

NASCA RESOLUTION TEMPLATE

Date: July 2008

Resolution Sponsor: Pennsylvania

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Title: Recommendations for NRCS Technical Service Providers

Subject: Technical Service Providers

Action requested to be taken by NASCA:

1. NRCS is encouraged to fully utilize TSP authority to maximize their capacity to deliver conservation technical services in each state, and also to build the technical capacity of the entire conservation partnership (NRCS, state agencies, conservation districts, private sector, non-profits) within each state.
2. NRCS is encouraged to provide states with maximum flexibility in the use of TSPs agreements to meet the individual, unique and variable natural resource concerns of each state.
3. NRCS is encouraged to consider, where possible, traditional partners (state agencies, conservation districts) in the establishment of TSP agreements based on their close working relationship and common mission.
4. NRCS is encouraged to use TSP agreements to help increase the agency's flexibility and agility, and to help manage peak workloads thru stable and consistent staff complements.
5. NRCS is encouraged to use TSPs to provide greater specialization in complex natural resource issues.
6. NRCS is encouraged to maintain strict standards and quality control over TSP work.
7. NRCS should maintain a key role in teaching, training and technical knowledge transfer (certification) in regards to TSPs.
8. NRCS should use TSPs agreements to target increased technical services to specific geographic areas or specific technical needs within a state.
9. While TSP authorization is specifically targeted to farm bill program implementation, NRCS should have greater flexibility in using TSPs funds for non-Conservation Technical Assistance activities (i.e. conservation planning, grazing, CRP/CREP, abandoned mine reclamation, etc) and receive credit for these activities within the goals of each state.

10. TSP rates need to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis, need to be updated to accurately reflect current market rates for private sector-based TSPs, and need to consider the full cost of providing technical services.

Supporting material and/or documentation:

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to address environmental resource concerns on privately owned agricultural lands. Due to a high demand for services in NRCS field offices, provisions were made to facilitate the installation of needed conservation practices using the services of non-NRCS employees to work as Technical Service Providers (TSP).

Since authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill, NRCS has used TSPs to provide direct technical assistance and deliver conservation services to landowners and others. The TSP program has expanded the availability of technical services and has enabled NRCS to increase the availability of their conservation programs beyond the capabilities of their employees.

NRCS staff, partner agencies, non-profit organizations, as well as private contractors and businesses may be certified to provide technical assistance through NRCS. Any individual, business, non-profit organization, or public agency that performs the categories of service specified on the TechReg website can become a TSP. NRCS employees are not eligible, and employees of public agencies must only practice under the auspices of their employing agency.

It is important to note that TSPs can only provide services for which they have been specifically certified by NRCS and different tasks require different certifications. The services a TSP can provide are limited by the technical service categories that the consultant is certified to perform in the state they are certified in. Certification in different states and counties is optional for the consultant.

The demand for services will depend, among other things, on the availability of assistance provided by NRCS and partners, the willingness of the producer to hire a TSP and program funds allocated for this purpose.

All technical services provided must meet all NRCS Technical Standards and Specifications that are located in the electronic Field Office Technical Guide ([eFOTG](#)). In addition, TSPs are required to follow NRCS and Departmental policies and guidelines as well as meet program requirements for the USDA program serviced. Policy, guidelines, program manuals, and handbooks can be found in the Online Resources on [TechReg](#).