

August 30, 2022

Terry Cosby
Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Chief Cosby,

Our organizations are writing to you with a shared interest in agroforestry. The heightened attention to long-term carbon sequestration and climate adaptation has helped elevate the need and potential for scaling agroforestry. For this reason, and in light of the many other beneficial attributes of agroforestry, we are writing to urge you to fill the vacant position of NRCS National Agroforester at the National Agroforestry Center (NAC) in Lincoln, Nebraska.

We know that U.S. agriculture has the potential to capture massive amounts of carbon from the atmosphere and store it in soil and plant biomass. Within agriculture, agroforestry stands out as a largely untapped but key climate solution. In fact, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2019 report titled *Climate Change and Land* listed agroforestry as a top land-based solution to sequester carbon.¹ In addition to mitigating climate change, agroforestry builds resilience to climate and economic risks and delivers multiple ecosystem benefits.

The contributions and continuity that a permanent National Agroforester could offer will provide important leadership for USDA as new projects and funding flow into agroforestry and enable more pathways for conservation programs to support agroforestry. All of us will welcome the opportunity to broaden our engagement with NAC and NRCS through this key position.

NRCS programs already serve as a source of technical and financial assistance to producers interested in agroforestry, including socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers who have shown a particularly strong interest in agroforestry. This increase in demand for agroforestry must be met with a corresponding increase in technical capacity at the national, state, and local levels. Filling this critical position will help meet NRCS training needs and producer demand and ensure that NRCS Conservation Practice Standards and payment scenarios are reflective of on-the-ground implementation of agroforestry. Furthermore, this position can also support collaboration with holders of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) in embedding agroforestry more holistically into federal conservation programs – TEK is an important means to teach and share agroforestry practices and acknowledge the Indigenous roots of those practices.

¹ IPCC, 2019: Summary for Policymakers. In: *Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems* [P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, E. Calvo Buendia, V. Masson-Delmotte, H.-O. Pörtner, D. C. Roberts, P. Zhai, R. Slade, S. Connors, R. van Diemen, M. Ferrat, E. Haughey, S. Luz, S. Neogi, M. Pathak, J. Petzold, J. Portugal Pereira, P. Vyas, E. Huntley, K. Kissick, M. Belkacemi, J. Malley, (eds.)]. In press.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working hand in hand with you to advance the health, diversity, and productivity of our working lands, waters, and communities through agroforestry.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

Agroecology Fund
American Forest Foundation
American Society of Agronomy
Biomimicry for Social Innovation
Carbon180
Crop Science Society of America
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Association of State Conservation Agencies
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Young Farmers Coalition
Natural Resources Defense Council
Soil Science Society of America
Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

Regional Organizations

Climate Land Leaders
Ecology Artisans
Green Lands Blue Waters
Missouri University Center for Agroforestry
Savanna Institute
Southwest Agroforestry Action Network

State and Local Organizations

Agroforestry Northwest
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia and Greene Counties Agroforestry Resource Center
Cornell Cooperative Extension, Tompkins County
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
Oregon State University
Sustainable Farming Association
Virginia Association for Biological Farming
Washington State University
Washington State University Extension

Companies

Breakthrough Strategies & Solutions

Common Vision Consulting

Humble Hands Harvest

Propagate