USDA
United States Department of Agriculture

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SUBJECT: EOP – Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Limited English Proficiency Policy Statement

TO: All NRCS Employees File Code: 230-15

It is NRCS' policy to provide equal opportunity in all programs, services, and activities to persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The purpose of the NRCS LEP policy statement is to reaffirm and highlight the agency's commitment and support to the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of national origin that covers program access for LEP persons. These protections are pursuant to Executive Order 13166, entitled, "Improving Access to Services by Persons with Limited English Proficiency," and further affirmed in the Department of Agriculture (USDA) Departmental Regulation 4330-005, "Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Persons with Limited English Proficiency in Programs and Activities Conducted by USDA," and the NRCS LEP Plan. LEP statutes and authorities prohibit exclusion from participation in denial of benefits and discrimination under federally assisted and conducted programs on the grounds of race, color, or national origin.

LEP persons are individuals who do not speak English as their primary language, and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. NRCS personnel should make reasonable attempts to provide language assistance services to LEP individuals whom they encounter, or whenever an LEP person requests language assistance service, will inform members of the public that language assistance services are available to LEP persons and ensure provisions for such services.

NRCS will not encourage the use of family members or friends as interpreters because this may violate an individual's privacy and disclose sensitive and confidential information. It is NRCS' policy to inform LEP customers of the right to the free language assistance and interpreter services at no cost to the LEP customer. LEP customers who decline such services and request the use of a family member or friend will be asked to sign a release acknowledging that this practice could result in a breach of confidentiality and they will not hold NRCS responsible for any inaccurate translation or miscommunication. NRCS prohibits the use of minor children (16 years of age or younger) as an official interpreter and will not allow minor children to interpret under any circumstances.

Following the guidelines established in the NRCS fiscal year (FY) 2014 LEP Plan is essential to the success of our mission to work with our partners and landowners to improve the health of our Nation's private lands while sustaining and enhancing the productivity of American agriculture.

All NRCS employees are held accountable for reviewing and implementing provisions of the NRCS FY 2014 LEP Plan, and adhering to the spirit and intent of our duty to provide timely and meaningful access for LEP persons. Stressing the importance of our commitment to this issue, this policy statement will be reviewed and reissued annually.

Jason A. Weller
Chief