

# TECHNICAL SERVICE PROVIDER: WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU?

*Bill Payne*

Certified Forage and Grassland Professional  
Technical Service Provider/NRCS  
Stanford, KY  
859-583-9626 brpayne77@att.net

Progressive graziers and forage managers are continually looking to improve their operations' productivity. The opportunity exists to have a Grazing Management Plan developed for your operation at little or no cost to you. By contacting your county NRCS office, you can apply to have this plan developed by a Technical Service Provider, an independent professional certified by NRCS.

Some background: like some other federal and state agencies, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), has faced significant reductions in its funding, while seeing an ever increasing workload. To help meet the demand for its services, the 2002 Farm Bill authorized the use of Technical Service Providers (TSP). TSPs are private individuals or businesses who have demonstrated professional skill and experience in a certain area of practice. The 2008 Farm Bill required national standards for TSP certification. The bill designated specialty organizations who would be tasked to set standards and certification procedures for professionals in their areas. The American Forage and Grassland Council was designated to certify those whose training and experience qualified them for the "Certified Forage and Grassland Professional" (CFGP) accreditation.

Those holding the CFGP designation could seek further certification with NRCS in order to become qualified to develop Conservation Activity Plans (CAP). The 2008 Farm Bill also created a list of sixteen of these CAPs ranging from Grazing Management Plans to plans for Forestry, Nutrient Management and Irrigation among others.

The EQIP program authorizes funding to assist in offsetting the cost for these Grazing Management Plans. Only TSPs are authorized to develop these plans. By working with a TSP to develop one of these plans for your operation, you gain additional ideas for increasing forage production and more fully utilizing that production through grazing livestock. Additionally, potential resource concerns may be addressed. The producer may also increase the possibility of getting funding for the implementation of needed conservation practices.

If you are interested in taking your forage production to new levels, see your local NRCS office for details on a **CAP 110 Grazing Management Plan**.

Source:

<https://prod.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/technical/tsp>