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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | Dear Conservation Districts and State/Territory Associations,  The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the nation’s soil and water conservation districts share a rich history of collaborating to deliver comprehensive technical and financial assistance to farmers, ranchers, forest stewards and other entities to voluntarily conserve and enhance natural resources. NRCS shares a special “government-to-government” relationship with conservation districts as well as tribal governments and their entities, including tribal conservation districts or Tribal Conservation Advisory Councils, grounded in a doctrine of trust.  Along with these historical and unique relationships, NRCS has a special statutory authority to cooperate and share resources with conservation districts and tribes for the conservation and enhancement of natural resources. NRCS, conservation districts and Tribal Advisory Councils typically document their cooperative relationship via Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs).  Memoranda of Understanding (or Agreement) are formal agreements outlining the relationship and basic framework for cooperation between two or more parties. MOUs are NOT legally or financially binding and may not be used to transfer things of value between parties. NRCS may only share resources (e.g. incidental office space, vehicles, technical assistance, etc.) via formal agreements such as cooperative or contribution agreements per the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act (31 U.S.C. §6301).  **Updated MOUs and Unfunded Cooperative Agreements**  The Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Business Center’s Grants and Agreements Division has developed two standardized templates for NRCS.  NRCS uses:   * [State-Level MOUs](https://nacdnet.z2systems.com/track/servlet/DisplayLink?orgId=nacdnet&emailId=a207bf93f9b5901f5fdb791aa4679cfdam3951694a20&secureId=7Gu9E1pIZOC%2FrUc2Hhgg0w%3D%3D&linkId=40711&targetUrl=https://nacdnet.z2systems.com/np/viewDocument?orgId=nacdnet&id=4028e48c6b1bfd8a016b22e686b20053) * [Unfunded Cooperative Agreements](https://nacdnet.z2systems.com/track/servlet/DisplayLink?orgId=nacdnet&emailId=a207bf93f9b5901f5fdb791aa4679cfdam3951694a20&secureId=7Gu9E1pIZOC%2FrUc2Hhgg0w%3D%3D&linkId=40714&targetUrl=https://nacdnet.z2systems.com/np/viewDocument?orgId=nacdnet&id=4028e48c6b1bfd8a016b22e809490054)   The new, State-Level MOU includes standard language to document the relationship of the parties, their shared objectives and mutual understandings. The target is to renew all State-Level MOUs with each conservation district and applicable Tribal entity by Dec. 31, 2019.  Unfunded Cooperative Agreements will be used to facilitate the exchange of resources (e.g., incidental office space and vehicles). Cooperative Agreements will be updated as former agreements expire. For instances where resources were inappropriately shared via a MOU, the new Cooperative Agreement template will be used to identify resources exchanged without obligating funds. These agreements have no minimum term and may last up to five years.  **What to Expect**  As you can imagine, with nearly 3,000 conservation district and tribal entities with whom NRCS enters into State-Level MOUs and cooperative or contribution agreements, this creates a significant workload. Over the next month, State Conservationists will be gathering information on MOUs to plan ahead for the anticipated workload and prioritize processing of State Level Cooperative Agreements.  For questions, comments or more information, please contact your NRCS State Conservationist.  Sincerely,  Jeremy Peters Chief Executive Officer National Association of Conservation Districts  CC: State Presidents, State Contacts, State Association Executive Directors, NACD Board of Directors | | |
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