

# **NRCS Conservation Technical Assistance**

## ***Issue:***

In Utah the conservation planning and project workload continues to increase, yet the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) professional personnel at the field level are not keeping pace.

## ***Problem:***

The appropriations for NRCS Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) have not kept up with the need. The President's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has not understood the importance of CTA or agreed that the NRCS should provide services to private land owners outside of the USDA program implementation. One result is that NRCS conservation plans more often address a single resource for which the land owner is making application for cost-share funds instead of whole farm conservation planning that should take into consideration all resources with detailed long-range concepts.

Though Utah's conservation districts' staff (funded by state and county appropriations) help by performing conservation planning and engineering for NRCS programs the federal agency has limited ability to service stand-alone projects funded by the state Agriculture Resource Development Loan (ARDL) and Nonpoint Source Pollution prevention programs. As the NRCS further commits federal technical assistance to USDA programs, it will be increasing more difficult to implement state and local conservation priorities that do not have a NRCS program component.

## ***How this could affect your constituents:***

Without adequate CTA Utah landowners seeking technical assistance to practice good natural resource conservation may not receive assistance or assistance will be delayed. These are often the landowners who either do not qualify for or do not seek any other form of federal assistance. They simply want to be good stewards of their resources. Without assistance voluntary conservation practices may not be implemented and the related benefits of clean air, clean water, healthy soils, or improved wildlife habitat not obtained.

## ***What can you do about this issue:***

We appreciate that you supported the FY 2008 Agriculture Appropriations for the NRCS Conservation Operations account, which included CTA. Please continue to encourage appropriators to increase funding in future funding years [not less than \$888.890 million, our FY 2008 request].

## ***Contacts:***

Bill Rasmussen	(435) 789-1383
Wendell Stenbridge	(435)783-5295
Larry Johnson	(435) 793-5625
Gordon Younker	(435) 753-6029