

# Technical Service Provider Assistance

## Producer Information Fact Sheet

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Minnesota

January 2005

In 2002 Congress authorized the use of federal dollars to hire Technical Service Providers (TSPs) to design and oversee installation of conservation practices.

### Who are TSPs?

TSPs are mostly private sector individuals who have been



certified by USDA to design and install one or more conservation practices. Their names and contact information are placed on a national registry accessible to the general public.

### Who receives money to hire a TSP?

Producers receiving USDA cost-share money to install a conservation practice can also receive funds to hire a TSP to design and oversee construction of the practice. For example a producer receiving \$50,000 for construction of a manure storage structure can receive additional money to hire an *NRCS certified TSP* to design and oversee construction of that structure. Minnesota TSP funding is currently available to producers receiving USDA cost-share money to install the following conservation practices: Nutrient Management; Pest Management; Forestry Practices; and Wastewater and Feedlot Runoff Control.

### Should you hire a TSP?

Many factors must be considered including NRCS staff ability to provide assistance. Our workload has significantly increased while staffing levels have remained relatively constant. As a result it may take a

long time before NRCS engineers or agronomists can help you install your requested conservation practice(s). A certified TSP may be able to provide service in a timelier manner than NRCS.

### Hiring a TSP

When hiring a TSP, you will be responsible to:

#### ▪ Select a TSP

As of Jan. 2005, numerous individuals have been certified by NRCS to provide conservation services to Minnesota farmers: nutrient management (124), pest management (113), forestry practices (20) and manure and wastewater handling and storage (21). Go to the following website to locate one of these individuals:

<http://techreg.usda.gov/>

Click on "Find a Technical Service Provider".

***Your local NRCS official may also be able to provide you a TSP list but will not recommend one TSP over another.***

#### ▪ Determine what you want from a TSP

NRCS has developed "Statements of Work" (SOWs) for individual conservation practices. These SOWs define what the TSP must do to successfully design, install and check your conservation practice for adequacy. ***Ask your local NRCS official for your applicable SOW(s) and review them with your potential TSPs.***

#### ▪ Negotiate a Fee

NRCS has developed Not to Exceed (NTE) rates for TSP work. The rates are specific to individual conservation practices. They are annually reviewed and updated if necessary. Knowledge of these rates will be important when you negotiate a fee. The rates will often but may not always cover the entire amount billed by your approved TSP. Example: The NTE rate for engineering services to design and oversee construction of a waste storage structure could be a maximum of \$7,000. If the engineer charges you \$14,000 you will receive \$7,000. If the engineer charges you \$6,000 you will receive \$6,000. ***Ask your local NRCS official for NTE information.***

## ▪ Determine how to pay a TSP

You receive money for TSP services after the service is complete. But how and when you pay the TSP will be between you and the TSP. TSPs may request payment in advance. TSPs may request that a contract be drawn up specifying when and how you will pay them. In some cases TSPs might suggest that you work out an “assignment of payment” with them. If you agree, they are paid directly by NRCS after successfully completing a service (instead of having NRCS pay you and you in turn paying the TSP).

## How do you obtain USDA funds to hire a TSP?

TSP funds are currently available if you have a year 2002-2004 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contract or will have a contract to install one or more conservation practices. Funds are set aside for you to construct those practices over the length of your contract (2-10 years). However, funds to hire a TSP are fiscal year specific and cannot be put into your contract until the scheduled year of practice installation.

### • Forestry and Wastewater and Feedlot Runoff Control Practices

- ◆ Request TSP funding during an EQIP signup period if you plan on installing those practices in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of your contract.
- ◆ Request TSP funding for practices scheduled for installation in later years of your contract by requesting contract modifications in those specific years.

### • EQIP Nutrient and Pest Management Practices

- ◆ *Fiscal year 2003 and 2004 EQIP contract holders.* Request a contract modification in each year you have scheduled nutrient or pest management.
- ◆ *Fiscal year 2005 and later EQIP contracts.* Request incentive payments for up to three years for the highest level of management only obtained by use of a certified nutrient or pest management specialist. NRCS will set aside this funding for you but will not put separate TSP funds into your contract. Specifically NRCS is giving you an incentive for high level nutrient management. You will have to decide how to hire and pay the certified specialist helping you manage at a high level.

**Note:** *Make sure you have an NRCS certified TSP willing to work for you before requesting TSP funding.*

## How do I receive payment for my conservation practice if I am using a TSP? How do I receive payment for the TSP who helped me install that conservation practice?

Payment for your conservation practice is released at your request after you have submitted invoices and bills for practice installation; provided documentation of successful installation; and certified on form CCC-1245 that your practice has been successfully installed. Documentation requirements are found in the SOWs discussed above. NRCS may also ask your TSP to certify successful practice installation.

Payment for your TSP’s services is released at your request upon completion of those services **if that individual is on our “certified list”** and you have provided us the TSPs’ invoices describing the service and cost of that service.

You also have to certify on form CCC-1245 that the services were successfully provided and submit documentation of that success. Documentation requirements are also shown in the SOWs discussed above.

Your EQIP program contract will likely contain separate TSP codes for engineered practices: 911 (design); 912 (installation); and 913 (practice checkout). In such cases you can request TSP funds for each component after your TSP has successfully completed that component.

## What assurance do I have that my TSP’s assistance will be acceptable to NRCS?

TSPs are required to sign a Technical Service Provider Certification

Agreement with NRCS. As part of that agreement, TSPs certify to us that their services will comply with all applicable laws and meet all NRCS technical and program requirements. Additionally, NRCS will randomly spot check TSP work for adequacy.

