

**Email**

rebecca@macdnet.org

**Sponsoring entity:**

Montana Association of Conservation Districts, Big Horn Conservation District

**Resolution title**

Support of Cover Crop Incentives

**Background Information Describing the Issue and Providing Context - PLEASE TRY TO LIMIT ENTRY TO 100-200 WORDS\***

The focus of this resolution is to enhance soil health, reduce atmospheric greenhouse gasses, and improve water resources while providing economic benefits to participating farmers and maximizing benefits to livestock and wildlife. Everything starts with the soil, and when the dirt is blowing away, erosion, saline seeps, and lack of habitat and crops are the outcome. RMA (Risk Management Agency) has a policy in place to raise premiums and lower coverage if a crop is not terminated by June 1st; we would like to change this policy and incentivize farmers to keep living roots in the soil year-round, rather than penalize them. Specifically, Big Horn County, Montana had a tragic dust storm in July, 2022 that took the lives of six people. This problem happens across our great nation and can be prevented by building soil health.

**Resolution Text to be Included in NACD Policy Book if Adopted \***

Whereas, current RMA policies work directly against cover crops and therefore hinder soil health.

Therefore, Federal Farm and RMA policies should encourage and promote farming practices that use cover crops as an essential asset to the rotation.

**Sponsor(s) Actions on this Issue to Date**

Big Horn Conservation District has worked in partnership with MACD to format our resolution for the NACD Convention. Our resolution was passed without opposition at the MACD Convention.

There is a growing trend in the push for Cover Crops:

- Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resource has issued new grant funding to engage producers in establishing better farming practices to benefit soil health, erosion, and water quality.
- The Illinois Department of Agriculture has funded a Cover Crop Premium Discount Program that will fund \$5 per cover crop acre to go towards an insurance premium discount.
- Midwest Cover Crop Initiative 2022 awarded five grants totaling 2.6 million dollars to aid farmers across Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, and Minnesota in the planting of cover crops.

**Impact on Existing NACD Policy\***

Risk Management Agency (RMA) will only cover policies that follow a summer fallow practice. All crops, including cover crops, must be terminated by June 1<sup>st</sup>. Big Horn Conservation District held a discussion

with an RMA Representative, and his advice was to gather data and prove that cover crops, over time, will in fact benefit yields.

Adopting this resolution will promote NACD to advocate for the goal of not only our resolution but aid in nationwide education of soil health during discussions with partners in agriculture, including insurance companies. Specifically, this policy aligns with existing NACD policy related to soil health and national cover crop programs.

“NACD strongly believes in the locally led, voluntary, incentive-based model for addressing natural resource concerns; not a one-size-fits-all regulatory scheme. Farm bill conservation programs should be locally led and resource-driven with sufficient flexibility to direct funding to local priorities and concerns. Program priorities, rules, and policies should be tailored and adapt to the natural resource needs of states and local areas. Local conservation district boards, local working groups, and state technical committees are essential to identifying local needs, maximizing conservation benefits, and setting priorities for program delivery.” – NACD 2022 Farm Bill

#### **Potential Financial Impact on NACD\***

This resolution may require a small amount of NACD staff time. Otherwise there is no significant impact.

#### **If Applicable, Potential Fiscal Impact on the Federal Budget**

The list of funding meant to aid in this plight for the importance of agriculture to our nation's organic matter grows steadily. That funding would be better served, in the bigger picture, by changing RMA's policies to allow coverage for a full year crop. In building soil health, we build carbon, minimize erosion, increase soil health, and inevitably reduce the amounts of fertilizers needed which in turn would lower production costs.

#### **Meeting and Date Adopted by Sponsoring Entity\***

Montana Association of Conservation District Annual Fall Meeting, November 17, 2022.

#### **Authorized Signatures and Titles\***

Dean Rogge, MACD Board President;  
Steve Hedstrom, MACD Representative to NACD;  
Rebecca Boslough-King, MACD Executive Director