



Memo

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

From: Jeremy Peters, NACD CEO

Date: March 9, 2026

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeremy Peters".

Re: NACD Update on Recent Congressional and Executive Actions

All NACD updates are accessible on the [members only page](#) of the NACD website.

Headlines and Deadlines

- House Agriculture Committee passes bipartisan Farm Bill
- NACD support for the bipartisan Water Project Navigator's Act
- USDA announces One Farmer, One File
- USDA announces enrollment period for Farmer Bridge Assistance payments
- Forest Service announces shared stewardship agreement with the State of Georgia
- EPA rescinds Greenhouse Gas endangerment finding
- Water delivery agreements – Rio Grande, Colorado River Basin
- Thank you all for joining us at NACD's 80th Anniversary Annual Meeting!

Action Items:

- Join NACD at the annual fly-in – March 25, 2026
- Requests for abstracts for Rural Community Assistance Partnership's National State Revolving Fund (SRF) [Infrastructure Financing and Training Workshop](#) in Denver, Colorado
- Let NACD know how you use State Revolving Funds

Current Events

On February 13, Glenn "GT" Thompson, Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, released draft language for a streamlined farm bill, with committee markup held last week. After 22 hours of discussion, the committee passed a bipartisan bill (34-17) out of committee and it now must go to the House floor for a full vote, something Chairman Thompson hopes to achieve as soon as possible. The Senate has indicated that it is also working on a version of the Farm Bill and hope to have markup completed this spring.

Over 150 amendments were proposed with dozens having debate and votes. Though the markup discussion focused largely on the cuts to SNAP benefits that were included in the OBBBA, there were amendments to all twelve titles of the bill. Within the conservation title, there were amendments to almost every program, but only three of those passed.



- **Amendment #122 by Rep. Vasquez (NM-2)** made several changes throughout the conservation title to incentivize wildlife corridors.
- **Amendment #10 by Rep. Johnson (SD)** clarifies that technology modernization is allowed when replacing fencing in the ECP program.
- **Amendment #69 by Rep. Davids (KS-3)** authorizes a study to analyze the environmental benefits of winter wheat as a cover crop including harvesting that crop.

Amendments #61 (Costa) and #18 (Finstad) both on CRP were withdrawn. Amendment #134 (Jackson), also withdrawn, would have allowed urban ag land into ACEP. Amendment #54 (Budzinski) on reallocating conservation funding within the title was defeated by recorded vote as was Amendment #106 (Sorenson) on soil carbon monitoring.

What's in the House version of the Farm Bill?

The Conservation Title (Title II) of the proposal largely mirrors the version introduced in 2024 and maintains the longstanding system of voluntary, incentive-based, and locally led conservation that producers and conservation districts rely on. The bill keeps historic conservation funding within Title II and emphasizes improved program delivery, streamlined administration, and greater flexibility at the local level. Most working-lands programs remain largely unchanged while retaining the significant funding increases previously provided through recent federal investments, reinforcing long-term support for conservation on agricultural lands. One notable change from earlier drafts involves the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), where the committee opted to pursue a straightforward reauthorization rather than the more extensive reforms initially proposed, due to cost concerns (estimated at about \$1.8 billion), mixed stakeholder support, and expectations that the Senate - particularly Senator Thune and Senator Klobuchar - may lead further discussion on CRP policy.

Across major programs, the bill maintains strong investments and introduces targeted improvements. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) continue largely unchanged but with increased funding levels, expanded support for precision agriculture, and incentives for innovative conservation technologies, while CSP also establishes a new state soil health grant program. The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) receives funding increases and policy reforms designed to streamline certification, increase cost-share levels, and improve long-term stewardship of farmland and wetlands, while a new Forest Conservation Easement Program (FCEP) is created to help protect working forests. The bill also proposes improvements to the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to simplify partnership agreements and address long-standing concerns about program complexity. Additional provisions strengthen watershed and emergency programs such as Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (PL-566) and the Emergency Watershed Program, including new authorities for floodplain restoration, watershed recovery, and improved emergency response. This bill also expands the use of Good Neighbor agreements and voluntary conservation easement programs. The proposed



bill further incorporates bipartisan legislation focused on conservation innovation, practice standard streamlining, and precision agriculture, while also addressing implementation capacity through expanded technical service provider access and hiring authorities.

The proposed farm bill would strengthen conservation districts' ability to deliver programs locally, maintain historic funding levels, and improve flexibility, innovation, and responsiveness to producer and resource needs nationwide.

Other Legislation

Water Project Navigator's Act

At NACD's annual meeting, the legislative committee affirmed its support for the Water Project Navigator's Act, a bipartisan bill introduced in both chambers on February 5, 2026. The bill would establish a new program at the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) to fund "navigator" positions with states, Tribes, and rural communities to boost capacity for developing, funding, and implementing water management and conservation projects. These navigators would assist with grant writing, project development and implementation, and maintenance plans to ensure that previously underserved communities have access to water project opportunities. NACD will be providing a letter of support to encourage Senators and representatives to consider the benefits of this type of community focused support for projects that provide multiple benefits for watersheds and the community at large. This proposed bill is based on programs that exist at the state level that have proven to be effective.

Agencies:

USDA

On Farmer One File

At Commodity Classic in San Antonio, US Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins introduced the "[One Farmer One File](#)" initiative aimed to streamline application for and delivery of conservation programs.

Farmer Bridge Assistance:

On Friday, February 20 USDA announced that the enrollment period for [Farmer Bridge Assistance](#) (FBA) payments would open on February 23 to run through April 17. The following commodities are eligible for the nearly \$11 billion in FBA: *Barley, Chickpeas, Corn, Cotton, Lentils, Oats, Peanuts, Peas, Rice, Sorghum, Soybeans, Wheat, Canola, Crambe, Flax, Mustard, Rapeseed, Safflower, Sesame, and Sunflower*. In December, USDA released the [payment rates by](#)



commodity. FBA payment rates are based on 2025 planted acres, Economic Research Service cost of production, and the World Agriculture Supply and Demand Estimate Report.

*Specialty crop producers have until March 13 to report 2025 acres to FSA.

US Forest Service

The State of Georgia along with the US Forest Service and NRCS have signed a shared stewardship memorandum of understanding, reaffirming a joint commitment to coordinated, cross-boundary forest management across priority landscapes in the state.

EPA

On Feb. 19, 2026, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published a final rule rescinding the Administrator's 2009 findings of contribution and endangerment – that greenhouse gas emissions cause harm - and repealing all greenhouse gas (GHG) emission standards for light-duty, medium-duty, and heavy-duty vehicles and engines to go into effect April 20, 2026. The endangerment finding is the basis for many Clean Air Act programs and initiatives.

Water Delivery Activity:

Rio Grande

On January 31st, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of State established a new commitment between the United States and Mexico that strengthens implementation of the 1944 Water Treaty, aimed at providing greater certainty for farmers, ranchers, and producers in South Texas who rely on consistent water deliveries from the Rio Grande.

Colorado River Basin

On February 14, the deadline for Colorado River Basin states to come to agreement on future allocations passed without consensus. The seven Colorado River Basin states have been trying to reach a joint agreement on how to manage the river basin's water supplies before the current rules expire this fall.

Originally developed and signed in 1922, the Colorado River Compact (the “compact”) allocates 7.5 million acre feet (maf) of water to both the upper basin states (CO, WY, UT, NM) and the lower basin states (CA, NV, AZ). The compact also allocates an extra 1 maf to Arizona to account for diversions from the Gila River and its tributaries in Arizona. Additionally, Congress and the courts have recognized the water rights of 22 of the 30 tribal nations in the basin, which represent 3.2 maf per year of the total allocation and by treaty, Mexico is allocated 1.5 maf per year. The primary concern is that water use has outpaced water availability by nearly 1 maf per year creating water shortages (especially in the lower basin and for Mexico), reduced



hydropower generation, and resulted in historically low water levels in Lake Powell and Lake Mead, the largest reservoirs in the system.

Both the upper and lower basin states are calling for restrictions and reduced use but cannot reach consensus on the specifics of those restrictions. Without basin consensus, the Trump administration will decide what to do with the river. With every missed deadline, the risk of expensive, yearslong court battles over water heightens, and communities are left in limbo.

Action Items:

NACD Annual Fly-In

Join us in Washington DC for NACD's annual spring fly-in March 25, 2026! This is an opportunity for you to meet with your representatives, senators, and their staff to discuss what districts do and how essential they are for conservation delivery in this country. Advocacy training is scheduled for March 16 and 19 at 4:00 pm ET. More information, including RSVP can be found on the [NACD website](#).

Source Water Collaborative – Call for Abstracts

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) is holding the National State Revolving Fund (SRF) [Infrastructure Financing and Training Workshop](#) in Denver, Colorado on August 18-20, 2026. The goal of this workshop is to provide a forum for EPA, state SRF programs, technical assistance providers, and other stakeholders to collaborate and educate each other. Deadlines for abstracts was February 25, 2026 though they plan to extend the deadline.

State Revolving Funds (Drinking Water and Clean Water) (SRF – DW, CW)

NACD is putting together a resource for use in advocacy, highlighting project funding and project development using funds designated for watersheds (see recent request for 319 stories). Please share your stories of projects your district has engaged in using DWSRF or CWSRF. Please send to Libby Wawro at libby-wawro@nacdn.org