



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

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Pacific Islands Area Employee Guide

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Overview of USDA

In the Department's early years, the vast majority of Americans lived on farms, and farmers produced only enough food to supply themselves and few other people. Today, although less than 3 percent of the population resides on farmland, farm workers produce enough for this country – as well as for a growing export market. Agriculture is, in fact, this Nation's largest industry and its largest employer – approximately 21 million people work in some phase of agriculture – from growing food and fiber to selling it in the supermarket.

It is USDA's mission to enhance the quality of life for the American people by supporting production of agriculture:

- ensuring a safe, affordable, nutritious, and accessible food supply
- caring for agricultural, forest, and range lands
- supporting sound development of rural communities
- providing economic opportunities for farm and rural residents
- expanding global markets for agricultural and forest products and services
- and working to reduce hunger in America and throughout the world.

Overview of Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The NRCS came out of troubled times – the Dust Bowl days of the 1930s. Dust storms ravaged the Nation's farmland, stripping away millions of tons of topsoil. Huge dust clouds carried the soil hundreds of miles, all the way to the Atlantic Ocean. Since that time, NRCS has kept a commitment to protecting and conserving soil and other natural resources on the Nation's 1.6 billion acres of private and other non-Federal land.

NRCS provides technical assistance and information to individuals; communities; tribal governments; Federal, State and local agencies; and others. NRCS also offers financial assistance, surveys the Nation's soils, inventories natural resources conditions and use, provides water supply forecasts for the Western United States, and develops technical guidance for conservation planning.

We are known worldwide for our accomplishments and innovations in conservation. The people of NRCS are recognized for their talent, dedication, and ingenuity in natural resources management. Participation in NRCS' programs is voluntary - the people we serve want us with them as they take necessary steps to reduce erosion, protect wildlife, promote good land use, and implement other measures to preserve the Nation's natural resources for future generations.

At NRCS, we take pride in our partnerships. We work with local soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), and others to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

The People of NRCS

The NRCS workforce nationwide is a diverse and highly skilled group of conservationists, biologists, engineers, agronomists focused on the same vision: Harmony between people and the land. Among the most common careers in NRCS are the following:

- ◆ Soil Conservationists spend much of their time in the field working with farmers, ranchers, and other land users. Soil Conservationists offer conservation planning and technical help to everyone from family farmers to local government officials.
- ◆ Soil Scientists map and classify soils, identify problems such as wetness and erosion, and use aerial photographs to map soils and write soil descriptions and prepare other information about soils.
- ◆ Rangeland Management Specialists help plan grazing systems that improve the quality of forage and other grazing land functions.
- ◆ Biologists work in the field with private landowners, other agencies, and units of government. They provide technical support on fish and wildlife habitat development or restoration.
- ◆ Engineers in NRCS use specialized skills in erosion control, water management, structural design, construction, hydraulics, soil mechanics, and environmental protection, along with general engineering skills. Job assignments may include establishing stream-bank and erosion control measures and water supply systems; designing waste management systems and concrete and earthen dams; and applying bioengineering principles to solve a host of natural resource problems.
- ◆ Engineering Technicians assist engineers in surveying, plotting, and laying out construction measures; gathering data; making computations; and preparing maps and cross sections of profiles. They may also serve as construction inspectors on a wide variety of projects.
- ◆ Other Careers in NRCS include Accounting, Agricultural Economics, Agronomy, Aquatic Biology, Business Administration, Cartography, Communications, Computer and Information Technology, Contracting, Forestry, Geology, Human Resources, Hydrology, Landscape Architecture, Plant Sciences, Recreation, Rural Sociology, Watershed Management, Wetland Science, and Wildlife Biology.

How NRCS Is Organized

NRCS employees are stationed in virtually every county in the United States, as well as in the Caribbean and Western Pacific Ocean. Our National Headquarters (NHQ) is located in Washington, D.C., where Chief Jason Weller provides leadership to the agency.

There are 50 State Conservationists providing leadership to the agency at the state level. The Pacific Island Area's Acting Director is Christine Clarke.

All NRCS employees in the PIA share the **vision** of "Our People...Our Islands...In Harmony." Our **mission** is to assist the PIA's people in responsibly conserving, managing, and using the PIA's natural resources. Through our actions, we strive to respect and value our clients, partners, and colleagues. More information is available in General Manual 360, Part 404, Organization: <http://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/RollupViewer.aspx?hid=17046>.

Human Resources and Administrative Policies

It will be beneficial for you to read and understand the regulations and policies that apply to your work and conduct as an employee. Each agency within the Department publishes regulations, policies, and procedures to supplement those provided by USDA or to provide information on matters that pertain only to the Agency. Information regarding employment issues is contained in directives, manuals, circulars, and instructions. Your supervisor and the Human Resources staff can assist you with this information.

Ethics and Personal Conduct

As a federal employee you are held to standards of ethical behavior representative of a public servant. These ethical standards are outlined in Executive Order 12674, as modified by Executive Order 12731. There are two core concepts underlying the ethical standards of these Executive Orders: (1) employees shall not use public office for private gain; and (2) employees shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual. In addition, employees must avoid any action that would create the appearance that they are violating the law or ethical standards.

Your supervisor will allow you one hour of official time to review the ethics regulations. A copy of the “Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees in the Executive Branch” is available on the USDA website at http://www.usoge.gov/laws_regs/regulations/5cfr2635.aspx or the PIA HR SharePoint site at: [Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch](#). Your supervisor should provide you with a copy of “Employee Responsibilities and Conduct”. A copy of “Employee Responsibilities and Conduct” is also available at: <http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4070-735-001.pdf> or the PIA HR SharePoint site: [Employee Responsibilities and Conduct](#).

If you have any questions about which of the rules applies to you in your current position, or any other questions, please discuss them with your supervisor and/or PIA Ethics Officials.

Political Activities

Under the Hatch Act, Federal employees face restrictions on their ability to participate in political activities.

Generally speaking, Federal employees *may*:

- ◆ be candidates for public office in nonpartisan elections;
- ◆ register and vote as they choose;
- ◆ assist in voter registration drives;
- ◆ express opinions about candidates and issues;
- ◆ contribute money to political organizations;
- ◆ attend political fundraising functions;
- ◆ attend and be active at political rallies and meetings;
- ◆ join and be an active member of a political party or club;
- ◆ sign nominating petitions;
- ◆ campaign for or against referendum questions, constitutional amendments, or municipal ordinances;

- ◆ campaign for or against candidates in partisan elections;
- ◆ make campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections;
- ◆ distribute campaign literature in partisan elections; and
- ◆ hold office in political clubs or parties.

They *may not*:

- ◆ use official authority or influence to interfere with an election;
- ◆ solicit or discourage political activity of anyone with business before their agency;
- ◆ solicit or receive political contributions (may be done in certain limited situations by federal labor or other employee organizations);
- ◆ be candidates for public office in partisan elections;
- ◆ engage in political activity while on duty, in a government office, wearing an official uniform or using a government vehicle; or
- ◆ wear political buttons on duty.

Government Property and Supplies

Employees have a duty to protect and conserve Government property and should not use Government property for other than authorized purposes. Government property includes items such as office supplies, telephone and other telecommunications equipment and services, Government mail, automated data processes capabilities, printing and reproduction facilities, Government records, and Government vehicles.

USDA policy provides for limited personal use of Government computer/telecommunications equipment on an occasional basis, provided that the use involves minimal expense to the Government and does not interfere with official business. Occasional personal use of computer/telecommunications resources shall take place during the employee's personal time, not during business hours. Use of the Federal telephone system for personal long-distance calls is not allowed.

While the occasional use of telecommunications resources in moderation is acceptable, uses not consistent with the USDA policy are strictly prohibited. Employees are expected to conduct themselves professionally in the workplace and to refrain from using telecommunications equipment for activities that are inappropriate or offensive to co-workers or the public, such as sexually explicit materials or remarks that ridicule others on the basis of race, creed, religion, color, sex, handicap, national origin, or sexual orientation.

Questions concerning appropriate use of Government property, including telecommunications equipment, should be addressed to your supervisor.

Office Mail

NRCS correspondence, publications and other items are mailed to recipients using official postage. These must conform to postal regulations and to Agency mailing procedures.

Use of Government letterhead and postage-paid privileges for personal purposes is not allowed. Also, note that it is a violation of Federal laws and regulations to use postage-paid Government envelopes to file job applications. Unless it is an emergency, do not have personal mail or packages sent to your office.

Your Appointment

You have been appointed to your position with the Federal government through one of several types of appointments: career-conditional, career, time-limited (temporary or term), or excepted. The type of appointment you hold determines your eligibility for reinstatement into the federal service if you should decide to leave.

- ♦ Career-Conditional Appointments A career-conditional appointment is a permanent appointment that leads to career tenure after completion of 3 years of continuous service. Career-conditional employees are eligible for promotions and within-grade increases (WGIs) and benefits. Under career-conditional appointments, you must complete a 1-year probationary period. Generally, career-conditional employees may not be promoted, reassigned, or transferred until 3 months after their initial appointment. Employees who do not have veterans' preference and who leave their government jobs while under career-conditional appointments have reinstatement eligibility for 3 years from their date of separation. Therefore, without competing with other candidates, they may be re-employed in a position for which they qualify at the same grade or with no more promotional potential up to that of a position the employee previously held on a permanent basis under career-conditional appointment, even though the employee never reached the full performance level of the career ladder. Employees who have veterans' preference and serve any period of time under their career-conditional appointment have reinstatement eligibility for life.
- ♦ Career Appointments Employees who have completed 3 years without a break in service under career-conditional appointments acquire career tenure and are converted to career appointments. If they leave the federal service as career employees, they have reinstatement eligibility for life.
- ♦ Temporary Appointments Temporary appointments are used to fill short-term employment needs of an organization. Temporary appointments are made for periods not to exceed 1 year but may be extended for one more year. Temporary appointments may be terminated at any time upon written notice. General Service (GS) temporary employees are not eligible for promotions or within-grade increases. Wage Grade (WG) temporary employees are eligible for within-grade increases. Service under a temporary appointment does not confer eligibility for reinstatement.
- ♦ Term Appointments Term appointments are normally used to fill temporary employment needs for a project. Term appointments are at first made for a period of 1 year and may be extended up to 4 years. The appointment may be terminated at any time upon written notice. Term employees are not eligible for promotions but are eligible for within-grade increases, retirement coverage, and health and life insurance. Service under a term appointment does not confer eligibility for reinstatement.
- ♦ Excepted Appointments Excepted appointments are used to fill positions that are exempt by law from the competitive system. Examples of employees under excepted appointments are students in the Pathways Program, people with disabilities, and positions filled by veterans under the Veterans Readjustment Authority (VRA). Excepted appointments can be either permanent or temporary. Excepted employees under permanent appointments must complete a 1-year probationary period.

You are able to obtain a copy of your Form SF-50-B, “Notification of Personnel Action” from EmpowHR or eOPF. The Nature of Action and Tenure blocks on this form will indicate the type of appointment you have. Your particular type of appointment will determine your eligibility for Federal benefits.

Probationary Period

Upon your initial appointment you may be required to serve a probationary or trial period during your first year of service. This period allows you an opportunity to demonstrate successful job performance. During this period your supervisor will assess your conduct and performance and make a recommendation for your retention or removal.

An employee who does not meet acceptable standards of conduct and/or performance may be removed during the probationary or trial period. If you are separated during the probationary or trial period for unsatisfactory conduct or performance, you do not have the right to appeal the decision; however, if you believe the separation action is discriminatory, you have the right to file a complaint through the EEO Complaint System.

Work Schedule

The standard tour of duty for a full-time employee is a 40-hour basic workweek consisting of 5 days of 8 hours each day, Monday through Friday. Core hours are hours designated during which all employees must be at work. The core hours in NRCS are 9:00am-3:00pm.

NRCS participates in a traditional work schedule, a flexible work schedule (Flexitour), and a fixed Compressed Work Schedule. For more information on the alternate work schedules please refer to the NRCS General Manual. Check with your supervisor to see if these alternate work schedules apply to your office.

WebTCAS (Web-based Total Cost Accounting System) & Timekeeping

Each day, you will record the hours you work in our internet-based timekeeping system: WebTCAS. At the end of each two-week pay period, you will finalize and submit your timesheet to your assigned timekeeper.

Your supervisor will provide training to you on the use of WebTCAS and the program, activity and county codes you will use to record your work status. It is important that you accurately record not only your hours of work and leave, but also the activities in which you are involved. Our timekeeping web site is <http://webtcas.nrcs.usda.gov/webtcas/>.

Automated Systems

EmpowHR

EmpowHR is an automated system for processing personnel actions, establishing performance standards and evaluating performance. It allows employees access to up to date personal information.

The Human Resources Office provides an EmpowHR User ID and password to you during your first pay period with NRCS. When you receive them, you will have access to the EmpowHR system to view your personal data as recorded by the Human Resources Office. The web site is <https://icams.usda.gov/psp/HRISP/?cmd=login&languageCd=ENG&>. When you access the EmpowHR system for the first time, be sure to change your password – and remember it! If you should forget your password, there is help available through the EmpowHR logon screen.

eAuthentication

You can use an eAuthentication account to access a wide range of USDA applications. You gain the convenience of transacting business with USDA online, anytime, anywhere. Your eAuthentication account consists of a User ID, a password, and your customer profile containing information about you that will help USDA applications make decisions about your identity. When you register for your eAuth account, make sure that your eAuth User ID is the same User ID as your EmpowHR User ID. The HR office will provide you with more specific instructions.

NFC Employee Personal Page

You also have access to your own Employee Personal Page (EPP) through the USDA National Finance Center (NFC). The Employee Personal Page allows you to view your payroll, leave, travel, life insurance, health insurance, savings bonds, and other personal information. You'll need a personal identification number (PIN) to access the NFC Employee Personal Page. Once your new hire action is processed in EmpowHR, you will receive a temporary PIN/password via mail correspondence. Visit the NFC EPP homepage at www.nfc.usda.gov/personal/ to log-in and change your PIN.

Pay and Leave

The GS Pay System

The general schedule (GS) pay system is divided into 15 grades, each of which has 10 steps. Entry-level hiring is normally made into the 1st step of the grade, although there are rare exceptions to this rule. The grade level of an initial hire depends largely on the occupation, as does the career progression up through the grades.

GS pay rates are locality based. For 2014, in Hawaii, employees receive 16.51% in locality pay plus a Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) of 12.25%. Employees on the island of Hawaii receive 16.51% in locality pay plus a 6.24% COLA. Employees on the islands of Guam and Saipan receive 14.16% in locality pay plus a 13.84% COLA. Eligible employees may also receive a post differential as well. Employees on the island of American Samoa receive 14.16% in locality pay plus *eligible* employees also receive a 25% Post Differential. Employees in Palau and Pohnpei do not receive locality pay. Additional allowances, such as post differential in Palau and Pohnpei are determined by the U.S. Department of State and are subject to change. (GS employees in the continental United States in approx. 30 metropolitan areas receive locality pay rates, with the rest of the GS employees in those states being paid at a catchall “rest of the U.S.” (RUS) pay rate.)

Increases in the all of the GS pay rates are set by local labor market conditions, subject to the availability of funds appropriated by Congress.

Some GS employees receive a special pay rate because of the shortage of qualified applicants available to fill our jobs. Engineers and Information Technology Specialists receive these special pay rates instead of the locality or RUS pay rates discussed above.

Your GS pay rate will appear on each SF-50 Notification of Personnel Action.

Your Pay

NRCS employees are paid biweekly. Your salary check will be deposited directly to your account at your financial institution through an electronic funds transfer (EFT). This will take place every two weeks on designated paydays. Our official payday is the second Thursday of the following pay period, although you'll generally find the EFT payment is deposited in your bank account on the previous Monday.

Your appointment with NRCS probably was effective at the beginning of a pay period. Your first timesheet won't be submitted until the end of that two-week pay period, and it takes our National Finance Center and the Treasury Department a few days to compute your pay and execute the EFT to your bank account. You will receive your first paycheck approximately three weeks after you begin work. From that point forward, your salary will be regularly deposited every two weeks.

You will receive a "Statement of Earnings and Leave" for each pay period that you are employed. It is important to verify that the statement accurately reflects required and, where selected, optional deductions. Report any errors to your Human Resources Office immediately.

Overtime

The federal government complies with the overtime provisions of both the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and the Federal Employees Pay and Compensation Act. Eligibility for overtime compensation varies, depending in large part on whether or not you are "exempt" from FLSA provisions. Block 35 on your SF-50-B Notification of Personnel Action, indicates if your position is exempt. Questions about eligibility for overtime may be discussed with your supervisor or the Human Resources Office. Note that all overtime must be approved in advance.

Within-Grade Increases (WGIs)

You advance from one step of your grade to the next step by means of a within-grade increase (WGI).

General Schedule employees are eligible for within-grade increases (provided that their performance is at an acceptable level) after completing the following waiting periods:

- ◆ 1 year for advancement to steps 2-4;
- ◆ 2 years for advancement to steps 5-7; and
- ◆ 3 years for advancement to steps 8-10.

In addition, employees who demonstrate outstanding performance of their full range of duties may receive a quality step increase (QSI) of one step under our employee recognition program.

Annual Leave

Annual leave may be used for whatever purposes you desire. Most people use it for vacations and personal business. Use of annual leave must be approved in advance by your supervisor.

You will accrue annual leave for each full pay period of employment unless you have been in a nonpay status for the entire pay period. You earn annual leave based on your number of years of Federal employment, including creditable military service. Full-time employees earn annual leave at the following rates:

- ◆ 4 hours of annual leave/pay period if length of service is less than 3 years
- ◆ 6 hours of annual leave/pay period if length of service is more than 3 years, but less than 15
- ◆ 8 hours of annual leave/pay period if length of service is 15 years or more

Annual leave is accrued by part-time employees on a pro rata basis. You will not accrue any annual leave during a pay period if you claim 80 hours of leave without pay.

Most employees may carry no more than 30 days (240 hours) of unused annual leave from year to year. The regulations are different non-foreign and foreign overseas locations. Check with the Human Resources Office if you are unsure of your status.

Sick Leave

Sick leave may be used when you: receive medical, dental, or optical examination or treatment; are incapacitated by physical or mental illness, injury, pregnancy, or childbirth; would, because of exposure to a communicable disease, jeopardize the health of others by your presence on the job; or must be absent from work for adoption-related activities.

You may also use a limited amount of sick leave to provide care for a family member as the result of physical or mental illness, injury, pregnancy, childbirth, or medical, dental, or optical examination or treatment; or make arrangements necessitated by the death of a family member or attend the funeral of a family member. For more information about Family Leave benefits, contact the Human Resources Office.

For full-time employees, the sick leave accrual rate is 13 days a year; for part-time employees, it is one hour for each 20 in pay status. There is no limit on how much you may accumulate.

Holidays

There are 10 legal holidays: for Federal employees:

- ◆ New Year's Day
- ◆ M. L. King, Jr. Birthday
- ◆ Labor Day
- ◆ Columbus Day

- ◆ Presidents Day
- ◆ Memorial Day
- ◆ Independence Day
- ◆ Veterans Day
- ◆ Thanksgiving Day
- ◆ Christmas Day

Your Position

Position Classification

Under the GS pay system, jobs are categorized by occupational groups, series, classes, and grades. This system ensures that positions that are similar require comparable qualifications, and that employees who are doing substantially equal work receive equal pay.

The system is designed to provide a systematic grouping of positions by kind of work, level of difficulty and responsibility, and required qualifications of the position.

The classification system is based on a set of written standards and guides, which are used by trained specialists to evaluate and classify positions. Classification Standards are issued by the Office of Personnel Management for use throughout the Government.

It is the position that is classified, not the employee in the position. Consequently, employee performance is not considered in the classification process. Similarly, the volume of work performed, employee's length of service, or superior qualifications are also not considered in classifying a position.

Position Description

Your supervisor will provide you with a description of your job. A position description is the official record of your major duties and responsibilities and the supervisory relationship of your position.

The duties and responsibilities that have been assigned to you will determine your title, the kind of position you occupy, the level or grade, series, and also the base pay that you will receive for performing the work.

If significant changes take place in your job, your supervisor should take immediate steps to see that a new position description is prepared and submitted for classification review. She/he must make certain that it represents the current duties and responsibilities that are assigned to you.

You and your supervisor have joint responsibility for reviewing your position description for accuracy and adequacy.

Performance Standards

You will have a performance work plan: a written document, developed by your supervisor, that identifies critical elements of your position and the standards by which you will be evaluated. A critical element is a work assignment or responsibility of such importance that unacceptable performance on the element would result in a determination that the employee's overall performance is at the unacceptable, possibly leading to demotion or removal.

You and your supervisor need to share a common understanding of the supervisor's expectations for your performance, so good communication is very important. In addition, you should discuss the goals of the office, basin and state, and the extent and nature of your involvement and contribution to meeting office goals for the upcoming year.

Your Career

Training

Although you brought considerable skills to NRCS when you joined our workforce, your training is just beginning! Whether it's formal training (such as the self-paced "Introduction to NRCS" or the classroom training course entitled Basic Field Conservation); or on-the-job training provided by your supervisor or other experienced NRCS staff; or technical workshops presented in-state, your professional and technical development will continue.

NRCS encourages all employees to participate in self-development efforts, as well. Discuss your interests with your supervisor – when university or community college courses relate to the work of NRCS, we may be able to provide tuition assistance to employees who are continuing their formal education after hours. Additional information is available on the PIA HR SharePoint site.

[PIA HR Sharepoint site](#)

Promotions and Transfers

Agencies may promote or reassign career or career-conditional employees under a variety of circumstances. They also may make time-limited promotions of up to five years to fill temporary positions, accomplish project work, fill positions temporarily pending reorganization, or to meet other temporary needs.

Generally, General Schedule employees who are promoted to a higher grade receive a pay increase of at least two steps of the former grade.

A career or career-conditional employee of one agency may transfer, without a break in service, to a competitive service position in another agency without competing in a civil service examination open to the public. A transfer-eligible may apply under vacancy announcements open to status candidates. An employee may transfer to a position at the same, higher, or lower grade level.

Present Federal employees who are serving in the competitive service under a career or career-conditional appointment have eligibility for transfer to a position in the competitive service. To transfer, they must meet the qualification requirements for the position.

Merit Promotion

When a vacancy occurs within NRCS, the selecting official may fill the position through the Merit Promotion Program or other means within Office of Personnel Management and NRCS regulations. Under the Merit Promotion Program, vacancy announcements are published and you as an interested employee may submit an application. (All vacancy announcements are available on the

Internet at www.usajobs.opm.gov .) Merit Promotion announcements are for current and former federal employees eligible for reinstatement, and those eligible under Special Hiring Authorities.

Vacancy announcements give the job title, series, and grade; describe the duties; outline the qualification requirements; state other knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that are required for the job; and provide application procedures. Candidates who have been found to be "basically qualified" by a Human Resources specialist are evaluated further. Candidates who are determined to be the best qualified are then referred to the selecting official for consideration. Selections for jobs are determined by merit.

Return Rights and Tour Renewal Travel

For current NRCS employees reassigned to the PIA through Merit Promotion procedures, who have a designated place of residence in the lower 48 continental United States or the District of Columbia (CONUS).

Initial tours of duty in the PIA are for 3 years. An employee may elect to serve an additional 2-year tour with the approval of the Director, Pacific Islands Area. At the completion of the initial or additional tour, the employee has guaranteed rights to a position of grade and pay equivalent to the employee's current position, whether or not such position is the product of one or more competitive promotions earned during the tour or tours.

Guaranteed return rights are forfeited once management accepts the employee's request to extend his/her tour beyond the 5-year period. From this point on, if an employee decides to transfer back to the CONUS, the employee is responsible for locating a position through normal merit promotion procedures. For further information regarding return rights, please refer to General Manual Title 360, Part 408, Subpart J, Section 408.90 and the Merit Promotion Plan.

NRCS restricts tour renewal travel to one non-foreign overseas tour renewal trip each time an employee completes one service agreement and signs a new one to continue to be stationed in a non-foreign overseas location. Travel and transportation expenses are authorized to the home of record or point of hire within the continental United States. The initial tour renewal travel should commence within six months prior to or six months after the original tour ending date. The second tour renewal travel trip must begin prior to 5 years from the original effective date of reassignment. After the fifth anniversary, employees in Hawaii are no longer eligible for tour renewal agreements or tour renewal travel. Employees in other non-foreign overseas locations continue to remain eligible for tour renewal travel every two years as long as they remain in the non-foreign overseas location and continue to sign tour renewal agreements.

Benefits

Health Insurance

The Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) program is designed to help protect you and eligible family members from the expenses of illness and accident. Unlike many private sector health benefit plans, it provides coverage without physical examination, places no restrictions on age or physical condition, offers a wide range of plans to choose from, and cannot be canceled by the plan in which you enroll. You and the government share the cost of the FEHB program. You

must enroll within 60 days of the beginning of your appointment, otherwise you will have to wait until the next annual open season. The Human Resources Office furnishes information on available health plans to new employees who are eligible for coverage. Major Qualifying Life Events may also permit enrollment or change in enrollment. If you have any questions, feel free to contact the Human Resources Office.

Dental and Vision Coverage

The Federal Employee Dental and Vision Benefits Enhancement Act of 2004 (FEDVIP) was enacted into law on December 23, 2004. The Act authorizes OPM to establish arrangements under which supplemental dental and vision benefits are made available to Federal employees, retirees, and their eligible family members, and the law gives OPM broad contracting authority to leverage the purchasing power of Federal enrollees to provide comprehensive benefits with competitive premiums. The government does not share the cost of these programs. You must enroll within 60 days from the beginning of your appointment, otherwise you will have to wait until the next annual open season. BENEFEDS is the official website for enrollment for FEDVIP and is located at: <https://www.benefeds.com/>. If you have any questions, feel free to contact the Human Resources Office.

High Deductible Health Plans (HDHP) with Health Savings Accounts (HSA)

A High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) with a Health Savings Account (HSA) or a Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) provides traditional medical coverage and a tax free way to help you build savings for future medical expenses. The HDHP/HSA or HRA gives you greater flexibility and discretion over how you use your health care benefits.

The HDHP features higher annual deductibles (a minimum of \$1,200 for Self and \$2,400 for Self and Family coverage) than other traditional health plans. The maximum amount out-of-pocket limits for HDHPs participating in the FEHB Program in 2013 are \$6,250 for Self and \$12,500 for Self and Family enrollment based on IRS rules. Depending on the HDHP you choose, you may have the choice of using in-network and out-of-network providers. Using in-network providers will save you money. With the exception of preventive care, you must meet the annual deductible before the plan pays benefits. Preventive care services are generally paid as first dollar coverage or after a small deductible or copayment. A maximum dollar amount (up to \$300, for instance) may apply. When you enroll in an HDHP, the health plan determines if you are eligible for a Health Savings Account (HSA) or a Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA). If you are Medicare enrolled, you are not eligible for an HSA. Each month, the plan automatically credits a portion of the health plan premium into your HSA or HRA, based on your eligibility as of the first day of the month. You can pay your deductible with funds from your HSA or HRA. If you have an HSA, you can also choose to pay your deductible out-of-pocket, allowing your savings account to grow. More information is available on the OPM website or in the Human Resources Office:

<http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/hsa/intro.asp>

Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS)

Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS) offers three different flexible spending accounts (FSAs): a health care flexible spending account, a limited expense health care flexible spending account, and a dependent care flexible spending account.

Eligible employees can enroll in FSAFEDS each year during the Federal Benefits Open Season (the November/December timeframe). Open Season enrollments are effective January 1 of the following year. Current enrollees must remember to enroll each year to continue participating in FSAFEDS. Enrollment does NOT carry forward year to year.

New and newly eligible employees who wish to enroll in this program must do so within 60 days after they become eligible, but before October 1 of the calendar year.

For further information, visit www.FSAFEDS.com or call 1-877-372-3337. TTY 1-800-952-0450.

Life Insurance

The Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) program, as the name implies, provides group term life insurance. In most cases, if you are a new Federal employee, you are automatically covered by Basic life insurance and the payroll office deducts premiums from your paycheck unless you waive the coverage. In addition to the Basic, there are three forms of Optional insurance you can elect. You must have Basic insurance in order to elect any of the options. Unlike Basic, enrollment in Optional insurance is not automatic -- you must take action to elect the options.

Unlike the Federal health benefits program, which has annual opportunities to join or change coverage levels, FEGLI open seasons are rare; elections of coverage generally must be made when first offered. You must make your additional election of coverage or waive your basic insurance within 60 days of the beginning of your appointment.

Employees who are eligible to participate in the FEGLI program receive enrollment information from the Human Resources Office. If you have any questions, or haven't received your information, feel free to contact the Human Resources Office.

Long Term Care Insurance

The Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP) provides long term care insurance to help pay for costs of care when enrollees need help with activities they perform every day, or you have a severe cognitive impairment, such as Alzheimer's disease.

Most Federal and U.S. Postal Service employees and annuitants, active and retired members of the uniformed services, and their qualified relatives are eligible to apply for insurance coverage under the FLTCIP.

Most employees must be eligible for the FEHB Program in order to apply for coverage under the FLTCIP. It does not matter if they are actually enrolled in FEHB - eligibility is the key. Annuitants do not have to be eligible or enrolled in the FEHB Program. Certain medical conditions, or combinations of conditions, will prevent some people from being approved for coverage. You must apply to find out if you are eligible to enroll.

If you're a new or newly eligible employee, you (and your spouse if you are married) enjoy special incentives to apply for coverage under the FLTCIP within 60 days of your hire or eligibility date. You can apply with abbreviated underwriting, which means that you answer fewer health questions on your application. If you're married, your spouse can also apply with abbreviated underwriting within the same 60-day period, even if you choose not to apply. You (and your spouse if you are

married) can still apply for coverage after your 60-day abbreviated underwriting period ends, but you must complete a full underwriting application that asks more questions about your health.

For more information about the FLTCIP, please contact Long Term Care Partners at 1(800)582-3337, or visit the website at www.ltcfeds.com.

Medicare

All employees contribute a portion of their earnings towards the Medicare Hospital Insurance Tax (HIT). This tax is included in the FICA deductions for employees who pay the social security tax; while other employees have a specified amount withheld from their salary. This tax is withheld from your gross earnings and is discontinued when yearly earnings reach the maximum wage base level determined by the Social Security Administration.

Retirement

Almost without doubt you are in the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). That system generally covers everyone hired since January 1, 1984. However, if you had previous Federal employment under the “old” Federal retirement program, the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), and were rehired, you may have been rehired under that system, called CSRS-Offset, which is a mix of CSRS and Social Security coverage. Beginning January 1, 2014, new employees will be covered under FERS as Further Revised Annuity Employees, FERS-FRAE. For more information about retirement, see the OPM web site at www.opm.gov or contact the Human Resources Office.

At the time of your appointment to a position providing retirement coverage, the Human Resources Office provides information about the benefits of the system. If you have any questions, or haven't received your information, please feel free to contact the Human Resources Office.

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)

The TSP is a retirement savings and investment plan for Federal employees and is similar to “401(k)” plans available to many private sector employees. The purpose of the TSP is to provide you the opportunity to participate in a long-term retirement savings and investment plan. The TSP is one of the three parts of the FERS retirement program. (The FERS Basic Annuity and Social Security are the other two parts.)

Automatic Enrollment

The amount of your automatic contribution to the TSP is 3% of your basic pay which will be deposited into your TSP account every pay period. These contributions are deducted from your pay and are tax-deferred for purposes of Federal and, in most cases, state income tax. In addition, for FERS employees, NRCS will deposit Agency Matching Contributions equal to your 3% deposit. Plus you also receive an Agency Automatic (1%) Contribution that is equal to 1% of your basic pay. All totaled with your contributions and those from the NRCS, the equivalent of 7% of your basic pay will be deposited into your TSP account each pay period. This is a good start toward saving for retirement; however, you can easily increase the amount of your contributions and

receive additional Agency Matching Contributions, making your retirement savings grow even faster. See the paragraphs, Employee Contributions and Agency Matching Contributions.

Stop Automatic Enrollment

If you do not wish to contribute to your TSP account you can request to stop the automatic enrollment process. To stop the automatic enrollment process before any contributions are deducted from your pay, you must complete Form TSP-1, Election Form, and immediately turn it in during your in-processing. If you stop your contributions, you are not eligible to receive Agency Matching Contributions. You will still receive the Agency Automatic (1%) Contribution. Also, it is possible that payroll may not be able to stop your first contribution to the TSP. If this happens, you can leave the contribution in your TSP account or you can make a request to the TSP to return your contribution. To request a refund of your contribution, read the paragraph titled Refund of Automatic Enrollment Contributions.

Employee Contributions

You may elect to increase, decrease, or stop your contributions to your TSP account at any time. To make a contribution election, complete Form TSP-1, Election Form, and return it to the Human Resources Office or make this change electronically in the Employee Personal Page. You may specify a whole percentage of basic pay that you want to contribute each pay period, or you may specify a whole dollar amount. Whether you specify a percentage or dollar amount of your pay, your total contributions for the year cannot exceed the Internal Revenue Code's elective deferral limit for the year. The limit for 2011 is \$16,500. Your contribution election will remain in effect until you make another election to change the amount of your contributions or to stop them. You should consider increasing your contributions to at least 5% of your basic pay each pay period during the year in order to receive all of the Agency Matching Contributions for which you are eligible. If you reach the IRC limit before the end of the year, the TSP cannot accept additional contributions and as a result you will not receive the Agency Matching Contributions for the remaining pay dates in the year. The TSP has a calculator on its website (www.tsp.gov) under Planning for Retirement to assist you in maximizing your employee and Agency Matching Contributions each year.

Agency Contributions

Because you have been automatically enrolled in the TSP, effective your first pay period, for FERS employees, the NRCS will begin making Agency Matching Contributions to your TSP account. Even if you stop contributing your own money, the NRCS will make Agency Automatic Contributions that will equal 1% of the basic pay you earn for the pay period. If you are making Employee Contributions, you will also begin receiving Agency Matching Contributions to your TSP account. The first 3% of pay that you contribute each pay period will be matched dollar for dollar, and the next 2% that you contribute will be matched 50 cents on the dollar. As a result of your automatic enrollment, you are contributing 3% of your pay and receiving Agency Matching Contributions of 3%. However, if you increase your employee contributions to 5% you will then receive Agency Matching Contributions of 4% each pay period. This means the equivalent of 10% of your basic pay will be saved toward your retirement each pay period (5% your Employee Contribution + 4% Agency Matching Contributions + 1% Agency Automatic Contribution = 10% in your TSP account). Your agency contributions will also be invested according to your contribution allocation on file with the TSP on the date the contributions are posted to your account.

Catch-up Contributions

If you are age 50 or older or will turn age 50 by the end of this year, you may make an additional election to contribute catch-up contributions. This is a separate election that will request your agency to deduct additional tax-deferred TSP contributions from your pay. To make catch-up contributions, complete the Form TSP-1-C, Catch-up Contribution Election Form, and return it to the Human Resources Office. You must elect a whole dollar amount from your basic pay each pay date. The maximum amount you may contribute in catch-up contributions for 2013 is \$5,500. This amount of tax-deferred contributions is in addition to the amount you may contribute through the regular TSP election discussed in the paragraph above. You will not receive Agency Matching Contributions on the amount you elect to contribute through catch-up contributions. Your catch-up contribution election will remain in effect either until you make another election to change the amount of or stop your contributions, or until the last pay date of the calendar year. You must make a new election to contribute catch-up contributions each year.

Refund of Automatic Enrollment Contributions

You may request a refund of the employee contributions that were deducted from your pay during the first 90 days that you were automatically enrolled. To do so, you must send Form TSP-25, Automatic Enrollment Refund Request, which you will receive with your Welcome Letter from the TSP. Your properly completed Form TSP-25 must be returned to the TSP using the address on the form and must be received by the TSP no later than the date provided in the TSP Welcome Letter. Do NOT return the form to NRCS. Make sure you read the directions on Form TSP-25 as well as the instructions in the TSP Welcome Letter. If you were previously employed by the Federal Government and were automatically enrolled, you are not eligible for a refund of the automatic enrollment contributions for subsequent periods, unless one full calendar year (January through December) has passed since your last automatic enrollment contribution (visit the TSP website for more details). The amount of your refund will be your automatically withheld employee contributions and any gains or losses from the performance of your investment(s). Although the Agency Automatic (1%) Contributions and their earnings will remain in your TSP account; you will forfeit any Agency Matching Contributions and their earnings.

Requesting a refund of your automatic enrollment contributions will not stop future contributions from being deducted from your pay. You must complete Form TSP-1, Election Form, and return it to the Human Resources Office.

See the TSP brochures provided by the Human Resources Office at the time of your appointment for more information on investment choices, enrollment provisions and in-service loans and withdrawals. Or use the TSP web site at www.tsp.gov or the TSP ThriftLine at (877) 968-3778.

Civil Rights and Equal Employment Opportunity

We in NRCS are firmly committed to ensuring that every customer and colleague is treated with fairness, equality, and respect; and without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital or family status, political beliefs, parental status, or protected genetic information.

You will receive training about the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and amendments, as well as subsequent laws and Executive Orders that clearly define our responsibilities. You will receive particular training regarding Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which refers to the rights of the American people receiving government programs and services; and Title VII, which addresses the Equal Employment Opportunity rights of employees.

In NRCS, we strive for a workplace that is inclusive and respectful of differences, while working toward unity and harmony. And we deliver programs and services to all people fairly and with integrity and equality.

FEDERAL SPECIAL EMPHASIS PROGRAMS

The term “Special Emphasis Programs” (SEP’s) refers to programs that focus attention on specific groups as a result of an assortment of laws, regulations, and Executive Orders. The collateral duty Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs) are appointed to help identify and assist in the removal of barriers that prevent members of these Special Emphasis Groups from achieving their full potential in the workforce. Special Emphasis activities are an integral part of the Civil Rights Program at NRCS. Each Special Emphasis Program has a National Program Manager and a State Program Manager. The SEPMs work through the Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC) and report directly to the NRCS State Conservationist.

Collectively, SEPMs assist the Director of NRCS’s Civil Rights Division to:

- ensure that equal opportunity and effective communication is present in all aspects of NRCS programs and services
- identify under-representation in employment and take positive action to address problem areas
- provide advice and assistance to management officials to meet civil rights program goals and objectives.

The PIA has SEPMs for the following groups that have been identified as targeted populations:

- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black
- Disability
- Federal Women
- Hispanic
- Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender
- Veterans

Grievances

Several processes are available to NRCS employees to address employment-related concerns. Most issues can be easily resolved by simply sitting down with the other party and calmly discussing the situation. However, occasionally outside assistance is helpful to reach resolution. NRCS firmly endorses the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) to address issues when they first arise.

Under ADR, a trained mediator works with the parties involved to identify common ground and facilitate the use of a structured process to address concerns and reach agreements. Your supervisor or the Human Resources Office will be happy to provide you with additional information about ADR at your request.

When informal methods don't fully address an employee's concerns, there are two formal methods that may apply: the administrative grievance process, and the EEO complaint process. Information on these systems may be found in 360 Personnel GM 412 and 230 Equal Employment Opportunity GM 401, or you may contact your supervisor or the Human Resources Office for additional information.

Information & Records

Personal Records

An electronic official personnel file (eOPF) has been created for you. It is maintained electronically by the Human Resources Office in Honolulu. You have the right to review the contents of your eOPF at any time. It is accessed using your eAuthentication log-in and password. There is a one-time registration process at this web address: <https://eopf.nbc.gov/landing/>.

Although many records associated with your federal employment are maintained in your eOPF, it is important that **YOU** keep a copy of important documents pertaining to your employment, such as:

- Your résumé
- SF-50 Notification of Personnel Action
- Position Description
- Performance Work Plan & Appraisal
- Awards
- Election of benefits (e.g., health & life insurance, TSP enrollment, designation of beneficiary)
- Training plan, certifications & transcripts

It is in your interest to verify the accuracy of information on employment-related documents, and to call any errors to the immediate attention of the Human Resources Office.

You are also responsible for notifying Human Resources of any change in your name, home address, and family status.

The Privacy Act of 1974

You will have occasion to handle an array of information and records concerning the land, landowners and landusers who receive technical assistance from NRCS. You need to understand the impact of pertinent records guidelines, particularly, The Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act, on the way we handle this information.

As a government employee you may have to work with or handle records or information about individuals. Generally, such records will require special handling and safeguarding because they are subject to the requirements of the Privacy Act. The Privacy Act establishes special requirements for collecting, creating, maintaining, and distributing records that can be retrieved by the name of an individual or other identifier (whether in paper or electronic form). These are called Privacy Act

Systems of Records. Our Conservation Plan files are one example of a Privacy Act System of Records.

The subject of a Privacy Act System of Records can ask to see, correct, and appeal the information in that record. These disclosure restrictions are subject to civil and criminal penalties. For more information, contact your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)/Privacy Act Officer. In the PIA, the Assistant Director for Administration is the FOIA/PA Officer.

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is meant to ensure that the public has access to information that is maintained by the government. FOIA also recognizes that the government must safeguard certain information that falls under one of the nine FOIA exemptions. Some of the requirements of the Electronic FOIA Amendments of 1996 ensure access to government information maintained in all formats (e.g. E-mail, back-up tapes), and makes more information available to the public electronically. (See the NRCS Freedom of Information Act web site at http://www.info.usda.gov/nrcs_foia/ .

If you receive a request from the public for information, you will need to consult with your supervisor to determine whether the material requested is public or nonpublic information. Even if a request does not cite FOIA, you should still consider whether it is protected under FOIA or the Privacy Act. Refer to 120 GM Part 408 for additional information. Records that are not routinely made available to the public must be requested under FOIA procedures to ensure a thorough review for sensitive information. Consult your supervisor and the FOIA Officer for additional information.

Information Technology Security

Personal Responsibility

IT Security is the personal responsibility of each computer user. The difference between a secure computer system and one that is vulnerable is how the users apply the security measures that are available. The following measures are your computer security responsibilities.

USDA Agencies have implemented the use of a smartcard, or “LincPass,” for Federal and Non-Federal employees who access USDA IT resources, such as laptop and desktop computers. Using the LincPass eliminates the need to remember multiple passwords while ensuring national security is met, as directed by Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD-12). Your LincPass is your USDA Personal Identity Verification (PIV) card.

NRCS is requiring the use of the LincPass card for network access on compliant agency computers. These requirements apply to employees, students, contractors, partners, volunteers and anyone who accesses the IT network.

NRCS Employees who meet the criteria for a LincPass will be contacted via email when it is time for them to enroll for their credential. Once contacted, you will visit one of the USAccess Enrollment Stations to enroll and then will receive notice a week or two later when your new LincPass has arrived. You'll then visit an Activation Station to pick up and activate your LincPass. The HR Office will assist you with this process.

Password & User ID

Never share your user ID or password with anyone else. Don't tape user IDs and passwords to desks, walls, or terminals, or write them down and store them in list finders, desk drawers, etc. Do not save a user ID and password on the hard drive of a notebook computer. Avoid using any word found in the dictionary as a password. Never use personal information (names of family members, pets, etc.) for your password.

Log-off Your Computer

Once obtained, your LincPass should be used to log-off your computer. Either log-off or lock your computer by removing your LincPass when you are away from your desk even briefly. Log-off and remove your LincPass when you leave the office.

Viruses

Do not open attachments to e-mail messages unless you are positive they could not contain a virus. Never use software or files obtained from the Internet before scanning them for viruses. Do not install software on government computers without first obtaining approval from your IT specialist. Scan any floppy diskette that has been received from an outside source. Insure that the current version of approved virus scanning software is installed and activated on your computer, and use it.

Backups

Computer files on the server are automatically backed-up. Your IT specialist can advise you on the backup procedures you should use for any file that you save on your hard-drive. If these files must be manually backed up, do so frequently. Always keep backups of your files in a secure location.

Copyright Law

Never use unlicensed software on your computer. It is illegal to make copies of copyrighted software.

Travel and Transportation

Travel

Many employees travel to attend training courses or to conduct official Government business. An employee on official travel is expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a person would when traveling on personal business. All travel is to be coordinated with your supervisor to avoid overtime compensation work periods (when possible) and high travel costs. Discuss travel with your supervisor prior to making final travel plans.

Travel Expenses

All travel must be approved by your supervisor. If you are required to travel for official purposes, you will be reimbursed for expenses essential to the transaction of official business. Allowable costs include transportation, per diem (which consists of lodging up to a certain amount), and a meal and incidental expenses (M&IE) allowance. Not all expenses incurred while traveling are considered necessary.

Government Travel Credit Card

Employees are mandated to use their government-issued travel charge card to pay for reimbursable travel expenses. Currently, all permanent employees who travel at least twice a year must participate in the government travel charge card program.

Every employee is provided detailed information about appropriate and inappropriate uses of the travel credit card, and signs an agreement to abide by the card's terms and conditions, before the card is issued. Any employees who use the charge card for inappropriate or non-official purposes or who fail to pay their account balance in a timely manner will be subject to disciplinary action, which can range from a letter of reprimand to removal from duty.

Employees are encouraged to charge as many official travel expenses to the credit card as possible since this will help maximize the rebates paid to the government by the bank.

Transit Benefit Program

Employees who use public transportation on Oahu to commute to work may be eligible to participate in a Transit Benefit Program that reimburses public transportation costs. Program information and an application are included in materials provided to all new employees.

Use of Motor Vehicles

Most NRCS positions in the PIA require employees to be incidental motor vehicle operators, because we must drive to meet with our clients in order to provide technical assistance. Your position description specifies whether you are as an incidental motor vehicle operator – if you are, you are required to maintain a valid State Driver's License. Employees who fail to maintain a valid driver's license or who misuse a GOV may be subject to disciplinary action including possible removal.

Government owned vehicles (GOV) are available at each NRCS office and may be used by employees for official purposes only. Willful misuse of GOVs carries a mandatory minimum penalty of 30 days suspension without pay; misuse of GOVs may be subject to further disciplinary action up to and including removal.

Safety and Health

Accident Reporting and Worker's Compensation

The Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) provides workers' compensation benefits to federal employees who sustain job-related injuries or illnesses. If you are injured or suffer an occupational illness at work, you must report this to your supervisor immediately. Follow up with your supervisor to ensure that he/she files the accident or incident report with the Human Resources Office.

- ♦ ***You are responsible for completing and submitting to your supervisor:***
 - The appropriate Dept. of Labor Office of Worker's Compensation Programs (OWCP) form (CA-1, CA-2, CA-16, or CA-17).
- ♦ ***Your supervisor is responsible for submitting:***
 - The appropriate Dept. of Labor OWCP form (CA-1, CA-2, CA-16, or CA-17) to the Human Resources Office.

Further details regarding OWCP benefits may be obtained from the Human Resources Office.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to all NRCS employees and their immediate family to help resolve personal and work problems. Marital, financial, alcohol, drugs, family, vocational, work related stress, legal referral, weight/weight loss, physical/medical, dependent care, emotional/psychological counseling are all available through our EAP.

Our EAP provider is The Sand Creek Group. If you would like to use their services, please call them at 1-888-243-5744 (TDD 888-833-2017). A professional EAP counselor will work directly and confidentially with you or your family member to help resolve the issue. In some cases, the EAP counselor's role will be to assist in determining how you may use your health insurance or community resources most effectively for future services.

EAP services are provided to you at no cost by NRCS. All services are confidential.

Dress Code

You must dress appropriately for each occasion. Your office or work setting and environment will influence your dress style. Always be neat and clean in whatever you choose to wear. Clothing should be clean and free of rips, tears, or holes.

Your dress style will project a positive or negative image about you. You broadcast a message in what you wear. We suggest you make an accurate statement in your appearance and transmit a positive, professional image at all times. Remember that your dress is a reflection of you and the Agency. While there is no enforceable dress code in NRCS, you are expected to dress professionally to match the occasion. Shorts, short skirts, crop tops, t-shirts with advertising, etc. are not appropriate dress. Talk to your supervisor and co-workers about safety considerations that you should take into account when heading out to the field (e.g., heavy boots, long sleeves, hats, etc.).

Emergency Procedures

Your supervisor will provide you with a copy of your office's emergency procedures. Please review it carefully and discuss any questions you may have with your supervisor so you will be prepared in the event of an emergency.

Directories

Directories for NRCS offices throughout the country may be accessed through the NRCS national home page: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov> . To view/print the latest version of our PIA directory, go to our home page at <http://www.pia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/> and click on <http://www.pia.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/index.html>.

A directory of all NRCS, Farm Services Agency (FSA) and Rural Development (RD) employees is available at <http://oip.usda.gov/scripts/ndisapi.dll/ed/pgMain>

Appendix A

Common NRCS Acronyms

AC	Area Conservationist
ACP	Agricultural Conservation Program
ACRES	Actual Cost Recovery Evaluation System
ADP	Automated Data Processing
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
AL	Annual Leave
AO	Administrative Officer
BTL	Basin Team Leader
CAMS	Combined Administrative Management System
CCC	Commodity Credit Corporation
CCE	Common Computing Environment
CED	County Executive Director
CET	Civil Engineering Technician
CFC	Combined Federal Campaign
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CO	Conservation Operations
COLA	Cost of Living Adjustment
CR	Civil Rights
CRM	Coordinated Resource Management
CRP	Conservation Reserve Program
CSRS	Civil Service Retirement System
CTA	Conservation Technical Assistance
CTAP	Career Transition Assistance Program
DC	District Conservationist
DD	District Director
EA	Environmental Assessment
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
EBI	Environmental Benefits Index
ECP	Emergency Conservation Program
EDP	Employee Development Plan
EE	Environmental Evaluation
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentive Program
EWP	Emergency Watershed Program
FAC	Food and Agriculture Council
FACTA	Food, Agriculture, Conservation, Trade Act of 1990
FAIR	Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act
FEGLI	Federal Employees Group Life Insurance
FEHB	Federal Employees Health Benefits
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency

FERS	Federal Employees Retirement System
FEFFLA	Federal Employees Family Friendly Leave Act
FFIS	Foundation Financial Information System
FIP	Forestry Incentive Program
FLSA	Fair Labor Standards Act
FMLA	Family and Medical Leave Act
FNM	Financial Management
FO	Field Office
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FOTG	Field Office Technical Guide
FPP	Farmland Protection Program
FSA	Farm Service Agency
FTE	Full -Time Equivalent
FWP	Federal Women's Program
GIS	Geographic Information System
GLCI	Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative
GM	General Manual
GOV	Government-Owned Vehicle
GS	General Schedule
HACU	Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
HBCU	Historically Black Colleges and Universities
HEL	Highly Erodible Land
HEP	Hispanic Employment Program
HRO	Human Resources Office
IAS	Integrated Accountability System
ICTAP	Interagency Career Transition Assistance Program
IDP	Individual Development Plan
IRM	Information Resource Management
IT	Information Technology
KCCC	Kansas City Computer Center
KSA	Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities
LAN	Local Area Network
LWOP	Leave Without Pay
M&IE	Meals and Incidental Expenses
MLRA	Major Land Resource Area
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NACD	National Association of Conservation Districts
NAD	National Appeals Division
NCC	National Computer Center
NEDC	National Employee Development Center
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NFAC	National Food and Agriculture Council
NFC	National Finance Center

NFSAM	National Food Security Act Manual
NHCP	National Handbook of Conservation Practices
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NHQ	National Headquarters
NPPH	National Planning Procedures Handbook
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NRI	National Resources Inventory
O&M	Operation and Maintenance
OGC	Office of General Counsel
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
OJT	On-the-Job Training
OPF	Official Personnel Folder
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
OTI	Opportunity to Improve
OWCP	Office of Workers Compensation Programs
PA	Program Assistant (FSA)
PAS	Public Affairs Specialist
PC	Personal Computer
PD	Position Description
PFT	Permanent Full-time
PMC	Plant Materials Center
POV	Privately Owned Vehicle
PP	Pay Period
PPT	Permanent Part-time
PRMS	Performance and Results Measurement System
Pub. L.(P.L.)	Public Law
QSI	Quality Step Increase
RC&D	Resources Conservation and Development
RD	Rural Development
RMS	Resource Management Systems
SAO	State Administrative Officer
SCEP	Student Career Experience Program
SED	State Executive Director (FSA)
SEPM	Special Emphasis Program Manager
SES	Senior Executive Service
SF	Standard Form
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
SL	Sick Leave
SO	State Office
SSN	Social Security Number
STC	State Conservationist
STEP	Student Temporary Employment Program
SWCD	Soil and Water Conservation District

T&A	Time and Attendance
TDD	Telecommunication Device for the Deaf
TSP	Thrift Savings Plan
USC	United States Code
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WAN	Wide Area Network
WebTCAS	Web-based Total Cost Accounting System
WGI	Within Grade Increase
WHIP	Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program
WLA	Workload Analysis Initiative
WLMA	Workload Management Analysis

Appendix B

Useful Government Web Sites

U S Department of Agriculture

USDA	http://www.usda.gov/
NRCS	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/
NRCS Pacific Islands Area	http://www.pia.nrcs.usda.gov/
NRCS PIA Bulletins	http://www.pia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/bulletins/
NRCS PIA Intranet	http://www.pia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/
PIA SharePoint site	https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/west/pia/default.aspx
PIA Employee Directory	http://www.pia.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/index.html
Employee Assistance Program	http://www.sandcreekeap.com/
Ethics	http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/ethics/
Freedom of Information Act	http://www.info.usda.gov/nrcs_foia/
AgLearn	http://www.aglearn.usda.gov/
EmpowHR	EmpowHR
GovTrip	https://govtrip.com/govtrip/site/index.jsp
WebTCAS	WebTCAS

U S Office of Personnel Management

OPM	http://www.opm.gov/
USA Jobs	http://www.usajobs.gov/

Other

NFC Employee Personal Page	https://www.nfc.usda.gov/personal/
Thrift Savings Plan	http://www.tsp.gov/