

July 2, 2019

To all employees,

The National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCP) is utilizing input from across the country as it develops plans to reinvigorate conservation planning.

### Listening Sessions

In 2018, the National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCP) conducted eight listening sessions across the country by soliciting feedback from the conservation delivery partnership on conservation planning. The participant feedback has provided leadership with a comprehensive picture of the current opportunities and needs related to conservation planning, program delivery and practice implementation. More than 450 questions and comments were received from over 1,035 listening session participants, which included employees, producers, conservation district supervisors and other partners from across the nation. Participant feedback was organized into the following 12 categories:

- Communications
- Access to NRCS Tools and Information
- Changes in Programs and Processes
- Training and Mentoring
- Work Load/Efficiencies
- Conservation Planning Designation Requirements
- Job Approval Authority (JAA)
- Tools and Technologies
- Quality Assurance
- Policy
- Tribal Connection
- Additional Producer Feedback

Comments were then summarized to capture the most prevalent themes. Focus groups, along with input from producers at a 2019 symposium, further articulated needs. Hundreds of suggestions were received and recorded. NCP teams analyzed, sorted and in some cases merged suggestions in preparation for the work planning session.

### Work Planning Session

The NCP committee chairs held a three-day work session on May 20-22, 2019, to review all listening session feedback and develop an in-depth process and plan of action to review and identify input, outcomes and priorities.

In addition to those that emerged as priorities, additional project proposals determined to be action-worthy will be undertaken in future years. The team determined **conservation planning**, **capacity** and **training** as the highest priorities in screening and ranking the recommendations.

The recommendations were broken down into four main areas:

- 1) Just Do It Projects (recommendations that can move forward immediately)
- 2) Recommended Projects (recommendations identified as priority for action and implementation)
- 3) Recommendations that need further exploration
- 4) Items that are out of the partnership's scope of work

Those projects to receive immediate action include the following:

- **Increased accessibility to trainings for employees**
- **Develop a collaborative process for regional trainings with identified trainers to support the training**
- **Use of 3<sup>rd</sup> party vendors to help deliver and support training**
- **Expand the communication of the benefits of conservation planning and funding opportunities**
- **Automation of planner database to generate messages and notifications to conservation planners**
- **Creation of e-signatures in conservation desktop and client gateway for job sheets**
- **Develop (with producer input) a streamlined conservation plan**
- **Streamlining the conservation planner certification process**

### Next Steps

Next steps will include developing work plans and timelines for projects, identifying and securing resources needed to accomplish goals and communicating about the projects to all employees.

NCPP's highest priorities include conservation planning, capacity and training. Other priorities include communication, operational processes, core partnerships, expansion, staffing and metrics. The list of initial projects reflects those priorities and other factors. An intake process will also be developed for future input.

The partnership's vision of improved and enhanced conservation delivery to customers by a highly skilled workforce will be boosted by the projects, which address needs for improved training, tools, capacity and experience.

An NCPP website is in development that will include information for both internal and external audiences.

Conservation planning and training will be strengthened through expanded training and certification programs to develop and maintain skills. Emphasis will be placed on economic benefits of conservation, landscape-scale planning, soil health improvement, knowledge shared across the partnership and communicating with customers leading to understanding about natural resources on their land.

We encourage you to review and share the attached listening session report and FAQ's (frequently asked questions) for your information and across the partnership as this will emphasize how NCPP is working with our employees and customers to improve all aspects of conservation planning now and for the future.

Sincerely,



Astor Boozer  
Regional Conservationist, NRCS  
NCPP Co-Chair



Mike Brown  
Executive Director, NASCA  
NCPP Co-Chair