



National Association of Conservation Districts

Memo

To: NACD Officers, Executive Board, Board Members, Presidents and Executive Directors of State/Territory Associations, Members

From: Jeremy Peters, NACD CEO 

Date: May 2, 2025

Re: **NACD Update on Recent Executive Actions**

I am writing to provide an update on recent Executive Actions.

President's Budget

On May 2, the White House released the budget request for FY2026. In this budget, the executive outlines significant cuts to a variety of agencies and offices within, citing duplicative programs and the need for states to take on the cost of water infrastructure, healthcare, natural spaces, including smaller national parks, education, and more while also proposing an unprecedented increase in the budgets for defense and border security. In addition to reducing the budgets of many research-based offices, this proposed budget seeks to eliminate climate research programs and grants as well as stripping DOI conservation programs (BLM, FWS) of all but essential funding, citing the Land and Water Conservation Fund and state and local funds as a means to achieve the same goal of conservation. The budget also seeks to consolidate wildfire mitigation and suppression responsibilities into a single Federal Wildland Fire Service within DOI to help streamline coordination and response (there is no budget request associated with this change).

NRCS Private Lands Conservation Operations program would see a loss of \$754 million of discretionary funding. Additional cuts at USDA would include:

- \$159 million from the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and USDA Related Statistical Agencies
- \$16 million from NRCS Watershed Operations
- \$358 million from Farm Service Agency (FSA) Salaries and Expenses: FPAC-BC
- \$392 million from National Forest System Management
- \$391 million from Forest Service Operations
- \$300 million from Forest and Rangeland Research (Except Forest Inventory and Analysis)
- \$303 million from State, Local, Tribal, and NGO Conservation Programs

The proposed budget also includes a \$2.4 billion reduction in the EPA's Clean and Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Funds.

NACD will continue to follow budget discussions and will provide updates as they come. For more information, including general line item adjustments and justifications, see the budget request [here](#).



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Forestry

The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry will hold a legislative hearing on the Fix Our Forests Act (S. 1462) on Tuesday, May 6 at 3:00 p.m. ET in 328A Russell Senate Office Building. Announced by Chair Boozman (R-AR) and Ranking Member Klobuchar (D-MN), the hearing will feature testimony from Chris French, Acting Associate Chief of the USDA Forest Service.

The National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council will hold a virtual public meeting on May 16, 2025, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. ET. The meeting will cover progress on the current Ten-Year Action Plan, preparation for the next plan (2027–2037), and updates to the Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Cost-share Grant Program. Oral and written public comments must be submitted by May 12. The public can join via Zoom, full details are available at fs.usda.gov/ucf/nucfac.

Congress

On March 31, Senators John Cornyn (TX), Ben Ray Lujan (NM), Tommy Tuberville (AL), Raphael Warnock (GA), Katie Britt (AL), and Jon Ossoff (GA) introduced the Feral Swine Eradication Act to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. The bill would make permanent the Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program (FSCP), which was established in the 2018 farm bill to protect agricultural lands from feral swine. The pilot, implemented in conjunction with NRCS and the Animal and Plant Health and Inspection Service (APHIS), established projects in 10 states.

On May 1, in a bipartisan effort, Senators Patty Murray (WA) and Steve Daines (MT) introduced the Floodplain Enhancement and Recovery Act to create a new pathway for ecosystem restoration projects in floodplains that meet specific low-risk criteria by simplifying approval for important restoration work while still upholding flood safety standards by adjusting the “No Rise” rule. This will be especially helpful in rural communities and low population areas in need of floodplain recovery. NACD will continue working with both Senator Murray and Senator Daines’ offices and will provide any updates as needed.

On May 1, the House of Representatives passed [H.J. Res. 78](#) overturning the Biden administration regulation listing the longfin smelt as an endangered species. The ruling removes protection for the species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, loosening water restrictions in the San Francisco Bay-Delta which drew criticism during recent wildfires.

Checks and Balances

On May 1, America First Legal, a legal group founded by WH aide Stephen Miller, filed a lawsuit against Chief Justice John Roberts arguing that the Judicial Conference of the US and the Administrative Office of the US Courts, the key judicial branch bodies that frame policy and handle the basic functions of the federal courts, are executive branch agencies that must be overseen by the President and not the courts. This lawsuit appears to be in line with the executive administration’s efforts to consolidate power in the executive branch. Though it is too early to opine on the merits of the claim, this lawsuit presents an interesting case to consider the strength of the defined separation of powers set forth in the constitution.

This week the Trump administration filed multiple lawsuits against individual states (MI, HI, NY, and VT) for various climate related laws and regulations that these states have enacted and NACD Update on Recent Executive Actions





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- 60% (350) report having a space sharing agreement with NRCS, receiving office space at no cost. 23% (138) report receiving space from the state or county, or own the facility. 12% (73) pay rent to another agency or private lessor. 6 did not respond.
- 18% (103) report that USDA utilizes state, county, or conservation district space. 84 respondents share that USDA pays rent; 19 report that this space is provided to USDA at no charge.
- Should NRCS terminate leases or if collocation is no longer an option, it would have significant impacts on conservation district budgets. Excluding outliers, NACD collected a sample size of 412 responses. Based on this, the median impact is \$25,000 (average = \$36,462).

Producer Impacts:

- Respondents represent nearly 2,000 employees serving 2.27M+ producers.
- If their local NRCS office is closed, the next closest is on average 50.2 minutes (47.8 miles) away.

Thank you for your participation thus far. We would greatly appreciate state associations helping to distribute this survey so we can collect additional data to inform our advocacy.

Conclusion:

Executive orders continue to be introduced, lawsuits are constantly developing, and the impacts of many recent actions are still unclear. Federal agencies are working to interpret and implement these orders and will share additional guidance as soon as possible.

NACD encourages members to contact NACD's Government Affairs Associate, Connor Simons (connor-simons@nacdn.net) to share updates and concerns related to the impacts of recent executive actions. This information will inform NACD's engagement with agency and congressional leaders.