

## NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)

### DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST'S MONTHLY REPORT

**3/14/2024**

#### PERSONNEL/OFFICE

- The Lancaster and Cass County Service Centers are under normal operations.
- New Soil Conservationist in the Lincoln Field Office. Bellodgia Roberson is originally from Houston Texas. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Multidisciplinary Studies (majoring in Mathematics, Engineering, and Combined Sciences) from Stephen F. Austin State University in Texas, recently earned a second Bachelor's Degree in Agricultural Sciences from Langston University in Oklahoma, and is currently pursuing master's Degree in Soil Science/Health at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln.
- New Resource Conservationist in the Lincoln Field Office. Trevor Hinn was previously the Soil Conservationist in the Lincoln Field Office since July 2021.
- Lincoln Program Assistant position is currently vacant. Hope to advertise soon.

#### LPSNRD LAND TREATMENT

- Drought conditions have continued to impact the installation of structural practices in LPSNRD since the fall of 2022. Current soil moisture conditions are variable across the district; staff are still conducting soil moisture evaluations on all projects prior to construction. Projects are being released on a site-by-site basis but many are being withheld due to inadequate soil moisture conditions.
- LPSNRD currently has the following land treatment cost-share program applications:
  - Lancaster County
    - 22 Fall 2023 Structural Applications
    - 24 Fall 2023 Cover Crop Applications
  - Cass County
    - 32 Fall 2023 Structural Applications
    - 2 Fall 2023 Cover Crop Applications
- Technicians are making site visits to the fall 2023 planted LPSNRD Cover Crop Program sites for photo/review.

#### USDA PROGRAMS

- Technicians are working on structural projects as soil moisture conditions allow and checking completed projects.
- Planning staff are reviewing FY24 EQIP and CSP applications, completing in field inventories, conservation planning, cost estimates, application assessments, ranking, and beginning to obligate contracts.

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

- 3/20/24 – Local Working Group Meeting – 9:00am-11:00am @ LPSNRD Office
- 3/29/24 – General CRP Sign-up Deadline
- 5/24/24 – Grassland CRP Sign-up Deadline
- 7/31/24 – Continuous CRP Sign-up Deadline

Tom Cowan – District Conservationist



# LOWER PLATTE SOUTH natural resources district

3125 Portia Street | P.O. Box 83581 • Lincoln, Nebraska 68501-3581  
P: 402.476.2729 • F: 402.476.6454 | [www.lpsnrd.org](http://www.lpsnrd.org)

---

## Memorandum

Date: March 13, 2024  
To: Board of Directors  
From: David Potter, Assistant General Manager (together with Directors Tom Green and John Yoakum)  
RE: 2024 NACD Annual Meeting in San Diego

---

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) held their 2024 Annual Meeting in San Diego, CA on February 10<sup>th</sup> through the 14<sup>th</sup>. I had the opportunity to attend the meeting along with Directors Tom Green and John Yoakum. LPSNRD is a Diamond Member of the NACD and has been for many years. With our membership we were able to get one of our registrations at half price. As you are aware, the LPSNRD has received six consecutive NACD Technical Assistance (TA) grants that help fund one of our resources technician positions. This was a great opportunity to meet those new NACD staff members I've been working with on the recent grant, meet with the NACD officers, hear presentations from national organization leaders, learn of conservation activities and projects around the country, and to network with other individuals in conservation. This was the second NACD annual meeting for Directors Green and Yoakum and myself, and I appreciate the opportunity granted by the Board to attend and represent LPSNRD.

We arrived in San Diego mid-afternoon on Saturday, February 10<sup>th</sup>. We kicked off the NACD 78<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting that evening with a welcome reception aboard the USS Midway (aircraft carrier commissioned shortly after WWII and now a museum). On Sunday morning I attended the NACD Grantees meet and greet. This was a session to showcase and ask questions regarding NACD grant projects. Later that morning I attended the Natural Resources Committee meeting where we received various updates. Sunday afternoon the LPSNRD reps attended the Northern Plains Region meeting. Orval Gigstad with Nemaha NRD and NARD President chairs the Northern Plains Region. Aubrey Evans of Kansas is our Region Representative. The Northern Plains Region includes Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas. Each state gave a report at the meeting, and we also heard from Curtis Elke the new NRCS Regional Conservationist for the Central Region. Elke was the Idaho State Conservationist prior to taking his current position in February. The NRCS Central Region States include Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wisconsin.

Monday morning started out with the opening general session. This included welcome programs, presentation of colors (Director Yoakum represented Nebraska on stage in the parade of flags), NACD President's (Kim LaFleur) Address, NACD CEO (Jeremy Peters) Report, and Keynote Speakers NRCS Chief Terry Cosby and Erik



*John Yoakum up on stage in Parade of Flags*

Wahl, Artist and Author. The Leadership Luncheon included membership recognition and awards, Friends of NACD recognition, NCF Recognition & NGLI 2023 Cohort Graduation, and keynote speaker USDA Deputy Secretary Xochitl Torres Small. The four afternoon breakout sessions I attended included 1)“Encouraging Urban Green Infrastructure Practices for Climate Resiliency” that discussed how Green Infrastructure above the minimum stormwater standards is important to community sustainability; 2)“Climate Adapted Native Plant Materials Project: Practical Innovation for an Uncertain Future” that discussed how the Tualatin SWCD is evaluating assisted migration to augment the genetic fitness of native plants used in restoration projects; 3)“Carbon Sequestration and Soil Health” that discussed the website OACD prepared on soil health and carbon sequestration with research information, links to tools, and articles; and 4)“Minnesota’s Resilience on SWCDs to Address Climate Resilience” that discussed the means and measures for climate action that will be delivered through Minnesota’s SWCDs. Directors Green and Yoakum also attended selected breakout sessions. The evening ended with a social hour and the National Conservation Foundation live auction.

Tuesday morning’s general session featured keynote speaker Carlos Suarez, NRCS California State Conservationist; a panel on approaches for fostering equity; a panel on climate and supply chain resilience; and keynote speaker Krysta Harden, president and CEO of the U.S. Dairy Export Council. During lunch we watched the film “The Biggest Little Farm: The Return”. Tuesday afternoon I attended four more breakout sessions including 1)“Converging Ag Drainage with Water Quality” that discussed how the Ottawa SWCD has blended the need for agricultural drainage and increased water quality for Lake Erie by integrating projects that accomplish both goals and brings partners together; 2)“Connecting Communities: Relationship Building to Diversity Participation” that discussed how a state association and state agency develop community relationships and leverage them to reach historically underserved producers, providing a trusted avenue to conduct outreach for NRCS programs; 3)“Cultivating Resiliency: Linking Soil Health to Profitability” that discussed how the Soil Health Institute, working alongside partners including the NACD, has assessed the economics of soil health management systems on a national scale; and 4)Maximum Partnerships: Building Partnership Between National Programs and Local Implementation” that discussed how partnership staff provide needed capacity in many areas of the country to address resource needs. Directors Green and Yoakum also attended selected breakout sessions. After the sessions I attended the President’s Reception. LPSNRD received one invite to the reception as a Diamond member. This was a relaxing atmosphere to meet the NACD officers and other conservationists across the country. The evening ended with a happy hour and the Appreciation Banquet which included award announcements and the installation of President-Elect, Gary Blair of Starkville, Mississippi. Blair will be sworn in as President in February 2025 at the NACD’s 79<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah.

On Wednesday I attended a Conservation Symposia entitled “Putting Farmers at the Center of Regenerative Agriculture Engagement Planning”. I was not able to stay very long in this session due to a virtual Finance & Planning Subcommittee meeting at 10:00 a.m. Pacific Time. That afternoon, Tom, John, and I attended the Host State Tours for our last event of the conference. John and Tom went on the Urban Agriculture in Southern San Diego County Tour, and I went on the Sustainable Agriculture: Compost, Pollinators, and Wine Tour (which included 1-San Pasqual Valley Soils, a compost facility located within San Diego County’s only agricultural preserve and 2- Domaine Artefact, a vineyard and winery in San Pasqual Valley, that is committed to sustainable land management practices). We flew home early Thursday morning.

Overall, the Annual Meeting was an exceptional event with lots of great speakers, sessions, and topics. The venue was great, the weather was awesome, and the networking was amazing. Nebraskans attending the Annual Meeting included: me, Tom Green, and John Yoakum from LPSNRD; Orval Gigstad from NNRD; Tim Fowler from PMRNRD; Eric Gottschalk and Ryan Chapman from LPNNRD; Ariel Fiedler from LCNRD; and Megan Grimes from NARD.

A copy of the “NACD 78<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting eResource Recap” which provides more information and photos of the 2024 Annual Meeting is attached, or you can get all the conference information, photos, press releases, and session videos at <https://www.nacdnet.org/newsroom/2024-annual-meeting/>.

This year’s NACD Summer Meeting will be August 10-13, 2024, in Boston, MA.

Again, thanks so much to the Board for allowing me to attend and represent LPSNRD at the 2024 NACD Annual Meeting!



*Nebraskans in attendance. Tim Fowler & Eric Gottschalk not pictured.*

---

#### **About the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)**

*The National Association of Conservation Districts is the nonprofit organization that represents the nearly 3,000 conservation districts across the United States, their state and territory associations, and the 17,000 men and women who serve on their governing boards. For more than 75 years, local conservation districts have worked with cooperating landowners and managers of private working lands to help them plan and apply effective conservation practices. For more information about NACD, visit [www.nacdnet.org](http://www.nacdnet.org).*



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

# 2024 Annual Meeting eRESOURCE

## NACD HOSTS 78TH ANNUAL MEETING

February 20, 2024



Last week, NACD welcomed over eight hundred conservation professionals to the [2024 Annual Meeting](#) in San Diego, CA. Hosted in partnership with the **California Association of Resource Conservation Districts**, the meeting explored the theme "Operation Conservation." We are excited to share a recap of the meeting in this special edition of eResource!

To explore the daily newsletters, see photos, read press releases, revisit presentations, and more - [see the meeting's media page](#).

---

## USDA ANNOUNCES WORKING LANDS CLIMATE CORP AT LUNCHEON

### NACD Leadership Supports Habitat Restoration Efforts



On Friday morning, the NACD staff, officers, and Executive Board joined the San Diego Audubon Society to kick off the Annual Meeting with a group service project. This volunteer effort was coordinated by the **Resource Conservation District of**





On Monday, February 12, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) **Deputy Secretary for Agriculture Xochitl Torres Small** and **Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation Robert Bonnie** announced the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) establishment of a new Working Lands Climate Corps (WLCC) during NACD's Leadership Luncheon.

The WLCC aims to provide skills-based training for careers in conservation. Its establishment is reflective of the critical role of voluntary, incentive-based conservation in meeting our climate goals.

"USDA is proud to partner with the National Association of Conservation Districts in the development and implementation of the Working Lands Climate Corps," said **Agriculture Deputy Secretary Xochitl Torres Small**. "This new program will provide technical training and career pathway opportunities for young people and help deliver climate-smart agriculture solutions for farmers, ranchers, and producers across the United States now and in the future."

Conservation districts have a long history of partnership with USDA, NRCS, and the original Civilian Conservation Corps. Together, we share nearly a century of history tackling our country's most pressing conservation needs through a voluntary, locally led, incentive-based approach.

"Climate change is this generation's Dust Bowl, presenting us with new challenges to agriculture, ranching, and forestry," said **NACD President Kim LaFleur**. "Preparing the next generation of conservationists to tackle issues such as soil erosion, drought, water quality and quantity, biodiversity, and habitat restoration is critical. NACD is pleased to collaborate with the USDA and NRCS to provide training support to the host sites that will be providing day-to-day mentorship, on-the-job training, and job experiences for a new generation launching careers in conservation."

**Greater San Diego County** and consisted of invasive species removal in California Least Tern nesting habitat.

NACD would like to thank our partners for bringing the NACD team together for this memorable event!

---

### **2024 Friends of NACD District Grant Program Recipients Announced**

NACD District and Partner Relations Committee **Chairman Franklin Williams** announced the 2024 Friends of NACD District Grant Recipients during Monday's Leadership Luncheon.

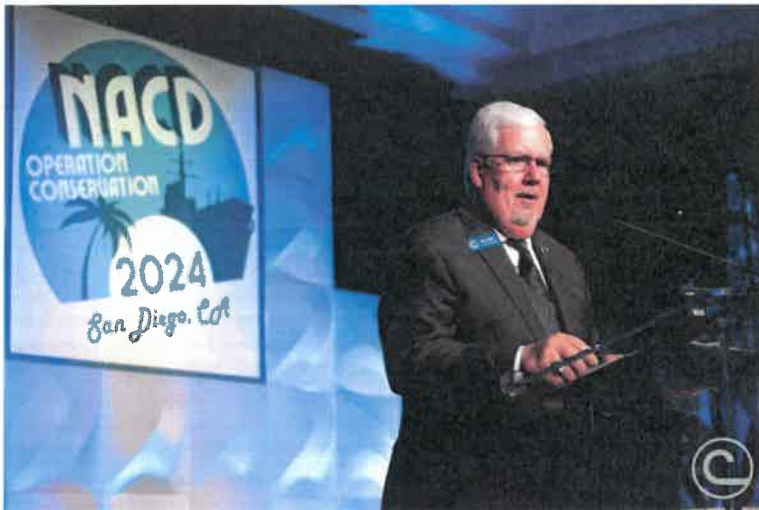
The Friends of NACD District Grants Program supports locally led conservation and advances climate resilience, education and youth development, and food security. Now in its fifth round of funding, the program is funded through donations individuals and organizations make to NACD. This year, eight conservation districts will receive \$2,500 to implement community-based projects.

Read about the recipients in [NACD's newsroom](#).

---

### **The Art of Leadership - an Exciting Keynote from San Diego Artist**

## GARY BLAIR ELECTED AS NACD PRESIDENT-ELECT



While meeting in California, the NACD Board of Directors elected **Gary Blair** of Starkville, Mississippi to serve as the association's President-Elect. He will serve a one-year term as President-Elect alongside current NACD President Kim LaFleur and will assume the role of NACD President in 2025.

Blair has served NACD in a number of roles since 2015, including as a board member, executive board member, and most recently as an officer in the role of First Vice President. He also serves on the board of his local conservation district, the **Carroll County Soil and Water Conservation District**, and is a former president of the **Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts** and Mississippi Forestry Association.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to take the helm and move NACD and its mission forward during this very important time in the history of soil and water conservation," said **NACD President-Elect Gary Blair**. "We promote conservation practices on Every Acre, for Every American, Every Day, with our almost 3,000 conservation districts across this great nation. I look forward to leading NACD by continuing to work collaboratively with my fellow officers, board members, and conservation districts."

Blair will be sworn in as President in February 2025 at NACD's 79th Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah.



Monday's general session excited attendees with a keynote from **Erik Wahl**, a San Diego based graffiti artist, best-selling author, and entrepreneur. Erik painted three canvases live on stage, while giving an inspiring address about "The Art of Leadership."

Wahl's artwork was auctioned off to benefit the National Conservation Foundation, raising \$10,450!

### **NCF Raises over \$100,000 in Auction!**

The 2024 **National Conservation Foundation (NCF)** Live Auction was held on Monday night to support Envirothon, the Next Generation Leadership Institute, and the organization's other conservation education efforts.

The auction raised approximately **\$107,450** in support of NCF's mission.

## OPERATION CONSERVATION INCLUDES KEYNOTES AND PANEL DISCUSSIONS



The first General Session of the NACD 2024 Annual Meeting opened on Monday, February 12 with addresses from **NACD President Kim LaFleur** and **NACD CEO Jeremy Peters**. They gave updates on the association and discussed the meeting's theme of "Operation Conservation," including the opportunities and challenges on the horizon for conservation districts. **NRCS Chief Terry Cosby** also spoke, reviewing the past year for NRCS, highlighting conservation activities supported by the Western Water and Working Lands Framework, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the Farm Bill.

**Carlos Suarez**, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist for California was the opening keynote speaker on Tuesday and introduced the California Conservation Planning Partnership, which is getting more conservation on the ground by increasing and streamlining the delivery of technical assistance to producers.

Following Suarez, Agri-Pulse Communications Managing Editor **Spencer Chase** moderated two discussion panels. The first panel identified obstacles, challenges, and barriers underserved producers face in accessing resources, and how to overcome these challenges. Panelists included: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Senior Advisor for Racial Equity **Dr. Dewayne Goldmon**, **Seanica Edwards Herron** with the Freedmen Heirs Foundation, **Jeanette Lombardo** with the Farmer Veteran Coalition, **Gary Matteson** with Farm Credit, and **Nancy Wahl-Scheurich** with the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts.

Thank you to all who participated! If you'd like to make a donation to NCF, please do so [here](#).

---

### NACD Visits

### USS Midway



During the meeting, NACD and the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts hosted a welcome reception on the USS Midway.

The USS Midway was the longest-serving aircraft carrier in the 20th century. It is now a museum with an extensive collection of aircraft built in Southern California.

Attendees explored the ship and its flight deck, center island, and hangar bays while networking with colleagues from across the country.

The event was sponsored by **Bob Warner**, owner of Warner Ranch, who had a renowned career with the U.S. Air Force. He retired from the Air Force with the rank of Colonel in 1990 after 31 years of service.

---

**See Photos & Videos  
from the Meeting!**



The second panel, with panelists **Alyssa Charney** of the White House

Office of Domestic Climate Policy, **Terry Baker** with the Society of American Foresters, **Kris Johnson, Ph.D.** with The Nature Conservancy, and **Rachel Pettitt** with the Southern California Soil & Water Hub, discussed ecosystem service tradeoffs, how companies are meeting environmental and social goals, and the impact of data collection impact on producers.

President and CEO of the U.S. Dairy Export Council **Krysta Harden** closed out the general sessions with a keynote on how dairy can provide a sustainable source of nutrition and help meet environmental stewardship goals.



See photos and videos as we shared them by following NACD on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram

**@NACDconserve.**

Check out all of our photos from the week [on Flickr](#) as they are uploaded. Videos of the general sessions will be posted on our [YouTube page](#) in the coming days.

## NGLI CELEBRATES 2023 COHORT GRADUATION AND WELCOMES 2024 COHORT



The 2023 cohort of the **National Conservation Foundation's (NCF) Next Generation Leadership Institute (NGLI)** graduated at this year's leadership luncheon. The NGLI program prepares cohort members for conservation leadership roles. The 2023 cohort members that graduated from the yearlong program, having completed the curriculum and a capstone project to benefit their home districts, are: **Daryl Donohue** of Kansas; **Donald Stephens** of Oklahoma; **Angela Rosol** of Iowa; **Dawn**

February 2024						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	1	2

Promote your conservation district or state association's tree sale, annual meeting, webinar, field day, or other events on NACD's [Calendar of Events!](#)

**Submit Events**

**Salcito** of Arizona; **Craig Myer** of North Carolina; **Eric Hanson** of South Dakota; and **Michael Stewart** of South Carolina.

The 2024 Cohort of NGLI also met for the first time at the Annual Meeting. These NGLI participants will meet for four training sessions throughout the year, with a capstone session and graduation at next year's annual meeting.



The 2024 Cohort participants are:

- **Vincent Thomas** – Kentucky
- **Excell La Fayette, Jr.** – Oklahoma
- **Kelli Bowen** – North Dakota
- **Kirk Daniel** – Tennessee
- **Glen Takai** – Guam

 @nacdconserve  @nacdconserve  @nacdconserve  @nacdconserve

[www.nacdnet.org](http://www.nacdnet.org)

NACD | 509 Capitol Court NE, Washington, DC 20002

[Unsubscribe dpotter@psnrd.org](mailto:dpotter@psnrd.org)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by [nacdnews@nacdnet.org](mailto:nacdnews@nacdnet.org)