

NRCS **NEWS RELEASE**

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Massachusetts State Office

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USDA Releases Payment Rates for Technical Service Providers

“Not to Exceed” Payment Rates Established for Massachusetts

Payment rates have been established for Massachusetts agriculture and land improvement professionals who provide conservation services through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), according to the NRCS state office in Amherst, Mass.

The 2002 Farm Bill expanded the availability of technical assistance to agricultural producers by encouraging the use of third parties—called technical service providers—to assist USDA in delivering conservation technical services to farmers and ranchers.

“Massachusetts technical service providers can quickly find ‘not to exceed’ payment rates based on location, land use and conservation practice with this interactive website,” explained Cecil Currin, NRCS State Conservationist for Massachusetts. “Such technical service providers include crop advisors, land improvement contractors, pest management specialists, erosion control specialists, civil engineers, and irrigation specialists.”

The “not to exceed” rates can be found on-line at <http://www.tsp-nte.nrcs.usda.gov/>. Professionals who would like to be certified as a technical service provider may register at <http://techreg.usda.gov/>.

“These payment rates will be provided to USDA conservation program participants to help them choose competitively priced services,” said NRCS Chief Bruce Knight. “We worked hard to ensure these rates reflect current market conditions for the delivery of these services. Technical service providers can help us get the maximum amount of conservation on the ground at the least cost.”

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“Not to exceed” payment rates for categories of technical services were established for each state. As part of the process to ensure consistency across state lines, NRCS reviewed payment rates between adjacent states where similar resource conditions and agricultural operations exist, taking into account differences in state laws, the cost of doing business, competition and other variables.

The rates were established using NRCS’ Technical Assistance Cost of Conservation Practices (TACCP) database, which reflects the agency’s total cost to provide technical assistance for conservation practices. TACCP uses cost information of sub-state areas, which reflect common natural resource, regulatory, geographic, social and economic factors. These factors affect the time needed to plan and implement conservation practices.

“This is a dynamic process,” Knight said. “USDA is accepting comments from the public on these rates and will make adjustments.”

Comments can be sent to Liu-Hsiung Chuang, USDA-NRCS, Resource Economics and Social Sciences Division, 1400 Independence Ave., Room 6141-S, Washington, D.C. 20250, phone: 202-720-7076, e-mail: Liu-Hsiung.Chuang@usda.gov. Information on the technical service provider process can be found at <http://techreg.usda.gov>. Information on the 2002 Farm Bill is available at www.usda.gov/farmbill.

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