



# Workforce Profile

The NRCS Human Capital Vision is **Conservation First, People Always**. NRCS is proud of the team of qualified technical, program, and administrative professionals that comprises its workforce.

**O**ver 12,000 employees are committed to helping people help the land, through technical excellence and high quality service to our clients, our partners and each other.

Field office staff work collaboratively with employees of local conservation districts and state conservation agencies. Working one-on-one with landowners, NRCS employees provide the expertise and information that enables land managers to balance their objectives with the needs of the natural resources - creating sustainable systems that not only produce abundant crops and livestock, but also a quality environment.

NRCS State Offices manage Agency programs and priorities within each state, coordinating activities with federal, state, tribal, and other agencies and organizations.

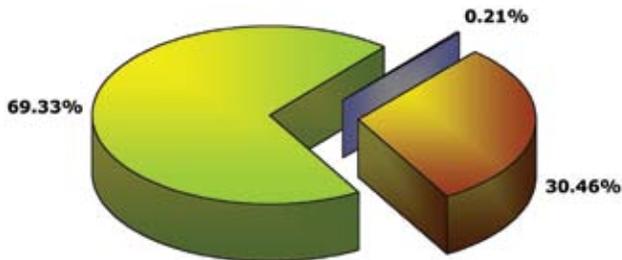
CONSERVATION FIRST ----	PEOPLE	ALWAYS
NRCS 2006 Workforce Profile	General Schedule	Senior Executive Service
# of Employees	13078	28
Average Age	44	54
Average Length of Service	16	28
Average Grade	GS-10	N/A
Eligible to Retire -now	13%	43%
Eligible to Retire-5 years	33%	79%
Percent Female	34%	25%
Percent Minority	16%	14%

*The NRCS workforce is characterized by extensive years of service with retirement eligibility approaching for many.*

A support framework of headquarters divisions and centers ensures that the Agency maintains the ability to provide consistently high quality, cutting-edge technology and information.

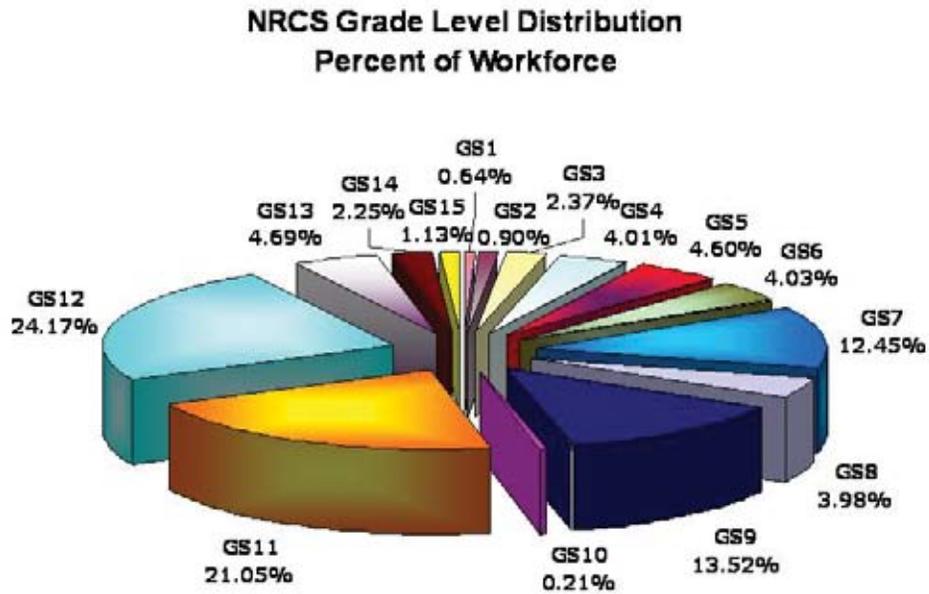
Although the work and organization structures vary by focus and location, all NRCS units are unified under the NRCS overall mission, strategies, and human capital strategic goals.

**NRCS Supervisory Profile**

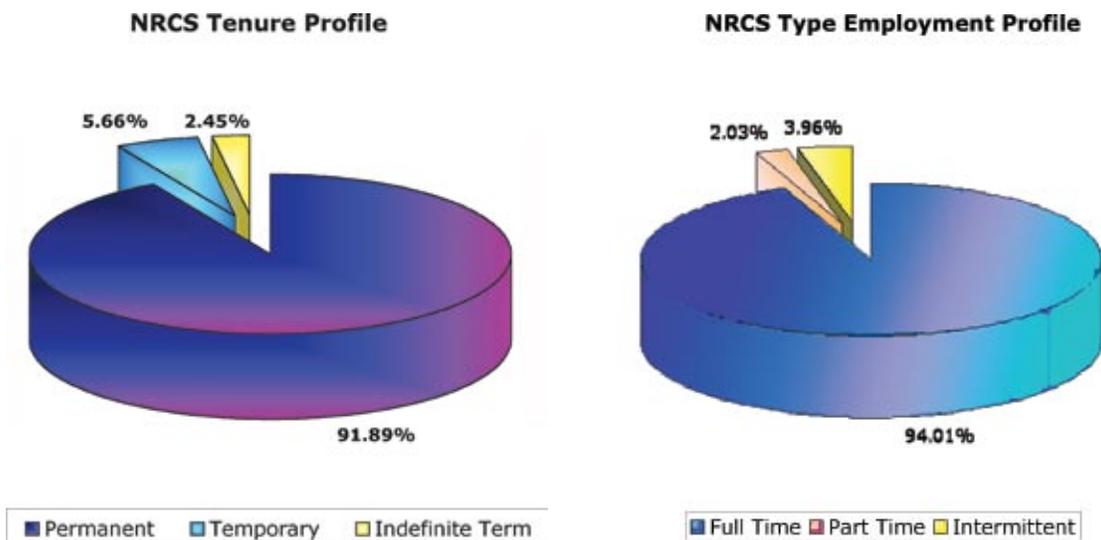


Senior Executive Service   Supervisor/Mgr   Non Supervisor

Approximately 60 percent of the 2006 NRCS workforce is working at the GS-9 through GS-12 grade levels and ten percent of the workforce is at the GS-13 through GS-15 and SES grade levels. The remaining 30 percent represents grade levels GS-1 through GS-8.



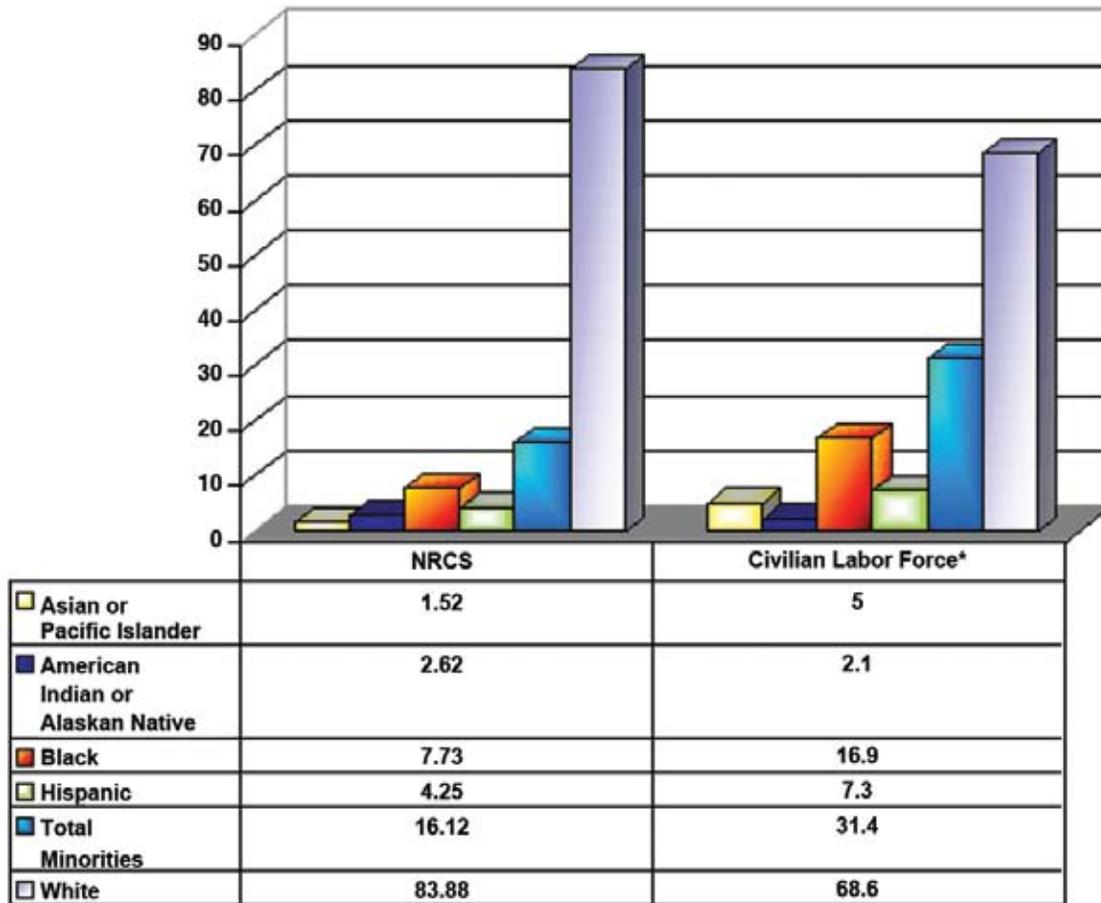
The current workforce is comprised of 90 percent permanent employees, with temporary and indefinite term employees making up the remaining 10 percent.





NRCS continuously strives to improve diversity in its workforce and currently has representation from most of the race and national origin categories.

### NRCS 2005 Race/National Origin Compared to 2004 Federal Civilian Workforce



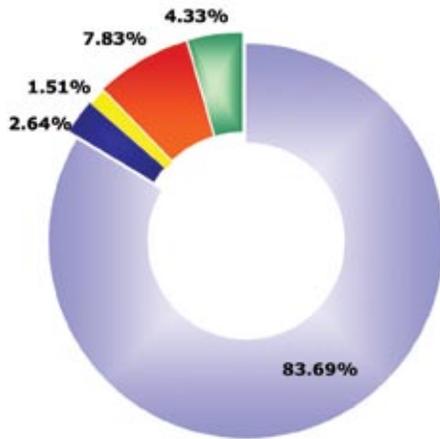
\* Data for the Federal Civilian Workforce was taken from a publication by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and represents characteristics of the federal civilian non-postal workforce in the Executive Branch of Government. The comparison data covers total employment, including full-time, part-time, and intermittent workers in those Executive Branch agencies participating in the Central Personnel Data File (CPDF). All pay plans and grades were covered in the OPM study. OPM noted that the coverage here varies considerably in Agency participation, geographic distribution, and work schedules of employees from previous annual surveys on equal employment opportunity.

The OPM data was used by NRCS in the Human Capital Strategic Plan for comparative purposes because of its availability and relevance to the strategies developed for the total NRCS workforce, including intermittent workers.

[This population coverage differs from the 2004 annual Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP 5 U.S.C. 7201) which covers full- and part-time permanent employees in non-postal federal Executive Branch agencies participating in the CPDF. FEORP coverage is further limited to only General Schedule and related pay plans, selected wage pay plans, and the senior pay level category.]



**NRCS 2006 RNO Profile**

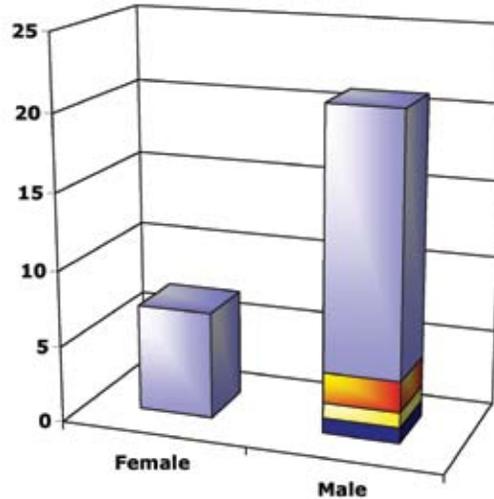


White American Indian/Alaska Native Asian/Pacific Islander Black Hispanic

As of July 2006, the majority (83.69%) of the NRCS workforce is White. Minorities comprise the remaining 16 percent. Of this, Blacks account for 7.83 percent; Hispanics for 4.33 percent; American Indians and Alaska Natives are 2.64 percent; and Asian and Pacific Islanders make up 1.51 percent of the current NRCS workforce.

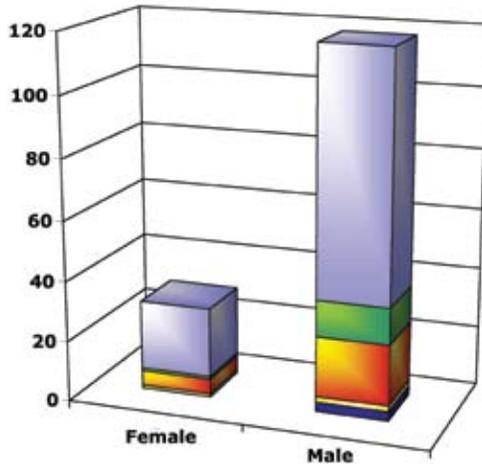
To increase diversity of the Agency, NRCS partners with special emphasis groups to recruit highly motivated and qualified individuals for positions throughout the country as well as participate in summer and career internship programs. NRCS attends university Career Fairs and provides opportunities for students to work at various NRCS locations across the country.

**NRCS SES-RNO Profile**



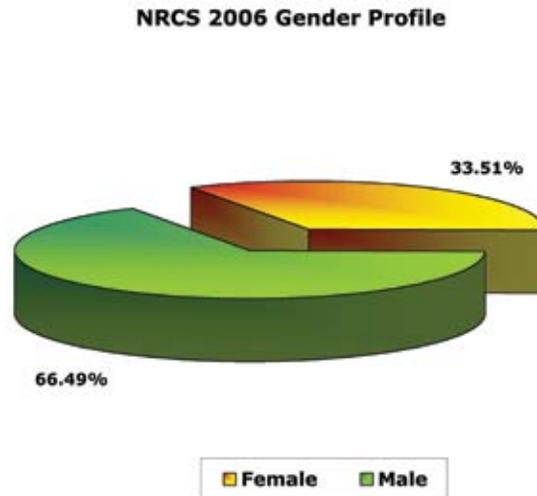
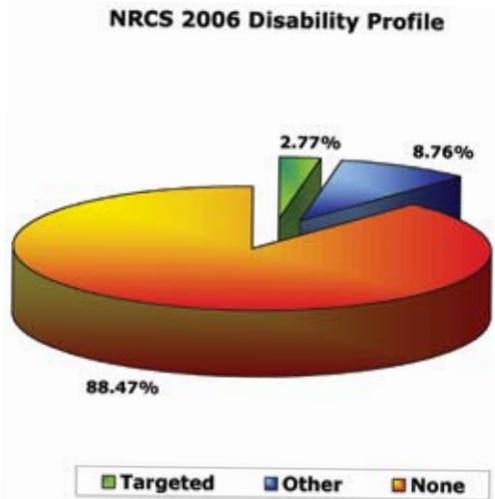
AmIndian/Alaska Native Asian/Pacific Islander Black White

**NRCS GS15 RNO Profile**

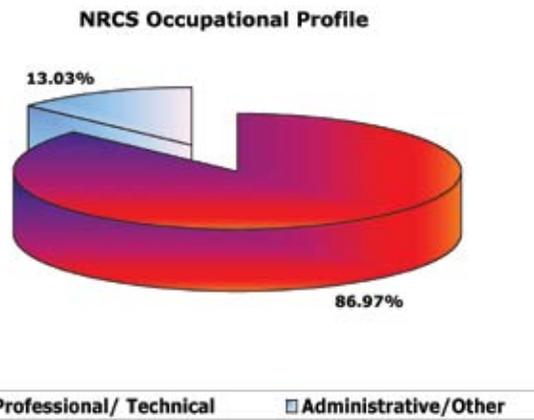
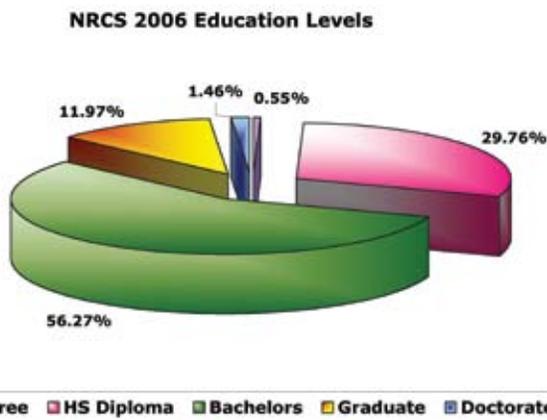


AmIndian/Alaska Native Asian/Pacific Islander Black Hispanic White

NRCS provides developmental opportunities to employees to increase the pool of candidates available for leadership positions. NRCS leadership recognizes that the Agency must continue to identify and eliminate barriers to effective diversity practices.



NRCS is committed to equal opportunity employment for all highly skilled individuals with the educational background and technical capacity required to be successful in the Agency. Females make up 34 percent of the current workforce, and 10 percent of the workforce has a self-identified disability. Close to 90 percent of the workforce is working in a professional or technical occupational series, and approximately 70 percent of employees possess an undergraduate or graduate degree.



## NRCS Mission-Critical Occupations (MCO)

NRCS currently has ten mission-critical occupations representing a wide range of skills that include scientific, analytic, and administrative functions. The emphasis of the Agency has traditionally centered on soil science, rangeland management and civil/agricultural engineering.

While these areas are and will remain at the core of the Agency's functions, NRCS has identified additional mission-critical occupations for 2006-2010. The MCO listing was developed by reviewing the current NRCS Strategic Plan and determining the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for the Agency to be successful during this period. Many of these positions, which have a direct impact on mission attainment, require specialized knowledge and skills; are often difficult to fill; and merit targeted recruitment and retention strategies as well as knowledge management strategies.

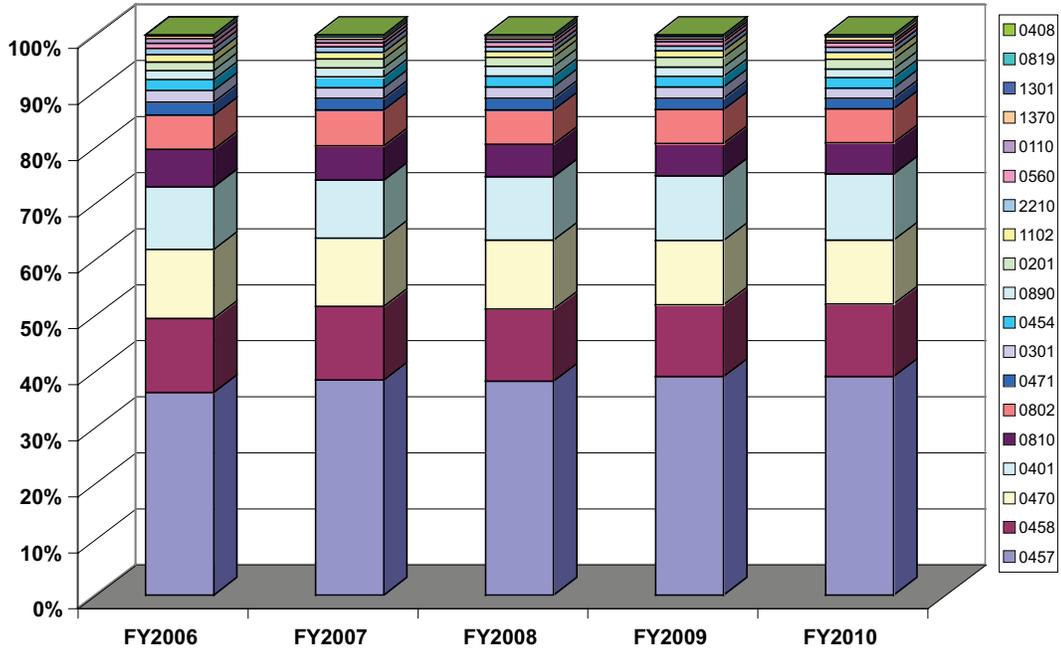
		Occupational Series Name	# of Employees
0110	*	Economist	48
0201	*	Human Resources Mgmt	120
0301	*	Misc. Admin and Program (Leadership)	138
0401		General Biological Science	886
0408	*	Ecology	8
0454		Rangeland Mgmt	288
0457		Soil Conservation	4488
0458		Soil Conserv Techncn	1906
0470		Soil Science	927
0471		Agronomy	132
0560		Budget Analysis	95
0802		Engrg Techncn	507
0810		Civil Engineering	555
0819	*	Environmental Engineering	22
0890		Agricultural Engineering	269
1102		Contracting	89
1301	*	General Physical Science	12
1370	*	Cartography	79
2210	*	Information Technology Management	57
1146	*	Agricultural Marketing	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>Mission Critical Occupations June 2006</b>	<b>10626</b>

\* New addition to mission-critical occupations for NRCS. Mission-critical occupations were initially identified during the 2004-2008 workforce planning process.



\*Nearly 80 percent of NRCS employees in mission critical occupations will become eligible for retirement within the next four years. The demographics for the NRCS top leadership profile reflect that at the end of 2005, 29 percent of the Senior Executives Service employees were eligible to retire; within the next 5 years, that number could reach 75 percent.

**Eligible to Retire-MCO**



Occ Series	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010
0457	485	680	827	1015	1198
0458	178	233	279	332	397
0470	165	215	267	300	352
0401	150	184	246	300	362
0810	90	108	124	150	172
0802	82	114	133	158	186
0471	31	37	46	53	57
0301	28	33	44	51	57
0454	26	34	42	49	57
0890	22	29	37	44	47
0201	20	28	35	45	54
1102	18	21	23	31	38
2210	15	17	18	21	27
0560	12	13	17	20	24
0110	11	11	12	14	14
1370	7	8	11	12	21
1301	2	4	4	5	6
0819	1	2	2	2	3
0408	0	1	1	1	2



## Strategic Management of Human Capital

In order for NRCS to successfully accomplish its mission and meet future business challenges, we must develop and implement effective human capital strategies and programs. As a high performing organization, we want to be attentive to emerging human capital demands, remain cognizant of a constantly changing workforce and continuously evaluate existing strategies and programs to ensure that we are effectively managing our most critical asset – our employees.

During the human capital planning process, discussions covered leveraging current best practices, improving existing processes, and identifying new opportunities. It is clear that within NRCS a “one size fits all” approach will not ensure success. However, it is just as apparent that a high level of integration in key areas with a unified approach is needed.



The Federal workforce is changing at a dramatic pace. Agencies are facing enormous challenges in recruiting and retaining employees, as well as closing skill gaps and dealing with knowledge management issues. In addition, a leadership shortage due to the looming retirement “bubble” could be significant, and requires us to look at new and creative ways to prepare and develop our future leaders.



## Human Capital Strategic Goals

The Human Capital Strategic Plan (HCSP) directs the planning, attraction, development, and retention of the talent and commitment to NRCS needs. In conjunction with the Agency Strategic Plan, NRCS will implement human capital strategies that are linked to the organization's mission and goals.

The HCSP is designed to advance our vision, provide the framework needed to meet our mission, and affect a culture of change in NRCS. It presents broad strategic direction that allows each level of NRCS the flexibility and freedom to target the most crucial human resources needs while recognizing and acting on crosscutting issues. The HCSP also addresses the foundation of support and services needed in the Agency.



Human resources management is a critical component to success for NRCS. The implementation of the HCSP is the responsibility of each manager, leader, and individual employee throughout the Agency. Through this ownership, accountability, and integration of the HCSP into every day business decisions, we will accomplish our human capital and Agency strategic goals.

External forces drive and shape the Agency's future and have a significant impact on its structure, processes, and the resources necessary to deliver products and services. NRCS mission goals and strategies are based on an analysis of the external environment, and are designed to respond effectively within the context of the current conditions. The Agency's human capital goals are based on an analysis of its mission goals with a focus on the people, technology, processes, and tools that it will take to attain the mission goals. The HCSP commits to five key human capital strategic goals that support the vision for the future of human capital at the Natural Resources Conservation Service: Leadership, Recruitment and Retention, Performance Culture, Talent Development, and Human Capital Effectiveness.

Our Human Capital Vision, **"Conservation First, People Always"** is the key link between the Agency's ability to accomplish mission goals and its workforce management.

Changes in our workforce, customers, partners, natural resource issues, and delivery of our services are only some of the areas in which the Agency must be able to respond. As a result, skill and competency gaps may occur. The NRCS human capital goals have been constructed to meet these challenges, and address the specific drivers that are shaping the future of the Agency by building on what is in place and developing transparent solutions for what is not.



## Human Capital Goal #1

# Leadership

**D**eveloping leaders to ensure that NRCS fulfills our mission of “Helping People Help the Land” is a strategic priority for the Agency.

In the next five years, we will develop leaders to continue successfully seeking and promoting cooperative conservation efforts; encouraging and enabling locally-led, watershed-scale conservation; and facilitating the growth of market-based opportunities and investments in conservation on private lands.

NRCS recognizes that we must foster a culture that values the development of leaders that serve as coaches, mentors, teachers, and models of the behaviors that the Agency will need in order to meet conservation challenges. NRCS leaders must understand what it takes to effectively bring about changes that achieve significant and sustained improvements in performance. Just as Hugh Hammond Bennett envisioned an Agency built on the needs of the land, future leaders must envision an Agency that maintains its conservation leadership role while achieving the mission goals related to soil, water, plant and animal communities, air, energy, and working farm and ranch lands.

NRCS leaders need to be creative in getting work done through employees and both traditional and non-traditional conservation partners.

NRCS leaders must be able to effectively manage in an environment that is characterized by competition for both financial and human resources, rapid technological changes, innovative approaches and increasing requirements and demands for conservation planning and assistance.

NRCS will value, reward, and retain a world-class leadership cadre that is diverse, inclusive and effective. Our goal is to develop leaders who can effectively manage people, ensure continuity of leadership, and sustain a learning environment that drives continuous improvements in performance. We will



*Develop leaders to ensure NRCS achieves conservation success through cooperative and innovative approaches for its investment in and delivery of products, technology, and services.*

expect NRCS leaders to continue their own professional growth, as well as sharing their practical experiences with individuals whom they supervise. They will demonstrate a commitment to the Agency’s guiding principles of service, partnerships, and technical excellence, and exhibit the underlying core values based on these guiding principles.





NRCS is committed to having leaders who represent the diverse communities and customers we serve. Leaders will demonstrate that they understand and value differences in the workplace, such as cultural diversity, age, gender, communication, and thinking styles. NRCS leaders of the future will possess intrapreneurial, change and people management skills, will have the capacity to recognize the need for adjustments and make mid-course corrections, and will be flexible and inclusive in their thinking and actions to move the Agency forward.

The development of leaders will not be limited to those who are in leadership positions, but will be expanded to include individuals who demonstrate leadership capacity. To achieve this goal, we will offer opportunities for individuals to build, practice, and demonstrate their skills. We are committed to identifying and addressing Agency leadership competencies so that continuity is ensured. We plan to develop competency models that define the desired skills, behaviors, and traits of leaders

in NRCS. Leadership competency models will be accessible by all NRCS employees and linked to the Agency's recruitment, development, and employee performance management systems. We plan to assess existing leaders using tools developed from the competency models. We will then identify potential gaps in effective leadership and implement strategies to close these gaps.

We plan to implement a leadership development process that utilizes multiple approaches including self-development, formal and informal training, mentoring, coaching, and work assignments, including details. As part of this process, career patterns will be developed, and career counseling will be made available to assist individuals in long-range planning and making mid-career adjustments.

In line with our guiding principle of technical excellence, NRCS plans to develop leaders who create and maximize opportunities. The **objectives and outcomes** for our leadership goal are as follows:

### 1. Develop Leadership Competency Models

- Leaders that demonstrate the desired qualities have been identified and interviewed.
- Qualities of effective leaders, including demonstration of NRCS core values, have been identified for construction of competency models. Competency models have been constructed and are accessible to all employees.

### 2. Assess leadership composition and competencies of current workforce

- Tools for assessing leadership competencies have been created.
- Inventory of leadership competencies has been completed.
- Diversity of the leadership has been evaluated.
- Leadership competency gaps have been identified.

### 3. Implement strategies to close competency and diversity gaps of Agency leadership

- Individuals that demonstrate leadership competencies are recognized and rewarded.
- NRCS has highly skilled and diverse leaders who motivate staff, at all levels, to embrace and advocate the changes that will be needed to attain Agency goals.
- Leadership development process (starting with a national program) has been created that utilizes multiple approaches including training, mentoring, coaching, career paths, and self development.
- Succession management process has been developed and implemented.



## Human Capital Goal #2

# Recruitment & Retention

**N**RCS recognizes that it is imperative to have a highly skilled and diverse workforce to achieve the strategic goals and outcomes described in the Agency's Strategic Plan. Our objective is to ensure that NRCS has access to people with the right skills, in the right places, at the right times. Senior leaders and managers will be involved in strategic recruitment and retention initiatives to ensure that NRCS has the necessary organizational focus and that resources are allocated to achieve recruitment and retention goals.

NRCS accomplishes its mission through the collaborative efforts of leaders, staff, conservation partners, volunteers, retirees, and private technical service providers. The success of the Agency depends upon our workforce having the technical expertise, dedication, and ability to work collaboratively with a diverse customer base. Our initial focus will be to identify any potential gaps in skills, knowledge, and competencies for current and future mission-critical occupations and then to implement strategies to close these gaps. Future plans include the identification of similar gaps and efforts needed to address them for all other occupations.

Mission critical occupations were identified for 2006-2010 as part of this HCSP (see pages 15 and 16 ) in order to meet the goals outlined in the Agency's strategic plan and the challenges expected from projected retirements over the next 5 to 10 years.

As NRCS moves toward becoming the "Employer of Choice" for a highly skilled and diverse workforce enabling conservation, we will be faced with recruiting in a highly competitive and shrinking market. The challenge is to be able to identify the workforce that we need to be successful in the future, and to remove barriers to recruitment and selection. We plan to create and implement a national recruitment strategy that is consistent with the Agency's commitment to

*Develop effective strategies to recruit and retain a highly skilled and diverse workforce to meet customer needs and to transform the Agency into the "Employer of Choice."*

diversity. Competition for talent makes it imperative that we have a consistent approach to recruiting for mission-critical occupations. Recruitment strategies will be appropriately aggressive and multi-faceted to ensure that we have a sufficient flow of quality applicants to meet staffing needs identified in the workforce plan. The national recruitment strategy will include flexible compensation and quality of work/life programs to attract and retain quality employees who possess mission-critical competencies.



Additionally, managing in an environment of increased customer expectations and limited funding makes it critical to look at alternative resources for attaining strategic goals. NRCS will employ innovative strategies to increase the pool of potential resources. We will target the use of traditional and non-traditional conservation partners, state and district employees, other federal agencies, private technical service providers (TSP), Agricultural Conservation Enrollees/Seniors (ACES) retirees, tribal employees, volunteers, temporary staff, and other on-call resources.

NRCS plans to implement strategies that will create opportunities for highly skilled individuals to choose to work for us. These include measuring and increasing satisfaction levels of employees and external sources with the performance of the Agency. Also addressed are strategies to form key partnerships in order to broaden the pool of diverse candidates and promote the strengths of the Agency.

NRCS plans to recruit and retain our highly skilled and diverse workforce by creating a workplace that is characterized by

effective working relationships and flexible arrangements; appealing compensation packages and incentives; a national mentoring framework; and upward mobility.

Our strategies for **Recruitment and Retention** include the following objectives and outcomes:

**1. Create and implement a National Recruitment Strategy for mission critical occupations that is consistent with the Agency commitment to diversity.**

- a. Strategy for national recruitment has been created, approved, and communicated to human resource professionals and managers across the Agency.
- b. A consistent approach to recruiting for mission critical positions, which includes a recruitment cadre, has been implemented.

**2. Become the Employer of Choice.**

- a. Human Capital Survey administered annually and progress on actions taken to increase satisfaction has been tracked and reported to senior leaders and to all employees.

- b. Strategic partnerships have been formed with schools, trade associations, and non-traditional conservation partners to ensure that the workforce includes diverse candidates and to meet challenges that the Agency will face in achievement of strategic goals.
- c. To promote the Agency as a diverse, market-driven conservation-focused organization, a variety of mediums, including high-tech media, are being utilized.
- d. External benchmarks for measuring Agency progress have been developed and implemented.

**3. Implement strategies to retain staff.**

- a. An exit interview process for capturing information related to why individuals are leaving the NRCS workforce has been developed and implemented with regular reporting to leadership.
- b. Barriers to upward mobility (initial focus on minorities and women) have been identified and action taken to eliminate barriers with periodic reporting has been established.
- c. Creative incentives (competitive benefits) to retain key personnel have been implemented.
- d. The Agency's position on mobility has been formulated and communicated.
- e. A national framework for mentoring has been created and implemented.

