



## **Chairman Robert Aderholt**

*Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and  
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies  
House Committee on Appropriations*

---

**FY 2016 Budget Hearing - USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
February 27, 2015  
Opening Statement As Prepared**

---

Good morning. The Subcommittee will come to order.

I would like to welcome Mr. Jason Weller, Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Mr. Mike Young, USDA's Budget Director, to the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee.

We convene today to review NRCS's fiscal year 2016 budget request. NRCS requests a total of \$1.031 billion in discretionary funding for its salaries, expenses, programs, and activities. In addition, about \$3.2 billion will be available through the farm bill's mandatory conservation programs to farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners to help them preserve, protect, and enhance their land.

NRCS has been working for several years to bring its financial and accounting systems into line with today's transparency and accountability standards. This work is enormously important to ensuring the integrity of NRCS's operations and programs.

The cooperative work between NRCS and farm, ranch, and private forest-owning families to conserve and maintain productive lands is often unrecognized. The science-based, locally led, and voluntary approach to conservation on these lands is an incredible legacy that arose out of the Dust Bowl years. This legacy is worth defending, but we must have the appropriate so-called back-office systems and controls in place to ensure that it can be passed on to future generations.

NRCS is about to embark on a significant restructuring that will strengthen the integrity of its programs and systems and ensure its legacy of science-based and locally implemented conservation continues. The plan appears to be thoughtful and thoroughly vetted. I look forward to hearing more about it at today's hearing.

#####