



Technical Service Provider Assistance

Information for NRCS Employees

Fact Sheet

610.97 Technical Service Provider Assistance Employee Fact Sheet

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

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The 2002 Farm Bill amended the 1985 Farm Bill, which authorized use of technical service providers (TSPs), by requiring the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to allow producers to receive technical assistance by individuals and entities other than NRCS. This provision is designed to ensure NRCS has the capacity to address the significant workload associated with implementing Farm Bill programs. Technical Service Provider Assistance is another tool for NRCS to use in the implementation of conservation programs.

What is a TSP?

A Technical Service Provider is an individual, entity (private or nonprofit business), or public agency. TSPs must be competent to perform technical services and their qualifications certified by NRCS. The TSP will be placed on an approved list of providers and selected by a producer or selected by NRCS through a procurement contract, contribution agreement or cooperative agreement.

TSPs provide technical services in most aspects of conservation, including conservation planning, design, layout, installation, and check-out of approved conservation practices.

All TSPs must perform services according to NRCS conservation practice standards and specifications. Therefore, there is an application process.

Technical Service Registry (TechReg)
NRCS developed an online application and

information system called Technical Service Provider Registry (TechReg). The Web site can be accessed from the internet at the following location: <http://techreg.usda.gov>.

TechReg is a great source of information for NRCS Employees plus it provides detailed instruction for TSPs

TechReg is designed to make it easy for TSPs to register, start the certification process, and obtain technical resource information. It contains **news** for and about TSPs including the TSP Express, a newsletter prepared by NRCS. There is a **help** section if you encounter problems with TechReg or just want to find an answer. The **resource** section includes: (1) step-by-step guide to using TechReg, details about categories of conservation practices; (2) criteria that qualifies a TSP to be certified; (3) help in becoming a qualified TSP; and (4) an online application for becoming a certified TSP. Finally, there is a section of **online resources**. It includes NRCS policy, regulations, and other technical material related to TSP. There is also a list of partner organizations that can help you become qualified as a TSP.

State Conservationists and TSP Coordinators utilize TechReg to manage TSP applications for certifications. NRCS has 60 days to review and verify TSP applications. This may include coordinating with other states if a TSP applied for certification in multiple locations.

Who Guides TSP Assistance

The State Conservationist or Caribbean/Pacific Basin Area Director designated a TSP Coordinator to address policy concerns and questions about technical provider assistance at the local level.

A national office team is responsible for developing policy and procedures to integrate technical service provider assistance into the NRCS way of doing business. They collaborate with program managers and technical specialists throughout NHQ to integrate this resource tool into all aspects of NRCS farm bill programs. Also, they support short term details to aid with the TSP Assistance Process development. The National TSP Team is headed by a National Coordinator and is assigned to the Science and Technology Deputy Area. The TSP Team is comprised of a Team Leader, Natural Resources Specialist, Management Analyst, and Clerical assistant.

District Conservationists and field personnel will likely encounter TSPs if they have been hired by a producer. TSPs may need access to resource information and related conservation plan information that the landowner could not provide. Likewise, landowners who hire TSPs may request assistance from the field office when completing payment request packages. It is a good practice to become familiar with TSPs within your county.

The field office will often be the first contact for potential TSPs. There are several preliminary steps that a potential TSP must complete in order to apply for certification. These steps include:

- Obtain eGov account on-line
- Visit the field office to get eGov level2 account
- NRCS employee certifies eGov level2 account of potential TSP
- NRCS employee inputs potential TSP into SCIMS (if they are not already in SCIMS)

- NRCS employee links SCIMS and eGov account
- Potential TSP logs into TechReg and completes on-line application for TSP certification
- NRCS certifies/defers TSP application
- Once certified, TSP provides technical services

TSP Information For NRCS Employees

TechReg is a great source of information for NRCS Employees. In addition the National TSP Team holds quarterly teleconferences with TSP Coordinators to disseminate information and address concerns.

The TSP Final Rule was released in November 2004. It outlines the basic requirements for NRCS policy to implement TSP Assistance. A copy is posted on TechReg.

Draft TSP Assistance Policy is in the NRCS directives system. The TSP Manual will replace the technical assistance section of the Conservation Programs Manual which formerly referred to TSPs as third party vendors. A TSP Handbook will outline most of the procedures that TSP Coordinators have helped to refine. Policy will be finalized in FY 2005. Copies of these documents are available in the directives and on TechReg.

For more information on the technical service provider process, please contact the National TSP Coordinator, Angel Figueroa at 202-720-6731 or e-mail at angel.figueroa@wdc.usda.gov.

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