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July 18, 2003

**WEST VIRGINIA BULLETIN NO. WV360-3-9**

**Subject: PER – Incentive Awards Clarification**

**Purpose: To provide clarification on the Incentive Awards Plan**

**Expiration Date: This bulletin expires September 30, 2004**

The Awards Committee recommendations raised some questions about the Incentive Awards Plan. This bulletin is to provide clarification on Career Service Awards, Retirement Gifts, and Awards to non-NRCS employees. NRCS policy is located in the Online Directive Service System at <http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/> under General Manual, Title 360 Human Resources, Part 414 Incentive Awards Plan.

Career Service Awards will recognize employees with a certificate and a pin with the appropriate years of service 10, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, and 50 years. Appropriated funds may not be used for personal gifts. The expenditure of funds must be a necessary expense to carry out the purpose of the agency's appropriation. Although NRCS previously purchased Length of Service gifts for employees meeting career milestones, this practice can not continue.

Retirements may be recognized with a certificate listing the appropriate years of service and an honorary non-cash award (token). Purchasing items such as Fenton glass vases with appropriated federal funds for employees is not authorized under the Government Employees Incentive Awards Act of 1954. USDA Departmental Regulation Number 4040-451 states "Employees should not be recognized monetarily when they leave USDA either through retirement or separation. However, agencies may consider providing some form of honorary or nonmonetary recognition of the employee's efforts in support of USDA's mission." Although retirement gifts have been purchased with appropriated funds in the past, this practice can not continue. The Awards Committee will review NRCS policy and recommend an appropriate token to the State Conservationist. I strongly encourage the WV Employee Association or groups of employees to pool together donations to purchase appropriate retirement gifts for retiring employees.

Government Employees Incentive Awards Act, which USDA Departmental Regulations Number 4040-451 and NRCS GM is based, is limited to government employees. This Act was developed by Congress and signed into law by the President. 5 USC Section 2105 defines employee as an officer and an individual who is appointed in the civil service by one

**acting in an official capacity as an individual who is an employee under this section (in NRCS's case). State employees and others, regardless of funding, may not receive monetary awards but may receive a certificate and/or token (non-monetary awards). According to Truman Wolfe, Executive Director of West Virginia Conservation Agency, state employees may not accept cash awards or bonuses from outside groups.**

**I asked the Awards Committee to develop a criteria or a format for awards nominations to ensure that employee recognition is based on consistently applied guidelines. Please forward your suggestions to any of the Awards Committee Members: Barb McWhorter (Chair), Susan Davis, Dewey Broyles, Tim Dilliplane, John Weller, Tina Daugherty, or Theresa Hafer.**

**I remind all supervisors of their responsibility to recognize exemplary work by the staffs and I encourage all employees who have witnessed an excellent, mission-oriented accomplishment to recognize the excellent work by submitting nomination(s) for awards.**

**If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Larry Sargent, Human Resource Manager at 304-284-7599.**

**/s/**

**LILLIAN V. WOODS  
State Conservationist**

**DIST: E**

**Truman Wolfe, Executive Director, WVCA, Charleston, WV  
Joe Gumm, President, WVACD, Elkins  
James McClelland, President, WV RC&D Assoc., Huntington**