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USDA Awards RS&GIS a National Training Contract

East Lansing, MI – The Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA, NRCS) awarded RS&GIS a $189,200 contract to redesign and expand its short course entitled “Introduction to Aerial Photography Interpretation for NRI.” Dr. Dave Lusch is leading the RS&GIS training team, along with Robert Goodwin and Dr. Dennis Hudson. They will deliver classroom instruction in the basic concepts of collecting National Resources Inventory (NRI) data from aerial photography at each of the three newly created NRCS Remote Sensing Labs (Greensboro, NC; Fort Worth, TX; and Portland, OR). Beginning in September, 2006, a second phase of this contract will completely revise the training materials and create a virtual course, hosted by RS&GIS, to be delivered via the Internet.

The NRI (http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/TECHNICAL/NRI/) is a Congressionally-mandated inventory of land cover and use, soil erosion, prime farmland, wetlands, and other natural resource characteristics on non-federal rural land in the United States. Previous NRIs relied primarily on collection of data via on-site visits. As a matter of efficiency, the NRI now uses high-resolution, orthorectified aerial photography as the primary source for data collection. With the consolidation of NRI data collection from 21 Inventory Collection and Coordination Sites to 3 Remote Sensing Labs, data collectors will have to be more skilled at interpreting a broader array of agricultural crops, cultivation-planting-harvesting methods, conservation practices, and forest types than ever before. RS&GIS has been providing remote sensing training for the NRCS, National Employee Development Center for more than 14 years. This latest contract continues the strong working relationship between MSU and NRCS on matters of airphoto interpretation and remote sensing.

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