



# NRCS Remote Sensing Laboratories (RSLs)

**Mission:** To produce remotely sensed resources inventory data that are nationally consistent, of high quality, scientifically defensible, and delivered on schedule.

## What Do the RSLs Do?

The NRCS established the three Remote Sensing Laboratories to conduct efficient remote sensing operations using state-of-the-art technology. The RSLs help stretch the capabilities of agency field staffs by applying current technologies to provide aerial photo interpretation support to NRCS programs and activities,

The RSLs currently serve two main functions:

1. To conduct the remote sensing data collection portion of the National Resources Inventory (NRI), a statistical survey designed to estimate natural resource conditions and trends on the nation's non-Federal lands.
2. To support state efforts in monitoring easements in the Wetlands Reserve Program.

In addition, plans are in place to support monitoring those aspects of operation and maintenance of small watershed dams that can be photo interpreted to improve dam safety nationwide.

The RSLs are also positioned to provide imagery support for response to natural disasters and other emergencies, and data analysis support for other Departmental and agency needs.

## RSL Staff

Each RSL is staffed by NRCS and contract employees of Sanborn. The NRCS staff comprises management support and technical experts in agronomy, forestry, grazing land management, soil science, and biology. The technical experts ensure the integrity of resource

identification, classification, measurement, and monitoring. They assist the contract data gatherers with difficult interpretations and unique situations. The contract employees provide image preparation and photo interpretation (data gathering) and quality control services.

The RSLs coordinate with NRCS program managers and cooperating universities, including the Iowa State University Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology, in the analysis and interpretation of collected data. The RSLs work closely with NRCS state and field office staff to coordinate state input to the resource data being collected.

The RSLs work under the direction of the NRI Data Collection Branch Chief, Resources Inventory and Assessment Division, NRCS, Beltsville, Maryland.

**Sanborn**, a leading provider of comprehensive end-to-end geospatial solutions, currently holds the data collection contract with the RSLs. Founded in 1866, Sanborn offers products and services that satisfy diverse and evolving customer needs for GIS software systems, application development, systems integration, and spatial analysis and modeling. Leveraging precision remote sensing techniques, Sanborn also supports a wide range of applications and users. Sanborn's solutions are founded on a strong legacy of innovative geospatial data collection and processing capabilities.

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