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TO: Chief David White

CC: Sylvia Gillen, State Conservationist

FROM: Gordon Younker, Executive Vice President

DATE: December 10, 2010

RE: NRCS Contracts for Conservation Activity Plan Limitations

Thank you for meeting by telephone with the NACD SW Region officials December 6, 2010.

At that time I inquired regarding the agencies use of EQIP funding for conservation activity plans. We are pleased that a contract for conservation planning could be obtained by an eligible applicant yet understand that selection of a technical service provider (TSP) is limited to those registered under NRCS Tech Reg.

UACD and Utah conservation districts are TSPs providing services to NRCS customers in Utah. Generally the agreements or contracts entered into with NRCS are limited to assisting producers implement contracted practices. It would benefit Utah producers to obtain front-end conservation planning and engineering available through conservation districts or UACD, whether a producer was planning to make application for NRCS program funding or were, for various reasons, to utilized state loan funds or their own resources.

At present, it is our understanding that NRCS policy does not allow for the agency to enter into cooperative agreements or contracts with conservation districts or nonprofit conservation district state associations for obtaining conservation activity plans. Please consider the advantages of bundling together the conservation planning needs for an area or state to better serve eligible EQIP or other NRCS program producers. In Utah and many areas in the west qualified Tech. Reg. TSPs are not generally available for these specialized services or are many interested and able to respond as are conservation districts.

In Utah often our technical staff is collocated at NRCS field offices. It has and will continue to be our practice not to compete with private Tech Reg TSPs. It is our request the NRCS consider bundling services and utilizing the personnel available at conservation districts, their state associations, and other qualified entities. The need is for more qualified personnel on-the-ground assisting producers, whether they receive EQIP or other NRCS program funding or not. The agency's policy should not be prohibitive, but should enable the flexibility for a state conservationist to use all available procurement tools.