



National Association of  
Conservation Districts

# Developing a Communications Strategy

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# NACD's Number One Communications Strategy:

**Increase content, see what sticks**



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# Increase Content and Quality of Communications... Regular Publications

**Continued improvements in publication content, volume, and design have led to increases in the number of subscribers across all four of NACD's regular publications in the last year:**

- eResource (10,000+ subs) – Electronic; weekly on Tuesdays
- Conservation Clip List (9,600+) – Electronic; weekly on Fridays
- The Resource (7,000+) – Electronic and print; quarterly
- Forestry Notes (9,900+) – Electronic and print; quarterly







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# Side Note... Subscribe Online!



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# CASE STUDIES SHOWING ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF SOIL HEALTH PRACTICES





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# NACD's Number Two Communications Strategy:

**Identify audiences, target content**



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# Cater to Audiences... Regular Publications



Forestry Notes primarily targets forest landowners and managers, but also districts with forestry programs.



eResource is read by districts, state associations, and ALL of NACD's partners.



Conservation Clip List is perfect for a Hill staffer, a farmer, or anybody in between that wants to stay up-to-date on conservation news.



The Resource is an archive of the season's happenings with some policy and organizational forecasting.



The Soil Health Bulletin is for Soil Health Champions specifically.





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# Cater to Audiences... Blog

The screenshot shows the website's header with the logo and navigation links: About NACD, News and Events, Get Involved, Resources, NACD Marketplace, and Members Only. Below the header is a search bar and buttons for Subscribe, Blog, and Contact Us. The main content area is titled 'RECENT ARTICLES' and features three article thumbnails with text: 'New Hampshire CD offers technical assistance to community-based farms 11/13/2017', 'Conservation district interns bring technical assistance to urban Colorado 11/13/2017', and 'Conservationists in Washington state host 10th annual Wounded Veteran Duck Hunt 11/06/2017'. On the right side, there is a 'Blog Categories' list and a search bar for 'Search Blog Articles'. A 'Did You Know?' article is highlighted with a blue arrow pointing from the right-hand version of the article.

Did You Know? Every CD board is responsible for personnel management  
10/31/2017

## DID YOU KNOW?

Interesting Facts & Anecdotes  
from your District Operations and Member Services Committee

As a conservation district board member, your responsibility to the employees of your districts starts with a thorough job description and an annual performance evaluation.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- **Good job descriptions greatly influence recruiting.** Applicants get a clearer picture of what you are seeking, plus interviewers are better able to objectively assess the applicant's skills against defined tasks and measures. With clearer expectations, the chances you'll hire the right candidate greatly improve. Application screeners and job interviewers have an easier task too, because potential applicants are less likely to apply if they cannot do the work or don't want to. Qualified persons might not even apply if the job description looks impossible, is too general, or is cluttered with tasks they do not want to do. Also the individual hired usually experiences fewer surprises about "what the job actually is."
- **Many times job descriptions are too general** or list all the possible responsibilities, tasks, and qualifications that might pertain to a job title and do not state tasks that can be easily monitored and measured. Job descriptions should give qualitative or quantitative measures for the tasks, stating how many, how much, how often, or how well each task should be done. More clearly specifying your expectations of the employee will improve your ability to measure actual performance

On average, NACD publishes **2.5 posts to the blog every week** each generating between 100 and 2,200 unique views (~5-minute read time)





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# NACD's Number Three Communications Strategy:

## **Rebrand and push message**



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# NACD Website



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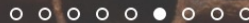
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# NACD Social Media

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**"Soil and water conservation does not start with land treatment. It starts in the mind of the landowner."**  
- Sam Studebaker

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Washington, DC • 15 followers

12 connections work here. See all 18 employees on LinkedIn →  
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About us

The National Association of Conservation Districts provides a unified, national voice for the more than 3,000 conservation districts - almost one in every county - across the United States.

Learn more on our website: [www.nacdnet.org](http://www.nacdnet.org)

Company details

Website  
<http://nacdn.net>

Headquarters  
Washington, DC

National Association of Conservation Districts

Tweets 1,792 Following 296 Followers 827 Likes 366

NACD  
@NACDconserve  
Serving conservation districts by providing national leadership and a unified voice for natural resource conservation.

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Tweets & replies

Research by @NACDconserve @CalsResearch finds that by using cover crops and/or no-till can result in \$8 return \$100+/-acre

NACD @NACDconserve Nov 8  
This week's eResource includes a link to NACD's new webpage announcing the availability of \$9 million in technical assistance grants for conservation districts. Learn more: [nacdn.org/news-and-events](http://nacdn.org/news-and-events)

NACD ANNOUNCES AVAILABILITY OF \$9 MILLION FOR CONSERVATION DISTRICT WORK

Who to follow

Followed by USDA Press Team and others

John Legere @JohnLegere  
NACD Forestry Notes @NACDForestry  
IndianaNRCS @IndianaNRCS

Trends for you

#WednesdayWisdom  
#AmericanRecycleDay  
#ConservationDay and #BPA are trending about this

Facebook - @conservationdistricts

Twitter - @NACDconserve



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# NACD's Number Four Communications Strategy:

**Engage the media in more  
meaningful ways**






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# Other Communications Components... One Pagers, Press Releases, Interviews



 The National Association of Conservation Districts' Technical Assistance Grants

NACD has secured a \$10 million cooperative agreement with NRCS to further build and enhance conservation district technical assistance across the nation.

**The Basics:**  
The agreement was approved September 25, 2017. We will still be finalizing details of a plan of work and timeline. We anticipate a significant portion of the funds will be utilized in a direct manner to enable conservation districts to staff up in areas where additional capacity will further improve customer service and reduce workload pressures to deliver conservation assistance.

**This agreement includes:**

- \$9 million for conservation planning and EQIP implementation assistance (80% EQIP & 20% CTA)
- \$1 million for NACD to manage the project (over a two-year plus period)
- A 25% match will be required for each agreement. For example, a \$50k contract would require a \$13k match. Match is preferably cash, but can be in-kind. NACD is required overall to have a 25% match. Most contracts would cover funding for a 1-year period.

NACD will ask state/territory conservation partnerships to identify high-priority locations for the use of these funds and seek first-come, first-served requests. NACD's priority is to get the \$9 million in the hands of conservation districts in the first and second quarter of Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) so that they can hire employees to help carry out the objectives of this agreement. Funding assumptions are that this \$9 million would hire about 180 Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs). Some will likely be part-time and/or multi-district.

As of September 29, 2017, NACD plans for some contractor assistance for region representatives and to provide additional capacity and assistance in coordination/communication with state partners.

**Initial Implementation Steps:**

- August 29, alert NACD board
- September 11 and 27, brief all NACD staff via teleconferences
- September 28, distribute briefing materials and project FAQs
- October 4, hold national teleconference with NACD Board/Staff, State/Territory Contacts
- In October, add contractor capacity for NACD
- Secure final approval on plan of work, timeline, and reporting metrics
- Prepare announcement for the project, distribute to all state and territory partners
- Begin engaging state partnerships in determining workload priorities and conservation district participants
- Goal is to have all funds (\$9m) transferred to conservation districts and engaged in hiring by March 31, 2018.

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 The National Association of Conservation Districts on Conservation Technical Assistance

The USDA Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) program is the lifeblood of conservation in the United States. Through NRCS and its local, state, and national partners, CTA helps landowners become better stewards of their natural resources by assisting them with resource assessment, practical design, planning, and monitoring of conservation practices.

**CTA makes conservation planning possible**  
For any landowner to participate in a farm bill or other federal voluntary conservation program, they must first have a conservation plan developed by a certified conservation planner. The majority of NRCS conservation plans are paid for with CTA funding.

Conservation plans are living documents developed confidentially and one-on-one between a local conservation technician and a landowner. These plans include recommendations for site-specific conservation practices and are tailor-made to meet a landowner's specific conservation needs and stewardship goals.

With conservation plans, farmers and ranchers can weave the right conservation practices into a system capable of achieving greater outcomes than any single practice could accomplish on its own. Together the right conservation practices produce on-farm results – like higher yields and more efficient use of inputs – and off-farm public benefits – such as clean water, safe air, and healthy plant and animal populations.

**CTA infuses critical resources into the voluntary conservation delivery system**  
CTA provided resources to train and employ more than 10,000 NRCS technicians and specialists, plus upwards of 30,000 more conservation-related jobs at the state and local level in 2016. Unlike many other federal agencies, NRCS does not have a "balance and expense" account, so it funds a large portion of its staff through the CTA program.

CTA allows NRCS to procure field office space, vehicles, computers, and equipment to strengthen delivery of on-the-ground conservation across the country.

The CTA program also makes contributions and cooperative agreements between NRCS and conservation districts and state associations possible. These agreements with NRCS help conservation districts deliver practical, site-specific solutions based on sound science and proven research directly to landowners.

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## NACD SOIL HEALTH CHAMPION RECOGNIZED FOR CUTTING-EDGE POLLINATOR MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

WASHINGTON, October 18, 2017 – Brendon Rockey, trendsetter and potato farmer at Rocky Farms, recognizes the importance of supporting a diverse pollinator population for a healthy farm and satisfied consumers. Located in Center, Colorado, Rocky Farms is known for growing specialty potatoes and quinoa. Under Brendon's direction, Rocky Farms has become a leader in using a biotic approach to farming.

Rockey Farms is alive with biological inputs. Companion crops, livestock, green manure fields, and flowering strips – instead of synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides – are all part of a system that supports soil health and attracts beneficial insects that defend against aphids and thrips. Pollinators are abundant across the farm, thriving in its diverse, chemical-free environment. Four-row flowering strips in his fields serve as nectar hubs and helped give his 90 seed potato lots a perfect inspection score under biotic integrated Pest Management last year. Brendon also uses nectar plants in his potato greenhouse to create beneficial insect habitat and eliminate the need for insecticide. He has begun incorporating a legume heavy mix of companion crops that fix nitrogen, mobilize phosphorus, and host pollinators. During the winter months, Brendon travels North America sharing his successes, and in 2017, went as far as France and Belgium.

Rockey's commitment to environmental stewardship and pollinator conservation has not gone unnoticed. He was named a Soil Health Champion by the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) last year, and has proven a tremendous advocate for conservation practices and an excellent mentor to many of the Soil Health Champions



# Workshop It!

What existing modes of communications does your district have?  
Can they be bulked up, focused, or otherwise improved? (It's OK to let a low-performing publication go, or to try a new one!)

## **Keep in mind:**

- 1.** Who are your main audiences right now, and who do you need to reach in the future?
- 2.** What are the top three messages that your district can/should communicate? How can you use social media to communicate those messages and re-enforce your brand?
- 3.** How can local media supplement and/or support your communications?