Outline of Presentation

• What is TSS?
• Current status of TSS and State-SSD collaboration
• Coordinating TSS activities moving forward
• FY2018 reporting deadlines and requirements
• Some new graphical reports to help us better tell the “TSS Story”
What is Technical Soil Services (TSS)?

Activities that focus on supporting the use of soils information

Examples include:

– Supporting conservation planning and agency initiatives (e.g. soil health)
– Providing soils-related information and training (internal and external)
– Supporting youth education (soil judging, conservation awareness contests, etc.)
Is Activity “X” TSS? – Broad overview

1. Look at the PRIMARY PURPOSE

2. Primary purpose is new data collection: NOT TSS
   1. Includes soils and ecological site data
   2. Initial soil survey, provisional ecological sites, MLRA updates, DSP projects, sub-aqueous mapping, digital soil mapping, etc.
   3. Includes data collection to support SSD sponsored cooperative projects (e.g. NEON, NWCA, other agreements)
   4. SSSs and staff receive SSD funding for their involvement

3. Primary purpose is to improve existing data: NOT TSS
   1. Water table study to improve soil survey data, field study to “upgrade” PES to approved ESD, etc.
   2. SDJR
4. **Primary purpose is site-specific application / evaluation of official soils data: TSS**
   1. On-site evaluation for resource inventory, conservation practice identification, design or implementation
   2. Wetland and HEL determinations

5. **Primary purpose is dissemination of official soils / ES information: TSS**
   1. Provide a map, help someone access WSS, etc.

6. **Primary purpose is educational: TSS**
   1. Presentations, work with kids, etc. (aka “the fun stuff”)

7. **Exception -- Data collection in support of COTA-funded agency activities: TSS**
   1. NRI, CEAP
8. **What about meetings?**

1. Go back to primary purpose
2. If the purpose is to discuss the collection of soils / ecological site information – NOT TSS
   1. Example: Management team meeting, technical team meeting
   2. SSD provides support for SSS / RSS attendance at those meetings through state allocations (Pam’s talk 2 weeks ago)
3. If the purpose is to discuss the use and application of soils / ecological site information – TSS
   1. Example: SSD staff attendance at the state TSS planning meeting
A bit of history
TSS and the Soil Science Division

• As part of the SSD reorganization, it was agreed that SSD staff would continue to provide TSS support to States

• A NATIONAL target of 15% of total SSD FTE support for TSS was established at that time based on the COTA (01) allocation provided to the SSD

• This was not codified in policy, but the former and current Division Director have affirmed this as a goal every year
What happened last year (FY2016)?
FY-2016 Distribution of TSS Activities by Staff Hours (~135,000 hours)

- Onsite investigations for soil health management: 2%
- Applications of ecological site information: 1%
- Onsite wetland determinations, delineations, and appeals: 23%
- Technical consultations: 10%
- Public education or outreach: 12%
- Onsite assistance: Other: 9%
- Creation of custom information (maps, reports): 8%
- Creating custom information (maps, reports): 10%
- NRI support: 6%
- Training for NRCS employees and partners: 6%
- State- and area-level support for conservation operations: 3%
- Support for soil interpretations: 3%
- Off-site wetland determinations: 3%
- HEL determinations: 2%
Instances of TSS Activity by State and by Employee Affiliation

Employee Affiliation
- Retired
- State Employees
- Soil Science Division Employees

Y-axis: Instances of TSS Activity
X-axis: States (abbreviated)

- States with the highest TSS Activity include AK, WI, IA, and IL.
- Retired employees have the highest instances in WI.
- State Employees have the highest instances in IA.
- Soil Science Division Employees have the highest instances in WI.
Staff Hours of TSS Activity by State and by Employee Affiliation

Employee Affiliation
- Retired
- State Employees
- Soil Science Division Employees

* Caribbean Area: Puerto Rico, United States Virgin Islands
** Pacific Islands, including Hawaii
Some broad observations:

• SSD provision of TSS assistance varies greatly by state and I suspect by areas within states
  • Different levels of workload (aka demand)
  • Different levels of state staffing
  • Different levels of SSD staffing

• On a national basis, SSD provides less than the 15% FTE informal target level of TSS

• Major caveat: numbers reflect TSS hours reported – if work was done but it wasn’t reported, it doesn’t exist
Working together; Moving forward
Soil scientists need to work together to support agency priorities (TSS)

- Lots of work out there
- Fewer and fewer soil scientists (both on state/area staffs and on the SSD staff)
- Blatant self-interest
  - Need to show the folks that make the decisions that soils information is important
  - If we don’t … fewer RSSs, fewer SSD staff, etc. etc.
- In most places, state and SSD staff are working together smoothly, but …
Comments I’ve heard …

• We can’t provide TSS if we aren’t asked (SSD Staff)
• We’ve stopped asking because we didn’t get a response (State Soil Scientist)
• Our staff have other priorities and can’t provide assistance; at least not now (SSD)
• I needed help right away for an urgent request and was told they were “too busy” (SSS)
• State “X” is using SSD staff to do TSS so they don’t have to hire an RSS (SSD)
• I was told by a local SSD staff member that they couldn’t provide assistance unless I made a formal request – it was easier to do it myself (state staff)
Moving forward

• **State and local TSS work plans**
  - Estimate workload – what? where? when?
  - Identify priorities
  - Help identify and allocate resources
  - Need to be the start (not the end) of discussion

• **Recognition that “stuff happens”** – will always have to adjust on the fly

• **Regular communication, understanding and flexibility are essential**
Keep communication at the “lowest” level

Regular communication

TSS Request:
- Type
- Timeframe
- Other (e.g. $$)

Elevate only if there are issues
FY2017 Reporting

• It’s that time of year again!
• FY2017 reporting deadline is October 31 (cue the spooky music …)
Why report your TSS?

• SSD employees: TSS reporting is required!
• But I don’t work for SSD …
• You should still report because:
  • Work that isn’t reported doesn’t exist
  • Need to know and show what is being done to justify importance of and support for soil scientists
  • Local, state, regional and national levels
  • You did good stuff; you should take credit for it!
Minimum reporting criteria (National)

- Date completed (used to ID the fiscal year)
- TSS activity type
- Instances (assumed to be 1 if left blank)
- Total hours (for that entry)
- NASIS user name (populated automatically)
- Recipient
- Program Benefitted
- State
Resources to help

- YouTube video tutorial: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0yr2Vduur8
- Updated “helpful hints” document available on the TSS Sharepoint
- Spreadsheet for recording TSS items -- can be imported into NASIS (available on sharepoint)
Telling the TSS Story
Jason Nemecek, SSS - Wisconsin
Web-based report now available

Soil Science Division Management Reports

TSS reports

TSS Interactive Charts By State and fiscal year
This report prompts for the State Code and FY. It displays several interactive charts and graphs useful for a State

WEB-TSS National Report (with graphics)

Parameters for Report: WEB-Technical_Soil_Services_National_Report_FY

Fiscal Year (4 digits)  
2017

Enter State Initials e.g. WI or % for National:  
WI

Submit

## Technical Soil Services (TSS) WI Report 2017

### Chart 1: Percent of Technical Soil Survey Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservation plan resource inventory</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create custom maps, reports, data files, etc.</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop or validate interpretations</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-site wetland determination</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site investigation, conservation practices</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site investigation, geophysical</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site investigation, nutrient management</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site investigation, other (non-soil survey)</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site investigation, reconsideration of others</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site investigation, wetland appeal</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site investigation, wetland determination</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide training to NRCS and partners</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public information articles, pamphlets, brochures</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Assurance Reviews</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil judging contests, envirothons, etc.</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching, lectures, presentation, display</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Chart 2: Instances Technical Soil Survey Activities

- Conservation plan resource inventory
- Develop or validate interpretations
- National Resource Inventory (NRI)
- On-site investigation, conservation practice development
- On-site investigation, nutrient management
- On-site investigation, reconsideration of wetland determination
- On-site investigation, soil health management
- On-site Investigation, wetland determination
- Public information articles, pamphlets, booklets, etc.
- Soil judging contests, envirothons, etc.
- Technical consultation
Additional Graphics from National Report
Annual soils data refresh
• Staging server has closed
• New (FY2018) SSURGO scheduled to be released on or about November 1
• It was a tough year: **THANK YOU** to everyone! The team worked together to get it done. Special thanks to Tammy Cheever.
• Small technical team is being formed to review the process and make recommendations for next year and beyond
  • If you are interested, please contact Mike
Rumored location of next State Soil Scientists meeting
Questions?

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender
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