



Technical Service Provider Network (TSPN)

MAKING CONSERVATION A PRIORITY

Washington D.C. Trip—April 3, 2018

by: Joe Lally, TSPN Executive Director

TSPN received an invitation from Chad Ellis at the Noble Research Institute to attend the “**Evaluation and Realignment meeting over the Conservation Activity Plans for Technical Service Providers**” meeting held April 3, 2018 in Washington D.C.

The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Provide an overview of the project (CAP updates)
- Review the project purposes and products (CAP Criteria, Statement of Deliverables, TSP criteria, and payment scenarios)
- Obtain additional input for the project

The meeting was facilitated by the Noble Research Institute staff and led by Jimmy Bramblett, the Deputy Chief for Programs of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The current state of CAP Activity Plans was reviewed, which mostly dealt with the various templates and confusion between the conservation planning aspects of the different plans. The current state of CAP plan deliverables promotes inefficiencies at both the NRCS office and the TSP office, the duplication of data entry, timing of conservation practices, and funding between funding cycles.

About half of the attendees were NRCS staff with individual CAP policy responsibilities, and the rest were existing partner organizations (i.e. wildlife, fisheries, foresters).

The three words driving the expected changes to CAP plans are: Consistency, Efficiency, Clarity.

All CAP planning starts after the NRCS office has completed Steps 1 & 2 of the nine step process:

- TSP takes it through Step 6,
- NRCS, TSP and Farmer complete Step 7,
- NRCS DC sees that step 8a, 8b, 8c, and 8d are completed and that step 9 is completed.

Link to the 9-Step planning process:

<https://aglearn.usda.gov/customcontent/NRCS/Consplan/module3/3phase9step.html>

In new CAP planning, Steps 1-4 will be and look the same for all areas of technical service.

The next step in the changed process will be the posting of CAP criteria on the Noble Research Institute website. The details of the announcement and instructions on how to provide feedback are located on page 5 of this newsletter, on behalf of Michael Robotham.



TSPN Board Members

SAVE THE DATE!

Our annual meeting will be held on September 7th, 2018.



**Join TSPN today
and attend the
annual meeting at
NO Cost!!**

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Notes from the Executive Director

by: Joe Lally,
Executive Director, Technical Service Providers Network



Technical Service Providers Network (TSPN), your TSP connection to training, education and direct communication with USDA-NRCS, continues our efforts to become the most important partner of this agency. TSPN (Joe Lally and Dennis Godar) has recently met with the Deputy of Programs Jimmy Bramblett in Washington D.C. on November 1st, 2017, and April 3, 2018. We also participated in the informational meeting held in Sioux Falls, SD regarding the introduction of the CAP 132, Soil Resources Planning, held May 8th, 2018.

We are actively working with Danny Jones, TSP Coordinator, NRCS-Tennessee, to offer a Conservation Planning Part II Training Course, for all TSPs that need this course for certification.

We have set our annual meeting date for September 7th, 2018. Training and educational presentations are an important part of our annual one-day meeting. CCA CEUs are also offered to TSPN members at no cost.

We've completed a membership survey on training and education needs from all TSPs listed on the TechReg website. The TechReg website will be updated soon. Look for that.

All 14 existing CAP's are undergoing changes and upgrades to offer cleaner, easier to format and create conservation planning. We will share the changes for your review as they are posted on-line for comments.

New TSP certification and requirements are expected as the result of the TSP Initiative changes.

Expect additional clarity as it becomes available to us. A summary will be provided of all comments, coming soon.

Stay in Touch!!

NRCS Technical Services Provider (TSP) Updates

by: Tim Pilkowski, Natural Resources Specialist,
USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service

To apply for TSP certification, an individual or business currently uses NRCS' online TSP registry website, TechReg. For the past year, NRCS has been working on a new application and certification web-based tool that will replace TechReg. The new tool will allow individuals (existing TSP's or new applicant TSP's) or businesses to apply for specific conservation practices, areas of technical services and conservation activity plans.

The new application system will include options to upload any required documentation (training-education), and will auto-check to indicate if criteria have been met. NRCS intends to launch the new tool this fall.

For more information about the Technical Service Provider program, including certification, please visit the [NRCS website](#).



(Evaluating aerial cover crop seeding results)

On behalf of Mike Robotham, CPTAD Director, NRCS:

Thank you for your participation in the CAP Harmonization webinar on Tuesday June 26th. If you were unable to participate or would like a recap, attached is the Power-Point slides and below are the recordings. We have heard some feedback that the webinar audio will only work if you download the .mp4 file. If you find that you cannot hear the audio that is likely the cause. Click the link in the upper right corner that says "Download" and save the audio file to your computer. You can then run it will you watch the slides.

MORNING (State NRCS):

Topic: CAP Harmonization - State Leads Meeting Recording:
<https://zoom.us/recording/share/0BSXsNDzblSdmezVTuP9RQx-ffUdX5h0JWRn43a0SwIumekTziMw>

AFTERNOON (TSP):

Topic: CAP Harmonization - TSP Meeting Meeting Recording:
<https://zoom.us/recording/share/Ngc-1qLQYIEGALVirJRWHMaRecw8jC-mfk6yzk9yME0DOWIumekTziMw>

The website for reviewing the caps can be found here:
<http://nrsc-cap.civiccomment.org/>

To Leave Comments, follow these instructions:

REGISTER: Click on "Register" in the top right corner of the page. You will need a current email address, and a UserName and Password you create for this website. Once submitted, you will receive an email containing a link to confirm your account. Confirm by clicking on the link, and you are registered. Using the same UserName and Password, you can log out and log back in at any point during the open comment period.

LEAVE COMMENT: Find a specific location on the document where you would like to comment. Click on the green cursor in that location, and an "Add Comments" box will appear. Type your comment into the box and, when finished, click "Add Comment." At that point, your comment will be saved. Close the comment box when finished and move on to other portions of the document, or to a new document. You will not be prompted again to save comments once they have been added




Finally, the payment scenarios were sent out via e-mail, however if you did not receive a copy, please request a copy by e-mailing Emily.fife@az.usda.gov. Any data you would like to submit for those can be sent to the same e-mail address above. If you have any questions, you can also call Emily Fife at 602-541-5423.

Thank you again for your participation.

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Presidents Award
 presented to
Judy Martinson

"In recognition of your leadership and commitment to the ideals established by USDA-NRCS for quality and comprehensive trained TSP's and for your unwavering support of the Technical Service Providers Network, we are presenting this first-ever Presidents Award in your honor with sincere appreciation and gratitude."
 -The Board of Directors and Membership

Why Do I Need an Agricultural Engineer?

by: By Jason Olmstead, TSPN President-Elect

Growing up on a small central Iowa grain and livestock farm, I always liked taking things apart and figuring out how they worked, and then I prayed they went back to together and still worked. This is sometimes called "the Knack" in the engineering world. This led me to Iowa State University where I received my degree in Agricultural Engineering 13 years ago. Fast forward to today, I am a licensed professional engineer in seven states and still cannot believe some of the fixes producers come up with.

The most frequent question we hear as engineers when talking to producers and clients is "Do I need an Engineer?" or "When do I need an Engineer?"

The short answer, **you need an engineer anytime you are planning an expansion or changes to manure handling and storage.** More specifically, it is a good idea to get an engineer involved any time you are planning to modify buildings, manure storage, feed storage, waste transfer systems, or anytime you receive notification of non-compliance from a county, state or federal regulatory agency.

But there are other advantages to hiring an Agricultural Engineer.

They can guide you through the planning, design, and construction of the project to help meet the producers' **long-term** plans or goals the producer may have for their facilities. They can look at how this will affect other areas of the production facility and identify other facility improvements that may **boost production capabilities.**

Agricultural Engineers plan and design many different types of animal facilities of all sizes. They are well versed in the regulatory **requirements of compliance** with local, county, state, and federal agencies.

For many years, producers received engineering services from their local NRCS office or land grant university extension office. However, due to changes in the Federal Farm Bill and government programs these agencies and departments have had their budgets and staff cut over the years. They no longer have the staff or time available to provide producers the services they once did. Many producers still look to these agencies for assistance, but they are now being referred to a list of private sector Technical Service Providers.

Remember, a good engineer will understand the producer, the facility, operation management, and long-term goals. An Engineer is an asset to the producer and facility, just like their banker and lawyer.



Maunderings from the Hay Field

by: Dennis Godar, TSPN
President

The official start of summer around here is the first cutting of hay, which happened for us this past Mother's Day weekend. You know the saying "make hay while the sun shines", really means work the till job is done, on holidays and after dark if needed...

So, Molly, I and our good old friend, Mike were picking up hay and stacking wagons and it occurred to me that our average age was 64 years old. We hadn't planned to pick up bales in the field that day, but some previous issues with the baler settings resulted in several rounds in the field spitting out fluffy, irregular bales that the New Holland 1033 Stackliner bale wagon just could not pickup and stack as designed. So here we were at the end of the day with a couple of wagon loads of hay on the ground and without any potential teenage hay crew members in sight.

Yep, I think this scenario might be typical for many farms these days, especially when we consider that USDA census of Agriculture shows that during the last 30 years, the average age of U.S. farmers has grown by nearly eight years, from 50.5 years in 1982 to 58.3 years in 2012. Bucking bales is good exercise but it would be much more fun to drive and give some younger folks the hay crew experience.

My hay field ramblings may be analogous to my profession as a Technical Service Provider. NRCS has stated goals to increase private sector utilization in the conservation planning process including Conservation Activity Plans. Undoubtedly, NRCS and landowner clients will have an increased need for Technical Service Providers in the coming years.

More than a few elder NRCS personnel have stated to me over the years that becoming a TSP could be part of their retirement program, which is a great idea. They have a wealth of experience which can help clients implement sound conservation on their lands. However, wouldn't it also be wise to create opportunities for younger highly motivated professionals to enter the TSP world?

Perhaps the time is right to develop a Mentoring* program for TSP candidates that are working to become certified and could benefit from having a mentor to provide a guiding hand while gaining experience and confidence in the many aspects of TSP work.

*Mentoring is a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and the psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development; mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and during a sustained period of time, between the mentor and the protégé.

This definition may be a bit labored, but so is becoming a Technical Service Provider. I believe we can all think of times when it would have been very helpful to have a mentor as we jumped through hoops to become TSP's.

In my opinion, TSPN is the ideal organization to cooperate with NRCS to design a mentoring program that could provide opportunities for TSP candidates to gain some needed practical experience.

Potential activities for a TSPN-TSP Mentoring program:

- Pairing TSP candidates with experienced TSPs as resource persons while working on their first projects or CAP plans.
- A 'Help Desk' for TSP candidates to call with specific questions.
- Apprenticeships.
- Video Conferencing to become proficient in use of planning tools: RUSLE, MMP etc.
- Reviewing of CAP plans.

I would like to conclude with a big **Thank You** for supporting TSPN and also, a request, if you have any ideas or suggestions for a potential mentoring program, please drop me a line at djgodar@gmail.com.



TECHNICAL SERVICE PROVIDER NETWORK
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