



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 10, 2025

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

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

USDA Disaster Assistance Roundtable

On May 7, Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins hosted the inaugural Farmers First roundtable, where she announced a plan to address the economic viability of farms and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) to improve coordination and collaboration. Secretary Rollins also announced plans to expedite \$21 billion in disaster assistance, with drought and wildfire payments expected to go out by the end of the month.

A [landing page](#) to track the status of USDA's disaster rollout, which will be updated regularly, was released in conjunction with the roundtable. The current Disaster Assistance Program Timeline is included as follows:

Emergency Livestock Relief Program – Drought/Wildfire

May 23 – Release to Federal Register for publication
May 28 – Final rule on public display
May 29 – Payment processing on Thursday night
May 30 – County offices sign and certify payments

Supplemental Disaster Relief Program – Previously Indemnified Loss

June 30 – Release to Federal Register for Publication
July 3 – Final rule on public display
July 7 – SDRP sign up begins

Emergency Livestock Relief Program – Flooding includes Commodity Loss Assistance Program, Milk Loss Program – Combined Final Rule

August 13 – Sent to Federal Register for Publication
August 15 – Final Rule on public display
August 18 – ELRP flooding, Commodity Loss Assistance and Milk Loss – sign up begins

Supplemental Disaster Relief Program – Uncovered Loss

September 10 – Sent to Federal Register for Publication
September 12 – Final Rule on public display
September 15 – SDRP sign up targeted.



Hearings

This week, Sec. Brooke Rollins appeared before both the House and Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittees to outline USDA's current priorities. She emphasized the agency's commitment to swiftly disbursing paused funds, highlighting recent progress through the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP). Rollins encouraged lawmakers to share details of any frozen payments directly with her office. She also addressed concerns about support for small-scale and urban agriculture, reaffirming the agency's dedication to all producers. Rollins noted her extensive travel across states and previewed upcoming farmer-focused events aimed at strengthening local agricultural communities.

Rollins also faced concerns from Senate Committee members on staffing levels across multiple agencies. The department is expecting to lose 15,000 employees, 5,000 more than typical yearly attrition, to buyout offers, but Rollins assured Senators that USDA is focused on recruiting and rehiring key positions. A reorganization and downsizing plan for USDA is expected to be released next week.

On May 6th, the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee held a hearing on the Fix Our Forests Act and heard testimony from the U.S. Forest Service Acting Associate Chief, Chris French. The hearing focused on proposed reforms to streamline forest management, reduce wildfire risk, and increase the pace and scale of restoration on federal lands. During the hearing, French told the committee that the Fire Service has lost a quarter of its non-fire-related workforce due to downsizing, although efforts to reinstate probationary employees may not yet be reflected in the figure.

On **Tuesday, May 13 at 3:00 p.m. ET**, NACD President Gary Blair will participate in a Senate Agriculture Committee hearing on "Perspectives from the Field, Part 4: Conservation." President Blair will join Brad Doyle from the Arkansas Farm Bureau, Lynn Tjeerdsma from Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever, Chad Ellis from the Texas Agricultural Land Trust, and Megan Dwyer from the Illinois Corn Growers Association in testifying to the full committee. The hearing will be [livestreamed here](#)

Budget Reconciliation

The president is required by law to submit a budget proposal, and in most years the plan serves as little more than a statement of the administration's priorities. Lawmakers have the power to amend their bills to align it with the president's proposal, but more often they dismiss it in favor of their own plans. This year, much of this skinny budget is being pushed through committee as part of the reconciliation process. Potential cuts within President Trump's "skinny budget" include:

- **30.5% cut** – Interior Department
- **\$198 million cut** – Bureau of Land Management conservation programs
- **\$1 billion cut** – Tribal and Bureau of Indian Affairs programs and grants
- **More than 50% cut** – National Science Foundation
- **\$18 billion cut** – National Institutes of Health
- **\$674 million cut** – Medicare and Medicaid Services



National Association of Conservation Districts

- **\$4.5 billion cut** – USDA (including Rural Development, Forest Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Service)
- **55% cut** – Environmental Protection Agency

House Republicans in the Natural Resources Committee voted early Wednesday morning to include the [sale of hundreds of thousands of acres of public lands](#) in Nevada and Utah for additional natural resource extraction and affordable housing opportunities. In response to this proposed sell-off of public lands, House Reps. Ryan Zinke (MT, former Sec. of Int.) and Gabe Vasquez (NM) created the bipartisan Public Lands Caucus as a means to protect all Americans' access to public lands, to continue to defend conservation efforts, and encourage investment in the outdoor economy which is the primary source of income for many small and rural communities across the country. NACD looks forward to working closely with the Public Lands Caucus to ensure conservation districts have a place at the table.

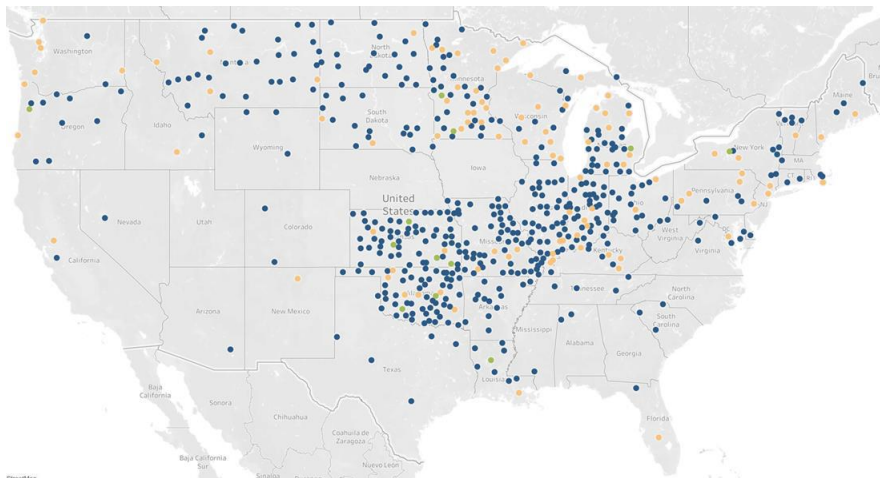
The House Agriculture Committee will begin to mark up their section of the reconciliation bill next week, with opening statements expected to take place on Tuesday night and voting on Wednesday. Text will be released in advance of the hearings.

NACD Call for Action

NACD has issued multiple surveys to members to better understand the local impacts of executive actions.

More than 400 districts representing 48 states and territories submitted responses to our February 2025 [survey](#). You can view NACD's updated survey report [here](#), which includes anonymized responses from conservation districts across the country.

Nearly 600 members responded to our second survey on **conservation districts' office footprint**. The data and responses have been incredibly helpful in understanding the extent to which conservation districts are collocated with USDA partners, as well as the potential impacts of USDA leasing decisions.



Response Rates

- n=580 (20% of conservation districts).
- The North Central Region has provided the most responses (260 or 35% of districts)



National Association of Conservation Districts

- The Northern Plains Region has the highest response rate (42% or 130 responses).

Collocation & Space Sharing Agreements

- 83% (479) report being collocated with NRCS (either in the same office or building)
- 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.