



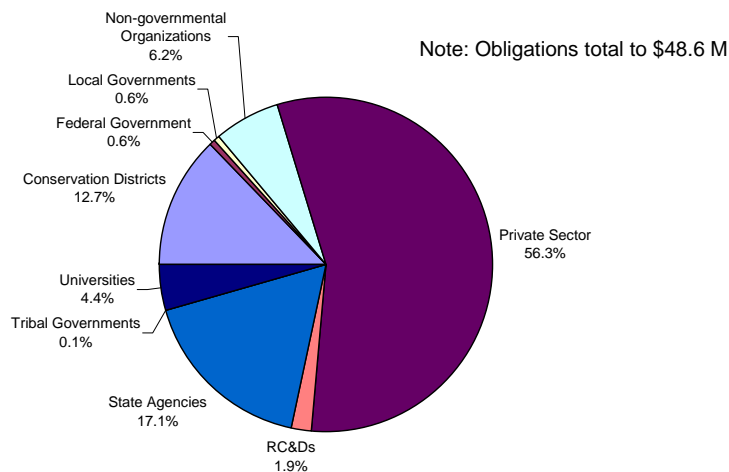
TSP Express

A report for Technical Service Providers
November 2004 **Report No. 5**

NRCS Announces TSP Accomplishments for Fiscal Year 2004

NRCS obligated \$48.6 million in fiscal year 2004 for technical service provider (TSP) assistance, which gives landowners the option of obtaining conservation technical assistance from third parties. The agency more than doubled the \$23.9 million obligated in fiscal year 2003. Below is a chart showing the distribution of funds by percentage:

**Technical Service Provider Assistance
Fund Obligations for FY 2004**



The agency exceeded its \$40 million goal in fiscal year 2004, which ended Sept. 30, 2004. Private sector TSPs received \$27.3 million or 56 percent of the funding. State agencies accounted for \$8.3 million or 17 percent and conservation districts received nearly \$6.2 million or nearly 13 percent. Below is a chart showing the actual dollar amounts for each entity:

ENTITY	TOTAL OBLIGATION
Conservation Districts	\$6,179,879.56
Federal Government	\$307,344.91
Local Governments	\$298,846.00
Non-governmental Organizations	\$3,009,105.54
Private Sector	\$27,385,018.97
RC&Ds	\$907,683.10
State Agencies	\$8,331,579.00
Tribal Governments	\$69,395.00
Universities	\$2,133,549.56
Grand Total	\$48,622,401.64

The agency funded more than 4,100 projects last fiscal year. More than half the projects—62 percent—were funded through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. The Conservation Reserve Program placed a distant second at 14 percent. The Wetlands Reserve, Conservation Technical Assistance, Farm and Ranchland Protection and Wildlife Habitat Incentives programs **each** contributed less than 10 percent.

The TSP process is gaining momentum. By Sept. 30, 2004, NRCS counted 2,062 certified TSPs in TechReg, its online registry.

TSPs may certify for **multiple** conservation practices. By September 30, 2004, nearly 18,000 certifications were recorded in the registry, an **average** of nine certifications per TSP. Most certifications occurred in the following areas: land treatment, nutrient management, water management, pest management, irrigation and land shaping, comprehensive nutrient management planning and wetlands.

New Management Analyst Joins National TSP Staff

Ivan Graff is the new management analyst on the national TSP staff. In his new position, he develops policy and educational materials, responds to inquiries about the TSP process, manages data and generates reports.

Prior to joining NRCS, Ivan served as an engineering program specialist at Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service. In that position, he supported programs in agricultural materials, animal waste management, product processing and occupational safety and health.

While employed at the University of Maryland, he designed and managed the construction and maintenance of agricultural research facilities located on the university's 10 research farms. Prior to that position, he designed dam and coastal rehabilitation, flood hazard mitigation, stormwater management and rural utility projects for a small environmental engineering consulting firm in southern Connecticut.

Ivan earned a B.S. degree in agricultural engineering from Rutgers University and an M.S. in civil engineering from the University of Maryland. He holds a professional engineer license.

Ivan can be reached at 202-720-3721 (Phone); 202-720-0428 (FAX) or Ivan.Graff@usda.gov (e-mail).

USDA Signs Technical Service Provider Agreements with Two Groups

USDA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with two new certifying organizations—the Association of Consulting Foresters of America (ACF) and the American Registry of Professional Animal Scientists (ARPAS) during the summer of 2004.

The agreement with ACF will offer landowners the option to obtain conservation technical assistance in forestry and agroforestry from certified TSPs.

USDA's Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Mack Gray and ACF's Executive Director Lynn Wilson signed the five-year agreement. The MOU allows ACF to recommend its members, who must meet strict education and experience requirements, to USDA for certification to provide technical services related to forestry and agroforestry.

The agreement with ARPAS offers landowners the option to obtain conservation technical assistance in feed management from certified technical service providers. ARPAS-certified professionals formulate diets that increase the animals' production levels but also reduce manure nutrients. NRCS Chief Bruce Knight, ARPAS President Kenneth R. Cummings and ARPAS Executive Vice President Richard R. Frahm signed the five-year agreement.

USDA has signed MOUs with the following nine organizations—American Registry of Professional Animal Scientists, American Society of Agronomy, Association of Consulting Foresters of America, Environmental Management Solutions, National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants, Society of American Foresters, Society for Range Management, The Irrigation Association, The Wildlife Society and University of Tennessee.

NRCS Seeks Cultural Resource Contractors as Certified Technical Service Providers

Several NRCS employees discussed the TSP initiative, including contracting opportunities, at the American Cultural Resources Association's (ACRA) 10th annual conference in Riverside, California in October 2004.

National TSP Coordinator Angel Figueroa, National Cultural Resources Specialist Sarah Bridges, California State Cultural Resources Coordinator Jerry Reioux and California State Contracting Officer Ray Miller conducted a panel discussion called “What the 2002 Farm Bill Means for Your Business.” The presenters explained many aspects of the TSP process, including the cultural resources compliance studies certification category. The agency developed this category to address the increased workload that has resulted from the implementation of 2002 Farm Bill programs.

Archaeologists representing various firms attended the panel discussion. They questioned the certification process, size of contracts, current and future opportunities and the benefits of working directly for producers. Archaeologists have two methods of obtaining work as TSPs—working directly with producers and accessing the federal contracting process. So far, NRCS has 116 TSPs that provide cultural resource services. The agency wants to register more of these TSPs, which will offer producers an option for acquiring this service.

Archaeologists who become certified TSPs can perform cultural resource studies to ensure compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The law requires intergovernmental (including tribal governments) and public consultation on the effects of conservation practices on historic sites and, thus, is dependent on sound professional documentation of resources in project areas. Services archaeologists can provide include historical, archaeological, historic architecture and ethnographic resources identification and evaluation studies.

NRCS panel members offered a list of references and web links that would help ACRA members better understand NRCS’ conservation mission and programs, cultural resources policies and procedures, TSP state coordinator contacts, and direct access to directories and the Cultural Resources Procedures Handbook. The participants were encouraged to compete for cultural resources compliance work through the Request for Proposals process.

The cultural resources links are available on the NRCS Cultural Resources Home Page at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cultural.html>.

FIELD FOCUS – UTAH



Technical Service Provider April Mckeon works with Utah dairyman Steve Gillins on an animal waste management system.

When Dairyman Steve Gillins contacted the NRCS field office in Beaver, Utah for help with construction of an animal waste management system, he learned that a TSP could provide the engineering services he needed.

When he checked NRCS' online registry for providers, he found one seven hours away in Idaho. However, he knew of a local engineer who had worked on area farms and inquired about having her do the work.

Engineer April Mckeon was very receptive to Gillins' interest in seeking out her services. Eventually she completed the process to become a certified TSP. She has worked as a professional engineer for 13 years and now operates her consulting business from a farm she and her husband operate near Milford.

When producers are able to select their own technical service provider, it increases the likelihood they will be satisfied with the results. This was clearly demonstrated in this example. "I'm very satisfied with the contract work that April did," Gillins said. "She's local and we were able to get together when things needed to be done, and with her local knowledge, she knew what we needed," he added. The Gillins operates a 500-cow dairy located between Beaver and Milford in southwestern Utah.

This is the first time Mckeon had worked as a TSP. She felt the overall process worked well, although she said some bugs, especially in reporting, needed to be worked out. "It's great to be a local TSP since I get to stay in my rural area and work with the people that I know," she said. She is about to sign another TSP contract on a larger dairy near Utah Lake.

Once the engineering work and construction are completed, Gillins Dairy will have a functional waste management system that includes a gravity separator, three manure collection areas, a storage lagoon and piping. Employees of the Utah Association of Conservation Districts wrote the conservation plan. The project was funded through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and monitored by the Twin M Soil Conservation District. NRCS State Resource Conservationist Lisa Coverdale and District Conservationist Lynn Kitchen offered technical assistance to Mckeon and Gillins and guided them through the project.

Connect to TSP Express Online

TSPs can subscribe to TSP Express on the Internet. The electronic subscription service, which NRCS began in 2003, alerts computer users to these information products and includes a link to view and download.

To subscribe to TSP Express, visit <http://news-source.nrcs.usda.gov>. Enter an e-mail address to receive messages alerting you to these informational products. Select your publications. Click on the "subscribe to selected e-mail lists" bar to submit your selections.

For More Information

For more information on technical service providers, visit the TechReg site at <http://techreg.usda.gov>; write to Angel Figueroa, National TSP Coordinator, Science and Technology Deputy Area,

USDA-NRCS, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, D.C. 20013; or send an e-mail to Angel.Figueroa@usda.gov.

State Technical Service Provider Contacts
<http://techreg.usda.gov/RptStateContact4Admin.aspx>

Your Feedback is Needed

This is the fifth issue of TSP Express, a report for TSPs. We are seeking topics for future issues. Please send comments to tspg@nrca.usda.gov.

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