



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
International Programs Division
Annual Report FY 2014

December 4, 2014

NRCS has had an international presence and involvement since the agency was established in the 1930s. NRCS staff regularly participate in international meetings, scientific and technical exchanges, provide short-term and long-term training and technical assistance, engage in post-disaster recovery assistance, and participate in other international activities. The International Programs Division (IPD) supports the agency's international efforts by responding to requests for assistance, identifying candidates to provide technical assistance, facilitating foreign technical staff and officials' visits to NRCS field or headquarters staff, processing official passports and visa requests, and promoting collaboration and joint activities with other international partners.

U.S. Government Initiatives

Feed-the-Future

NRCS continues to support Feed-the-Future (FtF), which is the U.S. Government's global hunger and food security initiative. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is the lead implementing agency for initiative. USDA FtF priority countries and regions are Haiti, Kenya, Ghana, Guatemala, Bangladesh, East Africa, and Central America. NRCS's IPD has been active in the quarterly USDA FtF Global Food Security Management Team meetings. The agency also has been involved in reviewing USAID and USDA strategy papers, FtF planning and reporting documents, country briefing papers, and other related documents.

NRCS was active in Haiti during fiscal year (FY) 2014 to complete the Haiti Pilot Soil Survey Project. Over 100 Haitians were trained in the use of soil survey, two were trained to lead and manage a soil survey program and operation, 30 agronomists were trained to survey and describe soils, six were trained in databases and GIS management, and six were trained in laboratory analysis. Most of the initial training was delivered by four NRCS soil scientists, with additional training by six NRCS technical specialists. Our collaborative effort built capacity among the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Rural Development and its partners to lead soil survey activities in Haiti. Partnerships were developed among various Haitian ministries, universities, and nongovernment organizations (NGOs). Deliverables provided included thematic soils maps, a printed report/manuscript, online Web applications – WebSoil Survey, Soil Data Viewer, and links to the National Soil Information System (NASIS) database. Of special note is the SoilWeb, a smart phone application that can be used to access soil information within the pilot area. Haitian scientists were also introduced to other practical application of soil information systems such as the soil erosion prediction tool, Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation, Version 2 as well as various soil interpretations using Haiti-specific data.

International Activities

The role of international programs in NRCS is to help foreign Governments develop, use, and protect their natural resources; exchanging scientific and technical information; contributing to the overall achievement of U.S. foreign policy that seeks to promote economic stability, reduce poverty, and solve world food problems; and providing opportunities that will broaden and increase the technical knowledge and professional capability of NRCS personnel.

Forty-eight NRCS personnel made 73 international trips to 14 countries during FY 2014. The adjacent table lists the trips by country and assignment type. Two people completed five assignments, another two completed four assignments, and three completed three assignments. Canada and Haiti were the most traveled to countries, with 21 NRCS staff each.

Country	Assignment type					Total
	IM	STE	Trans	TDY	TRN	
Australia	2					2
Canada	18		2		1	21
China, People's Republic of	1					1
Democratic Republic of the Congo				1		1
Georgia				1		1
Haiti				21		21
Ireland	1					1
Israel				2*		1
Italy	3					3
Jordan				2*		1
Korea, South	8					8
Mexico	2					2
New Zealand		1				1
Pakistan				8		8
South Africa		1		1		2
Totals	35	2	2	34*	1	73

Assignment type

IM: International meeting

STE: Scientific and Technical Exchange

Trans: Transborder issues meeting

TDY: Temporary duty

TRN: Training

*TDY consisted of travel to Israel and Jordan.

Technical Assistance

Eighteen agency personnel participated in 33 technical assistance assignments during FY 2014. Most of these were to Haiti (21) and Pakistan (8), where 12 and three employees traveled respectively. Assignments to Haiti were in support of the pilot soil survey project, while those in Pakistan were for soil health/soil fertility, water dialogue, and water management projects. Both projects in Haiti and Pakistan were funded through the participating agency service agreement USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) has with USAID. NRCS has interagency agreements with FAS to support technical specialists participation in these assignments.

An NRCS engineer also helped provide training in the Republic of Georgia in partnership with U.S. Forest Service (USFS). This training was done in support of the project on Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Mitigation (CCADM) funded by USAID that is being implemented by Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN). The workshop provided 25 student participants with a variety of basic soil and water conservation techniques for the protection and rehabilitation of degraded watersheds. These conservation techniques can be used to provide resiliency to a watershed that will reduce impacts of weather caused disasters. The participants also gained an understanding in the techniques and approaches useful in engaging communities to implement these watershed protection and rehabilitation techniques. The USDA team was able to greatly increase their knowledge and understanding of the issues, challenges, and opportunities in the Caucus region in general and the Republic of Georgia in specific.

At the request of FAS, an NRCS environmental engineer and water quality and quantity specialist provided technical support to the USDA/FAS Real Time Water Quality and Quantity Monitoring and Weather Monitoring Project in the Middle East. This program is designed to foster adoption of common, standardize data collection and storage techniques to improve the quality of water resources in the region, and improve communication among the scientific community in the region. The primary objective of their trip was to assess the four currently installed monitoring stations, suggest additional parameters to further enhance data collection, and to make recommendations for follow-on training based on the results of the pilot project and on the interest of the project's water experts from Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian Territories. The employees served as moderators and led technical discussions at the Project's Midterm Evaluation Workshop and participated in site visits to the stations in Israel, the West Bank, and Jordan along with other U.S. Government (USG) team members from FAS, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

Afghanistan

NRCS efforts in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan ended during FY 2014 when the last NRCS agricultural advisor completed his TDY. Since 2003, 38 agency staff completed 67 long-term (≥ 6 months) and 12 people completed

Number of visitors, 2014.

Country	Total
Australia	1
Belarus	7
Belgium	3
Brazil	4
Canada	14
China, People's Republic of	18
France	24
Germany	5
Hungary	1
Israel	1
Japan	2
Kenya	22
Mexico	11
Moldova	1
Slovakia	5
Turkmenistan	3
United Kingdom	3
Total	81

short-term (< 6 months) assignments. NRCS provided more employees in support of OEF than any other USDA agency. The role of the agricultural advisors transitioned from providing direct technical assistance to advising local agriculture professionals over the years.

Scientific and Technical Exchange

Two staff participated in scientific and technical exchange (STE) assignments during FY 2014. NRCS continues to support the long-term research project in Antarctica that monitors soil and climate conditions. The research being conducted by this project will determine the impacts of climate change on the soil active layer and upper permafrost. The data provides needed baseline information that will help us understand coastal ecosystems and active layer

dynamics that exist along the Victoria Land coastline in the McMurdo Sound region. Data is also used in the development of a robust spatial environmental classification of the Ross Sea Region. Here in the United States, information resulting from this trip will aid NRCS in understanding cold and dry soils and their monitoring, and can have implications for coping with global climate change. Another specialist traveled to South Africa to discuss conservation technologies to enhance soil health. Field tours were conducted to promote conservation agriculture, cover crops, and crop rotation.

International visitors

NRCS staff met with 125 foreign visitors from 17 countries during FY 2014. This enables NRCS employees to share knowledge of natural resource conservation with visitors from other countries. List of countries and number of visitors from each are presented in the adjoining table. Topics covered ranged from soil health (France) and rural pollution management (People's Republic of China) to innovation grants (Kenya). It is interesting to note that the ministers of agriculture from Kenya and Moldova lead their respective country delegation for the requested briefings from NRCS staff.

Fifty agency staff met with foreign visitors during FY 2014. Sixteen of the 50 were women. Of the 17 visits, one was coordinated by the California State office, one by the National Soil Survey Center in Lincoln, NE, and two by field offices in



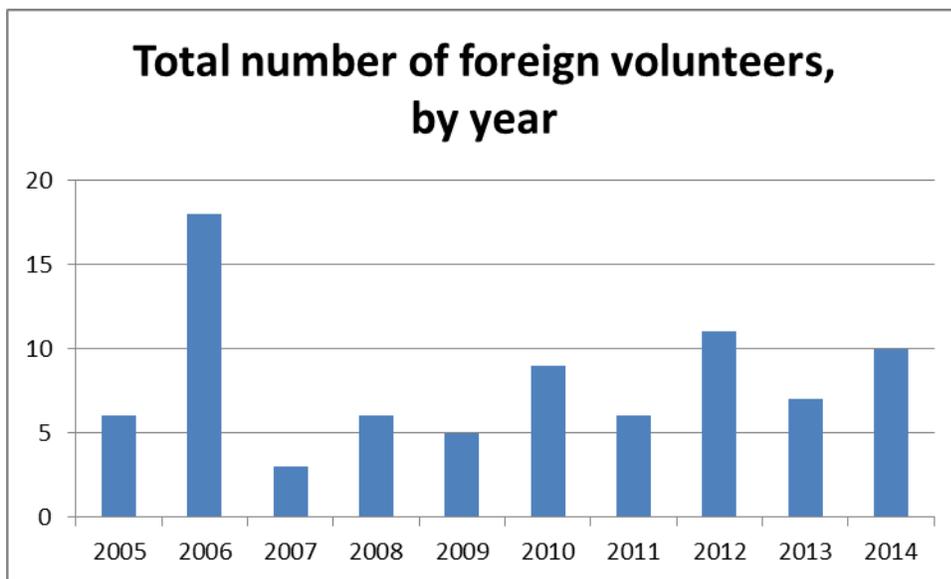
Thomas Reinsch (left) and Dave Smith meet with a group from Japan to discuss soil conservation policy.

Montana.

International volunteers

Ten foreign nationals volunteered as Earth Team members during FY 2014. Three volunteers were from the People’s Republic of China, two from India, and one each from Brazil, Canada, Japan, Libya, and Vietnam. Most of the volunteers were students at a nearby college or university wanting to obtain experience in natural resource conservation which they could take back to their home country. Total hours volunteered ranged from seven to 480. Four of these volunteers served in a field office in New York.

The adjacent graph provides the number of volunteers per year for FY 2005 – FY 2014 and tables list the top six countries of volunteers and top seven states with volunteers for the same time frame.



Top six countries of foreign volunteers, 2005-2014.

Country	Count
China, People's Republic of	10
Canada	6
India	6
Haiti	5
Honduras	5
Mexico	4

Top seven states with foreign volunteers, 2005-2014.

State	Count
Wisconsin	17
New York	14
Nevada	7
North Carolina	6
Missouri	6
Iowa	4
New Jersey	4

Other activities

NRCS specialists provided soil and water conservation training to a group from Tajikistan as part of USDA's Cochran Fellowship Program (CFP). Purpose of the CFP is to train agricultural Government officials and private individuals from middle-income countries, emerging markets, and emerging democracies to enhance agricultural development. FAS manages the program which allows Cochran fellows to come to the United States for approximately 2-3 weeks to enhance their knowledge and skills in areas related to agricultural trade, agribusiness development, management, policy, and marketing. Since 1984, the program has provided training for thousands of participants from many countries.



Community garden discussions.

This study tour gave the Cochran Fellows an opportunity to view several watershed treatments (conservation systems and practices) and irrigation technologies that are in use in the United States. The tour stops in Texas and California were areas with similar topographical and climatic conditions to the identified areas in Tajikistan. The Cochran Fellows observed and discussed conservation planning process, survey, design, construction, and operation and maintenance of several soil and water conservation systems and practices during the



Grazing assessment

study tour. The delivery of conservation technical assistance by trained conservationists to farmers was also addressed. Hands-on experiences were stressed. An essential aspect of this study tour was the dialogue among the Cochran Fellows, technical specialists, planners, farmers, and ranchers to discuss the potential applicability or adaptability of what they are seeing to their home country situations.

Division operations

Title 280, General Manual, Part 400, "International Conservation Program," was amended and posted to the eDirectives System in September 2014. This directive presents NRCS policies and procedures to promote, enhance, and strengthen the conservation of natural resources globally.

Two NRCS International Development Activities newsletters have been prepared and distributed in FY 2014: December 2013 and August 2014. The newsletters focus on NRCS international development activities and are used to reach out and increase awareness of NRCS expertise, in USDA, USAID, Peace Corps, Millennium Challenge Corporation, the World Bank, other international institutions, land-grant universities, and NGOs.

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Acknowledgements

Jon Fripp, Civil Engineer, National Design, Construction, and Soil Mechanics Center, Ft. Worth, TX; Shaun McKinney, Acting Director, and Harbans Lal, Environmental

Engineer, West National Technology Support Center, Portland, OR; and Thomas Reinsch, National Leader, World Soil Resources, Soil Science Division, Beltsville, MD, contributed to this report.