



SUBJECT: Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Advancing Equity Policy Statement

TO: All NRCS Employees

NRCS has proudly served and provided conservation technical assistance to farmers, ranchers, and other private landowners and managers for over almost 90 years. In continuing to implement good business practices, it is NRCS' policy to provide equal opportunity in all programs, services, and activities for all individuals and communities. Furthermore, NRCS prioritizes equity, along with equal opportunity for all, as an organizational value. The purpose of the NRCS Advancing Equity policy statement is to reaffirm and highlight the agency's commitment and support to the provisions of Executive Order (EO) 13985, "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government", signed by President Biden on January 20, 2021.

Equity in NRCS means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals to provide equal opportunity to participate in NRCS federally conducted and federally assisted programs, services, and activities, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

Since the agency's establishment, unfortunately, historically underserved communities and individuals have experienced significant barriers to equity, equality, and justice in NRCS' programs and policies. NRCS explicitly acknowledges that these inequalities and impediments have denied equitable services to many of our citizens. To achieve equity, it will be NRCS' mission to remove and dismantle those barriers of inequalities and impediments and create opportunities for all.

As Chief of this great agency, I champion this administration's goal for the Federal Government in advancing equity to provide everyone with the opportunity to reach their full potential. To meet this destination, NRCS will do its part by assessing its conservation, procurement, and grants and agreements programs and policies that may perpetuate systemic barriers to opportunities and benefits for the historically underserved and remedy inequities that limit the goal of equal opportunity. Our programs and services are too important to fall short. We will strive every day to earn trust in our programs and services when working with the historically underserved.

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To further affirm my commitment and support in advancing equity, in October 2021, I officially added the NRCS Equity Division to the agency's organizational structure. The NRCS Equity Division Director reports directly to the Associate Chief. Although the Equity Division will lead the agency's charge in advancing equity, all NRCS employees are held accountable for the provisions of the NRCS Equity Action Plan and adhering to the spirit and intent of our duty of equal opportunity for all. Stressing how integral our commitment is to this issue, this policy statement may be reviewed and reissued annually.

Terry J. Cosby
Chief