

**At a Glance:**  
**Technical Service Providers**

October 2008

**Overview**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) implements its Farm Bill conservation programs through its technical staff and with the assistance of third-party Technical Service Providers (TSPs).

TSPs are certified professionals, qualified to provide NRCS program participants with the technical services necessary to implement their conservation projects. Technical services include conservation planning, technical consultations, assistance with design and implementation of conservation practices, and related services.

The purpose of this program is to provide eligible participants with convenient access to the assistance they need to achieve the conservation objectives on their land. TSPs are individuals, private businesses, nonprofit organizations, or public agencies that help agricultural producers and owners of agricultural lands apply conservation practices on the land.

Eligible participants may choose to receive technical assistance directly from NRCS, by selecting a certified TSP from an approved list, or through an agreement NRCS has entered into with a TSP to provide the necessary assistance. Note that TSP services are not available for all technical services in all States (see <http://techreg.usda.gov> for the certified TSP registry).

**Legislative Changes**

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) revised the TSP authority to include the following provisions:

- Requires USDA to establish “fair and reasonable” payment rates for TSP services;
- Adds the Agricultural Management Assistance Program to the list of eligible programs. Other eligible programs include the Agriculture Water Enhancement Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, Grassland Reserve Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.
- Limits TSP agreements not to exceed 3 years, but allows for renewals;
- Requires USDA to provide national criteria for the certification of third party providers, as well as to establish approval procedures for any State-level unique certification requirements that differ from the national criteria; and
- Excludes as eligible for payment to a TSP those services provided by a business that are customarily at no cost.

**More Information**

For more information and updates about the TSP and other Farm Bill topics, please refer to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Web site [www.usda.gov/farmbill](http://www.usda.gov/farmbill) or the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s TSP Registry at <http://techreg.usda.gov/>.

