

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN THE
NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF INDEPENDENT CROP CONSULTANTS
AND THE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is between the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants (NAICC) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

I. BACKGROUND

NRCS is responsible for providing technical assistance to land owners and operators in protecting soil, water, and related resources under the provisions of Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 3801 et seq., and other applicable legislation. This legislation authorizes NRCS to cooperate with various Federal agencies, State and local governments, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals in order to carry out its responsibilities and further the conservation mission of NRCS on private lands in a voluntary, scientifically-based manner.

In addition to the technical assistance available from NRCS, USDA conservation program participants have the option of obtaining conservation technical assistance from individuals certified as Technical Service Providers by NRCS.

Section 2701 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, Public Law 107-171, May 13, 2002, (2002 Farm Bill) amended Section 1242 of the Food Security Act of 1985 to require the Secretary to provide technical assistance under Title XII of the Act to a program participant "directly, or ... through a payment ... for an approved third party, if available."

Section 1242 also requires the Secretary to establish a system for approving individuals and entities to provide technical assistance to carry out programs under this title including criteria for the evaluation of providers or potential providers of technical assistance.

NAICC is a 501 (c) (6) non-profit organization based in Collierville, Tennessee. NAICC has certified members with expertise in providing agricultural producers with specific types of conservation assistance.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this MOU is to establish a general framework for cooperation between NAICC and NRCS for the purpose of recommending individuals for possible NRCS certification. Through the MOU, NAICC may submit recommendations to NRCS of individuals who meet NAICC standards, under its Certified Professional Crop Consultants (- Independent) (CPCC (-I)) certification program, and NRCS may consider such individuals for certification as third party technical service providers. It is the intent of both parties that this cooperative effort shall be for the mutual benefit of each party as well as program participants who wish to avail themselves of technical services provided by certified Technical Service Providers.

This MOU is to officially recognize that a person who has met the standards set by NAICC and is certified as a CPCC (-I) and meets the NRCS performance proficiencies for providing conservation assistance in some or all of the suites of practices that follow as designated in advance: Buffers, Certified Conservation Planner, CNMP – Plan Approval, CNMP – Planning and Assistance, Grazing/Forages, Irrigation Water Management, Nutrient Management (Organic and Inorganic), Pest Management, Tillage and Erosion, and Vegetative Land Stabilization.

This MOU will benefit NRCS by providing certified CPCC (-I) individuals recommended by NAICC the opportunity to become certified by NRCS as Technical Service Providers. This, in turn, will assist NRCS in carrying out its mission of providing quality conservation technical assistance to its customers.

This MOU will benefit NAICC by providing CPCC (-I) certified individuals the opportunity to become certified by NRCS as Technical Service Providers. NRCS will place the certified Technical Service Provider on the approved list to provide technical service to USDA conservation program participants, thereby expanding their scope of services to existing and future clientele.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. NAICC will:

1. Provide a signed statement that the CPCC (-I) certified individuals NAICC recommends for certification as a Technical Service Provider meet the minimum NRCS performance proficiencies for providing conservation assistance in some or all of the suites of practices: Buffers; Certified Conservation Planner; CNMP – Plan Approval; CNMP – Planning and Assistance; Grazing Forages; Irrigation Water Management; Nutrient Management (Organic and Inorganic); Pest Management; Tillage and Erosion; and Vegetative Land Stabilization;
2. Establish and maintain a registry of individuals who meet the NAICC qualifications to provide conservation technical assistance in the suites of practices identified in A.1. The registry will identify the suite(s) of

practices each individual is qualified to provide. The registry will contain the following information:

- a) Name of individual
 - b) Company (if applicable)
 - c) Address
 - d) Phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address (if applicable)
 - e) Skill area
 - f) Service area
 - g) Expiration date of qualification under NAICC
 - h) NAICC as the recommending organization;
3. Annually record recommended individuals' efforts to satisfy continuing education requirements each year to maintain qualification under NAICC.
 - a) Each individual who wishes to remain on the NAICC registry is required to receive appropriate training in accordance with CPCC (-I) requirements.
 - b) The registry will indicate the deadline that each individual must receive training. Updates indicating the date training was last received will be submitted in accordance with their continuing education cycle dates;
 4. Update all information on its registry annually, or more frequently if necessary, and provide this information to NRCS in a timely manner;
 5. Remove individuals from the registry who do not maintain required levels of training within the 3-year timeframe or who are found to be providing substandard assistance from its registry and immediately notify the individuals and NRCS;
 6. Notify recommended members in a timely manner when technical and programmatic materials are available from NRCS to ensure that the highest quality of conservation technical assistance is available;
 7. Upon request and with agreement from all parties involved, provide NRCS with a list of courses an individual on the NAICC registry used to fulfill continuing education requirements;
 8. Inform members that all providers to be certified by NRCS must complete a Certification Agreement as a condition of their certification by NRCS as a Technical Service Provider. Encourage members to review the Certification Agreement prior to having their names placed on the registry of recommended individuals to NRCS;

9. Inform members certified as Technical Service Providers by NRCS that they are subject to the same annual quality reviews as NRCS employees; and
10. Inform members certified as Technical Service Providers by NRCS that they cannot legally certify completed cost shared practices for payment. Only NRCS employees have the legal authority to do so.

B. NRCS will:

1. Advise NAICC of the knowledge, skills, and proficiencies an individual will need to possess to qualify for Technical Service Provider designation for each of the technical service categories identified in this MOU;
2. Ensure that the NAICC standards for recommending individuals meet NRCS performance proficiency criteria for the specific suites of practices covered by this MOU;
3. Provide NAICC with access to current program information and appropriate technical reference documents for use by Technical Service Providers. Such documents will include manuals and standards and specifications for appropriate conservation practices;
4. Provide the approved list of Technical Service Providers to USDA offices;
5. Assist in suggesting training opportunities for NAICC members, provide training materials when available, and serve as a resource when practicable; and
6. Remove Technical Service Providers from the approved list through the decertification process if it is determined that the Technical Service Provider has failed to meet the terms and conditions of the Certification Agreement.

C. Agreed that both Parties will:

Meet as requested by either party to review progress and discuss methods of improving this process.

IV. GENERAL PROVISIONS

- A. This MOU takes effect upon the signature of NRCS and NAICC and shall remain in effect for 5 years from the date of execution unless amended or terminated as set forth herein. This MOU may be extended or amended upon written request of either NRCS or NAICC and the subsequent written concurrences of the other. Either NRCS or NAICC may terminate this MOU with a 30-day written notice to the other.
- B. This MOU is not intended to, and does not create, any right, benefit, or trust responsibility, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity, by a party against the United States, its agencies, its officers, or any person.
- C. Termination of this agreement will not affect individuals certified as Technical Service Providers by NRCS. Certified individuals will continue to be listed on the approved list of Technical Service Providers in accordance with the terms and conditions of their certification.
- D. NRCS and NAICC and their respective officers will handle their own activities and utilize their own resources, including expenditures of their own funds in pursuing the purposes of this MOU. Each party will carry out its separate activities in a coordinated and mutually beneficial manner.
- E. None of the information in this MOU shall obligate either USDA or NAICC to obligate or transfer any funds. Specific work projects or activities that involve the transfer of funds, services, or property among the various agencies and offices of USDA and NAICC require execution of separate agreements and be contingent upon the availability of funds. Such activities must be independently authorized by appropriate statutory authority. Negotiations, execution, and administration of each such agreement must comply with all applicable statutes and regulation.

V. TECHNICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONTACTS

A. NAICC

Allison H. Jones
Executive Vice President
349 East Nolley Drive
Collierville, Tennessee 38017
Phone: (901) 861-0511
Fax: (901) 861-0512
e-mail: JonesNAICC@aol.com

B. NRCS

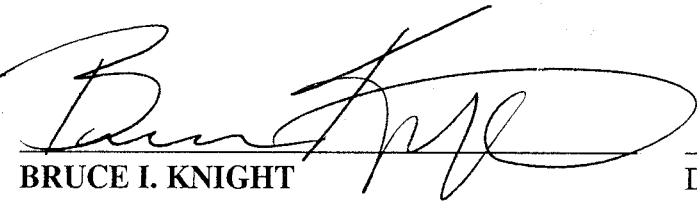
Lawrence E. Clark
Deputy Chief for Science and Technology
PO Box 2890, Room 5006 South Building
Washington, DC 20013-2890
Phone: (202) 720-4630
Fax: (202) 720-7710
e-mail: larry.clark@usda.gov

VI. AUTHORITY

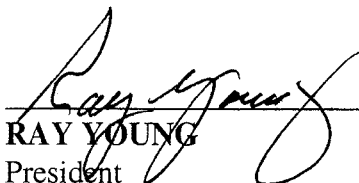
NRCS enters into this agreement under the authority of section 1242 of the Food Security Act of 1985, 16 U.S.C. 3842.

VII. APPROVAL

The undersigned parties hereby agree to the terms and conditions specified above.



BRUCE I. KNIGHT 6/23/03
Chief DATE
Natural Resources Conservation Service



RAY YOUNG 6-23-2003
President DATE
National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants