

USDA NRCS Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP) and Certified Technical Service Providers (TSPs)

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Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



USDA NRCS Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP) and Certified Technical Service Providers (TSPs)



Technical Service Provider Branch
USDA NRCS

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Agenda

- Overview
 - Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP) and Technical Service Providers (TSPs)
- TSP Roles Through the RPP Conservation Planning Process
 - Conservation Planning Activities and Whole Farm Assessments
 - Monitoring and Assessment through CEMAs
 - Designing Selected Practices with DIAs
 - Other TSP Support through the 900 series
- Process to become a Certified TSP
 - Initial TSP Certification Agreement and Modifying to Add RPP Work
- Highlighting CEMA 216 Soil Health Testing
- Summary and Wrap Up
- Question and Answer



Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP) Overview

Regenerative agriculture is a conservation management approach that emphasizes

Natural resources through improved soil health

Water management

Natural vitality for the productivity and prosperity of agriculture and communities



The RPP addresses whole-farm resource concerns through support for voluntary regenerative agriculture Conservation Plans

Current NRCS Programs Supporting RPP

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is NRCS' flagship conservation program that helps farmers, ranchers and forest landowners integrate conservation into working lands.

- **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) helps producers build on your existing conservation efforts while strengthening their operation.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives>

RPP in EQIP and CSP

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
All land that encompasses the “whole farm” will be evaluated	All land under control for the life of the contract will be evaluated
All applicable Resource Concerns evaluated	
<u>For at least one land unit:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil & Water Resource Concern thresholds are at met condition by end of contract* 	<u>On at least one land use (range, pasture, crop, forest):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil & Water Resource Concern thresholds are at met condition by end of contract*
<u>At least one land unit</u> must meet the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Primary RPP Practice planned or currently being implemented • Soil Health Testing beginning and end of contract 	
Minimum 5-year contract	

**Planned practices necessary to achieve these Soil and Water Outcomes must be contracted.*

Notes: All other applicable program requirements, including CSP Stewardship Threshold Eligibility, still apply. Qualified applications may or may not be funded.

RPP Planning and Contract Requirements

- Whole Farm Assessment
- Primary Practices*
- Soil Health Testing
- Minimum 5-year contract

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/regenerative-pilot-program>



NRCS Certified TSPs

TSPs are technical experts in their field.

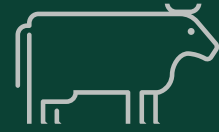
TSPs are certified by NRCS for specific types of technical assistance.

- Developing conservation plans
- Designing conservation practices
- Overseeing the installation and certification of conservation practices

Certification requirements to be a TSP vary based on the services and location (state or territory) in which they apply.

TSPs are hired by NRCS Program Participants to provide technical assistance in reaching their conservation goals.

Types of TSPs



Range and Pasture Specialists



Agronomists



Foresters



Biologists



Soil Specialists



Organic Specialists



Engineers

RPP and Technical Service Providers (TSPs)

Certified Technical Service Providers (TSPs) may be hired by RPP Program Participants with Financial Assistance Contracts.

Certified TSPs may be hired by Program Participants to:

- Develop Conservation Plans (CPA-199)
 - Conduct required Whole-Farm Assessments
- Design RPP Primary and Supporting Conservation Practices
- Perform Technical Assistance for Practice Design, Installation Oversight, and/or checkout
- Conduct Soil Testing (CEMA 216)

www.nrcs.usda.gov/tsp

Technical Service
Providers

TSP Roles Through the RPP Conservation Planning Process



RPP TSP Assistance Process Overview



A TECHNICAL
EXPERT BECOMES
CERTIFIED BY
NRCS AS A TSP.
NAME APPEARS
ON "FIND A TSP"



TSP IS
CONTACTED BY A
PROGRAM
PARTICIPANT
WITH A RPP
CONTRACT



WHEN HIRED,
TSP PERFORMS
TECHNICAL
SERVICES AND
SUBMITS
COMPLETED
WORK



NRCS REVIEWS
DELIVERABLES &
PAYS THE PROGRAM
PARTICIPANT FOR
COMPLETED TSP
ITEMS IN RPP
CONTRACT

TSP Services Fall Into Two Main Categories

Conservation Activities



- Conservation Planning Activities (CPA)
- Design and Implementation Activities (DIA)
- Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activities (CEMA)

Use FA funds
Typically included with the original contract obligation

900 Series



- Design of a Conservation Practice (911)
- Installation Oversight of a Conservation Practice (912)
- Check-Out of the Completed Conservation Practices (913)

Use state-level TA funds
Added to an active contract through a modification

How can TSPs help Producers with their conservation needs?

A Certified TSP can assist with all nine steps of the conservation planning process through NRCS Financial Assistance Programs

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8			Step 9
Identify Problems	Determine Objectives	Inventory Resources	Analyze Data	Formulate Alternatives	Evaluate Alternatives	Make Decisions	Implement the Plan			Evaluate the Plan
							Design	Installation Oversight	Check-Out	

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Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8			Step 9
Identify Problems	Determine Objectives	Inventory Resources	Analyze Data	Formulate Alternatives	Evaluate Alternatives	Make Decisions	Implement the Plan			Evaluate the Plan
							Design	Installation Oversight	Check-Out	
Conservation Planning Activity (CPA)							911 or DIA	912	913	

CEMA
Qualified Individual (QI)

TSP Services for RPP

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8			Step 9
Identify Problems	Determine Objectives	Inventory Resources	Analyze Data	Formulate Alternatives	Evaluate Alternatives	Make Decisions	Implement the Plan			Evaluate the Plan
							Design	Installation Oversight	Check-Out	

Develop Conservation Plans (CPA-199)
 Conduct required Whole-Farm Assessments

CONSERVATION PLANNING ACTIVITIES (CPAs)

“CPAs produce conservation plans that document participant objectives, existing resource concerns, and participant decisions regarding conservation practices and activities that will be used to address identified resource concerns.”

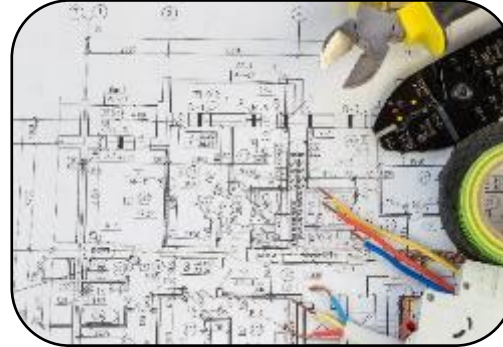
- **199 Conservation Plan ***
- 102 Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan
- 106 Forest Management Plan
- 110 Grazing Management Plan
- 116 Soil Health Management Plan
- 138 Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition

*Note: CPA 199 is optional for RPP. But all other CPAs can also be contracted for RPP.

CONSERVATION PLANNING ACTIVITIES (CPAs)

Deliverables

The resulting product is a stand-alone document which a customer can utilize for land-management decisions.



Maps

Habitat Parameter	Condition Category			
	Optimal	Suboptimal	Marginal	Poor
1. Epifaunal Substrate: Available Cover	Greater than 70% of substrate favorable for epifaunal colonization and fish cover; max of mang, submerged logs, undercut banks, cobble or other stable habitat and in stage to allow full colonization potential (i.e. logs/mang that are not new fall and not transitory)	40-70% max of stable habitat; well suited for full colonization potential; adequate habitat for maintenance of populations; presence of additional substrate in the form of overfall, but not yet prepared for colonization (may rare at high end of scale)	20-40% max of stable habitat; habitat availability less than desirable; substrate frequently disturbed or removed	Less than 20% stable habitat; lack of habitat in obvious; substrate unstable or lacking
SCORE	20 19 18 17 16	15 14 13 12 11	10 9 8 7 6	5 4 3 2 1 0
2. Embeddedness	Gravel, cobble, and boulder particles are 0-25% surrounded by fine sediment. Layering of cobble provides diversity of niche space.	Gravel, cobble, and boulder particles are 25-50% surrounded by fine sediment.	Gravel, cobble, and boulder particles are 50-75% surrounded by fine sediment.	Gravel, cobble, and boulder particles are more than 75% surrounded by fine sediment.
SCORE	20 19 18 17 16	15 14 13 12 11	10 9 8 7 6	5 4 3 2 1 0
3. Velocity/Depth Regime	All four velocity/depth regimes present (slow-deep, slow-shallow, fast-deep, fast-shallow) (Slew is <math>0.3\text{ m}^3\text{, deep is } 0.5 m)	Only 3 of the 4 regimes present (if fast-shallow is missing, score lower than if missing other regimes)	Only 2 of the 4 habitat regimes present (if fast-shallow or slow-shallow are missing, score low)	Dominated by 1 velocity/depth regime (usually slow-deep)
SCORE	20 19 18 17 16	15 14 13 12 11	10 9 8 7 6	5 4 3 2 1 0
Sediment	Little or no enlargement of banks or point bars	Some new increase in bar formation, mostly from	Moderate deposition of new gravel, sand or fine	Heavy deposits of fine material, increased

Assessments



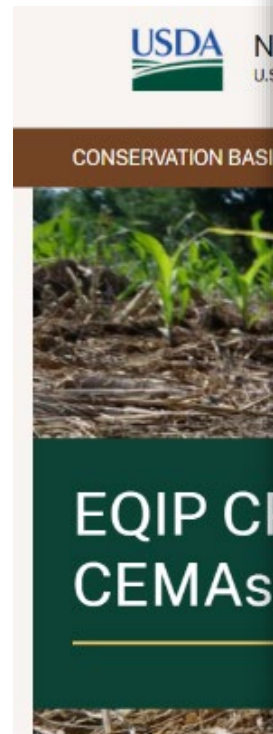
Goals



Alternatives

CONSERVATION PLANNING ACTIVITIES (CPAs)

Reference the primary Conservation
Activity document (pdf) on the
NRCS Website



Conservation Planning Activity

Conservation Plan CPA 199

Definition

A Conservation Plan addresses a limited number of resource concerns - or even a single resource concern – and consequently does not achieve a resource management system (RMS) level of treatment.

Applicable Land Uses

This conservation planning activity is applicable to any Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) recognized land use.

REQUIREMENTS

General Requirements

This Conservation Planning Activity (CPA) involves a Technical Service Provider (TSP), hired by a Farm Bill Program participant, providing a conservation plan to document participant objectives, benchmark (current) conditions, resource concerns, alternative actions, the evaluation of alternative actions, and the participant's preferred alternative with the intent to achieve specific ecological, economic and management objectives.

This activity will meet the NRCS planning criteria for one or more of the plant, animal, water, air, and soil resource concerns. The overall conservation plan must accomplish one or more purposes as described in the criteria and considerations for each conservation practice, as described in the Conservation planning process as outlined in the NRCS National Planning Procedures Handbook (NPPH), steps 1-7. A summary of those seven steps is provided in [Appendix A, Conservation Planning Activity, General Requirements](#), at the end of this document. Do not overlook the General Requirements – they are important for this CPA's development.

State-specific conservation planning reference information and technology is provided in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG). The FOTG home page hyperlink is: <https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/>

Technical Requirements

The TSP must:

- 1) Arrange a pre-work meeting between participant, TSP and NRCS field office staff in order to

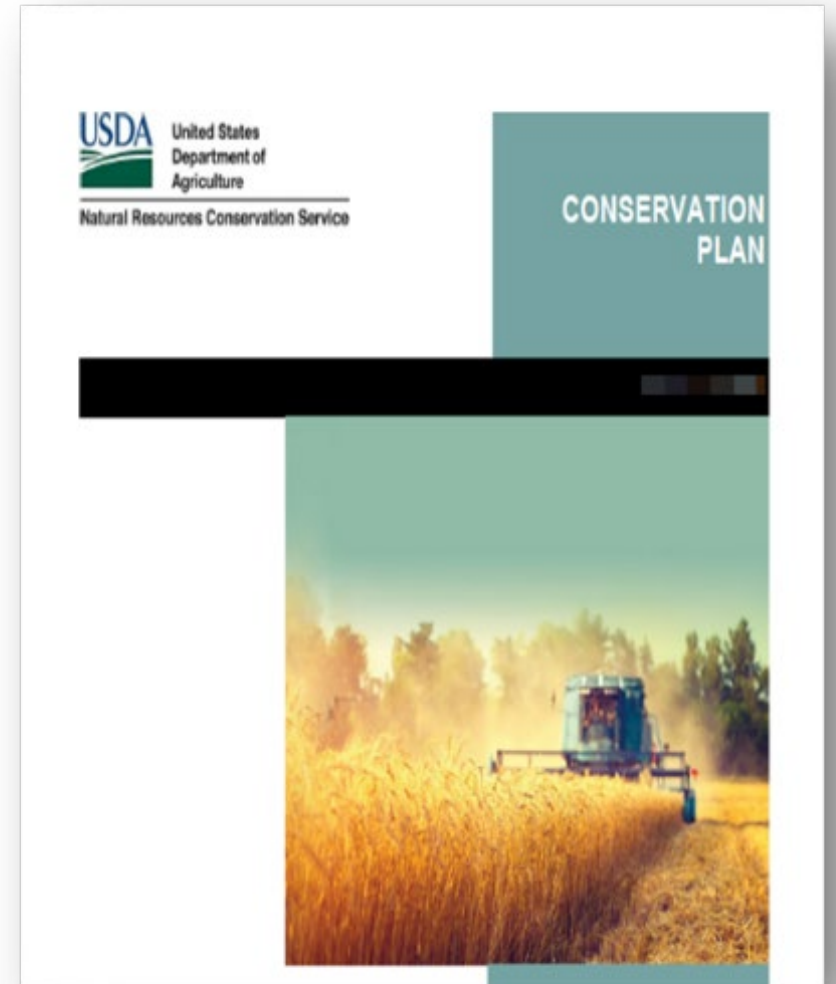
Conservation Plans to Help Meet RPP

Required

- Conservation Plan must span a minimum of 5 years
- A minimum of one primary Regen Practice
 - **Existing, or**
 - **Planned**
- Soil Health Testing 216 planned beginning and end of plan/contract
- Soil and Water Resource Concerns planned condition must meet or exceeded threshold
 - Planned practices to achieve outcome must be contracted

Optional

- Supporting and other practices are eligible
- CEMA 217 Soil and Source Testing for Nutrient Management
- CPA199 supports the client hiring a certified TSP to write the conservation plan.



Using TSPs To Complete Whole Farm Assessments

199 Conservation Plan Deliverables *mostly* overlap with RPP Requirements

To increase content that satisfies RPP, *communicate early*

- “These resource concerns need to be fully evaluated”
- Offer a planning alternative that is five years in length (practice schedule)
- Document client goals that are (or are not) related to RPP

The payment rates are based on the CPA199 deliverables.

RPP Whole Farm Assessment – Resource Concerns

- **A complete assessment of all resource concerns is required**
- All applicable Resource Concerns and corresponding Components will be evaluated **with the goal of establishing a whole farm plan before the end of the contract period.**
- By the end of the contract period **all Soil and Water resource concerns will be met**
 - EQIP – can be subset of all land units based on client objectives
 - CSP – On at least one land use (of range, pasture, crop, forest) before the end of the 5-year contract

Resource Concern Categories	
>	<input type="checkbox"/> Air (Air quality emissions)
>	<input type="checkbox"/> Animals (Aquatic habitat)
>	<input type="checkbox"/> Animals (Livestock production limitation)
>	<input type="checkbox"/> Animals (Terrestrial habitat)
>	<input type="checkbox"/> Energy (Inefficient energy use)
>	<input type="checkbox"/> Plants (Degraded plant condition)
>	<input type="checkbox"/> Plants (Fire management)
>	<input type="checkbox"/> Plants (Pest pressure)
>	<input type="checkbox"/> Soil (Concentrated erosion)
>	<input type="checkbox"/> Water (Field pesticide loss)
>	<input type="checkbox"/> Water (Source water depletion)
>	<input type="checkbox"/> Water (Storage and handling of pollutants)
>	<input type="checkbox"/> Water (Weather resilience)

National Resource Concern List and Planning Criteria

All resource concerns and applicable planning criteria are found in the National Resource Concern List and Planning Criteria document. (Jan. 2026)

- The planning criteria includes the minimum treatment necessary to address the resource concern to the point where it is sustainably functioning for its intended purpose.
- TSPs are expected to use and understand these criteria in conservation planning.



Conservation Practice Physical Effects - CPPE

CPPEs are used to describe the effects of each conservation practice on resource concerns.

Example: Cover Crop and Soil Erosion concerns

Resource Concerns FY2026				Sheet and Rill Erosion	Wind Erosion	Ephemeral Gully Erosion	Classic Gully Erosion				
Practice	Lead Discipline(s)	Practice Code	Unit	Effect	Rationale	Effect	Rationale	Effect	Rationale		
Cover Crop	ESD-Agron	340	ac.	Moderate to Substantial Improvement	Increased cover during erosive periods will reduce soil detachment by water.	Moderate to Substantial Improvement	Increased cover during erosive periods will reduce soil detachment by wind.	Moderate Improvement	Increased cover during erosive periods will reduce concentrated flow and associated soil detachment.	No Effect	Not Applicable

Updated FY 26 CPPE Spreadsheet available at:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/resources/guides-and-instructions/conservation-practice-physical-effects>

RPP Primary Practices and Required Activity

Conservation Practices

Code	Asset Name	Crop	Forest	Pasture	Range
328	Conservation Crop Rotation	Y	N	N	N
330	Contour Farming	Y	N	N	N
331	Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crop	Y	N	N	N
340	Cover Crop	Y	Y	Y	N
554	Drainage Water Management	Y	Y	Y	Y
511	Forage Harvest Management	Y	Y	Y	Y
666	Forest Stand Improvement	N	Y	Y	N
449	Irrigation Water Management	Y	Y	Y	N
484	Mulching	Y	Y	Y	Y
590	Nutrient Management	Y	Y	Y	N
595	Pest Management Conservation System	Y	Y	Y	Y
528	Prescribed Grazing	Y	Y	Y	Y
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till	Y	N	N	N
345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced	Y	N	N	N
585	Stripcropping	Y	N	N	N

Conservation Activity

Code	Asset Name
CEMA 216	Soil Health Testing

Excerpts from NI 440 307.14 Regenerative Dec. 2025

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES (DIAs)

DIAs produce designs, prescriptions, or other instructions for implementing a single conservation practice, or a system of conservation practices derived from the participant's conservation plan.

- DIA 101 CNMP Design and Implementation Activity
- DIA 120 Agricultural Energy Design
- DIA 140 Transition to Organic Design
- DIA 144 Fish and Wildlife Habitat Design
- DIA 148 Pollinator Habitat Design
- DIA 157 Nutrient Management Design
- DIA 158 Feed and Management Design
- DIA 159 Grazing Management Design
- DIA 160 Prescribed Burning Design
- DIA 161 Pest Management Conservation System Design
- DIA 162 Soil Health Management System Design
- DIA 163 Irrigation Water Management Design
- DIA 164 Improved Management of Drainage Water Design
- DIA 165 Forest Management Practice

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES (DIAs)

Deliverables

The resulting products are the details needed to install/implement the conservation practices identified in the Conservation Plan to NRCS Standards and Specifications



Ex. Plant species



Ex. Irrigation system layout



Ex. Fence wire heights




Ex. Pest thresholds

RPP Practice Implementation Requirements (IR)

- All Practices Planned must meet the general and additional criteria that align with Soil and Water resource concerns in the Conservation Practice Standard.
- Criteria for Soil and Water resource concerns can be incorporated in the Implementation Requirement document provided to the client.



Client Name:	County:	Date:
Planned By:	Job Class:	Planned Amt:
Program:	Contract Number:	Units:
CSP Enhancement (if applicable):		
Tract(s)/Field(s):		
PURPOSE <i>(Check all that apply)</i>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Reduce sheet, rill, and wind erosion		
<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain or increase soil organic matter		
<input type="checkbox"/> Improve soil aggregate stability		
<input type="checkbox"/> Improve habitat for soil organisms		
<input type="checkbox"/> Reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excess soil nutrients		
<input type="checkbox"/> Reduce weed and plant pest pressure		
<input type="checkbox"/> Improve moisture management		
<input type="checkbox"/> Reduce soil compaction		
<input type="checkbox"/> Supply nitrogen to the subsequent crop		
<input type="checkbox"/> Improve habitat for pollinators, beneficial organisms, or natural enemies of crop pests		
NOTE: <i>For more specific detail, refer to 340 WI Cover Crop Guidance Document and Field Office Technical Guide, Section IV, Standard 340, Cover Crop. Insurance may require additional termination guidelines such as terminating prior to or within 5 days of planting (pre-emergence). To develop a multispecies cover crop mix, see 340 WI GD Cover Crop Seeding Calculator on the Wisconsin Field Office Technical Guide.</i>		
COMMENTS		
		Cover crop seeding - winter rye, crimson clover, and winter peas. Photo Credit: Derrick Raspor, WI NRCS.

CONSERVATION EVALUATION AND MONITORING ACTIVITIES (CEMAs)

“CEMAs produce results of an evaluation,
monitoring, test, or assessment.”

CEMAs are completed by a **QUALIFIED
INDIVIDUAL (QI)**

Each CEMA has its own qualification
requirements.

- CEMA 201 Edge of Field Water Quality Monitoring Data Collection and Evaluation
- CEMA 202 Edge of Field Water Quality Monitoring System Installation
- CEMA 204 Adaptive Management Statistical Tool Spreadsheet
- CEMA 204 Adaptive Management for Soil Health
- CEMA 206 Feed and Forage Analysis
- CEMA 207 Site Assessment and Soil Testing for Contaminants Activity
- CEMA 209 PFAS Testing in Water or Soil
- **CEMA 216 Soil Health Testing – RPP (Required)**
- **CEMA 217 Soil and Source Testing for Nutrient Management – RPP (Optional)**
- CEMA 218 Carbon Sequestration and Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Assessment
- CEMA 219 Prescribed Grazing Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring
- CEMA 221 Soil Carbon Stock Monitoring
- CEMA 222 Indigenous Stewardship Methods Evaluation
- CEMA 223 Forest Management Assessment
- CEMA 224 Aquifer Flow Test
- CEMA 226 Site Suitability and Feasibility for Waste Storage Facility
- CEMA 227 Evaluation of Existing Waste Storage Facility Components
- CEMA 228 Ag Energy Assessment
- CEMA 297 Feral Swine Damage Assessment

CONSERVATION EVALUATION AND MONITORING ACTIVITIES (CEMAs)

Deliverables

The resulting product(s) contribute to the decision making of our customers: before planning, during planning, or to after project implementation to evaluate the outcomes.



Ex. Forage and Pasture Analysis



Ex. Soil test for heavy metals or other contaminants



Ex. Forest stand inventories



Ex. Identify lands with cultural and/or spiritual significance

How can TSPs help Producers with their conservation needs?

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Identify Problems	Determine Objectives	Inventory Resources	Analyze Data	Formulate Alternatives	Evaluate Alternatives	Make Decisions	Implement the Plan			Evaluate the Plan
							Design	Installation Oversight	Check-Out	
Conservation Planning Activity (CPA)							911 or DIA	912	913	

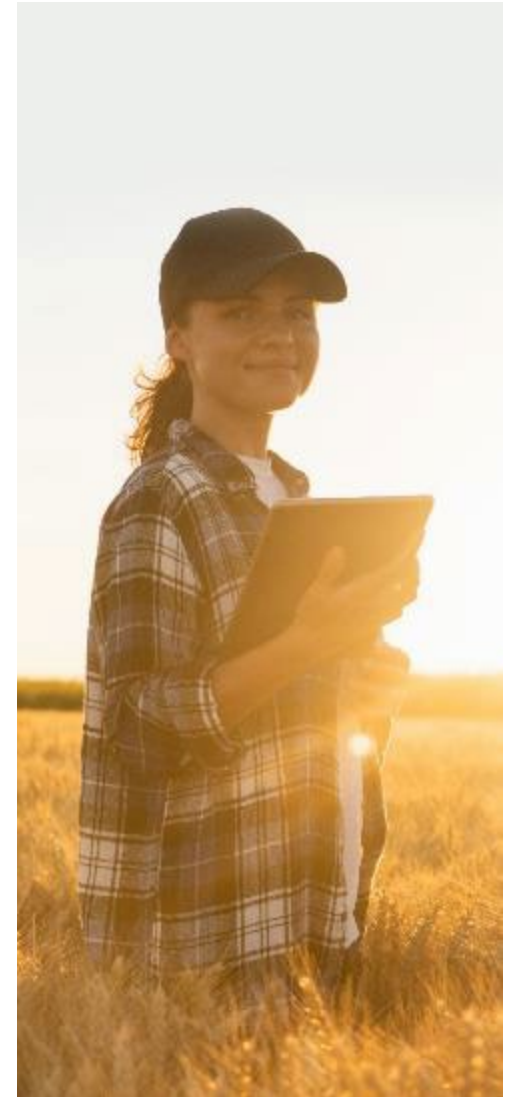
CEMA
Qualified Individual (QI)

900 Series Technical Assistance (TA)

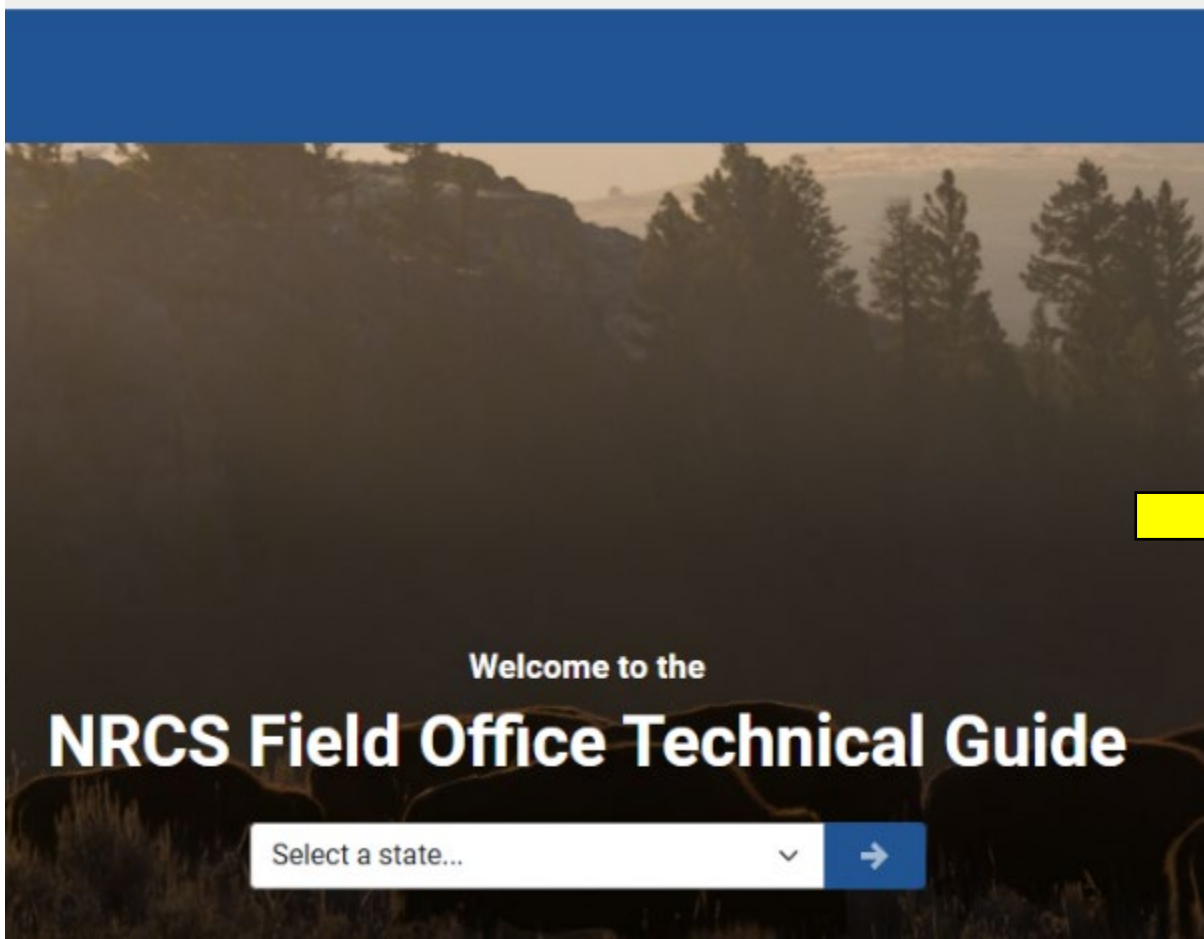
Funding for TSP services can be added to an active NRCS Financial Assistance contract for planned Conservation Practices – mimics NRCS staff technical responsibilities

- Design (**911**)
- Installation Oversight (Quality Assurance) (**912**)
- Certification of Completion (**913**)

Availability and level of payment rates vary by states and are set as “not to exceed” rates based on the completed quantity and TSP invoice.



900 Series- Deliverables in FOTG



Field Office Technical Guide | CA

Document Tree | Document Search

Keyboard Navigation Instructions

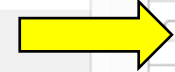
- Section 1 - General Resource References
- Section 2 - Natural and Cultural Resources Information
- Section 3 - Resource Concerns and Planning Criteria
- Section 4 - Practice Standards and Supporting Documents**

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- Conservation Practice Standards & Support Documents
- Access Control (472)
- Access Road (560)
- Agrichemical Handling Facility (309)
- Air Filtration and Scrubbing (371)
- Alley Cropping (311)

Cover Crop (340)

- ★ Featured by Content Manager**
- 340 CA CPS Cover Crop 2025
- 340 CA SOW Cover Crop 2011
- 340 CA IR Cover Crop 2025
- 340 CA PS Cover Crop-General 2015
- 340 CA PS Cover Crop-Planting Specifications 2019
- 340 CA GD Cover Crop-Planning Support Discussion Guide 2025
- 340 CA GD Cover Crop-Termination Guidelines 2019



STATEMENT OF WORK
Cover Crop (340)
California

These deliverables apply to this individual practice. For deliverables for other planned practices, refer to those specific Statements of Work.

DESIGN

Deliverables

1. Design documents that demonstrate criteria in NRCS practice standard have been met and are compatible with planned and applied practices
 - a. Practice purpose(s) are identified and are compatible with the conservation plan and (where applicable) client's crop insurance.
 - b. List of required permits to be obtained by the client
 - c. List all required and/or facilitating practices
 - d. Practice standard criteria-related computations and analyses to develop plans and specifications including but not limited to:
 - i. Planting dates
 - ii. Site and seedbed preparation
 - iii. Soil amendments required
 - iv. Species selection and seeding rates
 - v. Cover crop termination time and method
2. Written plans and specifications shall be provided to the client that adequately describes the requirements to install the practice and obtain necessary permits. Plans and specifications shall be developed in accordance with the requirements of conservation practice standard Cover Crop (Code 340).
3. Operation and maintenance plan
4. Certification that the design meets practice standard criteria and comply with applicable laws and regulations
5. Design modifications during application as required.

INSTALLATION

Deliverables

1. Verification that client has obtained required permits and
2. Application guidance as needed
3. Facilitate and implement required design modifications with client and original designer
4. Advise client/NRCS on compliance issues with all federal, state, tribal, and local laws, regulations and NRCS policies during application
5. Certification that the application process and materials meets design and permit requirements and (where applicable) client's crop insurance.

CHECK OUT

Deliverables

1. Records of application
 - a. Extent of practice units applied
 - b. Actual materials used
2. Certification that the application meets NRCS standards and specifications and is in compliance with permits
3. Progress reporting

RPP Practice Statement of Work (SOW)

The Statement of Work (SOW) lists the **deliverables** for Design, Installation Oversight, and Check-Out.

- The SOW is critical for **TSP work products** and is the primary reference for the 900 code payment rate calculations.
- Some deliverables may not be relevant to a project. The TSP must indicate why it was not completed, as described

RPP - How TSPs Are Paid

Funding for TSP services is obligated as individual line items in an NRCS Farm Bill contract.

REMINDER: The Contract is between NRCS and the Program Participant.

The program participant selects and hires the TSP to complete the required deliverables for that service.

The work products (deliverables) are completed and submitted to NRCS.

A payment is made to the program participant.

The program participant pays the TSP according to their pre-determined arrangement.

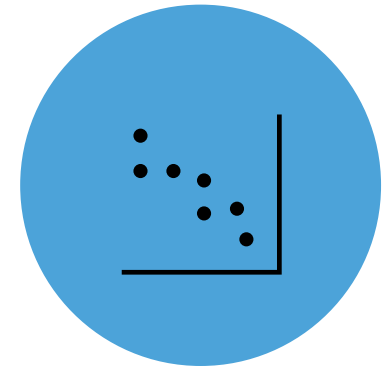
RPP - More on How TSPs Are Paid



NRCS PAYMENTS ARE
BASED ON THE FINAL
QUANTITY
(NUMBER, ACRES, FEET,
GALLONS, ETC).



TSPS CAN ARRANGE AN
ALTERNATIVE RATE WITH
THE CLIENT AHEAD OF
TIME.



ALL WORK MUST MEET
NRCS STANDARDS,
SPECIFICATIONS, AND
NRCS POLICY

CEMA 216 Soil Health Testing for RPP



RPP - Planning CEMA 216 Soil Health Testing

Frequency –

Soil Health Testing (CEMA 216) planning and contracting:

- Required at beginning and at end of the conservation plan and contract (at a minimum)

Location –

Soil Health Testing must be planned on one planning land unit (at a minimum).

- Extent will depend on the client's operation in combination with the client's objective.
 - Crop Rotation
 - Soil variability
 - Livestock vs no livestock
 - Nutrient sources
 - Client's desired extent of testing




RPP - Soil Health Testing CEMA 216

Soil Health Testing (CEMA 216) is required the first and last years of the contract (at a minimum) to establish a starting baseline and to record the resulting changes.

Financial assistance for **Soil Health Testing (CEMA 216)** is available to regardless of previous testing history.

Soil and Source Testing for Nutrient Management (CEMA 217) is optional.



United States Department of Agriculture CEMA 216 - Page 1

Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity

Soil Health Testing
CEMA 216

DEFINITION
Quantitative testing for biological, chemical, and physical characteristics of soil and constraints using approved laboratory methods.

APPLICABLE LAND USES
All Land Uses.

Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activities					
Code	Asset Name	Crop	Forest	Pasture	Range
CEMA 216	Soil Health Testing	Y	Y	Y	Y
CEMA 217	Soil and Source Testing for Nutrient Management	Y	Y	Y	Y

[CEMA 216 Soil Health Testing 10-2024](#)

[CEMA 217 Soil and Source Testing for Nutrient Management 10-2022](#)

RPP - Soil Health Testing CEMA 216

- **Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activities (CEMAs)** are provided by Qualified Individuals (QIs).
- QIs self-certify they meet qualification criteria stated in a CEMA document.
- Professional licenses, accreditations, certifications, and experience typify qualification criteria QI.
- A QI may, or may not, also hold TSP certification. Certification in CPA 116 or CPA 162 meets qualifications

A QI for Soil Health Testing CEMA 216 meets one of the following:

- 1) Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) or Certified Professional Agronomist (CPAg) through the American Society of Agronomy or a Certified Professional Soil Scientist (CPSS) or Associate Professional Soil Scientist (APSS) through the Soil Science Society of America.
- 2) Technical Service Providers (TSP) certified for Soil Health Management Plan Conservation Practice Activity (116) or Soil Health Management Design and Implementation Activity (162).
- 3) An associate degree or higher in an agricultural or soil science field with at least 2 years of experience collecting soil for laboratory analysis.
- 4) Individuals working under the guidance or management of a QI are allowed to collect soil samples for this CEMA.

Excerpt from CEMA 216 Soil Health Testing document

Soil Health Testing CEMA 216

- 11) Ensure laboratories maintain current certification from one of the following:
- a) The Performance Assessment Program (PAP) from The North American Proficiency Testing Program (NAPT) under the auspices of the Soil Science Society of America, or
 - b) The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) National Accreditation Board (ANAB), or
 - c) The International Organization for Standardization (ISO/IEC 17043:2010) for ISO 10694:1995, or
 - d) State-approved certification program that considers laboratory performance and proficiency to assure accuracy of soil test results.

Excerpt from CEMA 216 Soil Health Testing document

RPP - Soil Health Recommendations for TSPs

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review CEMA 216 and Laboratory requirements
- Determine if you meet Qualified Individual Requirements
- Determine locations of Certified Laboratories
- Communicate with clients on the benefits of soil health and testing.

Soil Health Website

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns/soil/soil-health>

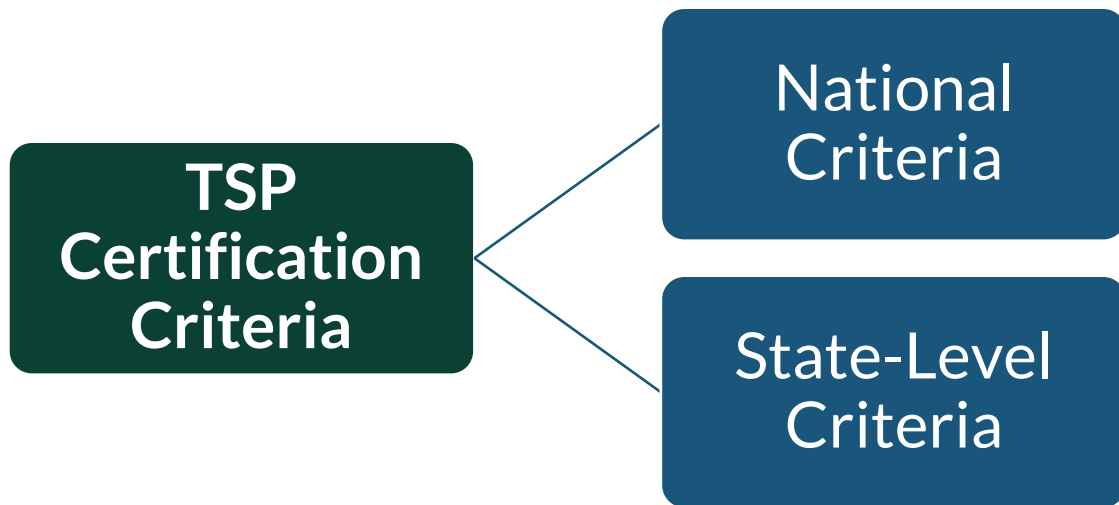
RESOURCES

- Recorded webinar on conservationwebinars.net: [Implementing CEMA 216- Updated Information January 2026](#)
- [CEMA 216 Job Aid](#)
- Technical notes on [eDirectives](#):
 - [TN-470-01 Choosing a Laboratory for Soil Health Testing](#)
 - [TN-470-07 Guidance on Grab Sampling for Soil Health Testing](#)
 - [TN-470-16 Soil Health Testing to Support Conservation Planning](#)

Process to Become a Certified TSP for RPP



BECOMING A CERTIFIED TSP FOR RPP



TSPs must be formally certified by NRCS for the services they wish to offer.

All Certification Criteria are listed on the NRCS TSP Website

Requirements for certification vary by conservation activity, conservation practice, and geographic location.

- Completion of Technical Training (NRCS provided)
- Work Experience
- Professional Certification
- Sample of Work
- **State Specific Requirements**

THREE PATHS TO TSP CERTIFICATION



1. Professional Certification



2. Experience



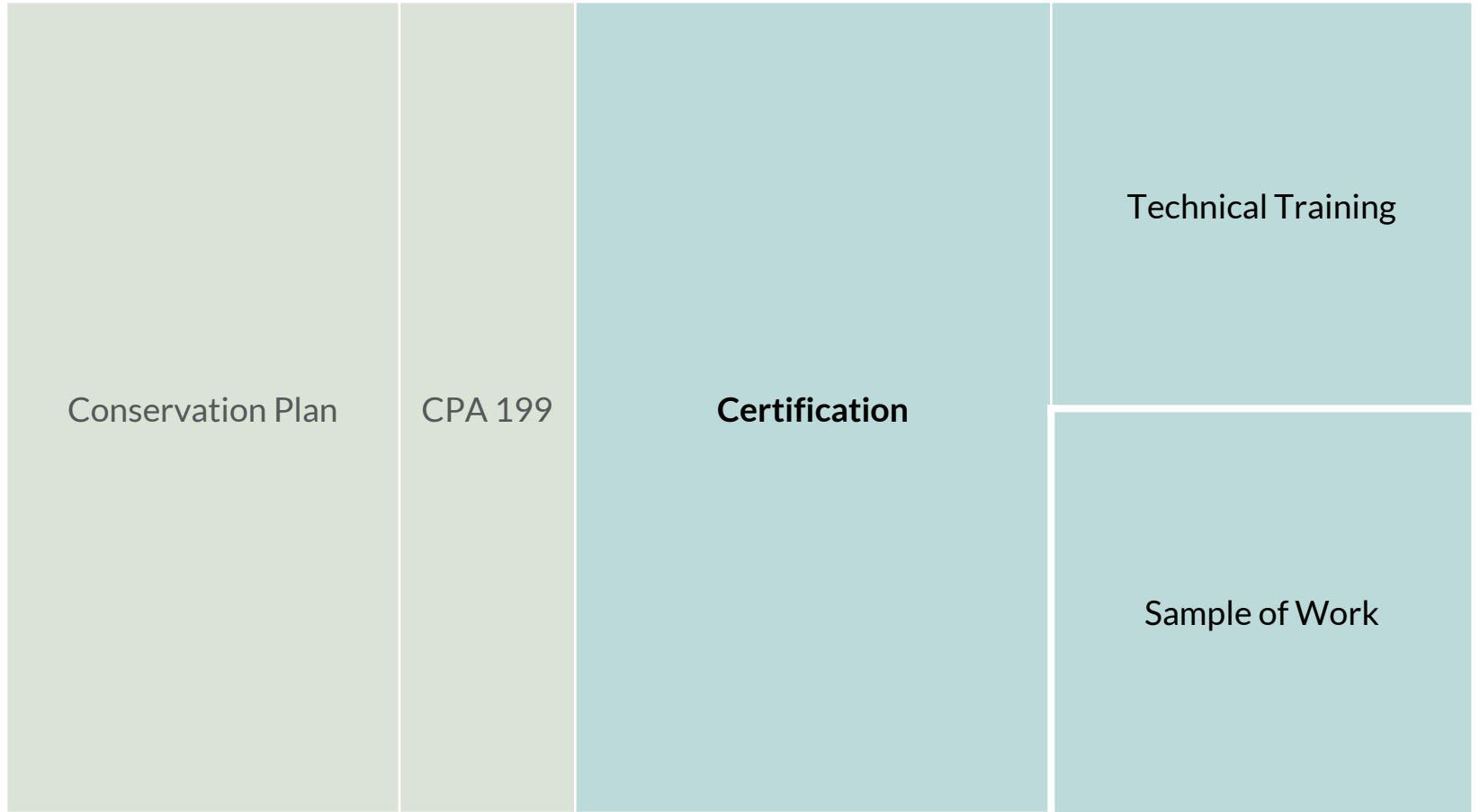
3. Education + Experience

BECOMING A CERTIFIED TSP

*Example of
Certification Criteria*

Contour Farming	CPS 330	Professional Certification	Professional Certification	<p>Certification in at least one of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) American Society of Agronomy (ASA): Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) or Certified Professional Agronomist (CPAg); 2) Soil Science Society of America (SSSA): Certified Professional Soil Scientist; 3) National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants (NAICC): Certified Professional Crop Consultant (CPCC); or 4) Professional Engineer License in any state (Agriculture Engineer, Biosystems Engineer or related major).
		Education and Experience	Education	Associate's or higher degree in Forestry, Agronomy, Soils, Animal or Plant Science, Natural Resources, or Rangeland Management.
			Experience	Demonstrate at least 2 years experience in planning, design, installation/layout, inspection, checkout and certification of this practice.

BECOMING A CERTIFIED TSP



*Example of
Certification Criteria*

TSP Certification Criteria Required Training - Conservation Plan (CPA 199)

- 1) Using Planning Criteria in Conservation Planning
- 2) Communication Skills for Conservation Professionals: The Art of Helping People Help the Land
- 3) Cultural Resources Training Series, Part 1
- 4) Environmental Evaluation Webinar Series No 1: Primer on NRCS Environmental Compliance
- 5) Environmental Evaluation Webinar Series No 2: Documenting the Environmental Evaluation
- 6) Basic Soils and Web Soil Survey to Interpret Land Capabilities & Limitations or Using Basic Soil Survey Information in Conservation Planning
- 7) Overview of Water Quality for Conservation Planners - No. 1
- 8) Nitrogen Management and Concerns – No. 2
- 9) Phosphorous Management and Concerns – No. 3
- 10) Sediment Management for Water Quality – No. 4
- 11) State-Specific Training Module for each state for which you are applying for certification,
- 12) Conservation Planning Course: Part 2 Modules 6 to 8**
- 13) Water Bodies – No. 5
- 14) Pest Management and Water Quality Implications – No. 6
- 15) Water Management
- 16) Conservation Planning course Part 3: Module 9
- 17) Cultural Resources Training Series Part 2**
- 18) Environmental Evaluation Webinar Series No. 3 to 11
- 19) Fundamentals of Highly Erodible Land & and Wetland Conservation Provisions or Fundamentals of Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation Provisions
- 20) Soil Health Basics for TSPs
- 21) Conservation Economics Webinar Series or Archived Course: Economics of Conservation Planning
- 22) Air Quality, Climate Change, and Energy



TSP Certification Criteria - Conservation Plan (CPA 199)- Sample of Work Requirements

Sample of Work Requirements:

- 1) The candidate will be accompanied to the field by the State Conservationist designee to meet with the decisionmaker.
- 2) The candidate will be expected to demonstrate competency in the planning process and planning development, as well as interpersonal skills representing excellent customer service.
- 3) At a minimum, the conservation plan components listed in 180-GM-409, Subpart E, Exhibit 5 should be documented in the plan or associated material.
- 4) The observer will evaluate the candidate's involvement with the decisionmaker (landowner or land operator) in the planning process to determine whether all client objectives and resource concerns associated with the planning area are adequately addressed, and whether the client understands the alternatives presented and feels satisfied with the planning assistance provided.
- 5) Field-reviewed plans must be approved by the State Conservationist or designee prior to final delivery to the decisionmaker.
- 6) A sample worksheet to evaluate the conservation plan can be found in 180-GM-409, Subpart E, Exhibit 5 (Conservation Planning Policy).

BECOMING A CERTIFIED TSP

Individuals with the required qualifications must apply to NRCS via the online “NRCS Registry” website.

TSPs sign a Certification Agreement with NRCS, which lists which services they are certified to perform, the locations (states/territories), and includes statements regarding their legal responsibilities.

A Certified TSP’s name will appear on the publicly available list “FIND A TSP” from which NRCS program participants can review and select.

NEXT STEPS- YOUR CONSIDERATIONS



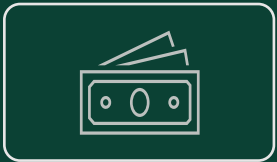
Technical Discipline and Qualifications

- National-Level TSP Criteria
- State-Level TSP Criteria



What is *needed-utilized-available* in your service area?

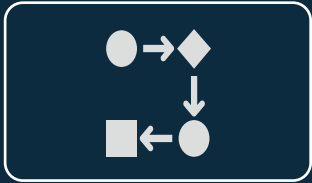
- Get familiar with needs in your area
- Get familiar with NRCS Programs (EQIP and CSP)



Payment rates and Deliverables

- View NRCS Payment Schedules
- Consider your awareness of required deliverables for work products

NEXT STEPS – NRCS REGISTRY FOR NEW TSP APPLICANTS



Start a new TSP application as an individual

Entity or business name can be associated with a business application after



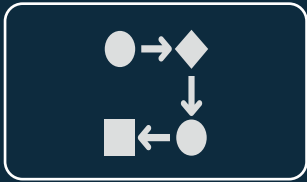
Complete required training(s) and develop samples of work

- TSP Orientation and Conservation Planning
- Other required



Upload necessary documents, review and sign certification agreement and submit the application

NEXT STEPS – NRCS REGISTRY FOR CURRENT CERTIFIED TSPS



Start a modification application logged in as an individual:
+Add RPP Primary Practices and RPP Optional Conservation Activities as applicable to your credentials



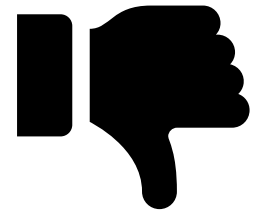
Complete any required training(s) and develop samples of work as required. Choose the states where you intend to provide these services.



Upload documentation, review and sign the certification agreement and submit application

Reminder: Quality Assurance

- Producers and NRCS expect quality deliverables
- NRCS may decertify a TSP if the TSP:
 - Fails to meet NRCS standards and specifications in the provision of technical services;
 - Violates the terms of the Certification Agreement
 - Engages in a scheme or device; or
 - Commits any other action of a serious or compelling nature as determined by NRCS that demonstrates the TSP's inability to fulfill the terms of the Certification Agreement or provide technical services.



Summary and Wrap-up



BENEFITS OF BEING AN NRCS CERTIFIED TSP



Income

NRCS Certified TSPs are paid to complete the technical assistance needs of Farm Bill Program Participants



Expand your Business

NRCS Certified TSPs can also be hired for other services.

- The actual construction/implementation of a conservation practices in the same contract
- Services outside of the NRCS contract

GETTING WORK AS A TSP



Advertise

Business website,
professional certification
websites

Ensure your contact
information is accurate on
the "Find a TSP" website



Engage with state and local NRCS staff

Learn about regional
programs and patterns.
Attend NRCS meetings



Introduce existing or new clients to NRCS programs



Offer **quality** services in high demand Offer a specialty

WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH NRCS STAFF

Agency
Organization



NATIONAL OFFICE – TSP Regional Coordinator

Certification – getting started, re-certification, modifying service area & support



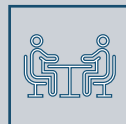
STATE OFFICE – State TSP Coordinator

State level review of qualification



AREA OFFICE – Area Specialist

Technical policy – SOWs, Standards & Specifications



FIELD OFFICE – District Conservationist

Contract questions, payments, program policy

WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH NRCS STAFF



A TSP should understand their role in the conservation planning process and the farm bill contracting process.



TSPs provide their own equipment and software



A TSP should be familiar with deliverables and “completeness” of work products, so the required effort is not underestimated.



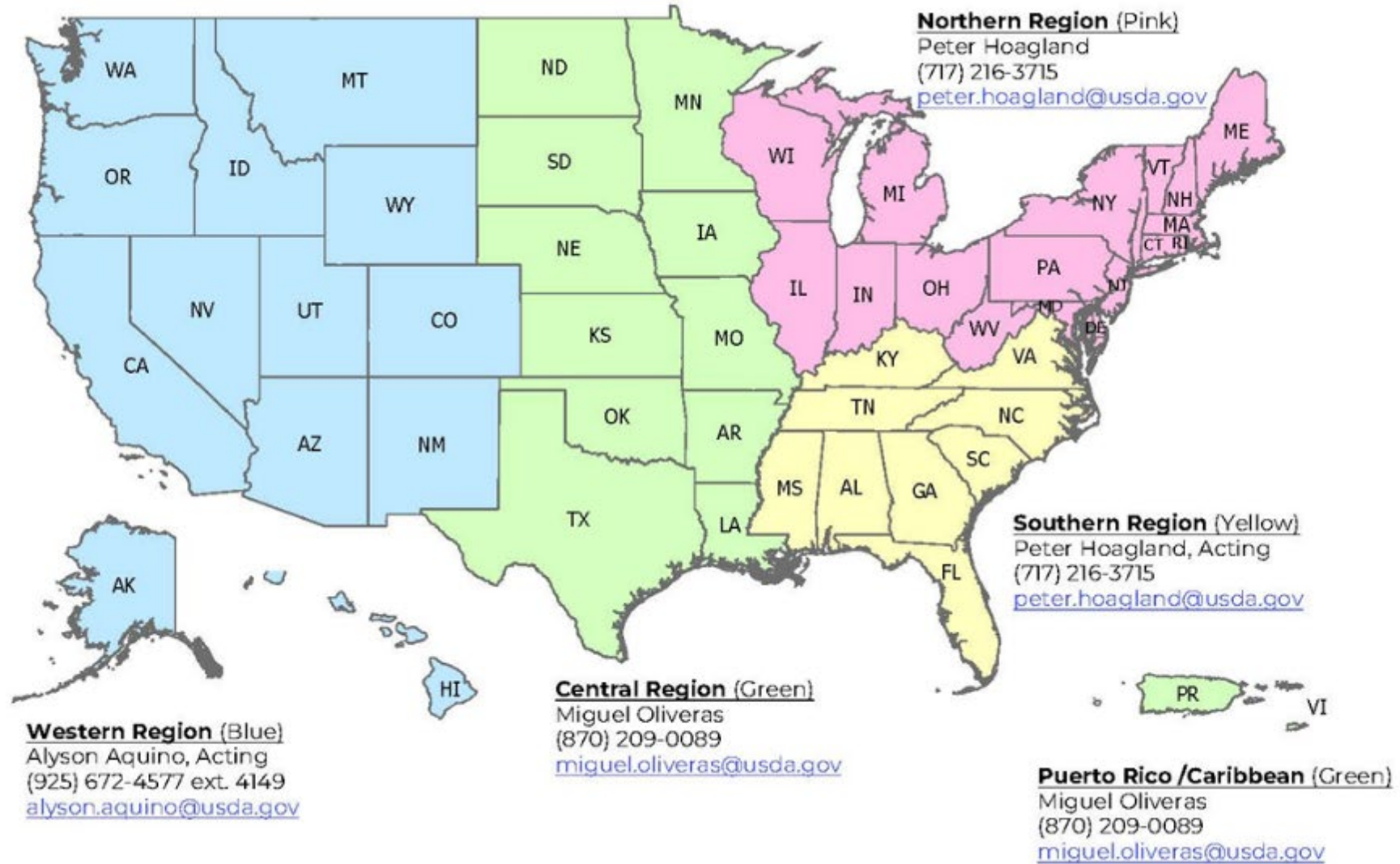
A TSP should thoroughly review the final work products with the program participant to agree on quantities and outcomes before submitting to NRCS.

RPP and TSPs Summary

- Certified TSPs may be hired by RPP Participants with NRCS program contracts to:
 - Develop Conservation Plans
 - Design RPP Primary and Supporting Conservation Practices,
 - Perform Technical Assistance for practice design, installation oversight, and/or checkout, and
 - Some certified TSPs may also have the documented skills to serve as Qualified Individuals (QI) that producers choose to hire to complete conservation evaluation and monitoring activities, such as the soil health testing required under RPP.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/regenerative-pilot-program>

NRCS TSP Regional Coordinators





Questions?

Click the Q&A button at the top right of your screen to enter questions.

The screenshot shows the top portion of the USDA NRCS website. At the top left, it says "An official website of the United States government" with a link "Here's how you know". To the right are links for "Subscribe", "About NRCS", "farmers.gov", "USDA.gov", and "Contact Us". The main header features the USDA logo and "Natural Resources Conservation Service U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE" on the left, and a search box labeled "Search this site" on the right. Below the header is a dark brown navigation bar with tabs for "CONSERVATION BASICS", "GETTING ASSISTANCE", "STATE OFFICES", "PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES", "RESOURCES", and "NEWS & EVENTS". The main content area features a large image of two hands shaking in a plaid shirt. A dark green box on the left contains the text "Technical Service Providers" with a horizontal line underneath. On the right, it says "Visit us at www.nrcs.usda.gov/tsp".

Scan here if you could not complete at the beginning of the presentation

