United States Department of Agriculture

NRCS

Natural Resources Conservation Service
Civil Rights Division
5601 Sunnyside Avenue
Mail Stop 5472, Room 1-2184
Beltsville, Maryland 20705

JAN 20 2012

SUBJECT: EOP – NRCS FY 2012 Civil Rights Policy Statement

TO: All NRCS Employees File Code: 230-15

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was founded in 1935 during a period in American History known for the "New Deal," to help get the country out of the Great Depression. NRCS employees are our greatest asset for enabling people to be good stewards of the Nation's soil, water, and related natural resources on non-Federal lands, in other words, in "Helping People Help the Land." We must accomplish this goal and fulfill our mission to provide service throughout the Nation by treating everyone in a fair, non-discriminatory, and equitable manner.

Prohibited discrimination is a violation of Title VI and Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and will not be tolerated. It is NRCS' policy to treat all customers and employees equitably regardless of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and expression), religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or familial status, parental status, and protected genetic information, and that employees and customers must be free from reprisal or harassment in the pursuit of fairness and equal employment opportunity. Complainants, representatives, and witnesses involved in complaints of discrimination must be unimpeded and free from restraint, coercion, or retaliation in the exercise of eliminating discrimination in the workplace. Reprisal of any kind against customers or employees will not be tolerated. Agency officials, managers, supervisors, and all employees will be held accountable for discrimination, reprisal, civil rights violations, and related misconduct.

I am committed to enforcing the Secretary's zero tolerance policy on discrimination. As such, managers and supervisors are responsible for the environment in which their employees work and have a duty to take both affirmative and corrective action to ensure equal opportunity and civil rights for customers and employees. To deter violations, managers and supervisors are required to take appropriate corrective or disciplinary action in findings of discrimination, reprisal, civil rights violations, and related misconduct in employment and program matters. NRCS will ensure appropriate corrective or disciplinary action is taken against violators who engage in discriminatory behavior. Simply put, accountability is key to our success.

We must embrace the goals of "Cultural Transformation" as expressed by Secretary Vilsack. On August 29, 2011, I sent an email message to all NRCS employee's titled "What is Cultural Transformation" and it was followed in September, by an agency-wide training entitled "Starting the Cultural Transformation Conversation." As I renew my commitment and the expectation of the agency to be committed to equal opportunity and civil rights, it is imperative to remind everyone that the core values of cultural transformation include of the principles of equal opportunity and civil rights. As such, I am incorporating Cultural Transformation as part of the NRCS Civil Rights policy.

Cultural Transformation is a "strategic effort to ensure every employee, partner, and customer can operate in an environment that is diverse, inclusive and high performing." Cultural transformation is a shift in our thinking, a modification in our behavior, and ultimately, a greater, more accepting world view about what it is that makes each of us unique. At NRCS, cultural transformation is not a dramatic departure from how we operate, instead it is an affirmation of our core beliefs, founded upon mutual respect for each other and an abiding core value to conserve our natural resources.

All NRCS employees are expected to model equal opportunity, civil rights, and cultural transformation, and managers and supervisors must demonstrate an elevated regard by supporting civil rights, equal employment opportunity, diversity, and cultural transformation. The Civil Rights Division will continue to provide guidance and ensure the agency's compliance with the laws and principles of equality for employment and programs.

NRCS can achieve and maintain a diverse workforce with an abundance of opportunities for every employee to reach his or her full potential. We can also achieve our critical mission of providing assistance and service to conserve our Nation's natural resources, but it requires every employee's cooperation and commitment. I have every confidence that you will take this responsibility seriously and do your part to renew and champion our commitment to equal opportunity, civil rights, and cultural transformation.

If you have questions, concerns, suggestions, or complaints of discrimination, contact the Civil Rights Division at (301) 504-2181.

Dave White
Chief