BACKGROUND

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service’s (NRCS) Pacific Islands Area (PIA) works closely with private landowners, local and state governments, and other partners to develop solutions for natural resource challenges. Over the past 15 years, NRCS’ approach to conservation delivery has been to fund conservation projects by an individual farm and spatially-random basis. As federal budgets and resources decline, we seek to find more strategic and efficient ways to deliver conservation in the Pacific. As such, PIA leadership has developed a new paradigm for delivering technical and financial assistance through our Farm Bill programs. We call this new way of doing business the Targeted Conservation Delivery (TCD) model. The TCD model focuses on leveraging partnerships and funding to invest federal dollars strategically to restore, conserve and protect PIA’s working landscapes.

This new Targeted Conservation Delivery model is:

- **Partner-Centric:** NRCS works closely with local, state, federal, and non-governmental organizations to strategically focus our investments on the highest-priority needs in the Pacific.
- **Cost-Effective:** By collaborating with partners, NRCS leverages additional funding sources from other partner groups to make the most effective use of limited federal conservation funds. Leveraging funds increases the total conservation investment and provides economic stimulus to local and regional economies.
- **Focused & Targeted:** Instead of funding conservation projects on a random, farm-by-farm approach, NRCS targets its conservation investments in focused areas to achieve clearly-defined natural resource goals as identified by local partners through a locally-led process. This targeted approach harnesses the power of multiple landowners in one area undertaking similar conservation projects to achieve a watershed or regional result.
- **Outcome-Driven:** The targeted approach emphasizes planning with the end in mind. NRCS works with local partners to set measurable goals to track and achieve meaningful conservation outcomes.
- **Strategic Forecasting:** The strategic nature of targeting conservation delivery helps NRCS leadership and field staff better understand short-term and long-term priorities across the Pacific. These priorities will enable us to better track, plan, and monitor conservation projects in real-time. Leadership’s ability to forecast budget into the future will drive strategic investments today for a better tomorrow.
With the development of our recent 5 year strategic plan, PIA NRCS is transforming how we plan and deliver our technical and financial assistance, called the “Targeted Conservation Delivery” model. PIA is working with our partners to take the steps to strategically focus our work on the highest priority resources needs and taking focused action with powerful conservation solutions. The goal of TCD is to enhance our ability to solve high-priority natural resource challenges in a focused, targeted manner. This strategic approach allows us to prioritize and focus conservation investments in the Pacific.

By clearly identifying our locally developed priorities, goals, and the investments needed to address the resource issues, we can more effectively leverage and strategically deliver our conservation assistance. As we begin implementing the current and future farm bills, we are taking this opportunity to carry our message to the next level, focus our efforts and tell success stories of conservation across the islands. The development of new conservation tools, such as the Conservation Application Ranking Tool (CART) enable our model to be successful through focusing on conservation planning first, targeted conservation implementation, customer-friendly service, and elevation through partnerships.

The building blocks to our strategic approach are Targeted Conservation Plans (TCP) — strategies we develop locally and collectively with stakeholders and partners. Each TCP is the culmination of a multi-partner effort that identifies a specific natural resource concern; sets goals and objectives; evaluates alternatives; establishes partner roles; and develops an implementation and monitoring plan. Each year, our team re-assesses each TCP and makes decisions to add, renew or modify plans.

Starting in 2022, PIA NRCS will utilize 50% of it’s Farm Bill funds to fund TCP’s developed and approved by the locally-led process. Although much of the work will be done in 2021 to develop long range plans (LRPs) and TCP’s, 2022 will begin the official start of the TCD model. By focusing on locally-led and driven conservation priorities, we can more effectively leverage funds, efficiently utilize resources, and strategically deliver conservation assistance. The process for implementing this model will be as follows:

- Every NRCS PIA Field Office will develop a ‘Long-Range Plan’ (LRP) which describes resource concerns that were identified through Local Working Group discussions and other available information from many conservation partners.
- Wherever possible and appropriate, the long-range plans are closely linked to local SWCD long-range plans.
- Taking the priority resource concerns from the long-range plans, county-level NRCS staff worked with local partners to determine specific goals and outcomes for a defined area.
- ‘Targeted Conservation Delivery’ (TCD) models are derived from the Long Range Plans and lay out the technical and financial needs for a specific natural resource issue for up to five (5) years. More specifically, they describe the primary resource goals, proposed solutions and actions, necessary funds and technical assistance, and monitoring and evaluating methods as well as an implementation timeline and partner roles.
- The approved TCD’s are used to develop NRCS PIA’s annual operating budget plan and State Resource Assessment for the year, identifying where the agency will invest its staff and financial resources in a strategic manner.
- All PIA managed funds (Technical and Financial Assistance programs) will have a link to the approved TCD’s and have a strategy to address a specific resource problem in a specific location.
• Local partners including Soil and Water Conservation District staff, watershed partnerships, state and local agencies, are just a few of the members across PIA who will contribute significantly to this locally-led effort.
• The support and assistance of our partners helps PIA NRCS ensure we have identified resources concerns and developed realistic plans to address these concerns.
• PIA Leadership will review and provide feedback on all TCP’s; District Conservationists will have an opportunity to fine-tune TCP’s prior to final submission for 2022 implementation.

With this new targeted approach to conservation delivery, we expect to see a stronger focus on conservation planning, efficient use of technical and financial assistance, and strengthened relationships with traditional and new partnerships. We’ll be better able to focus resources on identified training needs, development of new or additional technical tools such as LiDAR data, Ecological Site Descriptions, etc. Through identifying clear goal and objectives, we’ll be able to better communicate to staff, partners and customers what we do, where we’re headed, and how we’re getting there. We anticipate additional gains in efficient use of staff time, more timely ability to serve customers, and more effective development and implementation of conservation plans.

KEY DEADLINES
• **February 28th, 2020** – Final Long-Range Plans (LRP) completed.
• **March 15th, 2020** – Targeted Conservation Plan (TCP) proposals selected for development.
• **July 15th, 2020** – TCP’s finalized and submitted for review and approval.
• **August 1st, 2020** – TCP’s selected for funding in FY22.

A more detailed process with established deadlines and processes is included in Attachment A.

For additional questions, please contact any member of the Leadership Team.

Travis L. Thomason
Director
USDA NRCS Pacific Islands Area

ATTC:  
Appendix A – Targeted Conservation Delivery (TCD) 2021 Timeline  
Appendix A.1- Targeted Conservation Delivery (TCD) 2021 Gantt Timeline  
Appendix B – Targeted Conservation Delivery (TCD) model FAQ’s  
Appendix C – Targeted Conservation Plan (TCP) template  
Appendix D – Example Long Range Natural Resource Plan (LRP)  
Appendix E – Targeted Conservation Delivery (TCD) Framework
DIST: All Employees