



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

January 2004

Natural Resources Conservation Service Reorganization

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will undergo reorganization during the winter/spring of 2004. There will be several changes during this transition period. This summary provides an outline of the approved organizational changes. Updated information can be found at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/reorg/index.html> and for employees at my.NRCS.

Introduction

Agriculture is experiencing major changes. The array of conservation issues has grown with changes in the business practices of agriculture, in farm and forest management practices, and a greater public concern with conservation issues. This, in addition to farm policies enacted by Congress in 1985, 1990, 1996, and 2002, which have greatly expanded NRCS technical assistance role on the Nation's private land. NRCS has been challenged to make investments in technology and deliver its technology and other services, even as programmatic responsibilities have increased since the 1985 Farm Bill.

NRCS is reorganizing to meet these and other challenges. This reorganization is to strengthen multi-disciplinary technology support to States; consolidate similar functions to enhance communication and coordination; align human capital resources with mission, goals, and organizational objectives; streamline processes and procedures; provide an improved career ladder for technical personnel; and better balance Deputy Chief areas and workload at the national level.

With the constant change in technology and conservation issues, it is imperative to consolidate similar functions and realign others to better meet the goals and mission of the agency.

Key Changes in the Organizational Structure

NRCS Before Reorganization NRCS After Reorganization

Office of the Chief

- Civil Rights Staff

- **Civil Rights Division**

Deputy Chief for Strategic Planning and Accountability

- Operations Management & Oversight Staff (O&E) in seven locations.

- **Operations Management & Oversight Staff (O&E)** in two offices located at National Headquarters and Fort Worth, Texas

Deputy Chief for Science and Technology

- Institutes and Cooperating Scientists:
 - Social Sciences Institute
 - Watershed Sciences Institute
 - Grazing Lands Technology Institute
 - Wetlands Science Institute
 - Wildlife Habitat Management Institute

- **Three National Technology Support Centers:**
 - East: Greensboro, NC
 - Central: Fort Worth, TX
 - West: Portland, OR

Deputy Chief for Soil Survey and Resource Assessment

- Resource Inventory Division
- Resource Assessment Division

- **Resource Inventory and Assessment Division**
 - Three Remote Sensing Laboratories at each of the National Technology Support Centers:
 - East: Greensboro, NC
 - Central: Fort Worth, TX
 - West: Portland, OR

- **International Programs Division**

(To National Technology Support Centers, Deputy Chief for Science and Technology)

Deputy Chief for Programs

- Resource Conservation and Community Development Division

- **Resource Conservation and Development and Rural Lands Division**
 - Resource Conservation and Development Program
 - Some functions of the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Staff

- Animal Husbandry and Clean Water Programs Division

(To Deputy Chief for Science and Technology)

- International Programs Division

(To Deputy Chief for Soil Survey and Resource Assessment)

	NRCS Before Reorganization	NRCS After Reorganization
Deputy Chief for Programs (Cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Operations Division • Watershed and Wetlands Division 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Planning and Technical Assistance Division <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation Planning ■ Conservation Technical Assistance Program ■ Wetlands and highly erodible land conservation compliance functions ■ Watershed Surveys and Planning Program ■ Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative ■ National Conservation Partnership point of contact • Easement Programs Division <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation Reserve Program ■ Emergency Watershed Protection Floodplain Easements ■ Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program ■ Grassland Reserve Program ■ Wetlands Reserve Program • Financial Assistance Programs Division <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Agricultural Management Assistance Program ■ Conservation Security Program ■ Emergency Watershed Protection Program ■ Environmental Quality Incentives Program ■ Watershed Operations Program ■ Watershed Rehabilitation Program ■ Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program
Deputy Chief for Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No changes 	
Regional Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six Regional Offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three Regional Assistant Chief Offices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Duty station to be determined

Functional statements that describe the duties of each new organizational unit can be found at: http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/gm_360_404_h.htm.

National Technology Support Centers

This reorganization realigns functions and staffs of the former seven Institutes—grazing lands, natural resources inventory and analysis, social sciences, soil quality, watershed sciences, wetlands science, and wildlife habitat—and cooperating scientists into three new National Technology Support Centers (NTSCs). The Center functions will be direct assistance to States, technology acquisitions and development, technology transfer and training, development and maintenance of national technical standards and references, and emerging technology development.

Each NTSC will be staffed with the following core technical disciplines: agronomist; forester; rangeland management/pasture specialist; soil scientist; biologist; agricultural engineer; environmental engineer; sociologist; economist; water management specialist; cartographer/GIS specialist; environmental compliance specialist; and plant material specialist. Additionally, each NTSC will have three Special Technology Development Teams that will lead the acquisition and development of new technologies to address prescribed special emphasis areas.

These include:

- West—bio-energy, air quality/atmospheric change, water quality/quantity;
- Central—grazing lands, wetlands, and wildlife; and
- East—animal waste utilization technology, soil quality, and social sciences.

Periodically, NRCS managers will assess emerging conservation issues to determine whether these special emphasis areas appropriately address the public's and land operators' concerns and needs and whether changes are needed.

Remote Sensing Laboratories

Reorganization will restructure primary National Resource Inventory (NRI) photo interpretation (PI) activities into the Remote Sensing Laboratories (RSLs) collocated with the National Technology Support Centers. These units will operate and report to the Director of the Resource Inventory and Assessment Division. This new structure will create the following:

- Three RSLs, each completing NRI photo interpretation for its assigned region
- More consistent use of state-of-the-art technology
- Timely, high quality data collected in a cost-effective manner across the Nation
- Permanent staff assigned to collect NRI data year-round

State and Field NRCS offices will continue to have the lead for:

- NRI onsite data collection
- Providing ancillary data from field office records
- Verification of requested NRI-PI data
- Certification of annual NRI State level results
- Coordination and communication with the RSLs and the Resource Inventory and Assessment Division

Supporting Information

Transition Options

NRCS leadership is committed to offering a position to every employee affected by the reorganization at his or her current grade level. Employees must make individual decisions based on what is best for their career, health, and family. In order to facilitate the transition for affected employees, the Agency is offering numerous personnel tools:

- Pay Retention is being offered to employees affected by the reorganization who voluntarily move to a lower graded position within NRCS.
- Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) was approved for all current National Headquarters, regional, institute, and cooperating scientist employees who meet the eligibility criteria. The timeframe to accept VERA is December 1, 2003, through September 30, 2004.
- The agency will provide appropriate accommodations at the new duty location for employees requiring reasonable accommodations.
- Career transition services will be available for employees who choose to separate or apply for other jobs instead of relocating to their new duty stations. The contractor will provide career counseling, assistance with resumé and cover letter writing, skills assessment to identify strengths, interview tips, and job search assistance.
- The Employee Assistance Program is available during this time at www.sandcreekeap.com or by calling (888) 243-5744.

Civil Rights Commitment

NRCS is committed to ensure that all of its employees are treated in a fair, equitable, and respectful manner as the reorganization is implemented. NRCS will offer a position at the same grade level to every employee affected by the reorganization and use a broad range of managerial and personnel tools to ease the transition for everyone involved.

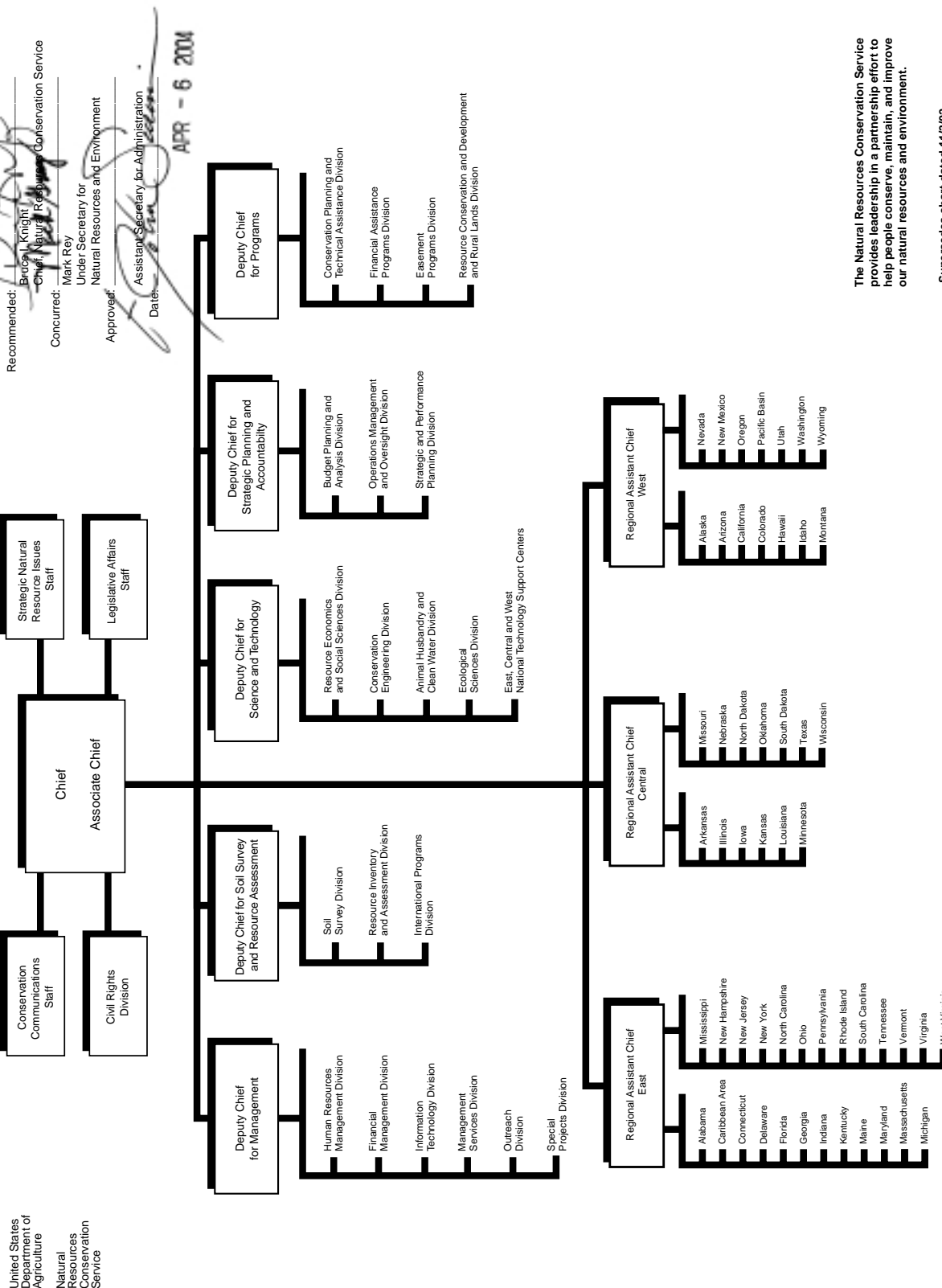
NRCS will monitor the strategies of the reorganization through implementation by:

- Ensuring that actions taken are in compliance with nondiscrimination laws and policies; and
- Maintaining the diversity profile of its workforce; and
- Pursuing all reasonable options available to mitigate, alleviate, and/or eliminate adverse impacts on NRCS employees, when possible.

As NRCS managers, supervisors, and employees, we must continue to strive and promote a workplace that is free from discrimination.

Appendix A.

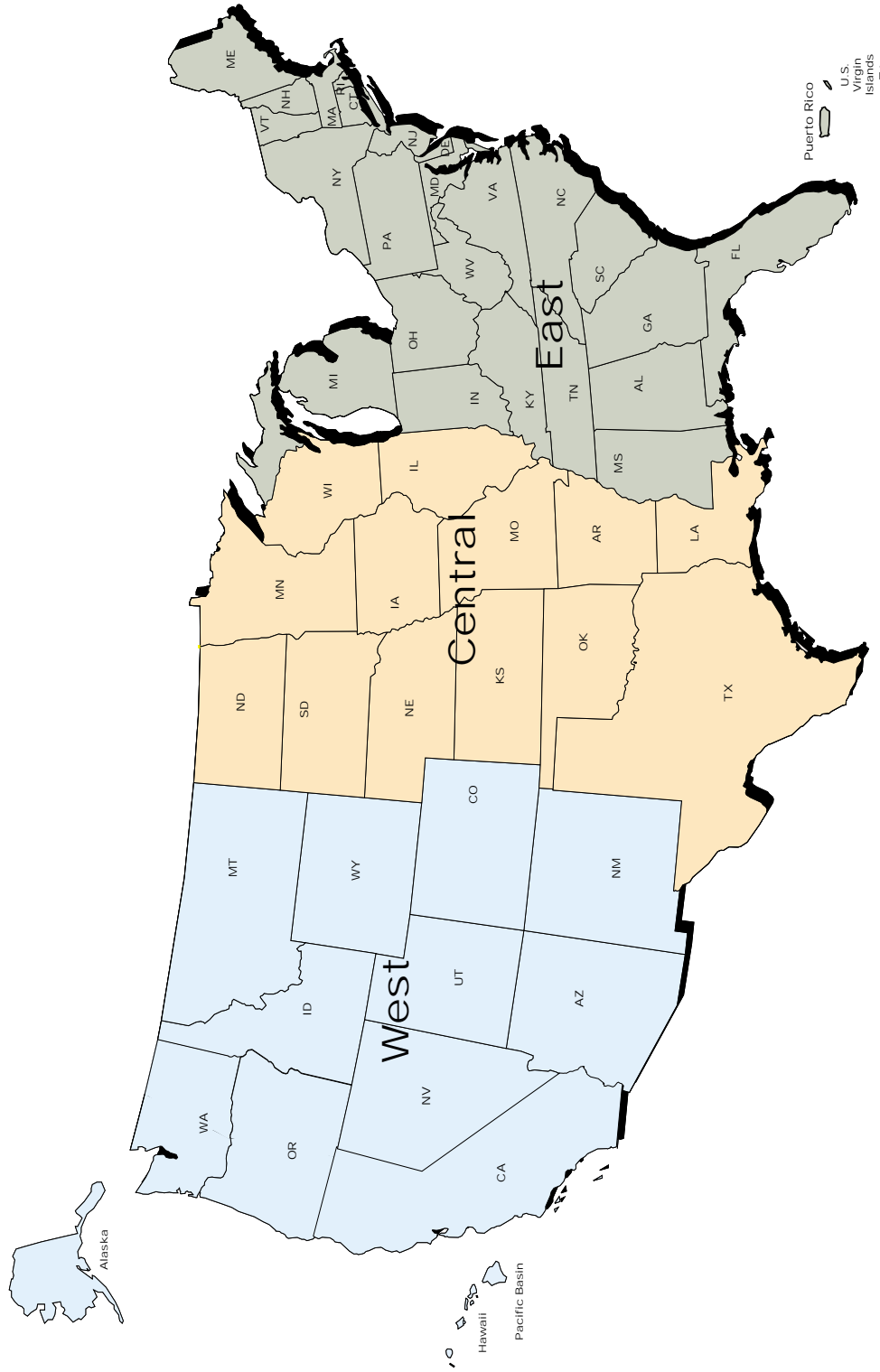
New Organizational Chart



Appendix B.

New Regional Boundaries Chart

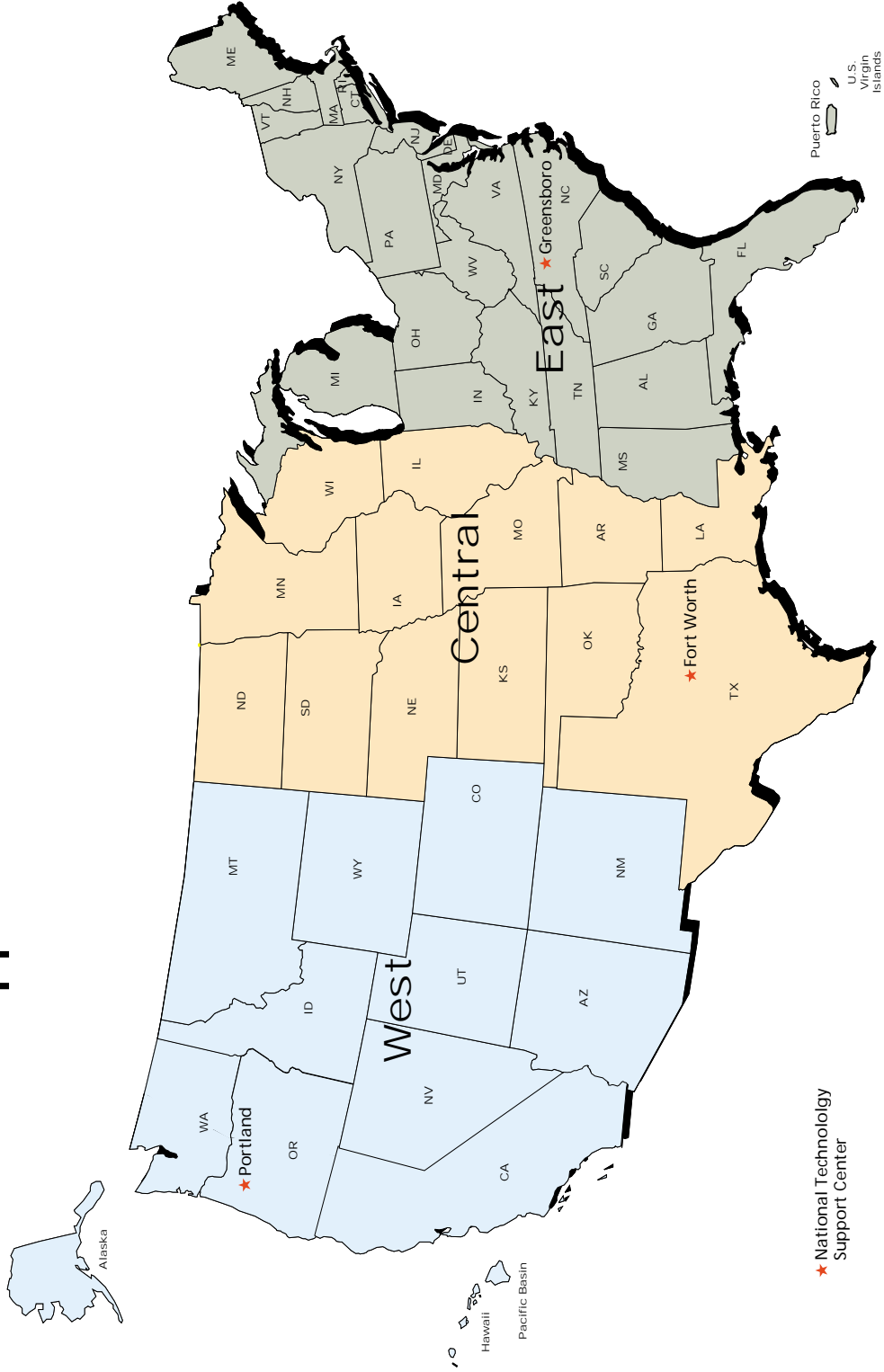
Approved NRCs Regions



Appendix C.

National Technology Support Centers

Approved NRCS National Technology Support Centers



★ National Technology Support Center