



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA Announces New Partnership with the National Older Worker Career Center

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 24, 2005—U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Chief Bruce Knight today announced the Agricultural Conservation Enrollees/Seniors (ACES) pilot project with the National Older Worker Career Center (NOWCC) to obtain the services of experienced workers on a temporary basis.

“This cooperative partnership allows experienced older workers to support NRCS employees to meet high conservation workload demands and enables producers to receive the conservation assistance they need,” said Knight.

ACES workers will help NRCS employees with survey, design, installation, checkout and follow-up for NRCS programs; develop materials for agricultural air quality issues; and process data for Farm Bill program ranking, tracking and payments.

The ACES pilot is underway in Colorado, Georgia, Kansas, Minnesota, Mississippi, Utah and Virginia, as well as the NRCS West National Technology Support Center in Portland, Ore., and NRCS national headquarters in Washington, D.C. Working through NOWCC, about half of the 36 positions identified for the pilot have been filled.

ACES participants are not considered to be federal employees and cannot displace NRCS employees. They earn benefits and work 20 to 40 hours a week under the guidance of an NRCS employee. ACES evolved from and complements the Technical Service Provider initiative to expand conservation technical assistance capacity on private lands and help landowners meet their conservation goals.

NOWCC, a nonprofit organization focused on employment opportunities and issues for older workers, posts ACES positions on the Web at: <http://www.nowcc.org/applicants/positions/index.html>, screens the applicants and forwards qualified ones to NRCS for interviews. For additional information, contact Renna Owens, NRCS-ACES national coordinator, at 202-720-8970 or renna.owens@wdc.usda.gov.

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