John Nielsen, of Nielsen and Nielsen Forestry, is a Richland County landowner and has been a forester for over 30 years. He is an approved NRCS Technical Service Provider (TSP) for Forestry. TSPs provide conservation technical services and expertise in conservation planning and design for a variety of conservation activities to NRCS clients. "Once I retired as a forester for over 30 years, I decided to get my boots dirty again and do a little consulting. The little turned into a lot through the opportunities as a TSP. It’s been very rewarding and a lot of fun," said John. There is a high demand for Forestry TSPs in the southern part of Wisconsin due to limited numbers of TSPs. John's wife and forestry partner, Carol, worked as a Private Lands Specialist and one of her jobs was working with consultant foresters. "She always tried to convince the consultants to be TSPs, so I really didn’t have a choice; when I retired I knew I’d be a TSP; we need more of them," added John. John offers advice for landowners, "Work to build a relationship with your forestry consultant and make sure you are comfortable in working with them."

"Being a TSP has really given me a chance to go back to the forestry that I really enjoy out on the land and why I became a forester," said John. In 2017, John wrote 20 Forestry Management Plans and in his three year career as a TSP, he's written over 70 plans. John is in high demand with over 30 plans on the books in 2018 waiting to be written in southwest Wisconsin. John makes it a point to be involved in the Wisconsin Forestry
Highlighting John Nielsen, Forestry TSP

Network and he also takes referrals through partnerships he has outside the southwest area. “I have been able to directly see the difference active management makes in the Driftless Area,” said John. Forest needs have been ignored by some in the southwest area of Wisconsin and John knows there is ample opportunity to make a difference through active land management and conservation planning. “In the last 10–15 years the forestry community and partners, like NRCS, have done a great job in changing the mindset of landowners through education; it makes a difference,” added John.

As a Forestry TSP, John has a Forest Management Plan of his own. He directly believes and sees on the ground, the importance an active, implemented plan can make. “It gives you the guidance you need to make decisions on what to work on next and set achievable goals,” said John. “Landowners can do more if they are willing to get assistance from different cost share programs.” John believes if you don’t have a plan for where you are going, you are much more likely not to be successful in what you implement and you may even do harm. “Knowledge is a good thing,” said John. New landowners should sit down and think about what their vision for their property is. “Think about where would you like to see your property in 50 years; it may be as simple as a healthy forest and we can help you from there,” added John. TSP knowledge can be used to assess land and provide detailed specifics to make informed decisions that are best for your lands management.

In the Richland Center area, deer are very prominent and are a challenge in regenerating the forest. “Working with landowners so they understand what they see on the landscape, the effect the deer are having if something is missing, whether its oak regeneration or trillium, landowners don’t know it’s supposed to be there,” added John. That’s why it’s important for foresters to talk with landowners about the effects of deer. “Overall, we are seeing a decrease in oak production and regeneration and even aged harvesting,” added John. “A challenge in southern Wisconsin is not having good markets for pulpwood; that’s why NRCS cost-sharing programs really make a big difference; it allows us to do active management without that solid pulpwood market,” said John. “Being a TSP is the best job in the world; one of the main reasons to be a TSP is it allows you to serve your clients better, give them advice and access to assistance by informing and broadening their options,” said John.

“Wisconsin currently has 31 individuals TSP certified to write Forest Management Plans for NRCS clients,” said Eric Allness, NRCS Wisconsin TSP Coordinator. In 2017, 115 landowners were awarded financial assistance to have a Forest Management Plan developed for their woodland. “TSPs like John Nielsen are critically important, as they provide valued technical assistance to landowners to help them identify and address resource concerns on their property,” added Eric.

The NRCS can assist forest landowners through a variety of ways. Landowners can work with NRCS Forestry TSPs to write a Forest Management Plan through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. From there, NRCS can assist with various forestry practices that can improve growth, reduce risk and improve forest health. Contact your local NRCS Service Center or visit www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov for more information.

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