservation Service to employ a soil salinity specialist to coordinate the delivery of multiple programs involving soil salinity management, in cooperation with the efforts of Agency partners. (BOD 2012) (BOD 2017)
8. We believe that soil surveys and Web Soil Surveys need to include tools such as a salinity risk index. Tools such as this would reflect the potential of salinity to affect the productivity of affected soil types which would allow proper management and accurate assessment of those soils. NDASCD requests that NRCS develop the tools needed to address salinity and that it be considered a high priority. (March 2016)
9. We support the 24 million acre cap for CRP in the next Farm Bill and will work to ensure that the workings lands programs such as EQIP and CSP are fully funded. (BOD 2017)
10. We support revisions to crop insurance that allows farmers to exempt non-productive saline areas from crop insurance coverage. (2017)
11. Tree protection is necessary. To protect deciduous tree seedlings from herbivores browse and to allow the seedlings to mature in height and shape to provide desired windbreak protection. NDASCD recommends that NRCS revise PEPS Guide to include cost share for tree shelters. (2018)

D. PL-566 SMALL WATERSHED PROGRAM

The Association urges the NRCS to utilize the water supply provisions of the Public Law 566 Small Watershed Program to participate in the development of rural water systems. (1991) (BOD 2007) (BOD 2012) (BOD 2017)

E. SAGE GROUSE

NDASCD strongly encourages the United States Fish and Wildlife Service consider conservation efforts being implemented on the ground, including grazing management to improve residual plant height, the planting of alfalfa and cover crops, and timing restrictions on installing conservation practices, when making a decision in the listing of the Greater Sage Grouse on the Endangered Species List. (BOD 2013) (BOD 2018)

IV. RESEARCH NEEDS

The soil conservation district supervisors are concerned about present and future research needs. Ongoing research needs to show potential financial benefits to agricultural producers and taxpayers. (BOD 2011) (BOD 2016)

A. WINDBREAKS

Farmstead and field windbreaks are an acknowledged asset in North Dakota and have been used successfully since the 1930's to control wind erosion. The NDASCD is concerned about the general decline of windbreaks in the State due to age, disease, chemical misapplication, neglect and landowner/operator removal. Recognizing the economic and aesthetic value of trees in North Dakota and the Northern Great Plains, we support and strongly encourage renovation and reestablishment of farmstead and field windbreaks, and research to identify and develop tree species and cultivars better suited to natural environmental threats. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)

We support and strongly encourage the promotion, establishment, and maintenance of Living Snow Fences, to save tax dollars for snow removal and improve driver safety on winter roads, while also sequestering carbon, improving soil health and enhancing the environment. (BOD 2010) (BOD 2015)

NDASCD will work to have NDSU or other appropriate governmental agencies conduct a study to assess health and effectiveness of Shelterbelt and Windbreak plantings in North Dakota.

There has been no study that has been done that assesses the health and effectiveness of Shelterbelt and Windbreak plantings and an organization such as NDSU has the knowledge and expertise to conduct a study of this type. There is a great deal of variation on the health and effectiveness of shelterbelts and windbreaks in North Dakota.

Among the considerations that would be helpful in designing future plantings are: Orientation(e.g. N/S, NE/SW,E/W), Overall width, Overall density, Spreading outward from plantings, Composition of species, Arrangement of species, Average height of each specie, Estimated age of planting, Apparent rate of growth of each specie, Spacing in rows, Density of each row, Encroachment within the planting, Competition between species, Leaning, Stunting, Regeneration, Succession of species, Need for maintenance, Overall potential for being self-sustaining, Ground cover, Probable effectiveness at controlling wind erosion, Probable desirability for snow distribution, Probable effectiveness for the general purpose of conservation, and Estimated remaining functional lifespan. (2018)

B. FORAGE BREEDING AND RANGE MANAGEMENT

Grassland management and grass breeding research is important to the conservation of the rangeland resources in North Dakota and should be continued and expanded. The livestock industry of the Northern Great Plains and particularly of North Dakota, relies on rangelands to maintain a competitive position in today's market. NDASCD supports ARS and NDSU research on pasture and rangeland to sustain the level of production of food and fiber and to provide an adequate forage base, for the livestock industry, and habitat for our wildlife resources. The USDA-ARS breeding program at Mandan is the only major

effort on breeding of perennial grass and legume species in the Northern Great Plains and is of particular importance to the farmers and ranchers of North Dakota. If the breeding effort is to meet the forage and range management needs for improved plant materials, it is imperative that the present forage and range breeding and management team at Mandan receive adequate funding and appropriate personnel position for these additional efforts. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)

C. AG RESEARCH

We support sound agricultural research in soil, crop and range science research programs based on science and emphasizing practical applications. This includes such areas as soil health, microbiology, saline and sodic soils, crop sequencing with both annual and perennial crops, cover crops and integrated cropping systems. (BOD 2012) (BOD 2017)

D. NDASCD asks NRCS to expeditiously re-evaluate the trees and shrubs that are approved planting in CTSG 2kk soils. In order to receive funding, NRCS requires planting trees that are approved for the CTSG 2kk soils. Shelterbelts are means of protecting tilled land from being eroded. (2018)

E. NDASCD requests NDSU and the North Dakota Forest Service to evaluate the suitability of all current unapproved species of trees and shrubs that are known to grow in North Dakota, specifically for use in shelterbelts, windbreaks, and urban forests, and requests the NRCS to add such species that are deemed to be suitable. (2018-Interim Policy)

V. WATER

A. GENERAL

District supervisors are concerned about present and future water needs. We believe the state's and nation's natural resources, especially water, are an essential part of North Dakota's and our nation's continuing growth. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)

We believe that these resources demand and deserve thoughtful and continuing attention by citizens, authorities of local communities, soil conservation districts, state agencies and appropriate branches of the federal government. Accordingly, we advocate the continued development and scientific management of all water resources. Because of the requirements of clean water for a wide range of purposes, we recognized these problems as having urgent national priority. (BOD 2010) (BOD 2011) (BOD 2016)

B. RIPARIAN BANK STABILIZATION

We favor riparian bank stabilization where damage occurs on streams or manmade structures where the public would derive benefits from these kinds of works. (BOD 2007) (BOD 2010) (BOD 2015)

C. STATES WATER RIGHTS

An adequate supply of quality groundwater is important to many regions of this nation with groundwater supply being relied upon not only for rural domestic needs but also for urban domestic and municipal needs, agriculture, manufacturing, and power generation. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)

The NDASCD will continually support the respective states' authority over management of its groundwater resources and will encourage sound groundwater management policies within the several states. The NDASCD will also support national programs designed to assist the states in planning for wise use and proper development of our respective groundwater resources. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)

The NDASCD opposes any effort by the Federal Government to usurp control of all bodies of water in the United States, specifically by changing the words "navigable waters" to "waters of the United States" in reauthorization of the Clean Water Act. (BOD 2011) (BOD 2016)

D. FLOODING

We oppose the Waffle Plan funding method for the Red River Valley Flood Control Project. Instead we promote a diversified approach to assist in solving the Red River Valley Flood problem such as retention dams, improved flows and diversion channels. (2002) (BOD 2007) (BOD 2010) (BOD 2015)

E. EDUCATION

We support development of a Project 319 Watershed Coordinator Training Program by the North Dakota Health Department, to include a Project 319 Coordinator Development/Training Manual for new coordinators and the hosting of an annual 319 coordinator meeting to provide 319 program updates, training, and networking opportunities among SCD Watershed coordinator staff and with state and regional staff. (BOD 2014) (BOD 2019)

VI. RECLAMATION

- A.** Right of Way Mulching – NDASCD will support the requirement of oil companies to include mulching techniques on all oil pipelines right of ways. These sites will be mulched after seeding using certified weed free straw or native grass hay. If proper grass seeding window per NRCS specs are not available in the first reclamation year, the entire right of way will be mulched. (2017)
- B.** Tree Survivability on PSC Mitigation – We will support remedies regulated by the PSC on all oil and gas industry impacted areas to meet a threshold of 90% survivability through the third growing season of the planting to ensure long term effectiveness. (2017)
- C.** We support private landowners in ensuring no past, present, or future pipeline right of ways will inhibit their ability to run personal underground utilities anywhere on or off their property. (2017)
- D.** We support the requirement of pipeline companies to assist in marking and crossing their lines. (2017)
- E.** NDASCD will engage with North Dakota Leadership and their appropriate units of government to address soil compaction issues for all open utility Rights of Way. Compaction Standards and specifications will be developed and required of all gathering and distribution utility companies in North Dakota. The fill material will be replaced in open trench in lifts and compacted back to 95% of its original site with compaction testing completed per industry quality control protocol to verify and document that the final compaction is compliant. (2018)