



Memo

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

From: Jeremy Peters, NACD CEO

Date: August 24, 2026

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy Peters', is written over a vertical line.

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

- Senate Agriculture Committee markup ends without final agreement
- Stopgap bill to get through the midterms
- USDA Listening Sessions
- Federal EIS allows flexibility for Colorado River Basin Management
- Roadless Area Conservation Rule Updates
- Upcoming webinars

Action Items:

- Use the August recess to connect with your local congressional members

CURRENT EVENTS

Senate Agriculture Committee holds Farm Bill markup but does not advance the bill.

Before leaving for the August Recess, the Senate Agriculture Committee held a markup of the Agricultural Act of 2026. At the start of the proceedings, the Committee approved a bipartisan package of amendments covering a wide range of issues, including transferring the Food for Peace Program from the State Department to USDA, allowing hot rotisserie chicken to qualify as an eligible SNAP food, improving fertilizer market transparency, and strengthening protections for CFTC whistleblowers. Additional approved measures addressed country-of-origin labeling for fish, timber loss assistance, rural housing, prairie dog management, SNAP EBT cybersecurity, specialty crops, creation of an Office of Small Farms at USDA, and expansion of the Heirs Property Relending Program.

Despite agreement on the amendment package, Senators were unable to reach final agreement on outstanding issues, and the bill was not advanced out of committee. Chairman John Boozman has indicated that he remains optimistic the committee can resume negotiations and find a path forward when the Senate returns on September 14.

Senate Passes Continuing Resolution to Fund the Government Through December 11



The Senate passed a bipartisan Continuing Resolution that would generally maintain current federal funding levels through December 11. The measure would temporarily extend government funding beyond the September 30 end of the fiscal year while Congress continues work on the 12 annual FY27 appropriations bills.

The Senate proposal differs from the House-passed Continuing Resolution, which would extend funding through December 4. The Senate bill also includes language temporarily blocking implementation of a proposed Office of Management and Budget rule that would give political appointees a greater role in reviewing federal grants. Because the House and Senate passed different versions, the chambers will need to resolve those differences before a final measure can be sent to the President. Congress will need to enact a funding measure by September 30 to avoid a lapse in government funding.

USDA Announces Listening Sessions on Agricultural Data Collection and Modernization

USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins announced a [series of listening sessions](#) focused on agricultural data collection, analysis, and reporting while attending Minnesota Farmfest. The sessions are intended to allow farmers and other stakeholders to provide feedback as USDA considers changes to how agricultural data is collected, analyzed, and shared.

Listening sessions will be held in conjunction with the Indiana State Fair, Wisconsin State Fair, Penn State Ag Progress Days, Illinois State Fair, Dakotafest, Missouri State Fair, Iowa State Fair, Nebraska State Fair, and the Farm Progress Show.

For additional information and details about a specific listening session, please email DataModernization@usda.gov.

USDA recently announced an interim rule with a request for comment.

The rule, “Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation” is intended to amend the regulations of the “Swampbusters” program in the Food Security Act of 1985 to address inconsistencies in determining eligibility for certain USDA programs. This USDA rule clarifies that wetland determinations made between November 28, 1990, and July 3, 1996, are officially certified—meaning farmers can rely on them to know where they can farm without losing USDA benefits.

For years, NRCS policy on whether those pre-1996 determinations were valid was inconsistent. In 2024, a federal court struck down NRCS's last rule, saying the agency changed its policy without proper explanation. This new rule lays out the full history and makes it official: if you were notified of your determination and given appeal rights back then, it's certified and stays valid.

What This Means for You:

You don't need to request a new wetland determination unless you want one. Your existing certified determination is good, and you can plan farming operations with confidence. The deadline for



comment is **September 28, 2026**. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Libby Wawro at libby-wawro@nacdnet.org.

Bureau of Reclamation Releases Final EIS for Colorado River Basin

The Bureau of Reclamation recently released the *Final Environmental Impact Statement for Post-2026 Operational Guidelines and Strategies for Lake Powell and Lake Mead*. The preferred alternative establishes a 10-year framework for operations beginning in 2027, with operating guidelines generally developed in two-year intervals. This approach provides flexibility to respond to changing water conditions while leaving opportunities for the Basin states and other partners to reach future agreements. The seven states that share the Colorado River have been negotiating for several years over how the river should be managed after the current operating guidelines expire in October 2026.

The Colorado River provides water to approximately 40 million people, including 30 Tribal Nations and communities in two Mexican states, and supports approximately 5.5 million acres of agricultural land. It also supports hydropower production, agricultural communities, ecosystems, and wildlife throughout the West. Overuse, climate change, prolonged drought, and declining reservoir levels have increased pressure on the system and made long-term management more challenging. The Final EIS follows a multi-year NEPA process and provides a framework for continued collaboration as the states and federal government work toward longer-term solutions to ensure the Colorado River Basin continues to provide.

Roadless Area Conservation Rule Updates

On August 18, USDA announced that the [U.S. Forest Service has proposed rescinding](#) the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which restricts road construction, road reconstruction, and certain timber harvest activities in inventoried roadless areas on National Forest System lands. USDA stated the proposal is intended to give local forest managers greater flexibility to address forest health and wildfire risk, while clarifying that rescission would not require timber harvest or road construction. The proposal and draft environmental impact statement are open for public comment through September 21, 2026.

[The Roadless Rule](#) was adopted in 2001 to provide broad national protections for undeveloped national forest lands that had been inventoried as roadless. The rule generally limits new roads and some timber harvest to protect roadless values, including watersheds, wildlife habitat, recreation, and large intact landscapes, while preserving limited exceptions for public safety, existing rights, and certain management needs.

Rescission could move more decisions on roads, timber harvest, fuels work, mineral access, and other activities back to individual forest plans and project-level review. Supporters argue this would improve local flexibility for wildfire mitigation, forest health treatments, timber supply, and rural economic needs. Opponents argue removing the national baseline could increase road building,



habitat fragmentation, invasive species spread, erosion, and pressure on drinking water and recreation resources.

The 2020 study, [“Long-term forest health implications of roadlessness”](#) found that roadlessness had not prevented fuel management work, with fuel treatments occurring more frequently per square kilometer in roadless areas than elsewhere in the National Forest System, though roaded areas saw larger treatment footprints. The study also found that forests with and without roads burned at similar rates after the rule took effect, and that non-native plants were twice as common within 500 feet of roads as farther away. The study concluded that the claim that eliminating road prohibitions would improve forest health was not supported by nearly two decades of monitoring data.

UPCOMING WEBINARS

Thursday, September 17, 1:30-3:00 p.m. ET: The EPA Nonpoint Source (NPS), [Utilizing Clean Water State Revolving Funds as Match for Section 319 Grants](#)

September 30, 2026 – October 1, 2026: The Agricultural Nutrient Policy Council is holding its annual Nutrient Summit in Des Moines, IA, where they will tour Agricultural Research Service field sites and discuss policy. Due to a generous sponsor, there is no registration fee. For more information, see [attached](#). To register, please click [here](#).

ACTION ITEMS

August recess provides an opportunity for conservation districts and state associations to connect with Members of Congress while they are meeting with constituents in their home states and districts. Members are encouraged to reach out to their Senators and Representatives, invite congressional offices to visit local conservation projects, and attend town halls or other community events.

When meeting with congressional offices, share examples of the work conservation districts are doing in their communities and how federal investments, including Farm Bill conservation programs and Conservation Technical Assistance funding, help districts continue to deliver locally led conservation. Specific examples of projects, partnerships, and local impacts can help demonstrate the value of these programs as Congress continues work on the Farm Bill and FY27 funding.