US Department of Agriculture
(USDA)

USDA FS R&D, Caribbean Climate Hub Support

Field Technician for Vegetation Survey

Statement of Work

August 5, 2026

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Project

Sampling vegetation and soils for Ecological Site Descriptions

General Information

1.0 Scope of Work

The contractor shall support vegetation and soil sampling at designated sites within tropical climate regions. Responsibilities include field data collection, accurate data entry, and reporting in accordance with NRCS and Forest Service standards

2.0 Background

This contract advances the USDA Research and Development mission by providing science-based support to farmers, ranchers, and forest managers for informed land management decisions. The project entails characterization of soils and vegetation across tropical climate regions, pursuant to Interagency Agreement 25IA11132650-248 with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The work will enhance Ecological Site Descriptions used for conservation planning and land management throughout the Caribbean Area. Surveys will adhere to protocols outlined in the National Ecological Site Handbook. Inventory activities include collecting soil and vegetation data across diverse land uses (e.g., forests, pastures, wetlands, orchards, beaches, and field crops). Results will contribute to soil survey publications and technical assistance programs supporting conservation planning.

. Contractor Requirements

3.0 Technical Requirements / Tasks

The contractor will assist the project lead and work with a team of 2-3 people to conduct inventories at approximately 32 sites, following NRCS and FS guidelines and best practices, to document current vegetation composition and structure within selected sampling targets.

Technical requirements include:

- At least two years of university-level education in agricultural/natural sciences.
- Experience (3 years) in natural resource conservation and related field activities in tropical ecosystems.
- Experience in conducting field soil and vegetation sampling English/Spanish capability.

Tasks include

1. Assisting the Project Lead and NRCS staff with planning and logistics for sampling activities.
2. Conducting vegetation and soil assessments at designated sites using approved protocols.
3. Recording and entering field data accurately and promptly.
4. Support reporting and preparation of deliverables.
5. Adapting to variable field conditions and terrain typical of tropical regions.
6. The following actions will be completed for an estimated 32 plots, with invoicing based on the number of plots surveyed:
    a. Vegetation inventory plots will be correlated to an established soil series by NRCS staff to confirm site location. Sites will be at various locations throughout Puerto Rico.
    b. Vegetation inventory plots will be geolocated with coordinates recorded to facilitate re-discovery.
    c. Sampling protocol at each site includes establishing a 0.01-hectare (1/100th – hectare) fixed-size vegetation inventory plot. A typical plot would be a 10m x 10m square or a 100m2 circle (radius = 5.64m), but small and/or narrow Ecological Sites might require modification. Species and percent

cover will be recorded for all vegetation other than trees > 4cm diameter. Percent cover is recorded separately for each species and should be a measure of the shade that would be cast by that species if the sun were directly overhead. Total percent cover on a plot can be >100% in the case of multi-storied canopies and/or overlapping species footprints. Species can/should include local names in Spanish, but all species must also be listed according to naming conventions in USDA.plants.gov when possible.

d. Trees > 4cm diameter will be inventoried on a variable radius plot. Basal Area Factor prism should be selected that will capture between 6 and 12 trees in a closed canopy forest. Species, DBH (to the nearest cm), and heights (to the nearest meter) will be recorded for all trees > 4cm diameter within the variable radius plot.
e. To the extent possible, land management and natural disturbance histories should be collected and recorded for each inventory location.
f. High-quality digital photographs should be provided for each of the sites, including photographs of the key features that define the ecological site, and a landscape view of the site.

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4.0 Government Furnished

The Government will provide:

- Field sampling equipment and supplies.
- Authorized access to sampling locations via cooperating partners.

5.0 Deliverables / Schedule

Field Data Collection: Soil and vegetation data for each assigned plot.
Data Entry: Complete entry of all required attributes in NRCS-approved formats.
Reporting: Summary documentation as required by the Contract Official Representative (COR).

Deliverable	Description
01	Field support and reporting activities across 32 plots, with each plot requiring up to 16 hours for sampling, reporting, and data management. All work must be completed within the performance period ending 31 May 2027.

HISTORICAL DATA

Historical data is provided as a workload estimate only. This estimate is not intended to be binding on either party or to be the only possible solution to the requirements.

ITEM	POSITION	ESTIMATED QUANTITY	
1	Vegetation inventory	10 plots	160 hours

6.0 Contractor's Key Personnel

Key personnel shall include:

- Field Technician (Primary Contractor Role) – qualifications as specified in Section 3.
- Resumes for key personnel must demonstrate relevant qualifications and field experience

7.0 Data Rights

All information produced will be for the exclusive use of the USDA Forest unless and until authorized for other uses. Publications resulting from this work will recognize the contribution of the Forest Service and appropriate Forest Service personnel will be considered for authorship.