

South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts

Policy Position



Mission Statement

The Mission of the SCACD is to protect the natural resources of South Carolina through its 46 member Conservation Districts by providing the leadership, information, and tools which enable Districts to achieve their goals.

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Overview

The South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts (SCACD) represents the state's 46 soil and water Conservation Districts. Its programs and activities are aimed at advancing the resource conservation cause of the Districts and the cooperating landowners, land users and citizens whom they serve in their communities. Since 1937, Conservation Districts have worked to promote and establish the wise use of soil and water resources on the land.

The quality of land, water and related natural resources has a direct bearing on the activity, growth, development and lifestyle in South Carolina. Conservation Districts develop and maintain programs to ensure a productive and desirable natural resource base.

In addition, these programs are conducted in a way that uses to the fullest extent (1) voluntary action; (2) local participation and decision; (3) private enterprise; and (4) partnership between private and public interests at all levels. Through these programs, a clear understanding of the economic, social, political and ecological interdependence between urban and rural areas is demonstrated.

Also the SCACD and Conservation Districts recognize the accomplishments and achievements in natural resource conservation as an integral part of the "grassroots" conservation program.

South Carolina's Soil and Water Conservation Districts are successful because they meet fundamental needs. They coordinate work on complex problems involving many people, organizations, government agencies and technologies. More importantly, they produce tangible benefits.

SCACD was founded in 1941 on the philosophy that conservation decisions should be made by local people with technical and funding assistance provided by local, state and federal governments. The mission of SCACD is:

- To represent Conservation Districts as their voice on natural resource issues
- To provide useful information to Conservation Districts
- To offer needed services to Conservation Districts

SCACD is a grassroots organization whose governing body is comprised of representatives from the District membership. The Conservation District Commissioners shape the policies of the SCACD

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Acronyms

ARS	USDA - Agricultural Research Service
SCDNR	South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
LWCD	SCDNR – Land, Water, and Conservation Division
NACD	National Association of Conservation Districts
NRCS	USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service
SCACD	South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts
SCCDEA	South Carolina Conservation Districts Employee Association
SCDHEC	South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

Standing Committees

SCACD has seven standing committees that meet to study issues in their area of responsibility. They make policy recommendations to the 230 Conservation District Commissioners for their consideration and approval. Following is a list of the seven standing committees:

Committees	Pages:
I Awards.....	5- 6
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I. Awards Committee

Chairperson: Barbara Padget

Mission

The South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts Awards Committee encourages all Conservation Districts to actively promote and participate in all awards programs available to them. Recognition of accomplishments and achievements in natural resource conservation is an integral part of the "grassroots" Conservation Districts program. The South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts recommends the following:

Action Items:

1. Encourage and promote the "AWARDS PROGRAM and PARTICIPATION" with 4 months for "Save the Date" notice and 3 months to send out the criteria and applications.
2. DNR or NRCS Partner will help publicize the Awards. ***Adopted 2/17***
3. *Educational Award for individuals doing conservation projects, different then a teacher.*
Adopted 2/18

Ongoing Policy Positions

- A. SCACD Awards Committee core members will be responsible for judging SCACD awards as outlined in the Awards Program book. The judging committee will be comprised of but not limited to the following individuals:
 - 4 Conservation District Commissioners one from each Area
(as appointed by the Area Director)
 - 1 NRCS Representative (volunteer participant)
 - 1 SC DNR Representative (volunteer participant)
 - 1 District Employee Association Representative (volunteer participant)
- B. SCACD's Awards Committee in conjunction with SCACD's Leadership will be responsible for the Awards Ceremony, i.e. selecting awards, planning, fundraising (if applicable), etc.
- C. Update Awards Packet as needed.
- D. The SCACD Awards Committee will work to get award recipients and their guest(s) complimentary registration for the awards banquet from SCACD's budget.
- E. The SCACD Awards Committee will recognize the South East Region Hall of Fame winner at the Partnership Conference.

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- F.** Awards committee will distribute awards form packet to each District office by email with a return receipt request. Inform each District Board Chairman the awards packet has been sent to their District. ***Adopted 2/17***
- G.** Develop & finance \$50 for first place category not to exceed \$250 statewide NACD Poster Contest to enable state winners to compete at the National level. The Awards Committee will be the final judge in determining state winners. Poster contest is open to K-12 grades. Posters are due to the Awards Committee by the second Tuesday in November. ***Adopted 2/17***
- H.** Develop & finance \$50 for first place category) statewide photo contest. The Awards Committee will be the final judge in determining state winners. The photo contest is open to 6-12 grades: Middle School (6-8) & High School (9-12). The photos are due to the Awards Committee by the second Tuesday in November. There are two categories: Landscape and Rural Life. ***Adopted 2/17***

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II. Conservation Districts Operations Committee Policy Positions

Chairperson: Yvonne Kling

Mission

To assist all South Carolina Conservation Districts in their day-to-day operations, development of policies and procedures, administrative activities, and other areas involving District Commissioner leadership, the South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts supports the following:

Action Items:

1. SCACD recommends a calendar of State deadlines be developed and given to District's to ensure continuity of operations when there is a change in district employee or leadership. ***Adopted 2/19***
2. A member of each District's Board shall notify SCACD, SCCDEA, SCDNR, and NRCS of any new district employee or employee resignation. ***Adopted 2/19***

Ongoing Policy Positions:

1. Commissioners/Administration:

- A. As duly elected or appointed public officials, Conservation District Commissioners should constantly strive to improve the administration of District affairs in fulfilling public responsibilities.
- B. SCACD, recognizing that the success of self-government depends on the local leadership provided, recommends Conservation Districts carry out activities and programs to activate and strengthen local leadership.
- C. SCACD recommends that Conservation Districts develop and adopt a Conservation Annual Plan of Operation by fully utilizing input from the conservation partnership, local citizens, and District employees, and to make efforts to incorporate SCACD Policies into the Annual and Long-Range Plans.
- D. SCACD, having adopted the Conservation Partnership Policy on Diversity in 1995, recommends that Conservation Districts, when making recommendations to fill appointed positions, unexpired vacated elected positions, or Associate Commissioner positions to the board, should consider race, gender, and other demographic factors to assure, to the greatest extent possible, equal representation of all segments of the population of the county, with a goal of ensuring that all segments of society are served by, and have the opportunity to participate in, our nation's conservation programs.

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- E. SCACD recommends that Conservation Districts consider the local board meeting attendance record of appointed District Commissioners at the time they are being considered for reappointment and that an appointed Commissioner with a local board meeting attendance record of less than 75 percent over the previous two years of their term shall not be considered for reappointment, unless evidence is presented showing providential circumstance is not expected to continue.
- F. SCACD recommends that Conservation Districts advertise Commissioner slots as they become available by posting in all public buildings, such as City Hall, courthouse, agriculture related offices, etc., along with applicable job description, salary information, reimbursement, and other related issues.
- G. SCACD recommends Conservation Districts develop and use titles and job descriptions that accurately reflect their District employees' duties and functions. It is requested that the SCCDEA address the issue of having one title for district employees/managers across the state and determine that title.
- H. SCACD recommends Conservation Districts give major attention to the assigned priorities regarding resource problems, needed work force, development of adequate inventories, maps of resources, identification of conservation problems, effective annual and long-range planning systems, and coordination with cooperating agencies.
- I. SCACD recommends Conservation Districts hold an election of officers in February of each year and provide the list to the DNR- LWCD for a directory revision. SCACD also recommends Conservation Districts rotate elected officers' positions.
- J. SCACD encourages Conservation District Commissioners purchase a personalized "Conservation District Commissioner" license plate for their vehicle annually. **Adopted 2/17**
- K. SCACD recommends that the Conservation Partnership conduct an annual Leadership Training for Conservation District Commissioners and District Employees. **Adopted 2/19**
- L. SCACD requests that all correspondence sent to District offices also be sent to District Chairpersons.
- M. SCACD recommends that minutes be recorded of SCACD committees, and hoc committee's general business sessions, and Executive Committee meetings, be provided to the SCACD Executive Director and that these minutes, financial reports, and budgets be printed and sent to all Districts for distribution to all Commissioners. **Adopted 2/16**

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- N. The Committee recommends that each District appoint a Commissioner to maintain regular communication with their respective DNR Board Member.
- O. SCACD recommends that SCDNR annually provide to each District, by March 30, an updated District Commissioner Directory in an electronic format which can be downloaded and printed by districts. In addition, Districts should report annually the list of Commissioners, Associates staff and changes as they occur to SCACD's Executive Director.
- P. The SCACD recommends the development of an orientation module for newly elected and appointed commissioners.

2. **District Communications/Education:**

- A. SCACD recommends Conservation Districts use the NRCS computers and e-mail system to share information and successes. Separate email for access "after" NRCS. **Adopted 2/19**
- B. SCACD recommends Conservation Districts obtain access to the Internet and develop a home page.
- C. SCACD recommends that SCDNR continue to develop and update training materials for newly elected and appointed commissioners, and to make these materials available in both on-line and printed formats. **Adopted 2/18**
- D. Develop and implement annual training for district commissioners and staff that will address district operations and the partnership.
- E. Districts are encouraged to submit activity reports to SCDNR on a regular basis. **Adopted 2/18**

3. **Financial:**

- A. SCACD recommends Conservation Districts continue 100% financial support of SCACD and NACD through annual dues payments. SCACD encourages Conservation Districts to participate in the individual membership program of NACD.
- B. SCACD recommends Conservation Districts support financially the SC Conservation Districts Foundation and its programs. In addition, Conservation Districts are encouraged to seek ways of providing financial support to the Foundation.
- C. Conservation Districts that enter into contributions agreements with the SCACD and USDA/NRCS are to be aware that financial management, justification, and audit responsibility lie with the District Board to assure its integrity and accountability. **Adopted 2/17**

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4. Legal:

- A. SCACD recommends Conservation Districts ensure that District conservation programs are delivered to all individuals and groups without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap or political affiliation.
- B. SCACD recommends Conservation Districts use the following statement on all District publications:

All programs and services of the Conservation District, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and DNR-Land, Water and Conservation Division are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, marital status or handicap.
- C. SCACD recommends Conservation Districts comply fully with their responsibilities as defined in the state and federal laws such as Conservation Districts' law, ethics law, freedom of information law, sediment, erosion control and storm water management law, as well as rules governing public notice, audit of financial records, bonding of Commissioners and staff, taxes, liability, and unemployment insurance.
- D. The SCACD and its member Districts shall provide all employees, volunteers, and Conservation partners with a work environment which is, at all times, free from discrimination with regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap, or political affiliation, and free from verbal or physical conduct of an unacceptable and unwelcome nature, including sexual harassment and/or intimidation.
- E. SCACD recommends this policy on discrimination/harassment be adopted by districts.
- F. Districts shall develop and implement a policy to annually review and document compliance with conservation, watershed, or other easement requirements, obligations, and/or restrictions. **Adopted 2/18**

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III. Conservation Education and Outreach Committee

Chairperson: Denise Parsick

Mission

Q. Natural resources education programs should, through the efforts of the South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts (SCACD) and its partners, be readily available to all persons of the state. The SCACD should try to provide and/or support classroom and field study educational opportunities for both students and adults. The SCACD policies should ensure that each Conservation District has the means and latitude to design and implement the programs deemed necessary for the population of that District. **Adopted 2/19**

Action Items:

1. The Committee requests annual funding from SCACD for representation to promote statewide conservation district programs and services utilizing exhibits and other educational displays at annual environmental related conferences. **Adopted 2/19**
2. In addition to providing educational opportunities to youth through public schools, Districts are encouraged to reach students engaged in alternative education, including private, charter, and home schools. **Adopted 2/16**
3. Districts are strongly encouraged to submit monthly activity reports to SCDNR. **Adopted 2/18**

Ongoing Policy Positions:

- A.** Each District should encourage the establishment of an education committee, the purpose of which shall be to improve local District educational outreach and promote conservation education on a local level.
- B.** SCACD recommends that districts in collaboration with conservation partners, promote local, state, or federal conservation funding opportunities to the public. **Adopted 2/17**
- C.** SCACD encourages Districts to support NACD and SCACD contests.
- D.** SCACD encourages Districts to promote and support the National Soil and Water Stewardship Theme as an outreach effort. **Adopted 2/17**
- E.** *SCACD recommends Conservation Districts implement an active adult education and outreach program with a variety of partners, i.e., governmental agencies, conservation organizations, local special interest groups, educational institutions, public libraries, public*

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media, etc. **Adopted 2/19**

- F.** SCACD recommends Districts meet with their local teachers, school administrators and school boards as necessary to meet the District's program goals. **Adopted 2/19**
- G.** Each district should set a goal to create a web presence and have it linked on the SCDNR website.

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IV. Conservation Legislative Committee

Chairpersons: Sterling Sadler

Mission

The SCACD Legislative Committee believes Conservation Districts should continue to develop, maintain and cultivate channels within their local, state, and where appropriate, national groups. The following are items that should be addressed in the pursuit of legislative activity.

Action Items:

1. SCACD recommends the support of the DNR Budget Request as prioritized below.
 - A. Recommends the “Aid to Conservation Districts” continue to be funded at \$690,000. **Adopted 2/16**
 - B. We recommend aid to Conservation Districts funding be increased by \$310,000. **Adopted 2/16**
 - C. Support DNR’s 2018-2019 Budget requests for new positions. **Adopted 2/19**
 - D. To encourage DNR and Conservation Districts to promote Educational Programs to implement a “nuisance wildlife” abatement program.
2. Legislative and Land Use and Water Quality Committees will work together on Water issues.
3. SCACD supports the NACD’s position on the Farm Bill. **Adopted 2/15**
4. We request NRCS State Conservationist inform SCACD Executive Director of all meetings of the State Technical Committee and she will distribute details to all Districts. **Adopted 2/16**
5. SCACD supports the Forestry Commission’s Budget request. **Adopted 2/15**
6. SCACD supports funding of the Conservation Bank and its current efforts on farmland protection and conservation easement programs. **Adopted 2/19**

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Ongoing Policy Positions:

- A. Conservation Districts and individual Commissioners should actively communicate with local, state, and federal legislators in regard to budgetary items, natural resource legislation, and the needs of the SWCD. Districts will support the SCACD legislative initiatives. Conservation Districts are strongly encouraged to invite local, state, and federal legislators and other leaders to appropriate meetings, tours, affiliate membership programs, and other events.
- B. The SCACD encourages the SC Department of Natural Resources to include USDA NRCS, SC DHEC, and local Conservation District, Clemson Extension and SCFC in any planning or implementation of new projects/programs that may affect a District's natural resources.
- C. The Committee recommends supporting SC Department of Agriculture in a long-term pesticide recovery program. ***Adopted 2/17***

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A. Envirothon Committee

Chairperson: Brooke Myres

Mission

The SC Envirothon represents a unique opportunity for the SC Conservation Partnership to contribute in the education of South Carolina youth and teachers through an internationally recognized program. It also offers an opportunity to draw in non-traditional partners to serve on the Steering Team, which organizes and conducts the event. SCACD policies should provide an on-going framework upon which to foster growth in this important education arena.

Action Items: All Completed

Ongoing Policy Positions:

- A.** Solicit sufficient funding to operate the program.
- B.** Organize and conduct a registration program in the fall of the year to solicit participation in the following spring's competition.
- C.** Produce a Coaches' Handbook relevant to the current year's event which includes the following contents: background, rules of the competition, learning objectives correlated to the curriculum standards, suggested resources including websites and contact information for state agencies which deal in natural resources.
- D.** Plan and conduct a Coaches' Workshop prior to the SC competition.
- E.** Assist in the training of the state winning team for participation in the international Envirothon competition.
- F.** Meet as needed to review progress, set goals, and provide support to the SC Envirothon Coordinator.
- G.** SCACD recommends that each SWCD support the SC Envirothon program by incorporating a yearly donation to the educational programs in their annual budget.
- H.** Adapt advertisements of the competition to reflect its relevance to the SC Curriculum Standards.
- I.** Investigate potential sources of information for distribution to Coaches and Teams.
- J.** Investigate better methods of advertising the program, ways to increase support at the district level and other factors such as timing of the deadlines to increase the number of teams participating.

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- K.** Unclaimed scholarship funds will remain in the designated Envirothon Scholarship account for future scholarships, while interest earned on scholarship monies will remain with the foundation for administrative costs.

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VI. Forestry, Wildlife and Recreation Committee

Chairperson: Kenny Mullis

Mission

In order to assist Conservation Districts, the SC Department of Natural Resources and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, SC Forestry Commission and other related natural resource agencies in their efforts to develop and maintain programs relating to forestry, wildlife, and recreation, the South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts recommends the following:

Action Items:

1. Support Legislative items of SC Forestry Commission as needed. ***Adopted 2/16***
2. Support SC Forestry Commission in their endeavors as long as it falls within guidelines of SCACD. ***Adopted 2/19***

Ongoing Policy Positions:

- A. SCACD encourages Conservation Districts to promote outdoor recreation so that the environmental benefits and economic returns are realized.
- B. SCACD encourages timber companies, private foresters, Ag producers and cities and municipalities to develop an "adopt-a-tree" program and plant native mast trees along pine woods and other needed areas. Through a Memorandum of Understanding, hunt clubs, and other interested individuals or groups would accept the maintenance responsibilities for the plantings. This approach is also encouraged for food plots, pollinators and other native forage habitats.
- C. Conservation Districts should promote best management practices.
- D. SCACD will cooperate with the South Carolina Forestry Commission and the Forestry, Wildlife, & Recreation Committee to encourage landowners, timber companies and private foresters to leave mast tree zones during timber removal operations. ***Adopted 2/18***
- E. SCACD supports and encourages participation in the Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) and supports full funding for these.

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- F.** SCACD encourages Conservation Districts to promote educational programs as needed for awareness of benefits, concerns, liabilities, etc. regarding controlled burning in woodlands such as those SCFC programs currently in place.
- G.** SCACD encourages forest landowners to get their land certified by the American Tree Farm Association.
- H.** SCACD recommends Conservation Districts support the acquisition of conservation easement by land trust and other entities to voluntarily protect farmland, forestland and other open spaces from development.
- I.** SCACD recommends that Conservation Districts support land trusts and their efforts to protect farm and forestland and other open spaces from development through volunteer efforts and that the state provide funding for purchase of easements.
- J.** SCACD recommends working with permitting agencies to enable landowners to restore or repair rice field dikes for water quality and wildlife habitat improvement.
- K.** SCACD encourages the Timber Producers Association and the Forestry, Wildlife, & Recreation Committee to make timber buyers and loggers aware of the potential of invasive species being transported and spread by logging equipment. ***Adopted 2/18***
- L.** SCACD opposes the sale of state owned real estate for the purpose of solving short-term budget problems.
- M.** SCACD supports and promotes the use of “renewable and sustainable energy sources.”
- N.** SCACD recommends to the SCDNR that information be provided to the public via the SCDNR Rules and Regulation Publication about the prohibition on the transportation of live feral hogs due to bio security reasons for pseudo rabies, tuberculosis, and other emerging swine diseases and environmental impact. Also, SCDNR should provide information on facilities that can legally process feral hogs for hunters.
- O.** The SCACD recommends that all Conservation Districts cooperate and participate with the South Carolina Wild Hog Task Force at the local level to help with the outreach and educational activities for our property land owners regarding the increase of wild hogs in our state.
- P.** The SCACD supports SCDNR and APHIS Wildlife Services measures to manage and control wild hogs and other non-game nuisance wildlife. ***Adopted 2/17***
- Q.** Encourage Districts to provide literature in office that corresponds with mission of this committee. ***Adopted 2/19***

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VII. Land Use and Water Quality, and Research Committee

Chairperson: Jeff Wilson

Mission

Conservation Districts should provide technical assistance and promote increased awareness and research in the wise use of the state's natural resources, including, but not limited to, the following areas: land use, watershed management, wetlands, and water quality and quantity.

Action Items:

1. SCACD supports sharing ideas among districts for proactive recommendations on conservation and urban and suburban development in SC. The goal of this item is to create integrated position on urban development issues and develop collaborative recommendations.
2. SCACD will develop position on:
 - A. Defining Federal jurisdiction of waters of the United States. ***Adopted 2/16***
 - B. Permitting programs that encourage efficient use of water related natural resources. ***Adopted 2/16***
3. The SCACD supports a broad spectrum of federal, state, and local funding to assist private dam owners and to maintain Legacy dam up keep and maintenance. This includes proactively working with DHEC and the public, requirements and funding based on categorization of ponds, and support of Stormwater utilities. ***Adopted 2/17***
4. The SCACD recommends the wise use of the latest technology to effectively and efficiently irrigate and manage water. ***Adopted 2/18***
 - A. Supports a pilot study to look at the sensibility of a Mobile Irrigation Lab in the State of SC. This study will demonstrate water savings by upgrading center pivots. ***Adopted 2/19***
 - B. Upon proof of efficiency the SCACD supports the implementation of Mobile Irrigation Labs in SC for voluntary use by landowners and as a TSP to work with NRCS to save water and promote agriculture in SC. ***Adopted 2/19***

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5. The Central Electric Company attempted to put a power line through a conservation easement on Jeff Wilson's farm. The judge, during the hearing, explained the Power Company did indeed have the right to condemn property but the landowner had a right to information through the Freedom of Information Act. A compromise was eventually reached with the Power Company who has agreed to move the line to a better location. In researching the situation, Jeff's lawyer found a NC law in place, which requires utility companies to avoid condemning land protected by a conservation easement if at all possible. In the event they claim they have no other alternative, the companies have to defend their decision in a court. An amendment is being proposed to improve existing SC law and will be introduced into the House and Senate. There is no mention of compensation to the landowner in this SC proposal. **Adopted 2/18**

Ongoing Policy Positions:

1. Conservation Districts should take a proactive role in the following natural resources conservation issues: storm water management, flood prevention, watershed and wetland protection.
 - A. Local Conservation Districts are encouraged to be involved in local decisions that may affect natural resources and to communicate through the appropriate SCACD committee chair to SCACD. **Adopted 2/16**
 - B. The SCACD will be active in reviewing and commenting on existing and proposed regulations as they apply to land application of animal and municipal waste.
 - C. Encourage, through proper channels to seek funding to continue to develop germplasm resources in USDA-NRCS Plant Material Centers.
 - D. SCACD opposes the location of mega landfills in South Carolina and further opposes out of state trash from being brought into South Carolina.
2. Land Use
 - A. Support a broad spectrum of federal, state, and local funding to assist agricultural and other producers to establish and sustain economically viable operations.
 - B. Support the reinstatement of state cost share funding to improve and protect soil health and water quality.
 - C. SCACD supports requiring Federal and State regulators to consider agricultural interest when authorizing utility corridor alignments. **Adopted 2/18**
3. Promotion of the use of the "tools" for resource conservation

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- A. Encourage educational programs for County and municipal planners.
 - B. Encourage educational programs for efficient water use. ***Adopted 2/16***
4. SCACD supports the continuing education of local units of government and or county/city planners and administrations about watershed management planning.
 5. The SCACD supports the development and seeking of the funding to support research to study the movement of pesticides, nutrients, and animal waste, through remote sensing projects. ***Adopted 2/15***
 6. SCACD supports the continued development of the weather reporting network, CoCoRaHS, and that each district implements a plan to seek and establish voluntary reporting stations in cooperation with the state climatologist and regional coordinators.