



NARC

Building Regional Communities

National Association of Regional Councils

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FY11 CONTINUING RESOLUTION TALKING POINTS

USDA Conservation Programs

Please use to guide phone conversations or in-person meetings with Congressional Members and/or staff.

IMMEDIATE ACTION: *Please support the inclusion of funding for the Department of Agriculture (USDA) **Conservation Programs** within the FY 2011 Continuing Resolution (H.R. 1) under development by Congress to ensure vital local and regional programs continue to boost the economy and create jobs.*

GENERAL STATEMENTS:

- Reforms to and consolidation of federal funding and programs should be looked to in order to save money and increase government efficiency, while decreasing the national debt.
- Domestic, discretionary programs, which are only 12 percent of the federal annual budget, are critical to the ability of local governments and regions to carry out their responsibilities as service providers for both the federal and state governments.
- Due to economic challenges, local governments have experienced reduced revenue streams due to decreased taxes (primarily property and sales) and major reductions in state financial assistance, while at the same time facing an increased demand for services. As a result, local governments of all sizes and in all parts of the nation have been forced to institute significant layoffs, furloughs and service reductions, which could continue for several years to come.
- Federal assistance to state and local governments and regions will help mitigate further layoffs. Current unemployment rates are already at 9.4 percent nationally.
- Federal investment in state, local and regional infrastructure produces jobs and promotes local economic development.
- Deficit reduction should not be accomplished by shifting costs to states and local governments, imposing unfunded mandates, or pre-empting local government programs or taxing authority.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Please consider the following when making **USDA Conservation Program** funding determinations in H.R. 1:

- Important Conservation programs include Conservation Operations (reduced by \$51.6M), zeros out Watershed and Flood Prevention, Watershed Rehabilitation (reduced by \$20.1M), and zeros out Resource Conservation and Development.
- Approximately 1/4 of the U.S. population lives in rural areas, which encompass 83 percent of the country's land. Rural areas face challenges related to demographic changes, job creation, capital access, infrastructure, land use and environment, and community and historic preservation.
- Rural Conservation programs help accelerate the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources, improve the general level of economic activity, and to enhance the environment and standard of living in designated rural areas. Additionally, these programs improves the capability of State, tribal and local units of government and local nonprofit organizations in rural areas to plan, develop and carry out programs for conservation and development while improving vital infrastructure systems in rural areas to increase the quality of life.
- The economic health and competitiveness of Rural America is directly linked to opportunity for rural development that defines strengths and opportunities.
- The federal government investment should foster rural conservation programs by leveraging public and private dollars, incentives, innovation and entrepreneurship to ensure that local governments have the tools and can build the capacity needed to make rural communities vibrant and sustainable.



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LOCAL/REGIONAL CONSTITUENT EXAMPLE: In our region alone, maintaining adequate funding for **USDA Conservation Programs** is needed for: [INSERT PROJECT DETAILS]

Project Name

Project Type and Description

Cost Estimate

Number of Jobs Created

Cost Efficiencies

Project Effectiveness/Improvements for community or region

Start/Finish Time (i.e. immediately, 3 months, 6 months)

- **PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE:** Investment in **USDA's Conservation Programs** must continually be promoted at all levels of government to ensure competitiveness, job creation, economic growth, healthy communities and the ability to address future challenges and opportunities.
- Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations and your commitment to sustained and strategic public investments. We offer our support and assistance to you and your colleagues on these important and timely efforts to stimulate jobs, reinvigorate local and national economies and possibly forestall deep problems within state and local governments.