

# NEW YORK ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS, INC.



*PROVIDING TODAY...  
PROTECTING TOMORROW*

## FYI...

NYACD NEWSLETTER • JULY 2008

## ANNUAL MEETING 2008

NYACD's 2008 Annual Meeting will mark our 50th anniversary. We hope as many Districts as possible will be represented at this gathering. The meeting will be held at the Ramada Lakefront Inn in Geneva. The dates are Sunday, October 19, through Tuesday, October 21, 2008.

Our theme is "New York Landscapes: Lessons from the Finger Lakes". As the title conveys, the intent is to provide directors with a practical, thought-provoking program they can use to serve their own Districts. It will be presented with a Finger Lakes flavor. A detailed agenda will be mailed out with the registration forms. Look for them in mid-August. A price break will be offered for those who register by a particular date.

We will offer a tour of a nearby facility on Sunday afternoon, October 19, so plan to arrive by 2 PM to take advantage of that. Monday morning will feature a series of educational sessions. Topics will include: running an effective meeting, staff performance appraisals, and contract development and execution.

Our regular business meeting will be held in the afternoon on Monday. As you know, the business meeting allows you to vote for your officers and on the resolutions that will guide NYACD in upcoming years. A District Managers' forum will be held concurrently with the business meeting. Tuesday morning, October 21, will be devoted to two panel discussions on "energy alternatives and conservation" and "conservation opportunities and the economy of NYS". We are lining up a number of top-notch speakers to share their knowledge with our members.

As always, the Annual Meeting provides an excellent opportunity to share ideas with your fellow directors and to ask the questions that will help you serve your constituents. Please join us in Geneva.

Mary Beth Goodwin, Secretary, NYACD



## NACD BOLD STEPS TO STRENGTHEN COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

During NACD's 2007 Summer Meeting in Washington, D.C., NACD's Board of Directors adopted changes that, hopefully, will strengthen the association's committee structure. These changes resulted in the establishment of five Foundation Committees that will help the Board of Directors meet their goals established by the strategic plan and will address major issues, concerns or opportunities. Membership of the Foundation Committees was determined by the state's participation in NACD. This allows participating states to be involved in the development and implementation of NACD's major operational and policy issues. Subcommittees, Task Forces, Advisory Groups and Resource Policy Groups (RPG) can be created by a Foundation Committee for only a short time period and must address specific issues.

One such RPG is the former NACD Great Lakes Committee. The NACD Great Lakes RPG is a special advisory group to the Natural Resource Foundation Committee whose responsibility is to coordinate activities and formulate policy recommendations in all areas, which include, but are not limited to agricultural lands, water resources, forestry, urban, wildlife habitat, and grazing. Each Great Lakes state association of conservation districts within the basin appoints a delegate to the RPG. The NACD Great Lakes RPG invites representatives of national and regional agencies to serve as advisors. The RPG addresses unmet needs in regional soil conservation and water quality policy and acts as an important information conduit from the national and regional levels to state associations and district offices. The RPG is also committed to conveying local concerns to regional and federal agencies with a mandate to report on water quality, air quality, soil erosion and sediment control.

Since the creation of conservation districts in the late 1930s, private landowners and municipalities in the Great Lakes Basin have relied on a basin-wide system of local conservation agencies. The 208 basin districts have provided a variety of resource management and conservation services, advice and education to private landowners and communities. The NACD Great Lakes RPG represents the "Great 208" on basin and national issues while, at the same time, expanding their mission as other significant conservation issues emerge.

You will find the NACD Great Lakes RPG's Annual Work Plan 2008 on the next page.

Brad Rogers, NYACD President  
Chair, NACD Great Lakes Resource  
Policy Group

## NACD GREAT LAKES RESOURCE POLICY GROUP

### Annual Work Plan 2008

#### Mission Statement

To represent Great Lakes conservation districts as an advocate for Great Lakes natural resources by facilitating activities and strengthening the abilities of conservation districts to conserve, enhance and restore these resources and use them in a sustainable manner.

#### Critical Issue #1

Provide assistance and information to landowners and municipalities as they manage growth.

1. Identify Great Lakes Basin soil and water conservation districts' directors, especially from IN and MN, willing to serve as voting members and/or alternates to fully complement NACD Great Lakes RPG.
2. Identify advisors and invite to participate at all meetings.
3. Help secure authorized funding and upkeep for Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Dispersal Barrier System.
4. Compile information into a briefing paper/brochure for conservation districts' Urban/Suburban Water Management Program(s), i.e. rain barrels, rain garden.
5. Aid in the assistance to conservation districts through education as to how to obtain certified technical assistance (CTA) dollars from the 2008 Farm Bill.
6. Lobby on behalf of Great Lakes Basin conservation districts for a favorable increase within the Environmental Benefit Index (EBI).
7. Investigate the possibility of a general session on "Agri-terrorism Issues" at NACD Annual Meeting in New Orleans, LA.



#### Critical Issue #2

Promote districts' involvement in Great Lakes restoration and protection activities/programs, including, but not limited to:

Sediment Management	Nutrient Management	Climate Change
Sediment Tributary Modeling (COE)	Watershed/ Lake Basin	Coastal
Surface Water Management	Ground Water Management	Forestry
Great Lakes Water Management Compact	Urban Land Use Changes	AOC

NACD Great Lakes RPG's Statement of Intent: Identify and strengthen conservation districts' informational tool box so directors can better manage their local and state cultures by become more involved in county, state and national programs.

#### Strategy:

- GLRPG members will share and create a briefing paper on state and local successes in district director education.
- GLRPG and the GLC will develop an Electronic Information Delivery System.

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*I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand as in what direction we are moving – Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.*

## LEGISLATIVE YEAR

This year has been an active one for NYACD in promoting legislative and administrative policies favored by our member conservation districts. On the State legislative front, we sought more funds for soil and water conservation districts and we supported a bill on farm pond dams. On the Federal front, we supported the conservation title of the Farm Bill. On the administrative front, we spent considerable effort on the proposed DEC dam safety regulations. (That is covered in another article).

For our annual Legislative Day in Albany on February 5, we had appointments with 74 legislators or their staff members. We sought an increase in the EPF budget line for Districts from \$3 million to \$6.2 million, which is \$100,000 per District. We believe that this level of support from the State accurately represents the technical services which Districts are increasingly being asked to perform by local governments, state agencies, and private land owners. We also joined the Friends of New York's Environment coalition seeking an increase of the overall EPF to \$300 million in '08-09 and \$500 million in 2010-11. While we were not successful in getting an increase for districts, we presented our goal as a need in upcoming years and the overall EPF goal was partly met.

In April, S7564/ A10542, a bill to exempt farm pond dams from regulation by DEC, was introduced by Senator Young and Assemblywoman Gunther. It would have eliminated the ambiguity in the draft Department of Environmental Conservation dam safety regulations about whether or not farm pond dams are subject to them. It clearly would exempt this category of dams from DEC's oversight and transfer it to the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee. When the bill was brought to NYACD's attention, the NYACD Board voted to support it and we sent out a round of support letters. Unfortunately the bill died in committee in both houses. With more time for support to develop, it might come up again in January.

On the Federal front, the Farm Bill became a melodrama, stretching on for many months of temporary budget extensions. This left NRSC with almost no funds to make meaningful long-term commitments to projects. Working with the National Association of Conservation Districts, we sent Brad Rogers to Washington, DC as part of a lobbying day. Ultimately, the Farm Bill passed with a good conservation title, and with an adequate amount of funds attached.

Gregory Bell  
Executive Director

## EDITOR'S NOTE

You will note that this issue of this FYI newsletter is dated July 2008 and that the last one was in December 2007. The reason for this gap is that we currently have no newsletter editor. NYACD believes that our newsletter is an important link between NYACD and staff and Directors of our member Districts and hope to resume regular issues. While we have not been able to get the newsletter out on a regular basis lately, we have partly filled in the gap with more e-mails to the District offices.

## DEC DAM REGULATIONS

At our 2007 Annual Meeting, a resolution was passed concerning dam safety. This resolution led to a major theme of our work for the first five months of 2008. First, we formed an expert committee of fifteen District staff, Board members, staff from other agencies, and help from a Cornell University Law School law clinic.

From that committee, we developed an official document providing our comments on the Department of Environmental Conservation's draft dam safety regulations. Our document ended up explaining 47 deficiencies the committee sees in the draft regulations. Because of the experience of our committee and because we began our work earlier than others, NYACD took the statewide lead on this issue. While we did not realize that it would work out this way, because we produced a detailed analysis before lake dam owners and statewide associations, about a dozen other associations took positions which used our document as a guide in formulating their own positions. (A copy is available on our web site, [www.NYACD.org](http://www.NYACD.org)).

DEC held public hearings in three cities around the state. NYACD had representatives speak at all three. DEC has promised to review all of the comments. We await their response.

In brief, the issue with the draft regulations, is that they would shift all responsibility and liability from DEC to the owners of dams. They provide no legal protections to owners, and they ignore environmental and economic impacts, focusing only on a narrow band of safety issues. Many believe that the draft regulations are so onerous that they will lead to the abandonment and breaching of several hundred dams. That will reduce the flood protection, wildlife habitat, and recreational benefits provided by these dams. It would also plunge the property values of thousands of lake cottages across the state.

Gregory Bell  
Executive Director

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*NYACD Annual Meeting  
October 19 - 21, 2008  
Geneva*

*see ya there!*